

**BOYS IN CARE:
HOW SOCIAL WORKERS INTERPRET DEVIANT
ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOUR**

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*Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D. at the London School
of Economics and Political Science, 1991*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to offer an ethnomethodological analysis of institutional life at St. Nicholas', a community home for deviant adolescent boys. I have been particularly concerned to examine the therapeutic mode of reasoning which the staff so often employed in interpreting the boys' behaviour as the *surface* manifestation of their *underlying* emotional disturbance. This constitutes the main focus of chapters three and four. The psychological problems from which the boys were typically seen to suffer were routinely attributed to their past, punctuated as it was by a variety of deprivations. I examine the construction of such historical links in chapters five to eight.

To procure the material necessary for a detailed empirical exploration of institutional discourse I spent a year and a quarter "in the field" at St. Nicholas'. In addition to my everyday observation of myriad institutional routines and practices I also recorded the vast majority of staff meetings and case conferences, and photocopied dozens of case histories. This form of data collection provided the empirical precision necessary for the methodological purpose in hand. I attempted to bring to the data an anthropological sensitivity. This involved the partial suspension of my normal, practical orientation to the world. By dint of this distancing process one is able to identify and analyze the common sense methods through which institutional realities are accomplished. These are usually concealed by their very proximity.

By subjecting the empirical material to such close methodological scrutiny, "children with problems", or "disturbed adolescents" emerge not as the *starting point*, but the *product* of the social knowledge and discursive procedures through which staff called their environment to account.

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PREFACE AND CHAPTER SUMMARY

This thesis has indeed proved to be a “problem child”. It took long in its conception, and has developed slowly and painfully. I have lavished years of attention upon it, and responded to its multifarious demands. And it has been greedy; a fact for which one must blame the parent in part. It has kept me up at night, interrupted my social life and depleted my finances. Like every mother I wanted my child to be perfect, and it has taken many years to accept what is, I hope, good enough.

The project which has come to fruition in this thesis began about eight years ago when I gained permission to observe the workings of St.Nicholas’. I brought to this project a range of theoretical preferences which flavoured my orientation from the outset. I had, throughout the second half of my sociology degree, cultivated an appetite for ethnomethodology which I found, of the range of perspectives to which I had been introduced, at once the most stimulating and radical. Although I later developed an interest both in post-structuralism and hermeneutics which have influenced my understanding of social processes, it is ethnomethodology - and the works of its arch exponents - which has remained the driving force.

As such the site of my ethnographic fieldwork was of less significance than my determination to pursue a particular form of research and mode of analysis. Regardless of the actual setting, I was committed to the idea of an empirical piece of research conducted along ethnographic lines, in an organizational context amenable to the in-depth analysis of participants’ working practices through, in particular, the methodological device of tape recording. My ambitions for the Ph.D were broadly structured by these *a priori* concerns.

The institutional setting which I selected was, however, of considerable substantive interest to me. I have always retained a concern for “topic”, the specific characteristics of an organizational site, in addition to a fascination with the formal methods which cultural members share. I was for instance, following an earlier six month placement in a childrens’ home (see page 42), interested in the knowledge and procedures through which staff constructed “problem children” as “children with emotional problems”. The community home was an excellent context in which to observe this process. For although the residents had been “diagnosed” by a series of professionals prior to arrival, the definitional process is never complete, and the staff at St.Nicholas’ were artfully engaged in accomplishing working

interpretations of the boys and their behaviour for the practical purposes in hand.

While committed to the belief that the boys' institutional identities were the *end product* of a complex web of social practices rather than the *starting point*, what remained to be discovered was how such an accomplishment was discursively realized, and through what methods of practical reasoning. Only by virtue of intensive empirical observation of everyday institutional life could such discoveries be made.

Of course I had certain inklings about the substantive nature of institutional discourse, some of which proved to be productive trails, others quite misleading. For instance, I entered the field with a sense that what was distinctive about a therapeutic mode of reasoning was the imaginative ways in which its exponents played upon the documentary method of interpretation. While it took long empirical experience and analysis to refine this rather crude insight and to begin to perceive this "play" in figurative terms (see chapter 3), it was none the less a fruitful lead.

By contrast, I started the research with the hunch that each of the different professional groups - the residential social workers and teachers within St.Nicholas', and other groups such as field social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists from without - would each employ a distinctive mode of discourse which would be apparent upon analysis. Indeed, this inkling was given a degree of substantiation in the second month of fieldwork on the occasion of what I saw as a breach of the professional boundaries. This occurred in one of Damian Tanner's case conferences when Nicola Hobbs, Damian's "basics" teacher, read the educational conclusions formulated by Kate Lambert, the head of education at St.Nicholas'. The report closed with the following observations.

"Individually, the bad behaviour Damian exhibits is more juvenile stupidity than serious behavioural concern, but, taken together these individual incidents constitute a disturbing lack of social conscience.

Damian seems to feel no guilt for himself and concern or compassion for his friends. It is this that concerns me more than the behaviour itself. Perhaps Damian needs professional expertise of a specialized kind in dealing with, what seems to me, a serious personality defect."

Following Nicola's presentation of Kate Lambert's report the senior field social worker responded thus:

S.F.S.W: Can I ask uhm - who the head of education is?

Nicola: Kate Lambert.

S.F.S.W: Kate Lambert. And is she ah - how qualified do you think she is to (1) or perhaps Roger Carter can say - but to talk about a serious personality defect? (2) I mean that's a very serious thing to say - and I wonder whether or not she's saying that ah (1.5) you know - you know almost ah - if one could put it in these words - almost irresponsibly?

Roger: No - I think what it was - she personally wouldn't say anything irresponsibly - because there are two things. I think that she is - uhm - an extremely concerned person - extremely experienced (.5) uhm (1) and (.5) I - would say - the deputy I value more than any other deputy (I've had). And I think - she's obviously expressing (1) uh - her opinion very clearly - uhm - and she is obviously extremely concerned - but she is certainly not irresponsible. . .

S.F.S.W: I mean clearly to-to suggest that Damian (.5) has a serious personality defect has got (.5) vivid psychiatric connotations.

Roger: Yes - yes.

S.F.S.W: I'm wondering what her background there is?

Roger: Yes I think perhaps she might have said that perhaps we need to get other advice then about his - behaviour . . . because she's obviously feeling very strongly about things.

Although this incident seemed to lend weight to my initial hypothesis about the existence of different professional languages and realms of expertise, such expressions were, in my experience, very rare, and never again was I witness to one so flagrant as that quoted above.

What became overwhelmingly apparent, in spite of subtle differences in emphasis, was the similarities which united the various professional practitioners, particularly in their adherence to a broadly therapeutic mode of reasoning. Nor did practitioners necessarily articulate the professional line, so that on page 221, for example, we have a psychiatrist denying that the child's deviance was borne of psychological disturbance, and embracing a theory of his criminal responsibility. Such deviations occurred without challenging the cognitive and moral universe of participants.

So, while the aims of the present research were broadly influenced by an ethnomethodological perspective which was sharpened and modified in its application, many of the substantive insights which I hope the research yields were discovered *in situ*. Such "discoveries" did, of course, flow partially from the framework and the perceptual discipline it demanded, but they could not have been known in advance, nor did the framework determine the findings.

I leave the reader to assess the extent to which my ambitions have been realized, and delay *my* assessment of the successes and failures to the concluding chapter. For the present purposes I proceed to offer a map of the chapters so that the reader may find her way around the thesis more easily.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 offers a theoretical appraisal of the nature of institutional order and an appreciation of its inextricability from the methodological procedures which members routinely employ. It is, I contend, an *accomplished* order. Recognizing that the sociologist too shares in and draws upon the knowledge and skills of ordinary members, and therefore cannot stand wholly apart from them, does not negate the possibility of analytical insight. The stance required is akin to an anthropology of the everyday: at once an immersion in the flow of institutional life as well as a suspension of one's common sense orientation to it.

I continue in the second half of the chapter to offer an account of the methods which I employed in the service of my fieldwork: in choosing a setting; gaining access; negotiating a conducive portfolio of roles. I point out that these conundrums are shared by nearly all ethnographers, however different they are in other respects. What more clearly distinguishes

the ethnographic perspective I favour is the methods of data collection and analysis which I employed.

Chapter 2 offers an introduction to the institutional context. In the first part I consider the changing historical orientation to “problem children” and the chequered emergence of a more therapeutically inclined approach. This culminated in the 1969 *Children and Young Persons Act* which created the community home as an institution. In the second half of chapter 2 I consider the prevalent organizational features of St. Nicholas’, preceded by a short historical appraisal of the institution.

In chapter 3 I turn to the empirical data to examine the therapeutic propensity which practitioners at St. Nicholas’ had to interpret behaviour as a manifestation of the child’s underlying emotional problems. I explore this relationship which staff constructed between the *surface* and *depth* in terms of its elaboration and adaptation of the documentary method of interpretation. The defining characteristic is the figurative play which is set up between the two levels which may take a metaphorical, ironical or metonymic turn.

Although a pathologizing tendency was the most systematic, two alternative frameworks were frequently employed to either normalize or criminalize the boys’ behaviour. In chapter 4 I investigate the contextual considerations and typifying knowledge which the staff employed in allocating the boys’ behaviour to one of the three schemata. These considerations encompassed an assessment of *what* the boy had done, *when* he did it and *why* he was motivated to perform the action. The practitioner’s knowledge of *who* was responsible for the behaviour was, however, perhaps the most influential factor in arriving at an adequate interpretation. The critical criterion in distinguishing a pathological from a criminal or normal motivation was the assessment of whether the behaviour was in or out of a boy’s control. Although institutional culture was therapeutically permeated, another tendency toward routine cynicism, as I call it, was also evident. While these two threads often strained in different directions they were nonetheless both accommodated within the institutional fabric.

In chapter 5 I withdraw once more from the empirical analysis to theoretically examine the nature of time and history. Time enters into our social awareness and actions in a number of senses. In a “macro” sense, the time in which we live clearly shapes our perceptions of reality. In a “micro” sense, participants in even the briefest of conversational exchanges orientate the

temporal features of them. We are not only *made* by time and history, but we also *make* them. This is clearly apparent in the work of historical (re)construction. The historian retrieves details of the past which happened independently of him, but he furnishes them with a context and organizes them in such a way as to lend an overall meaning to them. The events conveyed are inextricable from the story which is told about them.

This theoretical appraisal of time and narrative facilitates an appreciation of the nature of the case historian's task. When children are brought into care their past is often subjected to scrutiny by a variety of professionals. This often takes the form of a search for clues which reveal "what went wrong" with the child. The staff at St. Nicholas' would often make sense of the boys' contemporary behaviour with reference to the events of their case history and other scraps of information acquired along the way. This mode of historical analysis, whether formally inscribed in written reports or articulated in informal conversation, is no different in principle from other forms of historical discourse. It too is an artful accomplishment which involves injecting a wider significance and systematicity into events which are in themselves muddled and inchoate.

In chapter 6 I consider the recurrent *motif* of lack which showed up in many historical assessments. The boys were characteristically believed to suffer from a range of deprivations which encompassed lack of love, care, consistency and adequate parenting. It was this historical victimization which was typically held to account for why the child had developed the psychological disturbance of which his deviant behaviour was the manifestation.

In chapter 7 I move on from the knowledge upon which practitioners drew in identifying familiar historical *motifs*, to the procedures they employed in erecting an architecture of causality. I thus seek to examine the methods through which a series of events are forged into a chain of causal connections. Two broad modes of causal connection can be deciphered in the data. In the *configurational* mode the actual relationship between events is implied rather than stated. The reader is thus left to secure the links by drawing, above all, upon her social knowledge of narrative and, perhaps less importantly, her occupational wisdom. In the *rational* mode by contrast, the causal connection is accorded a more explicit status. Temporal events are bridged very often by a theory of the boy's psychological motivation: event B occurred *because* of A.

In chapter 8 I build upon the foundations laid in the previous chapter to develop an appraisal of how practitioners galvanized past, present and future events into a coherent pattern. This retrospective-prospective process was characterized by a *paradigmatic* mode of causal accounting: an emergent pattern was constructed from a series of events to which new items could then be assimilated as “another instance of” a familiar theme.

The thesis may, in summary, be divided into three parts. In the first I am primarily concerned to furnish the theoretical, methodological, historical and institutional context. In part two I explore the discursive relationship which practitioners constructed between the child’s behaviour and the motivations which purportedly undergirded it. In the remaining chapters I examine the nature of the relationship which members forged between the boy’s contemporary misdemeanours and his emotional history. Thus, if part two draws attention to the various ways in which the *surface* relates to the motivating *depth*, part three takes as its primary focus the relationship between the *present* and the *past*.

LIST OF PSEUDONYMS FOR THE STAFF AND BOYS AT ST. NICHOLAS'

STAFF

PRINCIPAL: Roger Carter (for first nine months of fieldwork)
Peter Scott (for last six months of fieldwork)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

HEAD OF SOCIAL WORK: John Townsend (for first three months of fieldwork)
Paul Skinner (for last year of fieldwork)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

HEAD OF EDUCATION: Kate Lambert

UNIT 1

UNIT MANAGER: Frank Mercer
SENIOR SOCIAL WORKERS: Joe Duggan
Karen Barker
BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKERS: Eileen Walker
Jim Taylor
Sharon Coulter

UNIT 2

UNIT MANAGER: Bob Burnett
SENIOR SOCIAL WORKERS: Mavis Baron
Lawrence Mansfield
Graham Wait (for last 3 months of fieldwork)
BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKERS: Brenda Derby
Melvin Hardy

UNIT 3

UNIT MANAGER: Philip Hooper
SENIOR SOCIAL WORKERS: Jan Butler
George Wallace
BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKERS: Tina Wait
Andrew Chetland
Colin Lynch

UNIT 4

UNIT MANAGER: Thomas McKinney
SENIOR SOCIAL WORKERS: Mike Griffith
Joyce Page
Colin Thompson (for a period of my fieldwork)
BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKERS: Sandra Crossley
Caroline Dixon
David Walsh
Sam King

NIGHT SOCIAL WORKERS: Duncan Tylor
Sheila Sands

TEACHING STAFF

HEAD OF EDUCATION: Kate Lambert
SENIOR TEACHER: Gary Pallin (for last six months of fieldwork)
"BASICS" TEACHERS: Nicola Hobbs
Ruth Jenkins
Peter French
Judy Mallum
ART TEACHER: Brian Potter
WOODWORK TEACHER: Jason Roberts
BUILDING INSTRUCTOR: Jack Dennis
P.E. TEACHER: Alan Evans

SOCIAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS

INSTRUCTORS: Agnes Turner
Malcolm Appleby

AFTER-CARE WORKER: Agnes Turner

BURSAR: Tom Paine

STAFF PSEUDONYMS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

MALCOLM APPLEBY: PRACTICAL SKILLS INSTRUCTOR

KAREN BARKER: SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 1

MAVIS BARON: SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 2

BOB BURNETT: UNIT MANAGER UNIT 2

JAN BUTLER: SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 3

ROGER CARTER: PRINCIPAL OF ST. NICHOLAS' (For first
9 months of fieldwork)

ANDREW CHETLAND: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 3

SHARON COULTER: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 1

SANDRA CROSSLEY: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 4

JACK DENNIS: BUILDER INSTRUCTOR

BRENDA DERBY: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 2

CAROLINE DIXON: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 4

JOE DUGGAN: SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 1

ALAN EVANS: P.E. TEACHER

PETER FRENCH: "BASICS" TEACHER

MIKE GRIFFITH: SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 4

MELVIN HARDY: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 2

NICOLA HOBBS: "BASICS" TEACHER

PHILIP HOOPER: UNIT MANAGER UNIT 3

RUTH JENKINS: "BASICS" TEACHER

SAM KING: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 4

KATE LAMBERT : DEPUTY PRINCIPAL-HEAD OF
EDUCATION

COLIN LYNCH: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 3
(AND LATER) UNIT 4

JUDY MALLUM: "BASICS" TEACHER

LAWRENCE MANSFIELD: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 2

THOMAS McKINNEY: UNIT MANAGER UNIT 4

FRANK MERCER: UNIT MANAGER UNIT 1

JOYCE PAGE: SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 4

TOM PAINE: BURSAR

GARY PALLIN: SENIOR TEACHER

BRIAN POTTER: ART TEACHER

JASON ROBERTS: WOODWORK TEACHER

SHEILA SANDS: NIGHT SOCIAL WORKER (attached to
Unit 2)

PETER SCOTT: PRINCIPAL OF ST. NICHOLAS' (for last
six months of fieldwork)

PAUL SKINNER: DEPUTY PRINCIPAL-HEAD OF SOCIAL
WORK (for last year of fieldwork)

JIM TAYLOR: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 1

COLIN THOMPSON: SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 4

JOHN TOWNSEND: DEPUTY PRINCIPAL-HEAD OF SOCIAL
WORK (for first 3 months of field work)

AGNER TURNER: PRACTICAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS
INSTRUCTOR AND AFTER CARE
WORKER

DUNCAN TYLOR: NIGHT SOCIAL WORKER (attached to
Unit 3)

GRAHAM WAIT: SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 2 (for last
three months of field work)

TINA WAIT: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 3

EILEEN WALKER: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 1

GEORGE WALLACE: SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 3

DAVID WALSH: BASIC GRADE SOCIAL WORKER UNIT 4

BOYS RESIDENT AT SOME POINT DURING MY FIELDWORK
(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

UNIT 1: RICHARD ASHWORTH
 JAMES BRYAN
 SIMON CUTTS
 ALAN MARSH
 JIMMY MASON
 GRAHAM MELLOR
 JULIAN PINES
 PERRY SAUNDERS
 MARK SMITH
 DAMIAN TANNER
 NIGEL WYATT

UNIT 2: SYDNEY ASHINGTON
 GARY BROOKE
 GERRY CASEY
 LEN COOPER
 KARL FOWLER
 JOHN KENYON
 DAVID MINTER
 SAMUEL NAILER
 LEON PRYCE
 TED VINCENT

UNIT 3: PAUL BLACK
 ANDY FISHER
 NEIL FOSTER
 BEN JACKSON
 DAVID LYONS
 MARTIN OLSON
 SIMON WELLS

UNIT 4: STEVE BUTLER
 CLIVE DENNIS
 IAN DRAYTON
 CHARLES HUDSON
 PETER HUGHES
 CHRIS JONES
 JUNIOUR KNIGHT
 KEVIN MEAD
 BARRY PAINTER
 TONY SALTER
 SAMSON SMITH
 WAYNE TALLIS

DAY BOYS REFERRED TO IN THESIS

 KEITH FLETCHER
 STEVE RILEY
 TOM SMITH
 JULIAN YOUNG

EX-RESIDENTS REFERRED TO IN THESIS

 RICHARD DICKENS (Resident of half-way house)
 DEXTER ABRAMS

ABBREVIATIONS

MEETINGS

P.O.'S MEETING = Principal Officers' Meeting

(Involving the principal, the two deputy principals and the bursar). Held twice weekly.

S.S.M. = Senior Staff Meeting

(Involving P.O.'s and unit managers). Held twice weekly.

T.M. = Teachers Meeting

(Involving deputy principal - head of education, and all the teachers). Held twice weekly.

C.C. = Case Conference

(Involving the boy, his special worker, unit manager, "basics" teacher, parent/s and occasionally significant others such as grandparent/s, field social worker and quite often her senior, and very rarely, other professional representatives such as education psychologists, etc.). Held every one to three months, otherwise known as reviews.

PERSONNEL

F.S.W. = field social worker

S.F.S.W. = senior field social worker

R.S.W. = residential social worker

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

C.H.E = Community Home with Education on the Premises

TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

URNS: The turn of each new speaker starts on a new line with a name designating the identity of the speaker.

PAUSES: Each pause in the conversation is timed to the nearest half second and placed in round brackets, so that (.5) = half a second, (3) = three seconds, (4.5) = four and a half seconds. For example, Peter: We've taken on a lot of (1) boys in the last (.5) nine months. . ."

Pauses of less than 0.5 seconds, but longer than usual are denoted by a hyphen. For example, Kate: Uhm - I I think I'd like to (1.5) ask Steven something - uhm (.5) regarding the delinquency bit . . .

Where the usual fractional pause between words is omitted this is designated by a hyphen without a space either side of it. For example, Thomas: You see I-I (.5) dunno where you're getting this idea . . ."

EMPHASIS: Syllables/words are underlined to denote emphasis placed upon them by the speaker. (See previously quoted example).

OVER-LAPPING TALK: Over-lapping talk is denoted by three bracket openings on consecutive lines. For example:

Eileen: . . . he respected his dad far more than his mother becos of her colour.
But he's the last admit it - no way will he {admit it

Kim: {His dad's black and his mum's
white?

Eileen: Yer.

UNIDENTIFIED WORDS: These are identified by question-marks in round brackets, each question mark denoting how many words I think are involved.

UNCLEAR WORDS: These are placed in brackets with a question mark either side of word(s).

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS: Preliminary context-setting comments in my own words are placed in square brackets preceding transcript.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTIONS: Summary descriptions in my own words in the body of the transcript are placed in brackets and acknowledged afterwards.
If brackets appear in original (written) text this is also specified.

EXCLUSIONS: Where I miss out a short piece of text or talk this is denoted by three dots.

TRANSCRIBERS DESCRIPTION: Where I wish to emphasize a tone of voice or physical expression/gesture, for example: (laughs), (slaps desk with hand) etc., I do so in brackets following relevant section.

LINE NUMBERING: Each line of transcript is numbered on the left hand margin so that particular parts of the transcript may be referred to in the analysis.

CHAPTER ONE

THE THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONTEXT

A) The Nature of Institutional Order

Introduction

A paramount challenge to sociology has been to account for the persistence of institutional patterns. How does behaviour become routinized and, hence, spawn stable domains of activity? The Parsonian solution to the problem of social order has been convincingly refuted. Institutional strength and durability lie not in a structure of external constraints which seep into the normative consciousness of individuals as need dispositions or the like. The scission between the solitary atom and the social collective is untenable even as a heuristic device, because it inevitably denudes one of its constitutive potential. In the neo-functionalist model the actor is reduced to the husk like repository of all things social. Even with a veneer of Parsonian sophistication, this is basically a Pavlovian view of human agency. Reacting directly against this model of the “judgemental dope” Garfinkel began to develop an account of social order premised upon cognitive-moral assumptions. Social facts are not objects to be passively imbibed, but an active,

“ongoing accomplishment of the concerted activities of daily life, with the ordinary, artful ways of that accomplishment being by members known, used, and taken-for-granted . . .”

[H. Garfinkel (1967) - p.vii]

Heritage’s eloquent definition of an institution as “the robust product of an interlocking network of reflexively accountable practices” [J. Heritage (1984) - p.229] nicely captures its processually accomplished nature. Whether one is considering a relatively simple routine of everyday interaction, or the amalgam of practices which constitute the organization of a bounded institutional domain, the insight remains the same. It is the capacity of actors to orientate to an extensive stock of social knowledge and repertoire of practices in which the cognitive foundation of order lies, and its moral counterpart, in their ability to call themselves or others to account. Indeed, Heritage’s reference to members’ accountability harbours a productive ambiguity. It at once describes the way in which institutional modes of reasoning are inscribed in *verbal and written accounts*, as well as the members’ recognition that they may be

called to *moral account* for their actions, especially if they are in breach of the socially defined rules. Far from denying the orderliness of social order, or the facticity of social facts, a cognitive-moral orientation lends depth and elasticity to our appreciation of reality as a social process in time.

i) The Typifying Process as Analytical Object

The capacity for social reproduction is bound up in the reflexive dynamic. Each action is assimilated to, or modifies the world it enacts; the cognitive canopy is extended to accommodate it. This is not an idle repetition. *Reproduction* is at once a creative *production* in which actors bring their interpretative prowess to bear in performing appropriate actions and making sense of those of others. It is this which inspires admiration for the skills and resources actors wield in the ongoing construction of reality; a celebration which leaves most sociologists cold, and uncomfortably so because it pulls the rug from under their seat of privilege.

Two analytical components are distinguishable in the production of a normal, familiar environment. In the first place it requires the activation of a body of *social knowledge*, and the typifying schemata which compose it, and in the second place, the capacity to utilize the *procedures* through which any experience can be plugged into a wider network. Meaningful sense is *made* in this process through which items are accommodated within “a horizon of familiarity and pre-acquaintanceship” [A. Schutz (1962) - p.7]. The operation is instantaneous and multiple; in a flash actors are able to locate a complex array of appearances within schemata which lend them typicality. In the empirical dynamic of reality production, the knowledge and procedures of its accomplishment are interdependent. If one is the yarn, the other is the process through which it is spun into the patterns which characterize a particular institutional fabric.

The procedural mechanism at work in linking the phenomenal world of appearance to an underlying typificatory pattern is the documentary method of interpretation which:

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

[H. Garfinkel (1967) - p.78]

Until “actual appearances” are incorporated into a pre-existing schema, they lack significance. And yet, the “underlying pattern” derives its authority from no other source than its propriety in relation to those same actual appearances. In the fluid and reciprocal elaboration between the presenting item and the ghost framework of typification the reflexive spark ignites the fuel of reality production. Through the workings of the documentary method the ordered world we share is perpetuated, or manageably modified at each encounter with new appearances. What accomplishes the work of maintenance, modification and repair is our cognitive orientation to and moral belief in the “underlying” patterns and procedures which define our social being. We at once presuppose and rely upon the existence of the realities we are in the process of making. The persistence of institutional patterns is grounded in these strata of sedimented knowledge and practices which have permeated the core of common sense, and are brought to life through the documentary dynamic.

An important dimension which Garfinkel added to Mannheim’s and Schutz’s conceptions of the documentary method was to extend it beyond merely a sociological method, or a means of eliciting subjective meaning in the manner of Weber. Garfinkel saw it as a ubiquitous feature of *all* modes of social reasoning, lay and sociological alike. To prioritize mundane practices, and give them the attention usually accorded the extraordinary, the analyst must temporarily and partially distance herself from the cultural assumptions in which she, too, is immersed. Paradoxically, to demonstrate the constitutive power of common sense reasoning the analyst must depart from it; a sojourn which requires no little effort and ingenuity. As Leiter points out:

“From the analyst’s perspective, the facticity of objects and events may be viewed as a product of the members’ use of the documentary method. *From the member’s perspective*, he is not working with appearances, but with facts which have factual meaning. To *use* the documentary method, then, involves presuming and relying upon the facticity of the social world at the outset while simultaneously creating that facticity through the use of the documentary method.”

[K. Leiter (1980) - p.170]

[Emphasis in original]

In this respect discourse analysis of the ethnomethodological kind is not naturalistic. Remaining faithful to the data does not consist of staying exclusively within the actors’ frame of reference. Indeed, as I have said, the analyst must strive to actively bracket certain taken-for-granted assumptions which she shares with her subjects, so as to explore the practices in which they consist. This is not a call to convert the analyst into an artless observer; a feat which would be

impossible even if it were desirable. To make such a claim would be to endow the analyst with the status of cultural dope, or unfettered scientific observer, at the very same time as one is objecting to such a status *vis a vis* people in general. The anthropological stance is an important moment in the analytic process, but only one, to adopt hermeneutic vocabulary, on an arc of operations.

Analysis of the documentary method as a topic alerts one to the inextricability of reality from the methods through which it is accomplished. Facts are not outside discourse; they are structured by the typified assumptions and expectancies which actors bring to bear in *making* sense of the world. I call this subterranean network of typifications a *ghost framework* because it is ever present in the background as a generalized corpus of knowledge, but only materializes at the point of articulation. An absent-presence, we never fall over the schemata which compose the ghost framework, nor are they ever absent from our sense-making practices. Although the world is inseparable from the language and practices through which it is realized, a sense of difference, or otherness, is a feature of the play of different levels within discourse. Thus, when an actor interprets appearance as the manifestation of a particular underlying pattern, she is engaging with the ghost network of assumptions which are always already in the discursive machine. In the process of mutual elaboration between the levels a generality is accorded to the specific, and a familiarity to the strange.

An obvious implication is that objects and events are imbued with meaning relative to the pattern in which they are incorporated. Hence, what appears *this* way may, in a moment, from a different perspective, or with new information appear *that* way. Even within the most homogeneous of institutional domains perceptual contrasts and modifications occur since such ambiguities are attendant upon all forms of practical reasoning. Institutions do, however, exhibit systematic tendencies in the kind of interpretations participants make about the nature of appearance. While the threads are drawn from the world of everyday common sense reasoning, they are spun into a particular design and accorded an emphasis which lends the institution its relative specificity. Examination of any piece of the fabric will jointly elucidate the reasoning germane to everyday life, as well as that characteristic of the institution in particular. My reading of the forthcoming empirical material, for instance, suggests that therapeutic accounts exaggerate and modify the procedures which are, nonetheless, indigenous to everyday reasoning.

The strategy I adopt in order to examine the play of institutional discourse is similar to what Silverman and Torode call “interruption” whereby discourse is itself “interrogated” to see how it forges the link between appearance and essence; talk and the world to which it refers. Silverman and Torode distinguish interruption from interpretation, by which term they refer:

“to the practice of treating language as the mere ‘appearance’ of an extra-linguistic ‘reality’ pre-supposed by the interpretation. This practice is itself not what it appears to be: it does not do what it says. For it is impossible to formulate an extra-linguistic reality, e.g. ‘nature’, ‘society’ or ‘grammar’ except in language. Thus in pretending to uphold a non-linguistic and so neutral reality the interpretation in practice imposes its own language upon that of the language it interprets.”

[D. Silverman and B. Torode (1980) - p.7-8]

Interruption, by contrast:

“seeks not to impose a language of its own but to enter critically into existing linguistic configurations, and to re-open the closed structures into which they have ossified.”

[Ibid - p.6]

The project undertaken in this thesis also attempts,

“to reveal the interplay between ‘appearance’ and ‘reality’ within language itself. As against the view of language as a reality *sui generis*, whether transparent or opaque, we insist that language necessarily refers, as appearance, to a reality other than itself. But, we propose, the way in which it does this is to refer to *other language*. Thus plurality is inseparable from language, and it is the play of reference from one language to another language that suggests the reference of language to a reality other than language.”

[Ibid - p.8]

[Emphasis in original]

By interrupting the documentary method of interpretation the analyst may explore the play it sets up between the document and the ghost pattern it purportedly manifests. In this respect Silverman and Torode offer a useful way of articulating the kind of intervention the discourse analyst might make. However, the severity of the distinction between interpretation and interruption has connotations which are damaging to a more reflexive appreciation of language use. It assumes the analyst can interrupt linguistic processes without having interpreted them, (an operation which I consider impossible), and by logical extension, that she can completely step outside of the interpretative methods that ordinary people use. For, although

lay actors too can interrupt, it is not clear from Silverman and Torode's account whether their unavoidable reliance upon interpretative mechanisms is naive, disingenuous, or embodies the quest for linguistic and hence political mastery.

In their call for a form of literal description Silverman and Torode appear to want to bury the methodological monsters which a more reflexive *genre* of discourse analysis at least acknowledge, if not celebrate. It appears that the "interruptor" is the mouthpiece for describing what is "really going on", and in so doing engages in a curiously classical form of sociological irony given the radical promise of the book.

Language does play a key role in the construction of institutional realities. As a "treasure-house of ready-made preconstituted types and characteristics" [A. Schutz (1962) - p.14] it provides the conceptual organization necessary for a stable world to emerge. Language itself, however, provides only the necessary but not sufficient conditions. Only when articulated in discourse is the system of language brought to life; only when employed to perform actions does it fulfil its constitutive potential. Discourse is a doing, or as Ricoeur puts it, an "event". Unlike language, as an internally logical system in itself outside of time, discourse unfolds through time, it is marked by the inscriptions of an author and the techniques through which she legitimates her version, and it addresses itself to a world outside, including the recipient of discourse [see P. Ricoeur (1981) - p.133-134]. While author, recipient and world are entities embroiled in discourse and inseparable from it, they are nonetheless the Other to which discourse alludes. Language is the prerequisite of discourse, but it cannot survive independently. As Ricoeur puts it:

" . . . language, by being actualized in discourse, surpasses itself as system and realizes itself as event. . ."
[Ibid - p.134]

The generative force which is doing the articulating is not language *per se*, nor, I must emphasize, the subjective consciousness of the author, as idealist conceptions would have it. Language *in itself* neither simply creates or reflects; it is neither master or slave. Discourse emerges at the junction at which actors employ their shared knowledge of the reflexively accountable practices to cut out shapes in language. Language and the methods of its articulation are different sides of the same piece of paper. Accounts cannot cut into one side

without simultaneously cutting into the other [see Barthe's adaptation of the Saussurean analogy examined in Silverman and Torode (1980) - p.258].

Accounting thus relies upon members' interpretative finesse. Since the meaning of objects and events are tied to the context in which they appear the actor must do a great deal of work to ensure the propriety of her interpretation of them. While items are, in principle, open to multiple interpretations, our mutual orientation to an amalgam of sense-making methods ensures that we live in a world which is shared sufficiently to be stable. Any strategy for eliciting the import of appearances must involve the reading of situational clues; a process which ensures that context seeps into the kernel of reasoning itself. In this sense we must:

“abandon our traditional conception of ‘context’ as something exogenous to interaction or as an external interpretative resource. Instead, we can begin to think of ‘context’ as something *endogenously* generated within the talk of the participants and, indeed, as something created in and through that talk.”
[J. Heritage (1984) - p.283]

[Emphasis in original]

This recognition invites the adoption of a perspective which Knorr-Cetina [1981 - p.6] termed “methodological situationalism”, from which:

“actions are treated not simply as the products of individual dispositions nor of external constraints, but as reciprocally organized within a setting in which actors' cognitive frameworks are instantiated as patterned interaction.”
[J. Heritage (1984) - p.307]

In summary, the attribution of meaning to appearance requires that it be identified as a particular type. Typification occurs through the location of an item within a cognitive framework which endows it with the status of “an instance of”. The situatedness of events is resolvable only by investing them with a generality which exceeds the specific. The point is, that by bringing their knowledge of social and psychological structures to bear in the elucidation of individual items, actors are incessantly engaged in the process of forging a link between the micro and its macro conditions of possibility. The specific is indexically repaired through being plugged into a typifying network which goes beyond it. The methods of repair are themselves part of the institutional setting, and in this sense an analysis of the panoply of techniques through which participants give micro events macro import must take place *in situ*. As Cicourel points out:

“ . . . micro- and macro-levels of analysis are integrated in everyday settings as a routine feature of all cultural or social organization. The members of a group or society have created their own theories and methodologies for achieving this integration.”

[K. Knorr-Cetina and A.V. Cicourel (1981) - p.65]

The micro and the macro are, in this move, dissolved as entities, and return as moments in the on-going construction of a shared reality.

ii) The Tension between Cultural Immersion and Anthropological Alienation

By exploring the everyday accounting activities of practitioners as part of a repertoire of “members’ methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical purposes” one is giving the mundane “. . . the attention usually accorded extraordinary events” [H. Garfinkel (1967) - p.vii and p.1 respectively]. At the very same time the exposure and magnification of the hitherto unremarkable features of institutional conduct shows it to be, in its own way, a minor miracle. What is required is an anthropology of the ordinary; a method through which the analyst can distance herself from cultural practices sufficiently to perceive the nature of their composition. Geertz’s anthropological impulse is borne out of the same desire to puncture the familiarity which obscures our own cultural competence. In his words:

“The famous anthropological absorption with the (to us) exotic (is) essentially a device for displacing the dulling sense of familiarity with which the mysteriousness of our own ability to relate perceptively to one another is concealed from us.”

[C. Geertz (1975) - p.14]

Taking physical flight to alien cultures is a dramatic way of achieving a perspective by contrast. It is not appropriate, however, to the detailed analysis of aspects of one’s own culture, the apprehension of which requires an alternative mode of displacement. Efforts have been made to devise a means of producing the shock of the exotic upon the analyst’s native soil. Garfinkel’s “breaching experiments” are, for instance, an original and intriguing means of calling cultural practices to account. He did so by requesting his students, a remarkably plucky group, to go forth and tinker with the normative presuppositions of everyday interactions; a disruptive project which has since been called “Garfinkelling”. We need not go into the details of the experiments which include the demand for absolute semantic clarity in casual conversation, pretending to be a lodger in one’s own home, standing too close to one’s fellow conversationalist,

and so on [see H. Garfinkel (1967) - pages 35-75]. By contravening the taken-for-granted patterns, Garfinkel was able to expose some of the work that is done to sustain them, and the moral power with which they are invested. The breaching method, albeit in the words of one of the subject-victims of an experiment, “diabolic - but clever”, is sustainable only momentarily; a fact to which the nervous tensions experienced by the student-experimentors bears witness. What is more the experiments intervene in and disrupt social life in a way that renders them quite unsuitable for ethnographic work. Nor was this the purpose for which they were devised.

What Garfinkel’s experiments display is the incessant hive of activity in which we are effortlessly and unconsciously engaged in the production of a normal, patterned environment. The comforting familiarity of cultural patterns blunts our capacity to perceive their workings; a blindness which is not to do with subjectivity or objectivity, but with *proximity*. Unlike the anthropology of alien societies where initial strangeness is gradually eroded by a growing sense of familiarity, the anthropology of the ordinary requires the analyst to partially and periodically push back the threshold of cultural acquaintanceship to permit a sense of strangeness.

How can one gain access to the mechanisms of reality production while leaving their product in tact? On this point statements in the literature are notable for their rarity. Methodological chapters in mainstream ethnographies offer a wealth of advice about access issues, negotiating a role, gaining trust, among other genuine difficulties for the would-be ethnographer. Some speak with endearing modesty about the bungling of the frail sociologist in relation to the potency of the social group. But the methodological monster remains: how is one to be at once cultural stranger and member; discourse analyst and *bona fide* social interactant? Clearly what the analyst must do is to attempt to bracket aspects of reality, to temporarily suspend judgement in its external *a priori* existence in order to be sensitized to the procedures of its accomplishment. How such a perspective is to be achieved is more complex, yet it takes us to the heart of reflexive analysis.

Any form of ethnography worth its salt requires an intensive period of fieldwork. If the cultural and institutional sense of reality is generated “endogenously” through talk and practical reasoning, it follows that the analyst must situate herself within the setting. In Garfinkel’s words, “The formal properties obtain their guarantees from no other source and in no other way” [H. Garfinkel (1967) - p.viii]. However, the commitment to a period of relative

immersion in the life of the group under study is the only factor which unites the heterogeneous array of approaches which rub shoulders under the rubric of ethnography.

Hammersley and Atkinson [1983 - pages 14-23] usefully distinguish between naturalist ethnography, and that informed by reflexive principles, although their conception of the latter is limited by its generality. In the case of naturalist ethnography the aim of the venture is to elucidate how actors organize and experience their world through the sociologist's description of it. However, a two headed serpent lurks in the apparently noble attempt to tell it like it is, and to usurp the ethnographer's version in favour of an appreciation of that of the actors. Both problems lie in the naturalist's failure to examine what it is to represent, describe, or tell stories "about" the world both as lay person or analyst. In failing to attend to discursive issues of this kind, the naturalist ethnographer presents her own description either as a window on the world, or as a picture of it, in the early Wittgensteinian sense. The practices through which members of the observed group and ethnographer construct their versions is displaced in this moment of fusion. Once used as unexplicated resource, many of the methods of practical reasoning are buried. As Atkinson and Drew say:

"Just as readers and hearers have no direct way of checking the ethnographer's selected descriptions of events in some setting against the events themselves, so too would they be deprived of any way of checking his descriptions of how he used his member's competences against his use of them."
[M. Atkinson and P. Drew (1979) - p.26]

Unless the analyst's unavoidable reliance upon cultural modes of practical reasoning in interpreting the data is acknowledged, and in some way exposed to scrutiny, the reader cannot follow through what Atkinson and Drew call the "logic of (his) interpretation" [Ibid - p.26]. The question is not, then, whether the ethnographer can avoid this intimacy, or the discursive skills which flow from it, but what she does with it. In this sense the analyst's reliance upon her cultural wisdom is not something to be begrudgingly acknowledged, or swept under the carpet. It is not only an inevitable, but a lucrative resource which the ethnographer can trade on during the course of her fieldwork. The reflexive ethnographer attempts to milk the benefits of immersion, while at the same time subjecting the familiar to the process of anthropological alienation. The intimacy which allows one to recognize categories of talk, repeats, deviations and so on, and the distantiation which yields access to the methods of their constitution, spawns a productive tension which is the hallmark of ethnomethodologically inclined ethnography.

The process of distantiating, whereby the analyst attempts to shed a layer of cultural skin, is one with which ethnomethodologists are characteristically familiar. Given its centrality, discussions about the nature of this anthropological moment are curiously hard to find. Phenomenological discussions are of little use to us here since reflexivity is treated as something to be eclipsed in pursuit of transcendental subjective structures; an orientation which re-appears in Schutz's call for presuppositionlessness. Programmatic discussions about reflexivity abound in ethnomethodological literature, but stop short of empirical suggestions about how this slippery customer is to be held onto. On pages 44-45 below I attempt to outline some of the methods through which I achieved an anthropological reading of institutional affairs.

iii) Ethnomethodological (or Reflexive) Ethnography

S. Woolgar (1982) makes a distinction between "instrumental" and "reflexive" ethnography as he calls them. Unlike the former, the latter variety are not predominantly concerned with what is unique about a setting. As Woolgar says, "the location of ethnographic experience provides the stimulus for, but not the exclusive target of, reflexive inquiry" (Ibid p. 493). The empirical material offers the occasion at once to explore the specifics and to gain insight into the generic features of cultural reasoning. The forthcoming analysis of therapeutic discourse, for example, highlights knowledge and practices which are germane to everyday life in such a way that the latter are opened up to analysis. One need not relinquish an interest in the specifics, since institutional patterns always express something in excess, the precise configuration of which is irreducible. Unless the relative and the universal, the particular and the general, are able to talk to and mutually elaborate each other one is left with an imbalance. Either the empirical data is merely a vehicle for making generalized theoretical statements or the latter are rather awkwardly stuck on to meet the requirements of the academy. A useful tip whenever one is struggling with such methodological issues is to shift attention onto how members in practice accomplish the manoeuvres which are in principle problematic for the analyst.

Since the accounts of both institutional members' and ethnographer display their interpretative skills they may equally be placed under the analytical gaze. In this lies a further distinction between a reflexive style of ethnography and the ethos of naturalism. In its depiction of the ethnographer as an empty vessel or receptor the latter exhibits a family resemblance to positivism since both envisage the existence of a world which is external to and independent of the observer. In the reflexive mode, by contrast, both ethnographer and subjects are seen as

skilled theoreticians. In this respect, while Schutz's distinction between first and second order theorizing gives rightful primacy to members' methods over those of the analyst, in other respects a hierarchical analogy is misleading since the practices which "lay" actors employ to accomplish a sense of social organization are those which "sociological" actors also use. Of course the reflexive gaze is distinct from that which obtains under the "natural attitude", and deliberately so as it is designed to subject the latter to the kind of appraisal usually accorded the extraordinary. Even so, the anthropological link is only one in a chain of operations in which the pull of familiarity and the push of strangeness are equally compelling.

The literary style through which the analyst displays her interpretative and interruptive reasoning may take a variety of presentational turns. The more stylized attempts to capture the reflexive dynamic in motion involve the author's ongoing attempt to draw attention to the discursive workings of her own account. Given the inescapability of the sociologist's dependence upon her cultural competence:

"the aim would be to retain and constantly draw attention to the problem in the course of description and analysis. We might as well admit that the problem is both insoluble and unavoidable, and that even efforts to examine *how* it is avoided are doomed in that they entail an attempt to avoid it! We need to explore forms of literary expression whereby the monster can be simultaneously kept at bay and allowed a position at the heart of our enterprise."

[S. Woolgar - (1982) - p. 489]

[Emphasis in original]

Or again,

"The aim is to heighten the reader's sensitivity to the way in which reporting is done. This seems to demand a mode of presentational cunning which is regrettably absent from most current work. . ."

[Ibid - p. 491]

An ironic display of the analyst's reflexive self-awareness, although largely undeveloped in this piece of work, can fruitfully help to elucidate the mercurial nature of accounting practices in general. However, potential hazards lay in the use of "presentational cunning" as Woolgar calls it. In the first place, the tone of this *genre* is often arch and affected, and in the second, a preoccupation with the sociologist's methods carries the risk that those of the institutional actors will proportionally recede into the background. To claim that one's own account is a

neutral and unreflexive vehicle for exhibiting the reflexivity in the accounts of others would be to deny the omniscience of reflexivity in all accounts. But to use the empirical site as just-another-occasion-for-examining-the-reflexivity-of-all-accounts transforms a celebration of reflexivity into self-congratulation; fruitful spirals into arid loopings of the loop.

A more fundamental and widely shared axis of ethnomethodological presentation resides in the verbatim reproduction of empirical material. This affords the opportunity to explore the basis upon which the analyst's train of reasoning rests. The precision of empirical presentation and exegesis is its characteristic trait. As Heritage says in the conclusion to his lucid study of Garfinkel and the ethnomethodological tradition:

“The research of the last thirty years or so has resulted in the creation of the sociological equivalent of the microscope. The use of this instrument is yielding glimpses of previously unimaginable levels of social organization in human conduct and it is clear that major findings at the molecular and sub-molecular levels of social structure are there to be made.”

The book ends with an invitation:

“The instrument has been built: the challenge is to start working with it.”
[J. Heritage (1984) - p.311]

I set out in this thesis to extend the workings of “the instrument” to the institutional domain of the community home. In particular it is adapted to elucidate the practical activities of social workers and teachers in their construction of an ordered environment of which objects, such as “problem kids” are an integral part. In this respect the study offers a modest contribution to the *Studies of Work* project initiated by Garfinkel.

iv) Degrees of Detail and Descriptive Dilemmas

It should be considered, however, that the microscope of which Heritage speaks can be adjusted to different levels of magnification which yield alternative types of result. The level at which the present study is pitched falls somewhere in between the classical ethnomethodological ethnographies on the one hand, and conversation analysis on the other. Cicourel and Wieder for example, as representatives of the former tradition, both rely more heavily than I upon

descriptive glossing.

Undoubtedly a classic of the *genre*, Cicourel's study of the organization of juvenile justice (1968) offers a fecundity of insights into the practices through which various agencies of social control such as the police, probation officers and court personnel, define delinquent behaviour. Cicourel has large fish to fry. Amongst his interests is the comparison of the systems of juvenile justice in two geographical areas. He is motivated to show how different organizational policies, and the priorities to which they give rise, filter through to the interactional "coal face" and frame the interpretative modes employed. Cicourel also demonstrates the ways in which official statistics on a social problem, such as juvenile delinquency, gloss the panoply of procedures through which professional practitioners define someone as being of a particular type, with particular characteristics.

Relative to most research methodologies, including those in the interactionist tradition, Cicourel's study is replete with detailed analysis of naturally occurring interactions. Its ambitious scope, however, inevitably entails the sacrifice of depth in the accommodation of such breadth. What fills the breach is the heavy reliance upon the kind of summary descriptions reminiscent of the conventional ethnographic mode.

Wieder (1974), by contrast, limits his research to one institutional domain: a halfway house for paroled drug offenders. In his grasp of the workings of the resident "code" Wieder's work offers a lucrative ethnographic resource from which the fundamental ramifications of reflexivity unfold. The central theme of the piece is how the inmate "code" which appeared to staff, residents and Wieder himself to undermine the rehabilitative ideal, was not an independent entity, as classical penological literature had it. Rather the code was a consequential part of the environment which in organizing it described. By invoking the maxims of the code residents could gather a collection of behavioural items under the auspices of a coherent range of motives. Through their orientation to the code, and their capacity to "tell" it, members of halfway house were in the business of constructing an organized environment conducive to practical intervention.

The beauty of Wieder's work lies in its simplicity. By isolating the workings of one interpretative schema he offers an elegant and powerful insight into the reflexive process in general. The feature which I consider lacking, however, is his failure to examine the precise empirical expressions of the code, in a sustained manner, on a sufficient variety of occasions. As

a consequence his analysis rather neglects a fuller appreciation of the unfolding of meaning *vis a vis* the code, and the practices through which its efficacy is realized in the course of its articulation.

Any style of ethnography, or investigative project of any kind for that matter, employs a level of descriptive glossing; a fact which testifies to the inevitable limitations of a reflexive style of research. It is hard to conceive of a study which does not assume at some level, for some of the time at least, that it straightforwardly represents an objective world outside of itself. Put in a language reminiscent of Woolgar's (1982), even reflexive ethnography always already entertains an instrumental orientation, and the most ardent discourse analyst steps outside of her radically reflexive stance on occasions to proffer descriptions which she treats unproblematically.

If the sociologist wishes to explore certain of the intricacies of institutional life in the context of the setting as a whole, a degree of descriptive filling in is a necessary prerequisite. Even if verbatim transcripts constitute the main source of data, as they do in this study, what is not so easily displayed is the institutional wherewithal that the sociologist acquires during the period of fieldwork and which guides her conception of what is interesting, worth transcribing, and, finally, selecting for inclusion in the research report.

The ideal of pure replication, as discussed above, is as impossible as it is undesirable. The *raison d'être* of any form of analysis is to do something with the material which inevitably alters its "natural" state. Clifford Geertz speaks of how:

"A piece of anthropological interpretation consists in: tracing the curves of social discourse; fixing it into an inspectable form."
[C. Geertz (1975) - p.19]

For:

"The ethnographer "inscribes" social discourse; he writes it down. In so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted."
[Ibid - p.19]

Similarly, the transcription of tape recorded talk into written text, however faithful,

transforms its nature. In according naturally occurring talk a permanence by dint of its inscription in written form one is recording, in Ricoeur's words, "not the event of speaking but the "said" of speaking" [Quoted in C. Geertz (1975) - p.19]. For, while the event of speaking is necessarily fleeting and contextually negotiable, the "said" of speaking, once transcribed, becomes the focus of analytic attention it would never command in its natural state, and is opened up to any number of potential re-interpretations. Hence the very "bottling" of talk through the process of recording and transcribing, an intervention which is necessary for analytical purposes, modifies the nature of the material.

Also, in the interests of practical dissemination and the requirements of academic presentation, discourse is also placed on a different spatial dimension. Naturally occurring talk is removed from its original temporal and spatial context and flattened onto the written page. It is not a case of claiming that either verbal or written language is inherently superior, only that a transcript of talk is not "the same" as the talk itself. Such accounts are always retrospective, and always convert original material into something else. This "contamination" is only a problem if one believes in principle that an unsullied account is possible.

The detailed analysis of transcribed talk lends a level of precision and homogeneity to events which are more dispersed and chaotic in their actual occurrence, and which far exceeds the attention which actors in everyday life would accord them. In this simple sense alone the analysis of data modifies its composition, and necessarily so. For just as a distancing perspective is required during the fieldwork, so too an analytical departure from the institutional framework and its sequential flow is necessary in the presentation of data. In both instances common sense preoccupations are displaced in order to elicit some of their key features.

Since descriptive simplification and analytical modification are unavoidable features of sociological accounts I am not advocating their eradication. What is in question is the degree and nature of their usage. A characteristic feature of ethnomethodology is its interest in accounts of all kinds. Raised to the status of topic, descriptive activities are scrutinized to see how they achieve the sense of an ordered reality. Atkinson and Drew's criticism of the ethnographic method [1979 - pages 22-33] is that the scrutiny accorded members' glossing activity is suspended when it comes to the sociologist's employment of similar descriptive devices. For they, too, are part of the scene they describe; they too must be indexically repaired in order to be meaningful to an audience who did not witness the events first-hand; they too are

concludable only for the practical purposes in hand.

Cicourel, Wieder and others such as Sudnow (1965), Bittner (1967), and Zimmerman (1969), undoubtedly attended to the data with a hitherto unprecedented appreciation of the discursive minutiae. But they each draw quite heavily upon their fieldwork experience as an unexplicated descriptive resource. The point, again, is not to eliminate the analyst's cultural competence; it cannot be done away with. What I aim for is a more thoroughly detailed and accurate presentation of the linguistic material upon which the analysis is based. This affords the reader the capacity for critical appraisal in assessing the plausibility of my own account.

What, however, constitutes detailed and accurate presentation is a moot point. The level of magnification and precision with which I transcribe and analyze the data would be unacceptable to many conversation analysts whose rigorous attention to the microscopic particles exceeds my intellectual requirements and theoretical interests. The issue is not one of how much effort the analyst is prepared to expend, but what form of discourse analysis she wishes to conduct. Conversation analysis has contributed a great deal to an understanding of the structural and sequential organization of conversation, but it is not the only way of conducting a form of discourse analysis broadly consonant with Garfinkel's methodological injunctions.

There is a case, what's more, for saying that the atomic and sub-atomic level at which conversation analysis is pitched obscures as much as it reveals. As Anna Wynne explains:

"This drive to pure replication through atomism (is) mistaken in that essence infinitely eludes any level of detail that has been achieved, because there are always in principle, beyond whatever is currently technically discernible, ever yet smaller particles that could be conceived - neutrinos that would lie beneath the quarks and charms. The revelatory power of this direction (is) delusory, because below a certain level of magnitude, the particles that could be discerned were no longer the 'same' object."
[A. Wynne (1986) - p.1]

The tendency to split the units of conversation into smaller particles evades certain of the conundrums so fundamental to early ethnomethodology, such as how actors are themselves able to link the fragment to a typificatory whole through the indexically and reflexively informed employment of the documentary method of interpretation. Such procedures are performed upon a discursive stage more inclusive than that upon which conversation analysis characteristically

operates.

Exponents of conversation analysis have tended not to be interested in the topic of conversation, or its conceptual content. For this reason they have long avoided institutionally circumscribed domains in their bid to avoid forms of talk which are in any way extraordinary. More recently work has been conducted by analysts such as Atkinson and Drew in specialist settings, especially the court room, in order to examine how participants employ and modify mundane conversational procedures. Nevertheless *what* is being said is still displaced in favour of *how* it is being said; a focus which renders a classically ethnographic style of research inappropriate.

Conclusion

To accord equal priority to the substantive *whats* and the procedural *hows* does not entail a reversion to ethnography of a more descriptive or naturalist kind. A reflexively infused ethnography entertains both a different form and style of analysis. It takes as its primary object the mundane methods which members' routinely employ to make sense of and organize their environment. Attention is thereby deflected from the theoretical and methodological prowess of the sociologist, to that of the ordinary actor in whose skill she shares.

B) The Fieldwork Process

Introduction

In many senses, some of which have been considered above, the task of the reflexive ethnographer is relatively distinct from that of her classical cousin. Yet, a number of the practical aspects of conducting ethnographic research are shared in common, such as the selection of an appropriate setting, the negotiation of access, the cultivation of a suitable fieldwork role, and the like. It is to these issues that I now turn.

i) Selecting an Appropriate Setting

If the process of anthropological alienation is the vital second stage of ethnographic research, that of cultural immersion is the first. Since organizational meanings are indexically tied to the circumstances of their production, and their production is bound up in myriad methods, it follows that the ethnographer must try to acquire an insider's knowledge. For, her research:

“is directed to the tasks of learning how members' actual, ordinary activities consist of methods to make practical actions, practical circumstances, common sense knowledge of social structures and practical sociological reasoning analyzable; and of discovering the formal properties of commonplace, practical common sense actions “from within” actual settings, as ongoing accomplishments of those settings.”
[H. Garfinkel (1967) - p.vii-viii]

The first phase of the fieldwork process was thus the choice of an institutional setting amenable to the intrusions of an observer. My choice of St. Nicholas' as a potential site was influenced by three factors. Firstly, I assumed in a general sense that the community home by its nature was an institution in which behavioural interpretation would be rife, and which would therefore be particularly conducive to the form of ethnomethodological analysis I wished to conduct. Since I was committed more to a methodological perspective than a substantive topic I had greater freedom in selecting a fieldwork setting suitable for my purposes.

Secondly, my selection of St. Nicholas' was influenced by a previous study I had conducted as an under-graduate [K. Lewis - 1979] which was based upon a five month work placement in a children's home. In my capacity as a residential social worker I chose to undertake an examination of the linguistic processes through which members of staff constructed the residents as children with emotional problems. During the course of this placement and in writing the report, I began to appreciate the powers of ethnomethodologically inclined ethnography to explicate the talk and practical reasoning through which institutional realities are constituted. I was thus keen to find a setting in which I might exploit the sensitizing experience afforded by this previous fieldwork project.

More significant in terms of the practical accessibility of St. Nicholas' was the position of my mother - Kate Lambert - within the institution as head of the education department. As an established and senior member of staff I knew she would facilitate my initial passage into

St. Nicholas' and that my relationship with her would alleviate the early suspicions by members of staff about me and my motives. I also assumed that initial doubt would be mitigated by my superficial acquaintanceship with a handful of the staff who I had met at social occasions over the years. My appearance on St. Nicholas' scene was not as a complete stranger, and my prior connections with members of the institution were instrumental in facilitating entry and promoting a sense of goodwill amongst the staff, though not unequivocally, as I consider on page 49-51 below.

ii) Negotiating Access

Kate originally presented my request for admission to the other two principal officers - Roger Carter and John Townsend - in August 1982, and they readily agreed. Before I embarked upon the fieldwork proper, however, I negotiated a trial period of two weeks to determine whether St. Nicholas would be a suitable research setting.

The timing of my entry to St. Nicholas' was strategically chosen to coincide with the beginning of the Autumn term in September 1982. The start of term was a natural juncture in institutional life, and my appearance, along with two or three new members of staff, was perhaps less striking than it might otherwise have been. On the first and last day of each half term a conference was held amongst the staff group as a whole. As my first appearance was at one such conference, it provided the occasion for Kate Lambert to introduce me to the staff group. She explained the purpose of my presence in the broadest terms, as a study of "interaction" and "assessment practices".

After the initial fortnight I decided St. Nicholas' was indeed a lucrative setting for ethnographic study. At this point I sent an official letter to the relevant local social services personnel requesting access to St. Nicholas' for a period of approximately a year to conduct social scientific research. This was duly granted with the proviso that I maintain confidentiality.

During the first phase of the fieldwork process I wanted to ease myself into the institution and begin to acquire pockets of knowledge about it. At the same time I hoped to ameliorate confusions and suspicions members had about my research and role within St. Nicholas', without being so specific as to foreclose the possibility of future developments. Throughout this early period many of the staff and boys initiated discussions about the nature

of my fieldwork and sought clarification with regard to it. To the staff I would stress my interest in the language and theories that *they* as a group used to interpret the boys' behaviour. I also hastened to add that unlike a great deal of sociology, the perspective I adopted treated their interpretative capacities as extremely skilled, and their knowledge something upon which I was not concerned to improve. To the boys I emphasized that I was writing a book about what life was *really* like in a community home, and how the staff *really* treated them; a description which they often assumed was tantamount to support for their cause. Their main source of concern seemed to be that their names and photographs would not be included in my forthcoming "book"!

iii) The Cultivation of a Suitable Fieldwork Role

This early phase of the fieldwork process is immensely important, though one is ill-equipped to reap the benefits of it. The ethnomethodological ethnographer struggles to acquire a knowledge of institutional culture, while attempting to bring to it an anthropological sensibility. The two principles of ethnographic exposition - cultural immersion and anthropological distanciation - are not discrete and temporally segregated phases but part of a dialectical process which is continually enacted throughout the course of one's fieldwork.

What is special about the initial period of fieldwork is one's heightened sensitivity to the institutional processes which often lose their clarity during the course of one's socialization. What is required is a delicate balancing act, as Hammersley and Atkinson say:

"In studying such settings the ethnographer is faced with the difficult task of rapidly acquiring the ability to act competently, which is not always easy even within familiar settings, while simultaneously privately struggling to suspend for analytic purposes precisely those assumptions that must be taken for granted in relations with participants."

[M. Hammersley and P. Atkinson (1983) - p.93]

The adoption of a wholly anthropological perspective would jeopardize the ethnographer's relationship with her subjects since it would require the suspension of a "normal" social orientation to them. As the ethnographer is dependent upon the indulgence of those she studies this would be a highly risky affair. Equally, the wholesale adoption of a member's criteria would blunt one's perceptiveness to the mundane assumptions upon which institutional realities are built. The way in which I managed the tension between familiarity and

strangeness for methodological purposes was two-fold. Firstly, my role of non-participation in the practical affairs of St. Nicholas' afforded me the luxury of being able to observe meetings of all kinds without having to contribute. I could thus adopt an anthropological ear without the attendant risk of social embarrassment. But even under these circumstances one's estrangement can only be sporadic and partial. It is much easier to slip into the familiar membership mode of engagement, even if this is just as a listening level. The suspension of familiarity takes the kind of effort which can only be sustained temporarily, as Becker says, it is like "pulling teeth" [Quoted in M. Hammersly and P. Atkinson (1983) - p. 32].

This is where the second tension management technique of tape recording is so essential. In the retrospective listening through and transcribing of tape recordings one is able to attend to the discursive processes in a way which would not be possible during the actual flow of talk. The rapidity with which communication gets done is incredible, as anyone who has ever undertaken detailed transcription will know. Discourse can only be analyzed in depth if placed in a different temporal dimension. By repeated attendance to the particulars, whether in audio or literary form once the talk has been transcribed, one can adopt something akin to a Martian perspective without the threat of interactional breakdown which accompanies the adoption of such a role in the field.

But before the researcher can get her hands (and recording machine) on the data she must establish a sufficiently trusting relationship with the members for them to grant her on-going and increasingly intimate access. My relationship with Kate Lambert was probably the most influential factor in this process. Not only did she sponsor my entry into the home, but continued to play a pivotal role in illuminating various features of institutional life. I was furnished with a desk in her office; a geographical position from which I was able to witness informal meetings, conversations and 'phone calls. Kate's willingness to share her knowledge and expose her working practices so candidly was undoubtedly born of our kinship. It is difficult to imagine an unknown researcher being given such immediate access, unless she was being asked to support a partisan line.

The trust afforded me by dint of my connections with Kate extended to the other two principal officers. In particular Roger Carter, the principal during most of my fieldwork, was extremely generous in his attitude toward me and my research which he treated unreservedly. His promotion of my fieldwork role, in collaboration with Kate Lambert, was immeasurably

beneficial in easing the transition from the state of outsider to marginal insider.

Although my relationship with Kate was predominantly beneficial, it did create certain problems of its own. In particular my apparent intimacy with her, and the principal officer's group in general, generated one or two pockets of suspicion about the objectivity of my research. This feeling emerged most flagrantly during my observations of unit 3 in the early part of 1983, as I explain in due course. Otherwise, my impression was that while it smoothed my access into St. Nicholas', the ramifications of my relationship with Kate became less significant for most of the staff as I became independently established.

The ethnographer inevitably has *some* effect upon the group she wishes to study which she may exploit to her advantage. One may, as I did on occasions, play the role of naive or "acceptable incompetent" as Lofland (1971) calls it, in order to elicit knowledge and, simultaneously, promote one's relationship with members of the organization by endowing them with expertise. Or again, one might adopt a sympathetic stance in order to encourage one's subjects to divulge more information, or ask a provocative question to get a reaction. In these ways, and many others, the ethnographer employs her panoply of social skills to enhance her understanding of the social group.

However, since the ethnographer wishes to study the institution as it typically operates, she will attempt to adopt a position within the setting which least disrupts the flow of everyday organizational business. This commitment prompts some researchers to play the role of participant observer whereby they literally become a member of the group in order to appreciate its workings wholly from within. Certain aspects of this intimacy are very appealing, but it also harbours limitations. As a *bona fide* member one's mobility and access are circumscribed by the limitations of one's role. For instance, if I had joined St. Nicholas' as a residential social worker, I could not have observed the array of meetings and the majority of case conferences: a) because I would not have been accorded the legitimacy and b) I would not have had the time. Also, the effort required to sustain a sense of anthropological distance as a fully fledged member would be infinitely greater.

As a non-participant observer I could infiltrate the range of groups and devote myself exclusively to the ethnographic task. The effect of my presence was initially more pronounced, however, as I did not fit into a predefined organizational role. The question is not whether the

observer has an effect, for this is inevitably the case, but whether that effect systematically alters the interactional dynamics of the group. In most institutional settings, the impact of the observer's presence is likely to diminish in relation to the amount of time she spends there. Participants could not stage-manage their appearance over the extended period of ethnographic involvement, which in my case lasted for over a year. Nor would they have had the motivation. If the researcher is reasonably discrete, as I attempted to be, she becomes part of the institutional furniture. In any case, pragmatic organizational concerns take overwhelming priority in the conduct of everyday life, in relation to which the observer's presence is of minimal significance.

Of course, one's non-participation in institutional affairs is never total. I did engage in social contact with the boys and staff, and would often be drawn into, or initiate discussions about aspects of institutional life, and other less specific topics. On rare occasions I was also called to participate in meetings, and even accorded a degree of expertise either as objective observer and/or sociologist. But my most prevalent role, particularly in more structured settings, was that of "pure" observer. Such lack of routine involvement was strategic in terms of the perspective I wished to adopt. It allowed me to maintain a certain balance between familiarity and strangeness and to attend to the talk with a largely analytical criterion in mind.

The ethnographer attempts to eek out a position in the group which is comfortable enough to pursue her research, though not so comfortable that it blunts her critical faculties. In the early phase of fieldwork, and to some degree throughout, the role of "acceptable incompetent" [J. Lofland - 1971] is a useful one. It allows the researcher to trade on her ignorance in order to seek clarification and to ask questions in a way which would be considered unacceptable if uttered by the established member. But no one *persona* is sufficient to sustain the ethnographer through the extended duration of her fieldwork. One can, for instance, play the role of the naive for some of the time, especially in the preliminary stages. But to embrace such an orientation beyond a certain point would jeopardize one's credence. Similarly, if one was impartial to the extent of never expressing sympathy for members' views, one would threaten the goodwill upon which research of this kind fundamentally relies.

I am not suggesting that the researcher become so embroiled in institutional politics that she becomes an affiliate of one particular group, or that she enthusiastically supports every group, or individual in its criticisms of others. As Rawlings says: "the ethnographer is neither

critic or champion, since to be either would involve getting in on the act, so to speak, and producing more of those arguments, accounts and descriptions, instead of examining their production" [B. Rawlings (1980) - p.1:13]. Least of all should one become involved in trading information between different groups, in spite of one's unique capacity to fertilize the institutional grape-vine in this way. Any short term kudos generated by such activity would be undermined by the long term diminution of trust resulting from the adoption of such a duplicitous role.

What I do question are the concepts of *total* non-participation and *absolute* impartiality. The ethnographer simply cannot render herself invisible even if this were desirable. She must negotiate an unpredictable path as nimbly as possible through the course of her fieldwork. However much the ethnographer struggles to project a *persona* which is favourable to her progress, she only has limited control. For, participants also project certain roles onto her. While I did establish a core identity as impartial observer, to which the majority of members subscribed for most of the time, other characterizations included (unacceptable) incompetent, expert, *confidante* and "mole". To offer three examples of the circumstances which gave rise to such typifications illustrates the divergent roles to which the fieldworker may be allocated.

One is most likely to blunder early on in the fieldwork before one is fully acquainted with institutional expectations. On one notable occasion about a month after I entered St. Nicholas' Paul Black, one of the residents of unit 3, asked me for a lift to the local police station to retrieve some tools which had previously been confiscated. Although Paul insisted that he found the tools in a derelict garage, and they had not been reported missing in the intervening period, the staff of unit 3 were convinced that the tools had been acquired illegally. They therefore refused to "collude" in Paul's dishonesty by providing him with a lift.

Unaware of the controversy I willingly agreed to Paul's courteous request, thinking that it was an opportunity to enhance my relationship with one of the residents. Upon my return I was approached by Philip Hooper - the team manager of unit 3 - who explained the circumstances and spoke of how both I and they had been "manipulated" by Paul who had cunningly "beaten the system". As an assumed victim of Paul's manipulative prowess I was able to maintain the status of incompetent. My *faux pas* was attributed to ignorance and gullibility rather than a motivated collusion with a resident in conscious defiance of the staff.

In another incident I was drawn into a heated debate which was being pursued in the

teachers' meeting. The discussion pivoted upon the question of whether it was acceptable to show selective X category films to the boys in the video lesson. The P.E. teacher - Alan Evans - argued that X rated films should not be shown to any children of fourteen and fifteen, least of all if they were emotionally disturbed and susceptible to suggestion, as he believed the boys of St. Nicholas' were. Alan sought my informed corroboration as a "sociologist" who would "know" about the media studies which demonstrate the negative effects of violence on the screen. Before I had formulated a contribution Nicola rejoined: "And Kim will also know that the link between what you see on the screen and how you respond is not straightforward. Otherwise we'd show our boys nice little stories about happy families all the time". Without uttering a word I was allocated to a position of support for each argument on the basis of my presumed expertise.

Having a cup of coffee with Alan and Judy after the meeting Alan asked me directly what my opinion about the topic was. With a tone of impartial pomposity I replied that I thought there were two issues to consider. Firstly, whether violence on the screen prompted increased levels of violence amongst spectators, or whether it was cathartic in expunging violent feelings through vicarious participation. Secondly, whether showing the boys violence which was meaningful (and often distasteful) within the context of a particular message was justifiable. Judy replied in morally indignant tones that she didn't think it was "that complicated". Rather, she continued, "it falls on me to control them in my classroom after they've seen a film like that". My academic pontification was, in one deft stroke, rendered irrelevant in relation to Judy's more pragmatic concerns.

Neither of the preceding characterizations had particularly negative connotations for my research. The following scenario was, however, more disruptive and potentially damaging. In early January 1983, I asked Philip Hooper if I might become more closely involved in unit 3 affairs in order to gain a better understanding of the internal workings of one of the living units. In addition to informal access to the unit, I also wanted to observe and ideally tape record staff meetings. After discussing the issue with his unit 3 colleagues Philip granted the access I had requested.

From the outset my experience of attending the unit 3 staff meetings was uncomfortable. This unease, I think, derived partly from the nature of the living units at St. Nicholas'. As intimate and semi-private groupings of boys and social workers, the presence of an outside

observer was more intrusive. Also, during this period the staff of unit 3 were having a great deal of trouble with the boy group, and there was a level of dissention about the most appropriate mode of response. Concern spilled beyond the boundaries of the unit, and the principal officers called a special meeting with the staff group to discuss the weaknesses and inconsistencies in their management of the boys' behaviour.

The sense of suspicion provoked by my presence in unit 3 should be viewed in the context of contemporary events. It was also during this episode that my relationship with Kate Lambert proved most problematic. As a harbinger of what was in store, Tina Wait greeted my entry to one of the unit staff meetings in late January with the words: "Ah - it's our little spy"; a characterization which the other members of staff nervously laughed off. However, within the month Philip Hooper asked me to withdraw from the unit, claiming that the staff needed to "reconstruct themselves" as a group, and the presence of an outsider would interfere with this process.

Although Philip denied that the reason for my expulsion derived primarily from my kinship with Kate, he did suggest that the staff group in unit 3 were traditionally suspicious of external forces, and that I was a convenient scapegoat for their anxieties about what was going on within the unit. More specifically, Philip explained, the staff were "threatened" by the principal officer group and their perceived tendency to intrude upon unit business. My connection with a member of that group thus served to fuel their paranoia.

The principal officers' response to this turn of events was unanimous. They collectively interpreted my expulsion as the manifestation of staff neuroticism and a slur both upon their professionalism and mine. When Kate reported Philip's claim that my ejection was in order for the group to "reconstruct" itself, Roger pronounced:

Roger: No that's rubbish. It's all part of the general paranoia and anxiety . . . what they think is that Kim might be reporting back to the P.O.'s meeting. And I didn't even know Kim was in unit 3. But when she's been so professionally ethical about her research it's annoying that they should think that.

Clearly, my assignment to a more Machiavellian role in the foregoing scenario had the negative result of cutting short my observation of unit 3. However, in the scheme of things, in

relation to the vast amount of data I did gather, my expulsion from the unit was of minimal importance, and *in itself* constituted an interesting piece of data which revealed certain features of institutional culture. Soon after this episode I was successful in my application to observe unit 4, an activity which continued until June 1983.

The examples quoted above bear witness to the researcher's inability to sustain a monolithic role over the lengthy period that ethnographic study endures. Although I did establish a core identity which prevailed throughout, a number of more peripheral characterizations did temporarily emerge. The question is not whether the ethnographer can be eliminated from the equation; she is part of the environment, and subject to the process of interpretation by others. It is more a case of the researcher doing what she can to minimize the disruptions to which her presence may give rise. In a more fundamental respect of course, the ethnographer is always a reflexive part of the scene she describes, since it is only by exercising her faculties of reasoning that she can make sense of it in the first place.

iv) Methods of Data Collection

The prolonged and relatively intensive nature of ethnographic enquiry at once serves to diminish the disruptive effects of the researcher's presence, and to promote her appreciation of the contextual emergence of meaning. It is against this backcloth of cultural immersion that any more specific method of data collection must be situated. For my particular methodological purposes, the tape recording of talk and the copying of text were essential additions to the everyday observations of St. Nicholas': firstly because note-taking cannot possibly yield such detailed and accurate descriptions; secondly, such methods of preservation afford the capacity to retrospectively scrutinize verbal and written discourse with a thoroughness one could never accomplish in the course of its natural flow. The sheer repetition and intensity of one's listening strengthens or displaces the embryonic patterns which develop during the fieldwork, and adds new strands to them. The capacity for such detailed analysis of the minutiae is the linch pin of reflexive analysis.

In spite of the importance I placed upon being able to tape record, I felt it was an issue too delicate to raise prior to my research, or as a condition of it. I therefore took the calculated risk of waiting for a month or so before broaching the subject within individual groups. The concept of being recorded can provoke a great deal of anxiety, which I attempted to allay by

stressing my observance of complete confidentiality, and by reiterating that my purpose was not to evaluate their professional effectiveness or linguistic eloquence. By the end of October 1982, I had been granted permission to record all teachers' meetings, principal officers' meetings, senior staff meetings and day conferences.

My requests to attend, and later to record case conferences, was negotiated on a different basis because they involved external participants, such as the field social worker, and members of the boy's family. As the social services were in *loco parentis* to the boys, I initially sent a standardized letter individually addressed to each of their field social workers asking for their permission to attend case conferences. Approximately two months later I sent a further letter asking permission to tape record, stressing the purely practical benefits of this measure. Drawing upon my knowledge of the organizational muddle of social services departments, I suggested in each of the consecutive letters that the field social worker should only reply if she objected to my presence, and that otherwise I would assume her silence was consent. I was only refused access completely by one field social worker who wrote back to Roger Carter saying that he thought the "stratagem" I had employed in my letter was "really quite artful", and that he would, "be obliged if you ensure that Kim Lewis does not attend the case conferences or reviews" of his client. In two other cases I was allowed to observe and make notes, but not to tape record. With these few exceptions I was granted permission to attend, and record, all case conferences; a decision which was ratified in all cases by the boy and his parents.

One of the objections to the use of a tape recorder *in situ* is that the participants' consciousness of it alters their behaviour. Certainly in the period immediately after its introduction, members of staff were more inclined to draw attention to the tape, usually in a humorous way. For instance, at the first teachers' meeting that I recorded, Judy Mallum asked at one point whether the tape was still on. When I said it was, Brian responded:

Brian: I'd like to totally agree with what everyone in the meeting has said.
(Laughs all round)

Peter: I think everyone in this place is wonderful - especially the senior staff. I think they do a marvellous job. I've rarely seen such qualities of leadership.

Brian: Particularly in the art department (in a stage whisper).

After the initial impact, the presence of the tape was only referred to on a handful of occasions when particularly controversial issues were being aired in meetings. Consider the following extract from a senior staff meeting in which a “hot” topic was being discussed. Thomas McKinney is addressing Roger Carter.

Thomas: Roger - why are you actually deliberately like - I mean is that bloody tape on? You are now coming in and you are playing a game again of undermining your own position to justify what you're doing.

Roger: I am not at all.

Thomas: Now listen to what I'm saying for a minute. I will tell you -

Roger: Haven't I said this time and time again - without that bloody thing on (referring to the tape recorder).

With the exception of such rare references, the disruptive effects of the tape recorder, like those of the observer, dwindle with time until they are eclipsed for all practical purposes.

Clearly not all aspects of institutional life are equally amenable to being recorded. While the more circumscribed arena of the meeting or case conference was eminently suitable, informal interactions were usually not. In these circumstances the presence of the recording machine would have been detrimentally intrusive and a breach of the rules of intimacy attendant upon more personal modes of exchange. On such occasions I had to rely upon retrospective note-taking or, more unusually, the covert recording of conversation. As I often carried the tape recorder around in my handbag, I was occasionally tempted to surreptitiously switch on in the course of an interesting informal discussion. Leaving aside the ethical objections to covert taping, in pragmatic terms the quality of the recordings procured thereby were usually sufficiently poor to be of little use.

The recording of naturally occurring talk, usually in the context of various meetings, was the most important source of data collection. The primary focus was thus upon the retrospective interpretation of the boys' behaviour in which staff were so actively engaged.

However this did not exhaust the methods upon which I drew. During the latter phase of fieldwork I employed my developing knowledge of institutional culture to interview the majority of staff and boys. The data gleaned thereby formed an interesting supplementary source of information, though insufficient in itself. My objection to an exclusive reliance upon interviews is not that the subject's version may be distorted or biased in a straightforward sense, or that they are not reflexive. One may of course treat interviews or personal accounts as situated accomplishments which are revealing in themselves. One only need consider Garfinkel's study of Agnes, the inter-sexed person [H. Garfinkel (1967) - pages 116-186] to recognize the scope of ethnomethodological analysis.

The problem with relying upon interviews as the main source of knowledge about an institutional setting is that participants simply cannot fully articulate the gamut of assumptions upon which their everyday organizational capacities are premised. As a taken for granted resource participants do not have the language through which to articulate their common sense methods of practical reasoning. This inability is nicely expressed in the following two extracts from interviews with members of staff. In the first piece, having formulated an answer to my question about what educational techniques she uses in the classroom, Nicola Hobbs continues:

Nicola: I mean - God no - it sounds so (.5) really stupid said like that. But (2.5) I don't know how - and quite frankly I'd be frightened to give an example becus I would think (.5) it - that would be exactly the thing that wouldn't - work again. You know it's (.5) not exactly magic - but it's closer to magic than anything . . . I-I do think anything - like that - is precarious and I - if I started analyzing it - I'd either do it in a self-congratulatory kind of way that would kill it dead - or else I would do it in a way that would - allow all the (.5) inherent - weaknesses (.5) to present themselves to me in such a way (laughs) that I probably would lose confidence in them at the time - you know. I think it's very, very unprofessional - unscientific in that area - but I think there's enough around it that's professional and scientific to carry just that bit.

Soon after, in answer to a question about how individual educational programmes are devised, Nicola says:

Nicola: This is terrible Kim - I'd no idea this was going to be so difficult. It's not just

the tape . . . it's the actual questions and actually trying to (.5) present something that's the - mush you live in - as a sort of -

Kim: Yer.

Nicola: train of thought - uh -

Kim: I think that's one of the dangers of interviews.

Or again, in my interview with Philip Hooper I ask him how he believes the work he does helps the boys?

Philip: To develop insight - into the areas of difficulty (1) in their life - and hopefully provide them with some sort of tool - to - be able to handle it.
(2)

Kim: Right - clear cut answer.

Philip: That's a - clear cut pat answer. But in a lot of ways quite meaningless. (Kim laughs). Well it is isn't it.

Kim: Yer . . . I think that's also a difficulty of doing interviews (.5) that - becus it's very difficult to do anything other than ask principled questions - you get principled answers.

And later:

Philip: I know what I mean - and you know what (.5) for you that thing means - that phrase - uhm - and you're quite comfortable with it - and you can take it on - and yes I mean . . . we'll come to a common agreement about it. Uhm (3.5) it just slips (.5) I dunno - I mean it-it slips out so easily - so neatly -

Kim: {Uhm.

{
Philip: {into place.

Kim: Well I-I - I'd be uh (.5) less interested in knowing (.5) whether (.5) that was (2) absolutely meaningful or not - than to ask - why it becomes - slips so easily out (.5) what - why you're able to answer so precisely - and so quickly a question like that.

As the latter comment suggests, the formulation of such stock in trade answers in itself displays the kind of recipe knowledge which practitioners employ; as long as it is situated in a context of observing how actors actually behave and formulate interpretations. I reiterate, the point is not to eliminate bias, but to embrace the indexical complexities through which ordinary sense is made.

Interviews conducted after a sustained period of ethnographic observation have the advantage that one has a better sense of what questions to ask, as well as an informed framework within which to interpret them. Although I did try to cover a similar range of questions with all members of the staff (and a different range with the boys), the interviewing process was largely unstructured and each one assumed a shape of its own. Most practitioners seemed to enjoy the opportunity to discuss their working philosophies and practices (a penchant which many identified as being characteristic of their profession) and the interviews lasted anything from one hour to three. Philip Hooper suggested I entitle the interview series the B.O.F. ("boring old fart") stakes and often enquired who was "winning". Some of the boys were more reticent, while others treated the interview as a confessional, or an opportunity to beef about the staff.

The culture of St. Nicholas' was not, of course, exclusively oral. The construction of written accounts was a routine feature of institutional business. The various types of documentation provided a fertile source of empirical material which elucidated at once the theories upon which practitioners at St. Nicholas' and related institutions drew, as well as the procedures through which they were galvanized into a coherent account. The case histories in particular revealed a wealth of discursive practices which I examine in depth in chapters 6 and 7. Other documents of interest included case conference reports, court reports, unit logs, incident reports, letters in and out of the institution, various working party reports and historical documents, all of which I had unrestricted access to. Luckily I was given permission to photo-copy as much of the

documentation as I chose, which I could then remove from the institution to examine at leisure.

v) Methods of Data Analysis

The analysis of data is not something one saves up until the fieldwork is over. The researcher already starts with a set of theoretical and methodological assumptions which predispose her to a particular perspective and style of analysis. Also, the researcher is constantly in the process of formulating concepts and identifying patterns whilst in amongst it all. Nor is this activity different *in principle* from that which any member undertakes, and unavoidably relies upon the same common sense procedures. What distinguishes the ethnographer's purpose from that of the *bona fide* participant is twofold: firstly the process of analysis is typically more self-conscious and deliberate; secondly, for the ethnomethodologically inclined ethnographer at least, the attempt is to partially and periodically suspend aspects of mundane reasoning in order to raise it to analytical visibility. In this process the reflexive researcher attempts to shed a layer of cultural skin.

During the course of fieldwork one's analytic attention tends to be progressively focused, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) put it. What may initially appear muddled and incomprehensible gradually assumes a developing sense of conceptual organization by dint of the ethnographer's analytical activity. One's explicit identification of recurrent themes, practices and procedures provides the cognitive conditions necessary for the *retrospective* reappraisal of the data and *prospective* orientation to discourse of a similar kind. Clearly one's capacity to accomplish such a hearing during the actual flow of interaction is circumscribed. The regular retrospective perusal of the tape recorded data during the on-going course of the fieldwork draws out features which would have been lost, and furnishes the analyst with a prospective orientation to discourse of a similar kind. This, in turn, may help elaborate a more sophisticated appreciation of earlier examples of the same type of talk, and so on.

For example, after a period of fieldwork I began to disentangle three recurrent tendencies in the way members of staff typified the boys' behaviour which I glossed as normalization, criminalization and pathologization (see chapter 4). Although I had been developing a sense of these three interpretative tendencies for some time, their categorization as such allowed me to reinterpret earlier, and "hear" later material as documentary manifestations of them. What's more, once I had defined these processes, I began to identify a range of

contextual complexities in their articulation. For instance, characterizations of this kind often seemed to have a dominant and recessive theme, so that while an account may have had predominantly pathologizing overtones, it might also have a normalizing sub-text. In this sense, “it is frequently only over the course of the research that one discovers what the research is really ‘about’” [Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) - p.175], at least at the substantive level.

The inscription of these emergent patterns, ideas and theories in written form (in my case in an “ideas file”) was important in lending them clarity and prominence, albeit they amenable to modification at a later point. In forcing one to articulate implicit and half formed conceptions it also provides the space for a reflexive appreciation. This anthropological stance involves asking rather simple questions of the data. What background or implicit knowledge informs the speaker/ writer; what knowledge is presupposed by the reader/hearer. Similar reductions in levels of cultural competence invite the analyst to pose questions about the procedures operative in shaping an account, and predisposing the recipients to a particular reception of it. A growing sensitivity to the *leitmotifs* of institutional life are thus orchestrated in the course of one’s fieldwork. I had already tentatively formulated many of the themes which were finally selected for inclusion in the thesis prior to my departure from the field.

However, for the ethnographer intent upon the detailed exploration of members’ accounting practices, a thorough retrospective review of the data is essential. It is at this point that the in-depth analysis begins; one simply does not have the time or energy while preoccupied with the demands of fieldwork. With a burgeoning amalgam of themes in mind I listened through to all three hundred and fifty hours of tape, which included the interviews, and read through the thousands of pages of photocopied text, composed mainly of case histories. In the process I categorized and transcribed every segment of talk or text of potential interest according to the thematic content or the procedural mechanisms of its accomplishment. As I addressed the empirical material in this way, the embryonic concepts and patterns which had emerged during the fieldwork began to develop, diversify, coalesce and link up in a variety of ways.

The procedure I employed to sift through the data in this way was akin to the “constant comparative method” described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). As I went through the data I created a new category whenever a piece of discourse could not be accommodated within a pre-existing one. I also allocated some segments to multiple categories. When I had concluded

my perusal of all the data, the list of categories generated amounted to over two hundred. The procedures through which I identified repetitions, permutations, associations and differences in the material would itself have represented a fascinating topic for reflexive analysis. The analytical process through which typification is accomplished is shared by the sociologist and “lay” member, even if the object of the sociologist’s typification is precisely the methods through which members themselves typify the environment.

As the taxonomic process continued, wider thematic typologies began to appear to me, under whose rubric many of the individual categories fell. In reorganizing the two hundred plus categories in relation to these generic classifications I constructed about a dozen or so major groupings, and a number of minor ones. It was at this point that I returned to the empirical material, reconsidering all of the extracts in relation to the newly defined and more encompassing categories. In examining each group of extracts which I had identified as belonging together, I began to appreciate the subtleties and complexities of each internal grouping. At this point a third re-grouping occurred which did not so much change the categorical boundaries as the sub-divisions within them. This process of diversification and refinement occurred repeatedly in the continued dialogue between the analytical categories and the empirical data. In this mutual elaboration a productive relationship is set up between members’ analytical categories and those of the sociologist. Neither one is sufficient in itself - as I consider on pages 26-27 and 38-40 - since it is only by doing something with (and therefore to) the data that one can get an adequate handle on mundane institutional practices.

While this method of data collection and analysis is immensely rich, it is also painfully time-consuming and labour intensive. Yet, the transcription of the tape recordings was not an activity whose burden could be shared, even if I had had the financial resources, since the attention required by it is an excellent way of concentrating upon the unfolding minutiae. A related difficulty with recording and transcribing extensively is that it generates a phenomenal amount of data - literally thousands of pages of transcript - from which one then has to select. This problem of selectivity is compounded by the methodological injunction to examine the intricacies of discourse, not only for what it says, but what it does.

vi) The Presentation of Data

While reflexive ethnography is of great value, it brings with it a portfolio of methodological horrors. In response to these, reflexive ethnographies may appear rather piecemeal, even stark. The analyst selects from the vast expanse of potential data a few recurrent themes. She then subjects them to excruciatingly or exquisitely detailed analysis, depending on one's perspective. If one wishes to perform such a dense and textured mode of analysis, one simply cannot cover very much material. It is because of this dilemma, I suggest, that so many students of discourse shy away from the muddle and scope of ethnographic enquiry. It is much neater, and less demanding to study circumscribed pieces of discourse, like individual snippets of conversation, texts, photographs, or whatever.

Conventional ethnographers classically manage the conundrums of choice by generating purportedly comprehensive descriptions of the social group. The only way they can create this illusion of completeness is by glossing over the methods and theories through which members account for their environment, and prioritizing the analyst's version. The recognition of reflexivity, by contrast, alerts one to the essential incompleteness of *all* accounts: there are always gaps in the filigree of institutional threads.

For the ethnographer committed to detailed linguistic analysis, an alternative is to concentrate predominantly upon a few extended pieces of data, which are then given the right royal treatment (B. Rawlings - 1980, T. Walker - 1986). Although this option is very attractive as a simple solution to an intractable problem, it did not satisfy my purposes which were to elucidate and display various aspects of commonplace institutional reasoning.

My criteria of selection were thus based upon what was recurrent and typical, apparently important to participants, and interesting to me *at the time*. To do the empirical material justice I selected just five of the major categories around which I organized the empirical chapters. In narrowing the focus so radically I had to exclude vast amounts of data; a process which was excruciatingly painful.

A further methodological dilemma resulted from the dual focus of my analysis. On the one hand I was interested in the social knowledge and typifying schemata to which members orientated in making sense of their environment. On the other hand an equally compelling

concern was to study the range of scenic methods which members often unconsciously utilized in the second by second production of talk, and word by word production of text. Without each component of discourse the other could not exist: they work hand-in-hand in the active accomplishment of sense. At certain points in the thesis I concentrate on *either* the knowledge or the methods; at other points I consider the interweave between the two.

Another feature which serves to differentiate between alternative modes of ethnography is the way in which the ethnographer writes herself into the text, although I do not play the reflexive game to its full potential by any means. In the present text I appear primarily as an analytical voice which attempts, through the examination of empirical material, to make sense of members' methods of making sense. But my voice is not disembodied any more than that of the institutional member. The only way I can accomplish such a reading is by exploiting my common sense wisdom, while at the same time constructing it as an object of scrutiny. That another voice could be interpolated whose purpose is to elucidate the methods which I - the ethnographer cum author - employed to make sense of members' methods of making sense in no way invalidates the exercise. It is because ethnomethods are an integral feature of all forms of practical reasoning that they warrant such serious attention.

Conclusion

In this chapter I offered an appraisal of some of the more significant theoretical and methodological aspects of my research. I started with an account of the nature of institutional order and the procedures of typification to which it is reflexively bound. I spoke of how the aim of this research was to "interrupt" the documentary dynamic in order to appreciate the mechanisms of its production. Because these procedures are part of our common sense knowledge it requires an anthropological effort to raise them to visibility. The analyst so engaged must strike a balance between cultural immersion and anthropological alienation: a tension which is productive for methodological purposes.

The ethnomethodological ethnographer's object and mode of analysis thus tends to differ from her more conventionally disposed cousin, not least in her attention to the empirical details. But there are disagreements within the ethnomethodological school as to the legitimate level of descriptive glossing. While this thesis offers more empirical substantiation than was characteristic of the classical ethnographies in the ethnomethodological *genre*, it does not offer

the degree of detail provided by conversation analysts'. The appropriate level of detail depends upon the kind of discourse analysis one wishes to conduct. What is more, an element of descriptive glossing is inevitable, however attentive one is to the minutiae. This methodological irony may just as well be acknowledged as swept under the carpet.

In the second part of the chapter I attempted to open up a dialogue between the more abstract insights proffered in the preceding section, and the actual fieldwork process. Before the reflexively inclined ethnographer can bring her perspective into play, she must first negotiate a series of processes. The choice of a conducive fieldwork setting, the negotiation of access, the adoption of an appropriate set of roles are amongst the activities she shares with the conventionally inclined ethnographer.

Beyond this bond of communality the ethnographer's conduct within the field and her treatment of the data will depend upon her grander scheme. For instance, the methodological injunction to make the ordinary anthropologically strange must be practically managed during the course of data collection and analysis. I achieved a partial suspension of my common sense orientation to the world: a) by adopting the role of non-participant observer which allowed me to extricate myself from pragmatic involvement; b) by tape recording a great deal of data which I could then scrutinize in a more detached way. The broader attempt to convert common sense reasoning in to the analytical object thus influenced the methods I employed at the "grass roots".

From an ethnomethodological perspective, theory, methodology and method are not discrete entities. For this reason it is difficult to write an introduction which crisply conforms to conventional divisions. What I sought to show was how theory and methodology dovetail, and together influence the fieldwork process. At the same time the ethnomethodologist refuses to entertain a radical distinction between "lay" and "sociological" theories and methods. This communality renders an anthropological approach to common sense reasoning as necessary as it is demanding. An extraordinary effort has to be made to see what is under our noses: a perspective which makes the fruits of ethnomethodological research look in many respects distinct from those of conventional sociology.

The ethnomethodologist characteristically ends where others take off. Thus, if my thesis starts from the institutional reality of "problem children", the remainder of the enterprise is dedicated to a retrieval of the methods through which that "fact" is socially constructed.

Before embarking upon this project let me offer a substantive description of the institutional history and setting.

CHAPTER TWO THE HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

A) An Historical Overview

Introduction

As the following chapters empirically display, I consider the accomplishment of institutional order to be bound up in the language and modes of practical reasoning which members routinely employ. Such practices do not, however, evolve wholly from within the institutional domain by an act of collective voluntarism. Institutional practitioners are primarily part of the wider culture, and are informed by the common sense knowledge germane to it. They do not suspend this plethora of assumptions when they step over the institutional threshold. In this fundamental sense, wider society seeps into the daily working practices of organizational and occupational groups.

In a more specific sense, institutions are enmeshed within a configuration of social circumstances which help define the constraints within which members operate. Some of the core socio-historical processes relevant to the emergence of the community home will be considered below, thus providing a framework for those unfamiliar with the details. My main purpose is to trace the development of a welfare-orientated therapeutic approach to the institutional care of young deviants, since it is this which influenced the working methods of practitioners at St. Nicholas'. As a preliminary however I would like to qualify my understanding of the status of such material, and in so doing to challenge the classical sociological distinctions between the internal and external, the micro and macro.

Firstly, while institutional ideologies and practices are not generated entirely *in situ*, neither are they *determined* by external factors. Whether a more nebulous social influence, or a concrete one, like a statute, institutional actors must engage with the "official rubric" so that it may be "translated into practical actions" [Dingwall et al (1983) - p.20]. External factors provide the *necessary* conditions of institutional existence by furnishing the broad objectives and affording it legitimacy. But such conditions are not *sufficient*. Any set of principles, objectives or rules must be interpreted in relation to a particular configuration of empirical circumstances.

The problem with determinist theories which reduce institutions to the status of a “black box” buffeted by elemental social forces is that they are based upon the model of:

“a social world which simply could not work, or at least could only work in a very different world to the one in which most of us live. Thus, were it the case that descriptions and explanations of social order and particular social phenomena could indeed be arrived at, and empirically validated independent of the setting in which they are used, then there would presumably be not only a much greater degree of certainty in human affairs than appears to be the case, but also little scope for originality, diversity, innovation, conflict, or social change.”

[M. Atkinson and P. Drew (1979) - p.19]

Even statutes and organizational charters which are precisely drafted to minimize ambiguity could never specify the range of empirical applications because, quite simply, the permutations are infinite.

A productive way of exploring the inevitable inter-relationship between external influences, and their internal application may be achieved by deflecting attention on to how members themselves routinely forge such a link. In the process of constructing an environment of normal appearances members interpret objects and events as “instances of” a more general pattern. In this process specific local items are plugged into a ghost schemata of typifications (see pages 25-31). In institutions which have an established framework of accounting, especially bureaucracies, items are routinely accorded significance in relation to the organizational criteria of relevance. As Cicourel says:

“Everyday settings, therefore, abound with highly organized ways of dealing with and producing macro-evaluations, reports, and summarizations of relentless micro-events. There are many ways in which everyday micro-events are evaluated and/or reported and/or summarized. In each case the activities are routine aspects of some organization and are independent of the way social scientists design and carry out their research . . . Organizations have developed methods for resolving complex problems of evaluation, reporting, and summarization that constitute natural experimental settings for the social scientist interested in micro-macro integration. These everyday settings demand assessment as a routine part of achieving and evaluating organizational goals.”

[A. Cicourel (1981) - p.66].

It should also be noted that the social forces which help define the space within which institutional actors perform are not themselves free-floating entities, or processes. They too are

accomplished through the talk and practical reasoning which practitioners in a variety of settings employ. A piece of legislation, for instance, is the result of pockets of public discourse of which official committees are but one, albeit influential source. What is of interest, from this perspective, are the procedures through which laws are objectified in the process of their inscription and application.

For these reasons, amongst others, a degree of circumspection is recommended in considering the following historical gloss. The latter, nonetheless, provides a useful means of tracing the broad changes in institutional approaches to “problem children”, and the development of a quasi-therapeutic approach enshrined in the community home system. The emergence of the community home was bound up in changing social constructions of the young offender, and the legislation to which these gave rise. The 1969 *Children and Young Persons Act* which brought the community home into being was the statutory culmination of a welfare orientation to juvenile deviance. The Act represented an attempt to decriminalize all but the most extreme and recalcitrant of deviants and, concomitantly, to increase the provision for care and treatment rather than punishment. It thus sought a realignment of power between agents of law and order, especially the magistracy and police, and those of care and welfare, in particular social workers.

It would be simplistic to trace a unilinear development toward the more therapeutic approach which gained currency in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. As Collison says:

“the categories of guilt and need have a long history of conflation and difference in discourses of punishment/treatment . . . This dualism appears under a number of rubrics: need/guilt, responsibility/non-responsibility, custodial/therapeutic, welfarism/legalism, prevention/deterrence and so on.”
[M. Collison (1980) - p. 154]

The welfare orientation did, however, enjoy a tangible expansion of influence which may be traced through a series of historical processes.

i) The Segregation of Children as Legal Objects

During the nineteenth century children were increasingly identified as a special category who fell within the jurisdiction of the law. Their separation from adults was based upon the emergent conception of children as a vulnerable group whose physical and moral welfare

must be guarded. The child protection legislation was one manifestation of this view, as was the emergent socio-legal response to young deviants which tended to identify them as a group who were susceptible to degeneration, and amenable to reformation through segregation. Until the mid-nineteenth century the young offender, at least from the age of seven, was dealt with alongside mature criminals. In the second half of the century a two-fold system emerged encompassing the industrial school and reformatory.

The emergence of separate institutional provisions for the young deviant was partly premised upon their assumed vulnerability to moral contagion from adult offenders. The same rationale informed the institutional separation between the industrial school and reformatory. The former dealt with a variety of deviant categories from the vagrant, to the child whose involvement on the margins of criminal activity was seen to constitute a moral risk. The reformatory tended to deal more specifically with the convicted offender. Both of these institutions were voluntary, and adopted similar working philosophies. The object was not predominantly to punish, although it may appear so from a modern perspective, but to resocialize through the discipline of hard work.

Up until the first decade of this century the criminal court was responsible for disposing of the child who came before it. By an Act of 1908, a separate jurisdiction for children was created in England and Wales in the form of a juvenile court. Recognition of the need for a special legal arena for children in trouble constituted an important signpost in the history of their segregation from the population of adult offenders. From the outset the juvenile court embodied a joint affiliation to the protocol of criminal due process married to a concern for the child's welfare. As Priestly et al say, the juvenile court:

“defined a jurisdiction within which the criminal law still ran in its entirety but within which the full impact of judicial proceedings on the individual offender was subject to considerable mitigation.”
[P. Priestly et al (1977) - p.3]

In this process:

“the courts themselves emerged as a species of welfare agency in their own right; ministering to the age entities they had captured in the net of ‘moral quarantine’.”
[Ibid - p.5]

ii) The Conflation of the Troubled and Troublesome

The judicial segregation of juvenile deviants from adult offenders rendered problematic the issue of their criminal responsibility, and opened the conceptual space for reinterpretation of their status. The categorical fusion between children in need and young offenders has been a persistent feature of discourses on child care. As Morris et al say:

“The expansion of the child care service in the twentieth century and the development of preventive social work both served further to consolidate children in trouble into a single conceptual category: the deprived and depraved were one and the same. Couched in the language of ‘welfare’ and supported by an army of professionals, attention was continually diverted from what children *do* to what children *are* . . .”

[A. Morris et al (1980) - p.7]

[Emphasis in the original]

Reformers have repeatedly attempted to persuade government and legal agencies of the wisdom of bringing the young offender under:

“the umbrella of neglect and deprivation, where they might be sheltered from the ill-wind of public reprobation.”

[P. Priestly et al (1977) - p.5]

This perspective was not confined to the periphery. Government committees throughout this century have also recognized a similarity between children who have broken the law, and those deprived of the resources assumed necessary for healthy physical and emotional development.

In the 1940's the Curtis Committee recognized a fundamental convergence between the two categories, and advocated a unified statutory service to cater for the child “deprived of a normal home life” in the words of the Committee. The Curtis Report formulated a series of recommendations of which the *Childrens Act* of 1948 was the legislative fruit. Details of this Act are briefly considered on page 69-70 below. For the moment the point is to recognize the attempted dissolution of conceptual boundaries between types of children in trouble. This thrust gained greatest momentum in the 1960's in two White Papers entitled *The Child, Family and Young Offender* (1965) and *Children in Trouble* (1968) which advocated a decriminalizing response to all but the most extreme offenders who appeared before the juvenile bench. The

concept of need thus gained primacy over that of criminal responsibility, at least within the terms of the 1969 Act.

Despite the popularity and influence of conflationist theories, a distinction between types of juvenile offender has been maintained in principle and in institutional practice. The conceptual dynamics of this mode of differentiation hangs upon the question of moral responsibility. While an act of delinquency *may*, from this dualistic perspective, be conceived as the manifestation of a child's deprivation and/or disturbance, it is not *necessarily* so. The examination of the deviant's underlying motivation is thus considered a necessary process in eliciting the meaning of his deviant behaviour.

The distinction between the deprived and depraved and between what Morris et al call the acceptably and unacceptably deprived (1980 - p.28) is apparent in the range of institutional provisions for children in trouble. Thus detention centres and borstals continued to exist, alongside more welfare orientated institutions, despite the efforts of those who drafted the 1969 Act to minimize the punitive response to juvenile offending.

The historical movement toward the conflation of problem children and children with problems has not, then, resulted in the complete abolition of boundaries. In spite of the maintenance of conceptual distinctions, there has been a process of convergence in the middle ground. It is from this domain that the community home population is drawn; a group of adolescents who are at once defined as deviant *and* disturbed.

iii) The Systematization of Services and Emergence of a Family Focus

During the Post War period there has been a gradual systematization of provisions for children "deprived of a normal home life" as the *Children Act* of 1948 defined them. This piece of legislation formed part of the architecture of the welfare state and was founded upon the Curtis Committee report. Prior to the 1948 Act services for children - whether deviant, disturbed or abandoned - were administered by voluntary organizations with no substantial coordination or cooperation between the different institutional branches.

The Curtis Report advocated the erection of a simplified and unified network of provisions under the auspices of a centralized government department: namely the Home Office.

A system of accountability was enstated which sought to ensure minimal standards amongst residential institutions. The Committee recommended that responsibility be allocated to a Childrens' Department dedicated to the administration and overview of the system.

The systematization was also at an ideological level, since the 1948 Act proffered a more child-centred orientation which aimed to minimize the intervention of the state. It specified that children should be brought into care only where strictly necessary, and for the minimal length of time. Although these provisos derived from an appreciation of the importance of the family, the focus was primarily upon the child, and the orchestration of a Childrens' Department to meet his or her needs in relative isolation from the family.

The prevailing tendency of public discourse since Curtis has been to locate the "problem child" within the wider familial context which is thereby opened up to scrutiny. As Donzelot so powerfully illustrates in his seminal work, *The Policing of Families* (1980), the family is a social entity which is constituted through the range of practices which come to bear on it. These practices operate with a range of cognitive and moral assumptions about what the family *is* and what it *should* be.

One of the primary responsibilities with which parents in our society are charged is the upbringing of their offspring. What constitutes an adequate up-bringing is a complex social issue which varies from agency to agency relative to the purposes in hand. What is significant in the present context is how the private domain of family life becomes a public issue when deviance spills out into the wider social arena. The display of deviance or disturbance by children is thus treated as an occasion for examining the workings of the family as a whole in an attempt to locate the problems or pathologies which give rise to such symptoms. This mode of scrutiny is validated through the discourse of welfare; the administration of what is "best" for the family and/or the child.

Since the "problem child" was most likely to be referred to a field social worker, it was she who was considered best placed to undertake family assessment. So it was that the family was increasingly opened up to the statutory gaze. As Collison says:

"While the family has been the effective location of coercive and didactic institutional practices since the nineteenth century, the major movement

since Curtis has been for the state to take over directly what previously had been the terrain of private philanthropy. The demand for systematized strategies for the family created the space for the development of a service that could claim privilege in arbitrating between the various knowledges that impinged on the family. Social work has developed a particular knowledgeable discourse about the nature of social problems. This knowledge is eclectic, in that it seeks to appropriate (speak for) all the knowledges previously brought to bear on the family (sociological, psychological, medical, fiscal, moral).”

[M. Collison (1980) - pages 160-161]

The kind of knowledge in which social workers claimed expertise was in relation to the *needs* of families. Just as young deviants underwent a process of decriminalization, so too were their parents constructed as potential victims whose lack of parenting skills was bequeathed by dint of their own familial past. The mode of discursive reasoning which developed in relation to families was, in a word, welfarist; designed to elicit the underlying disturbance which gives rise to the symptom of deviance in its children.

Accompanying the emergence of a family focus, the principle of organizational unification shifted away from the Childrens' Departments of the 1948 Act. While the family reorientation was not wholly decisive, it was the dominant *motif* in the public committees which informed child welfare legislation throughout the 1960's. For instance, the Ingleby Committee Report of 1960 spoke of the "situation and relationships" within the family being responsible for deviance amongst its offspring, and advocated preventive work with families to reduce the likelihood of the child entering care.

In the two White Papers published in 1965 and 1968 entitled *The Child Family and Young Offender* and *Children in Trouble* respectively, the Longford Committee echoed a similar theory of causation. The first, and most radical of the two papers proposed the abolition of the juvenile court and the creation of a coherent family service with a therapeutically inclined family court at its hub. The paper met with a storm of protest from the magistracy and probation service. The second White Paper of 1968 appeared as an attempted compromise designed to ameliorate criticism and facilitate the passage of legislation. The 1969 Act did legislate in favour of the unification of practices centering upon the family. It did not, however, fulfil the promise of a non-judicial family service in England and Wales, despite the statutory provision of such a service in Scotland.

Another development in the formulation of a coherent policy was occurring simultaneously. The Seebohm Committee was set up in 1965 to review the array of personal social services with view to their possible integration. The Committee identified a level of fragmentation and duplication in the existing services, and recommended the creation of a local authority department to coordinate the amalgam of services relating to the family. The *Local Authorities Social Services Act* - based on Seebohm's proposals - was passed on the same day as the *Children and Young Persons Act* of 1969, and was, according to Burchell:

“the culmination of the movement towards the organization of the various social services, which have evolved separately and autonomously into a unified and comprehensive ‘family service’.”

[G. Burchell (1979) - p.130]

In spite of the emergent family orientation, the legislators of the 1969 Act recognized the continued need for a residential provision for children whose behaviour was not criminally extreme enough to be incarcerated in more punitive institutions such as borstal or detention centre, but who were nonetheless considered out of the control of their parents.

Notwithstanding this policy of removing certain children from their families, what was evident in verbal and written accounts to emerge from St. Nicholas' and related institutions was how the boys' deviant behaviour and their problems were so often formulated in relation to their family background; a tendency borne out by the empirical material throughout. While the emotional origins of a child's deviance were situated within the emotional context of his family history, the therapeutic focus of St. Nicholas' was largely upon the individual child who was charged with ultimate responsibility for coming to terms with the damaging circumstances which were, originally, out of his control.

iv) The 1969 *Children and Young Persons Act*: The Growth of Social Work Knowledge and Power - and its Limits

The burgeoning of a welfarist approach to the young deviant brought with it a concomitant growth in the power of social workers both to define “the problem” and devise appropriate modes of dealing with it. This expansion of the social work jurisdiction was based upon a professional claim to a body of social and psychological expertise, and practical experience in the management of deviance. It was matched, at the same time, with a diminution

of power amongst those groups who advocated a more punitive approach to deviant behaviour amongst the young.

The 1969 Act advocated a realignment of forces within the field of juvenile justice. It promoted the powers of the field social worker at each stage of the judicial process, and demoted those of other personnel involved, such as police, probation officers and magistrates. The ascendance of welfarism and social work expertise fuelled the drive toward the decriminalization of delinquent behaviour by subsuming it under the generic umbrella of need. The 1969 Act thus restricted the use of criminal proceedings for children under fourteen who, it stated, could only appear before the bench where there was evidence of neglect. The Act also minimized the circumstances in which children of fourteen to seventeen could be subjected to the processes of criminal law.

A process of pre-court sifting was recommended by the Act to filter as many children as possible out of the judicial system. This task was jointly allocated to police and social workers in negotiation with each other. Such discretion with regard to prosecution had previously been the exclusive domain of police work.

The 1969 Act thus sought to divert as many children as possible away from the juvenile court, and for those who did appear the horizon of social work discretion was much expanded. Prior to appearance, for example, the field social worker was given authority, alongside probation officers, to compile the social enquiry report. The nature of social work input in this respect manifested itself in the therapeutic tone of such reports which tend to situate the child's deviance within the anterior framework of his historical and emotional disturbance. Social enquiry reports and other such documents do not, of course, determine the magistrate's understanding of the case, and may indeed provoke resistance to the view which they enshrine. They are nonetheless of some import as they furnish the magistrate with the primary source of information about the child and his background.

A more tangible sense in which the 1969 Act curtailed the powers of the magistracy was in restricting their non-criminal disposals to the supervision order or care order. Hitherto, they were able to specify the institution to which a child should go under the approved school order. In 1969 social workers were allocated the authority to implement the orders in relation to their knowledge of a particular case. Responsibility for the child was thus placed in the hands

of the social services rather than the institution as such. This entailed, in the words of Dingwall:

“transfer (of) all the powers and duties of a child’s parents to the local authority for an indefinite period, terminating on the child’s eighteenth birthday. The authority has almost entirely unfettered discretion over its management and placement of the child.”

[R. Dingwall et al (1983) - p.10]

The 1969 Act set out the diverse criteria which must be met in order for the magistrate to grant a care order. These include: the existence of conditions in which the child’s physical and emotional development is demonstrably being impaired or neglected or he/she is living in a household where there is a risk of this; where the child is perceived to be in moral danger; he/she is beyond parental control; a persistent truant or guilty of the commission of a criminal offence, excluding homicide.

The new residential provision created in 1969 to meet the need of children whose circumstances embraced the last three conditions was the community home with education on the premises. The adolescents referred to community homes, including St. Nicholas’, were thus considered to be at once deviant in some specifiable way, *and* disturbed. The latter was not a sufficient reason in itself to justify the child’s referral to such an institution. Children who would previously have been sent to an approved school for correction were, from 1969 onward, referred to a community home where a rehabilitative ideal prevailed. Alongside this ideological shift of emphasis, government responsibility for the community home passed from the Home Office to the newly created Social Services Department.

The Limits of the 1969 Act

It is well documented how, in considering the success of the 1969 Act, one must distinguish between the principles it embodied, and the limits of its practical application. The thoroughgoing decriminalization of the under fourteen age group did not occur, nor the pre-court negotiation between police and social workers. What is more, punitive custodial provisions for convicted offenders, such as detention centre and borstal, were maintained alongside more therapeutically inclined institutions like the community home.

The 1969 Act did, nonetheless, constitute an advance in the discourse of welfarism,

and social workers did enjoy a tangible expansion of power, especially in relation to the interpretation of supervision and care orders and the expansion of their residential role. However, the construction of a homogeneous category of need advocated by Committees from Curtis through Ingleby to Longford, was not realized. This was undoubtedly partly due to the failure of the incoming Conservative Government of 1970 to implement the more radical sections of the Act.

The 1969 Act was also a microcosm of the wider tension between the discourses of welfare and those of law and order. In particular, a contradiction lay in the attempt to place a heart of welfare in a judicial body. For a legal criterion to retain any meaning, the concept of moral responsibility must remain a central issue in the determination of an appropriate disposal. From a therapeutic perspective, the deviant's responsibility is very often mitigated by his disturbed emotional history. Thus, legal and therapeutic modes of reasoning tend to strain in different directions.

A number of negative consequences have been seen to flow from the scrolls of the 1969 Act and the contradictions it enshrined. The "law and order" lobby, represented by the magistracy for instance, believed it went too far in challenging the doctrine of individual responsibility. From the perspective of the welfare lobby, especially social workers, the piecemeal implementation of the Act compromised the ideals upon which it was founded, and threatened to reinstate the damaging dichotomies it was designed to foil. An alternative approach is articulated by the Justice for Children group, composed of academics and lawyers, who argue that:

"in rushing to embrace need as an orchestrating category for state intervention in the control of youth, certain fundamental rights . . . have been subsequently denied by welfarism."
[M. Collison (1980) - p.165]

Consequently, in the words of Morris et al, themselves members of the aforementioned group:

"children became ensnared in a series of discretionary processes within which the safeguarding of the rights of individual children was subordinated to what were seen as wider social problems."
[A. Morris et al (1980) - p.7]

Far from enhancing welfare and justice for children, the Justice for Children lobby argue that the infiltration of therapeutic principles into the court room deprives children of legal protection against the vagaries of welfarism.

v) The Emergence of a Therapeutic Orientation and its Residential Application

The ideals of the 1969 *Children and Young Persons Act* have never been wholly realized either in the legal adjudication or residential placement of children who enter the system. It did however amplify a process which was already well underway. The therapeutic-cum-welfare orientation to social problems began to infiltrate a number of deviance processing agencies from the 1930's onward. The profession of social work in particular was very influential in fostering a therapeutic approach to children in trouble. This was partly attributable to the import of Freudian theory into social work training courses during the War and Post War period. The authority with which psycho-analytic concepts were invested was manifest in the prevalence of the case work approach during this period. Since then an eclectic array of theories have been adopted and developed in relation to both field and residential social work, some of which directly and vehemently challenge the validity of a therapeutic approach to deviance. A therapeutic mode of reasoning did, however, continue to exert influence upon social work practice, and was prevalent, though not universal, amongst the staff at St. Nicholas' during the period of my fieldwork.

From a therapeutic perspective deviance is conceived as the manifestation of its perpetrator's underlying emotional disturbance. Through this manoeuvre a variety of behavioural episodes can be reduced to a symptomological status. The "problem child" is thus transformed into a "child with problems" who is in need of help rather than punishment. Clearly, this mode of interpretation helped to promote the convergence between deviance and disturbance and lent it theoretical legitimacy.

The therapeutic principles upon which the 1969 *Children and Young Persons Act* was built are apparent in the Government publication, *Care and Treatment in a Planned Environment* (1970) which refers specifically to the community home project. The paper speaks of how:

"The new legal framework (post 1969) should enable greater weight to be given, in deciding what treatment a child needs, to the background and

causal factors underlying his behaviour, although it must still be recognized that presenting symptoms in the form of difficult or anti-social behaviour should also receive attention in the treatment situation.”

[Paragraph 1]

Or again:

“It is the children who present symptoms of anti-social and aggressive behaviour and those whose disturbance is such that it calls for particular investigation and treatment, including the withdrawn child with marked personality difficulties who will require community home provision with specialist resources, which also offers education on the premises . . .”

[Paragraph 14]

The change in the name of the institution - from approved *school* to community *home* - was itself indicative of the ideological reorientation which was taking place. In this transition the emphasis changed from the discipline and training characteristic of the approved school, staffed mainly by teachers. The community home was to prioritize the therapeutic welfare of the child, and the cultivation of a warm, caring environment to compensate for the deprivation from which the majority were assumed to have suffered. To quote once more from *Care and Treatment in a Planned Environment*:

“All aspects of a child’s day are used therapeutically, that is in such a way as to heal the effects of past damage and to promote emotional and social growth; the ordinary group living arrangements in the home contribute a major part of the treatment methods.

These children need the warm and accepting environment which such a community home can offer.”

[Paragraphs 25 and 26]

It is clear from the preceding quotation that the evocation of a *home* (rather than a school) does not entail the adoption of a family model. Such a model, which characterized the organizational arrangement of childrens’ homes and, in certain respects, the approved school, was based upon a conjugal mode of management with house mothers and fathers (or headmasters and matrons) assuming the traditional role of surrogate parents. This naturalistic mode of discourse was quite different to that upon which the community home was based. Rather than doing what came naturally the therapeutic approach aimed to illuminate the psychological significance of behaviour by subjecting it to a particular kind of scrutiny.

The creation of the community home opened up many job opportunities for residential social workers and encouraged a movement toward their greater professionalization. Within the approved school system teachers had been the most numerically and hierarchically powerful professional group. Within the community home system, by contrast, the axis of power shifted in favour of residential social workers. Their role within the approved school and childrens' home had been extremely limited; confined very largely to taking care of the child's functional needs. With the emergence of a therapeutically orientated community home system the residential social worker was required to engage in a more specialized and complex set of practices.

The demands of this new, more therapeutically infused role attracted new recruits to the community home, some of whom were professionally trained. Senior institutional positions were increasingly filled by practitioners with a greater therapeutical knowledge of their task. Similarly, many of those who were not trained began to seek secondment to enhance their knowledge and facilitate promotion. Even those workers who remained unqualified had the skills of therapeutic theorization, imbibed by dint of their immersion in institutional culture.

Conclusion

The emergence of an interpretative framework which influenced working practices at St. Nicholas' can be traced through the historical processes identified above. Before I proceed from a diachronic to a synchronic description of the organizational setting, I include a brief history of St. Nicholas'. This helps elucidate how the particular institution in question fitted into the wider picture, and gives a flavour of the local history to which members themselves sometimes referred.

B) A Brief History of St. Nicholas'

A residential institution for deviant boys had stood on the site of St. Nicholas' for over eighty years when the home closed in 1987. For the first period of its history the building was used as a privately funded industrial school. In the late 1930's, however, it was sold to the local county council and became an approved school. Mr. and Mrs. Park were appointed as headmaster and matron, where they remained until their retirement nearly thirty years later.

In 1969 St. Nicholas' was chosen as one of three institutions from different local authorities to participate in a collaborative project administered by personnel in the old Home Office Childrens' Department and relevant personnel from local authorities, amongst others. The purpose of the project was to monitor the transition from approved school to community home, and to develop general guidelines based upon the practical experience of the three institutions. The project committee set up a working party responsible for the production of reports and working papers which were published under the auspices of the D.H.S.S. advisory council. The most famous of these documents was *Care and Treatment in a Planned Environment* (1970).

In 1973 St. Nicholas' was relocated within new purpose-built premises constructed on the same grounds as the old school. In spite of the new building which had been designed to embody the philosophy of 1969, and the recruitment of new social work staff sympathetic to a more liberal and therapeutically inclined approach, contemporary documents suggest a period of disorganization and ideological conflict during the 1970's. This was partly because the new community home system inherited many staff who were steeped in the culture of the old approved school and resistant to new methods of working. Mr. and Mrs. Britton - the headmaster and matron during the transitional phase - were also very much part of the old regime with its attendant disciplinarian values. Their retirement in the mid 1970's thus provided an opportunity to replace the old guard with the new.

Mr. Sands was appointed as successor to Mr. Britton. He was a keen advocate of welfarism, and referred to *Care and Treatment in a Planned Environment* as his "bible". In a written statement in 1980, Mr. Sands spoke of the state he found St. Nicholas' to be in upon his arrival in 1976.

"On my appointment as Principal, I was given to believe that St. Nicholas' Home was organized along the lines of "Care and Treatment in a Planned Environment". Indeed, this was to be expected in view of the involvement of (the local authority) and St. Nicholas' Home in the preparation of that Report.

When I commenced my duties, I found that this was not so.

- a) While a few members of staff understood the philosophy of the book, most did not.
- b) The staff, depleted in numbers, were dejected and depressed.
- c) Control of the boys was, all too often, physical (I had to reprimand three members on this account in my first three weeks), reflecting the staff's image of the former Principal as one who beat up the boys in his office and who ... ruled by fear.
- d) Boys were absconding frequently.
- e) Taking and driving away cars by boys, and burglaries by them were commonplace.
- f) Members of staff operated on the principle that authority and control were exercised "from above" - "the sort of hierarchical structure which inhibits free communication" between adults and children which was condemned (Care and Treatment in a Planned Environment, Paragraph 38) as causing "resistant sub-cultures to flourish."

This situation could hardly be further from the philosophy of "Care and Treatment in a Planned Environment" and it was, properly and obviously, my task to tackle the problem."

Mr. Sands issued the statement from which the preceding extract is drawn after being suspended from duty in 1980 for "gross mismanagement", as the director of social services called it. This accusation emanated originally from a coterie of staff within St. Nicholas' itself. They claimed that Mr. Sands' managerial incompetence had led to a damagingly high staff turnover, and the breakdown of a level of discipline necessary to control the boys and prevent their involvement in deviant behaviour. Mr. Sands refuted the validity of these accusations in other parts of the statement quoted from above.

Even Kate Lambert, head of education, who supported Mr. Sands during the challenge to his leadership, retrospectively identified the period of his rule as characterized by disorganization. As she said in an informal conversation with an applicant for the head of social work post during my fieldwork in 1983:

Kate: . . . St. Nicholas' did get into a terrible mess - uhm - I was the art teacher here

in those days - and I might have - twelve kids due to come to me because we had sixty - at that time (2) and six of those who should - would come - plus twelve others - you know - it was absolutely chaotic . . . Uhm - and when Roger came - he had a hell of a task pulling things together - but I think we've succeeded very well.

Applicant: What happened with the predecessor? Was he uhm (1) a sort of ridiculously libertarian - fellow - that wanted to -

Kate: Yes (1) I think that (1.5) and also he was a very nice - very honest straight man - but not strong enough for the job - you know . . .

And later:

Kate: Well this was the state we got into - and - it was a case of either shut us down - that was very much on the cards - or look at the whole thing through a microscope - set up a working party - which they did do. And we sat for - ooh (1.5) I suppose (1) six months. And - gradually - by our policy - the numbers - went right down until we had no boys - then all the staff pitched in - cleaned the place up - painted. We started off initially with two boys - and at that time it was costing - because it's *pro rata* - one thousand two hundred pounds a week - to keep a boy here . . . and ah - I remember the headline in the local paper was ah (1.5) "One thousand pounds a week and twelve staff to keep one boy at St. Nicholas' over Christmas" . . . uhm - it didn't go down very well with the local rate payers - you know.

The working party to which Kate refers above was set up in October 1978. Its mandate was to reconsider the working methods employed by St. Nicholas' staff team in an attempt to enhance their effectiveness. At this time, as Kate's account suggests, the number of residents was run down to accommodate such a radical reappraisal. As a result of working party deliberations a new "sequential model" of organization was adopted. New admissions were all placed in "phase one" - and progressed to "phase two" when they were judged to have reached a certain level of social and emotional maturity. The educational system was similarly based upon the concept of progression through phases. Within a year the model was dissolved because

it was seen to create bottlenecks in the system, especially in the preliminary phase, and to create a “sin bin” for boys who were unable to progress sufficiently to proceed to “phase two” within a reasonable time. The concept of “sequential development” was nonetheless retained by a number of staff as a working philosophy, albeit no longer inscribed so clearly in the organizational structure.

During the course of the three-phase experiment Mr. Sands was suspended, and then formally dismissed after the accusation of mis-management was upheld at a tribunal. At the beginning of 1981 Roger Carter was appointed as principal. His arrival marked the genesis of a more stable period of greater organizational and ideological consolidation. Roger Carter was a charismatic figure who maintained a strong sense of leadership while also advocating a more therapeutic approach to the residents, and greater democracy in the management of staff. This joint affiliation was sometimes considered by staff to create a level of conflict. Perhaps it was a feature of Roger Carter’s charisma that on a number of occasions staff could be heard to mitigate the contradictions and perceived weaknesses by invoking the redeeming strengths of his leadership qualities as a whole. Consider Brian Potter’s response to Kate’s announcement of Roger’s resignation.

Kate: Brian - how do you feel . . . about everything?

Brian: Oh - I dunno - I’m a bit confused really . . . no I was totally sort of - amazed to hear Roger was leaving (.5) and although I - disagree with a lot of things (.5) I think he has been a tremendous principal.

And again:

Brian: He’s such a big personality - I think something that Mike - Griffith got it right (.5) when you accept Roger - you accept the whole package - sort of thing. And I think on the whole I do accept the package even though there’s a lot of things I disagree with -

Kate: {Uhm
{

Brian: {about him. I think his main - strength is (.5) that he’s so committed.

Kate: Yer.

Brian: And I think if we have someone (.5) they've gotta be that committed - I think his great strength of-of - how he's made this place work (.5) is his total commitment - and it - in-in a way - that also can be his weakness I think. The fact that he gets so emotionally involved sometimes that he can't make judgements.

[Extracted from a T.M.]

Following Roger Carter's departure in Summer 1983, Kate Lambert filled the post of acting principal until Peter Scott was appointed toward the end of 1983. Peter, who remained as principal until St. Nicholas' was closed in 1987, had a very different style of leadership to his predecessor. He was more involved in political issues, such as fighting for resources, than in working at the "coal-face" with staff and boys. Peter's managerial predisposition is nicely illustrated in the following extract from a teachers' meeting to which he, as new principal, had been invited. Peter stated his intention to fight for more resources for the teachers, and continued:

Peter: I'm like a terrier - if I get something between my teeth - I shall carry on 'til I get what I want. (3) And we could start getting militant - no problem - I mean I like that too - "you wan' us to teach - give us some materials and we'll teach. If you don't - we aint bleedin' teaching anybody." We'll go to the NUT (.5) we'll do these sorts of things. You won't find me lacking there - I love a good fight.

Peter Scott's political acumen was put to full effect in dealing with one of the major threats to St. Nicholas' at the time: that of closure. All community homes were vulnerable during the 1980's; an era in which a different socio-political climate to the welfarism of the 1960's and 1970's prevailed. With a drastic decline in referrals to community homes, many fought to maintain a population sufficient to justify their continued existence. The causes of this decline are complex and multifarious, but included the high cost of the community home which at St. Nicholas' had reached £800 pounds per week for each boy during my fieldwork. Cheaper options such as fostering, childrens' homes or special schools were thus often chosen in preference to community homes by field social workers concerned to balance the books.

At the same time, by broadening their admission criteria other institutions began to compete for the type of adolescent which the community home had previously had almost exclusive access to. The “middle ground”, as Peter Scott called it, was being nibbled away in the fight for survival. The problem, and Peter Scott’s response to it, is displayed below in his attempt to sell a new and wider admission policy to the staff at St. Nicholas’ in a day conference whose topic was “the numbers problem”.

Peter: See what I feel about all of you (1) is (1) and maybe you should feel it about yourselves (.5) I couldn’t admit some of these kids ’ere - if I didn’t feel you could cope with ’em. (2.5) I mean I actually think that there are (.5) some bloody good people working in this school - who given the right kind of - help to do it - will manage - some of the most damaged kids in London. And that’s what I believe about this school. Now it’s a reality - that if (.5) C.H.E.’s are not prepared to take that more difficult boy (.5) the fact of the matter is - C.H.E.’s will shut (.5) becus in reality - they are the boys we should be taking. We shouldn’t be taking nice boys (2) every boy we get should be an animal. (2) ’Cus if he isn’t - what’s ’e doing ’ere . . . I mean the reason referrals have dropped - let’s make no mistake about it - ten years ago - childrens’ homes - wouldn’t touch with a barge pole any kid - you mention glue - or (.5) slapping (.5) or absconding - or (.5) crime (.5) no - children’s home would touch ’im with a barge pole. Now childrens’ homes are full of kids like that (.5) ’cus the writing’s been on the wall for them too. No - you either take them or you shut. I mean - you know (.5) it’s all the way down the line - it’s not just C.H.E.’s that are being shut - it’s childrens’ homes as well. So our referral rate dries up - largely becus childrens’ homes are absorbing these difficult kids as well.

In spite of the extended admission criteria, the opening of a day care unit to cater for boys who had been excluded from local schools and an array of public relations exercises, St. Nicholas’ was closed in 1987.

Conclusion

Having mapped out the historical emergence of a therapeutically infused institutional approach to young deviants embodied in the community home, and offered an historical sketch of St. Nicholas' in particular, I turn to a general description of certain key facets of institutional life.

C) The Institutional Setting

Introduction

Writing a summary of the kind I attempt below represents a particularly difficult and frustrating task for the sociologist preoccupied with the complexity and reflexivity of institutional life. By extrapolating principles and practices from the muddle of everyday activity, such a gloss inevitably presents a compartmentalized, wooden and reified picture of them. The litany of descriptive dilemmas which confronts the sociologist are not exclusive to her. Practitioners at St. Nicholas', as elsewhere, routinely found pragmatic solutions to methodologically irresolvable issues; and solutions which were "good enough" for all practical purposes. The practical purpose in hand is to provide an institutional framework for the reader unfamiliar with the environment. This may also help clarify the contextual significance of the empirical material explored throughout the thesis.

i) The Structure and Organization of St. Nicholas'

St. Nicholas' was a residential home for boys between the ages of thirteen and seventeen who had been placed in the care of the local authority. In 1973 it was relocated in new premises built to give physical expression to a more therapeutic concept of residential care. The building was designed to promote "small group living", as it was called, and to inhibit the risk of regimentation and institutionalization characteristic of the approved school. As one of St. Nicholas' brochures says:

"The layout and style of the home has been carefully designed to provide an environment which balances the boys' needs for privacy and community

involvement and it is this philosophy which lies behind the domestic scale of the buildings and the close integration of all the facilities.”

With view to this balance, the living units, classrooms and offices were situated around a communal nucleus composed of an indoor sports and leisure area. The building and carpentry workshops, and staff housing, formed another tier on the periphery of the main building, beyond which lay the playing fields which extended to the perimeter fence.

St. Nicholas' was situated in an urban environment to which boys had regular access during their leisure time. They were also expected to go home at weekends and during holiday times unless there were specific reasons why they should not. Just as the boys were encouraged to venture outside of the institution, local teenagers were welcomed into the home during certain periods of the day, as were members of the boys' families.

Each of the four living units was furnished with the facilities necessary for its practical autonomy, including a kitchen, lounge, bedrooms, toilet facilities, laundry and staff office. The units were designed to accommodate eleven boys each, or forty-four across the home. During my period of fieldwork however St. Nicholas' was, at its peak, a little over half full, although it still enjoyed its full complement of staff.

While certain expectations about organizational routines and working practices did encompass the institution as a whole, each unit was identified by its distinctive atmosphere and style of management. Thus, while unit 1 was renowned for the down to earth “basic care” and “reality training” its staff offered, the character of unit 4 was defined in terms of the more psychologically informed orientation of its staff. The team managers were largely responsible for encouraging a particular method of working amongst their staff.

The structure of staffing at St. Nicholas' was organized in the following way:

PRINCIPAL

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL: SOCIAL WORK DEPUTY PRINCIPAL: EDUCATION

(For each of four units)

1 unit manager

2-3 senior R.S.W's

2-3 basic-grade R.S.W's

1 team manager

4 "basics" teachers

1 P.E. teacher

1 woodwork teacher

1 art teacher

1 building instructor

(unqualified)

[For list of staff pseudonyms see pages 15-18]

While the formal lines of accountability were clearly drawn, the institution was not strictly hierarchical. Each member of staff, including those in more junior positions, were accorded a degree of power and autonomy which I shall discuss on pages 100-101 below. In terms of external accountability, the principal of St. Nicholas' reported to the assistant director and the director of the local authority Social Services Department, and the Regional Planning Committee. The latter, composed of various social services personnel, was responsible for overseeing and allocating resources to community homes within a given geographical *region* made up of a number of local authority areas.

In terms of professional training, nearly all members of staff with the status of senior social worker and above, and all of the teachers were qualified. Of the qualified social work staff, some had completed training courses specifically tailored to residential social work, while others possessed the more generic Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. The basic grade staff were untrained, although a number were seconded onto courses during the period of their employment at St. Nicholas'.

ii) The Referral and Admission Process

All of the boys referred to St. Nicholas' had been placed in the care of the local authority for the perpetration of one form of deviant behaviour or another. A care order had

been placed upon them by the courts, under the terms of the 1969 *Children and Young Persons Act*, because they were deemed to be out of the control of their parents or guardians, defined as truants, or charged with the commission of a criminal offence. St. Nicholas' therefore dealt with boys whose deviant identity had already been established by judicial means.

In the majority of cases the boys had been involved in multiple forms of petty deviance, including truancy, the abuse of minor drugs, solvent abuse and theft. A number had been identified as having violent tendencies, and some had been convicted of crimes of violence, though rarely of a more serious kind. It would be apt to define most of the residents as petty offenders; indeed this was the client group for whom the community home was designed. During the latter period of my fieldwork however, a new admissions policy was instigated by the incoming principal, Peter Scott, in an attempt to stave off the closure which threatened all community homes during this period. He sought to attract and admit a more extreme category of referral, both in terms of their criminal convictions and assumed psychological disturbance. Peter Scott thereby hoped at once to boost the number of residents and render St. Nicholas' more indispensable as a resource which dealt with a more severe class of problem children.

The main avenue of referral to St. Nicholas', as other community homes, was via the assessment centre where the child was placed for a period of time after the care order had been imposed by the court. This phase of residential assessment could last anything from six weeks to several months, depending on how difficult a child was to place.

During the period of assessment the child and his behaviour were subjected to examination by a team of psychological experts. A compendium of reports were then compiled based upon a variety of sources ranging from the everyday observation of a child by residential social work staff in the living units, to more specialist reports written by educational psychologists, psychiatrists and the like who would make an assessment of the child on the basis of an interview or two with him. The referral papers sent to St. Nicholas' by regional assessment centres usually employed a psychological mode of theorization, as the forthcoming empirical material reveals.

The period of assessment culminated in a conference at which *inter alia* the most appropriate regional placement for a child was discussed. When referral papers arrived at St. Nicholas' they were read primarily by the principal officers (i.e. the principal and two deputies) who would mutually decide whether the child was a suitable candidate, and if so which

was the most appropriate unit for him. The manager of the chosen unit would then be given the papers to read and discuss with his staff team. If the unit staff rejected the case, the papers would be sent to the second choice of unit, and so on.

Once the child had been allocated to a unit, visits were arranged and, in the absence of any major upsets, a formal acceptance issued. Before admission date a “special worker” was chosen for the boy from the staff in his living unit. The worker selected for this role was charged with primary responsibility for looking after the child’s practical and emotional needs and coordinating various aspects of his residence at St. Nicholas’.

Upon admission a contract was drawn up between the child and his special worker in collaboration with the team manager and “basics” teacher. This consisted of a list of long-term goals individually tailored to the child relative to his perceived level of social, emotional and intellectual development. Periodically throughout the child’s stay, at intervals of one to three months, case-conferences (or reviews as they were otherwise known) were held to assess the child’s progress and his success at meeting the short term goals set at the previous conference. In the words of John Townsend, head of social work during the first period of my fieldwork, the case conference was designed to:

“...embody the concepts of St. Nicholas’, i.e. shared responsibility, participation and consultation, and formalize the working together of the four groups of people - the boy, his parents or significant adults, St. Nicholas’ and the social services. Often they contain therapeutic interventions and become agents of change.”

[Report written for support group meeting - 1981]

A child’s residence could last for anything from about six months to two years or more, with the majority of boys remaining at St. Nicholas’ in excess of a year. A great deal of preparation went into a child’s departure; a process which it was often said, started from the day a child arrived. The boy was encouraged to assume increasing levels of responsibility for areas of his life, and was exposed to a life skills programme in education designed to equip him with the practical knowledge necessary for his survival in the outside world.

In the case of planned departures, sometimes known as “leaving through the front

door”, arrangements were made many months in advance. In a number of cases by contrast, about a third during my observation of St. Nicholas’, the departure was more abrupt; precipitated by a spate of behaviour, or a particular incident which was seen to be in breach of an acceptable level. Such departures were often referred to as “leaving through the back door”. The commission of a criminal act during the boys’ residence at St. Nicholas’ was not in itself sufficient to justify his removal. Indeed, on many occasions boys returned to St. Nicholas’ after a stint in detention centre.

iii) The Philosophy and Working Practices of St. Nicholas’

In this section I examine certain key features of the official philosophy of St. Nicholas’ as it was articulated by members of staff, particularly those in the higher echelons, and as it was inscribed in brochures, working party reports and the like. It is not my concern here, or throughout the thesis, to ironically juxtapose espoused principles with actual practice, except insofar as institutional members routinely generated anomalies of this kind. What the following description suggests, as much as anything else, is the ways in which staff at St. Nicholas’ tended to gloss their working ideologies and practices (when called upon to do so) and thus to present a heterogeneous array of activities in relatively coherent form.

Many of the working practices at St. Nicholas’ flowed from a conception of the residents as adolescents with problems. Since the boys were typically defined as being in need of help rather than punishment, care and understanding rather than training, the staff attempted to cultivate an environment which was comfortable, relaxed and informal. The regimentation characteristic of more punitive institutions for young offenders was conspicuously absent, as was the rigid status differential between the residents and the staff.

Indeed, the most striking manifestation of informality lay in the relationship between the two groups. The boys were encouraged to relate to members of staff in a casual, familiar and equal way; a convention which new boys often had to be initiated into. All members of staff were, for instance, addressed by their first name, or nickname, regardless of their status. But this was only a superficial expression of relationships between the staff and resident group which encompassed the display of affection, humour, cheekiness and open hostility - the latter more typically articulated by the boys!

A related feature of institutional life was the toleration shown by the staff group toward certain forms of petty delinquency as one might call them. Thus, for example, residents of all ages were permitted to smoke throughout the institution, including in classrooms during lesson times. Or again, the staff tended to tolerate the regular use of four letter words by the boys with only mild resistance, unless their swearing breached a contextually acceptable level. The widespread attitude of toleration extended to the boys' verbally aggressive behaviour and a level of damage to the property (such as window-breaking), both of which were considered inevitable given the type of child who was resident at St. Nicholas'.

One incident during my first week of fieldwork nicely illustrates the ethos of informality which permeated the culture of St. Nicholas'. I was observing a "basics" lesson in progress when one of the members of the group arrived late. He immediately jumped on a table and, with the use of a thick black felt tip pen, added the name of a football club to an already graffiti-clad ceiling. "I didn't know you supported that football club" said the teacher.

The toleration of a level of deviant behaviour was partly due to the symptomological status it was accorded. Consider the following extract from *Care and Treatment in a Planned Environment*, Paragraph 27:

"A therapeutic environment is one in which informal communication is encouraged, where there is understanding and tolerance of deviant behaviour, where the child has opportunity to express symptoms of his disturbance and where both children and adults accept their share of responsibility for helping others."

Deviant behaviour was often treated, at least retrospectively, as an occasion for therapeutic interpretation and speculation rather than, or in addition to, more traditional forms of discipline. But staff toleration was by no means indiscriminate, nor were the boys allowed to simply do as they pleased. Two recurrent distinctions were drawn: a) between symptomatic deviance, and that borne of more rational motivation, and b) between behaviour which was within acceptable limits, and that which exceeded them, regardless of its motivational status. Thus, if a boy broke a window, or verbally assaulted a member of staff, this may or may not be construed as a manifestation of his disturbance, depending on how the circumstances were interpreted. If, by contrast, a boy physically assaulted and injured a member of staff, the police would nearly always be called in and criminal charges pressed against the child even if his act of

aggression was seen as the manifestation of his emotional disturbance. Such extreme acts of aggression were, however, rare.

Although the working practices employed by the staff team did help to promote a sense of informality and understanding, they were keen to point out that this did not entail that St. Nicholas' was devoid of controls, or "boundaries" as they were often called. Indeed, the boys were seen to be in desperate need of certain limits, physical and emotional, within which they could feel safe. The challenge was to create an institutional infrastructure which was flexible enough to accommodate individual variation, but consistent enough for the residents to feel secure.

The boundaries considered necessary for the boys' sense of psychological stability were partially inscribed in the daily routines of institutional life. There were also the boundaries of acceptable behaviour which were reinforced most powerfully in the response of staff to behaviour which was deemed in breach of them. On such occasions an appropriate reaction was considered essential so that the boy "knew where he stood".

However, traditional forms of punishment were considered inappropriate by many staff in relation to the psychological theory of causation they employed. Thus, for instance, although members of staff did occasionally have to use physical force of a passive kind to restrain the child, the active enforcement of physical punishment was taboo. Only on one occasion during my fieldwork did a social worker slap a boy round the face for an act of defiance; an incident which caused a furore amongst many of the boys and staff.

St. Nicholas' had no "lock up" facility, as such a response was considered anathema to the principles of the home. Since episodes of deviance were identified in principle as occasions upon which good therapeutic work might be accomplished, the provision of a secure room was seen to detract from the opportunity. As Kate Lambert said to a group of visiting magistrates:

Kate: Yes - o-often the maximum time - for - for - want of a better expression - getting through to a child - is in the moments of the highest emotion. Now if you've got a facility to deal with that - without you having to work with words with it - you may - miss the optimum time of -

Mag: Yes.

Kate: understanding.

Only Peter Scott actively fought for a secure provision to cater for the more extreme client group he sought to attract to St. Nicholas'. Despite a pocket of support, the majority of staff were opposed to the implementation of such a measure.

The withdrawal of privileges such as weekends home, late nights and pocket-money was sometimes used as a means of discipline and deterrence. However, many staff claimed that the withdrawal of approval from significant staff was the most effective tool in curbing the boys' deviant excesses: a practice dubbed "negative reinforcement", borrowed from behaviourist terminology. The idea was that through the media of their relationship the practitioner could express the anger and disappointment engendered by the boy's behaviour, which he would experience much more poignantly than the imposition of a more conventional mode of punishment. This assumption is clearly articulated below in a piece extracted from a discussion between the principal officers at St. Nicholas' and a group of visiting residential social workers from another community home.

Roger: We try to-to - run the place - actually - very very much - the whole place is run through relationships. Individual one to one - I mean we each know each other terribly well - and ah - it's very relaxed and ah - that's the way I think we try to run - although we've got a structure - we've got a - you know - we're very much in control I hope. I'm worried if we're not.

Kate: Yes - within - within the structure - you can be quite flexible. But if you're flexible without a structure - then you've got chaos which ah - again - it was here at one time - ahm where - flexible became laissez-faire - you know.

R.S.W.1: Problems with kids always boils down to relationships - you have with certain kids - and that's what gets you through I think.

Kate: Well sanctions on a kid's behaviour are so limited aren't they.

R.S.W.3: Yes.

Kate: We don't want to use a sanction - "you can't go home for weekends" because we think the contact with home is so important.

R.S.W: Yes.

Kate: In fact you can do quite a lot of - damage that way ... And then again if you use money as a sanction - they get such limited money - right so you've used up all your pocket-money so what the hell - I can do what I like now. So we try to sanction through relationships. Again (2.5) if you gain the disapproval of someone who you're very fond of - or have a great deal of respect for - that's a damn sight harder than having - twenty five pence stopped out of your money.

Since the significance of a child's deviant behaviour was considered in relation to his psychological motivation, the application of a universal body of rules and regulations was judged by most staff to be inappropriate. Hence, the expression of the "same" piece of behaviour by two different boys would not necessarily elicit the same response, as the underlying meaning of the act may differ. Roger articulates this individualized response to the boys' misdemeanours in the following extract drawn from a discussion with a group of visiting magistrates from the local juvenile bench.

[Roger speaks of how the staff at St. Nicholas' have "norms and expectations" rather than "rules and regulations". One of the magistrates asks if the boys themselves know that there is a point beyond which they must not go?]

Roger: Yes - I think so . . . But - but again if I could just - add a proviso to that. What is acceptable for Steve -

Mag: Mmm.

Roger: is not acceptable for somebody else. And that is the difficult area to work. Becus it is very easy to run an establishment where the rules are very - very

clearly defined - and they apply to everybody - exactly the same. But - becus (.5) and I'm not teaching anyone to suck eggs - becus we are different and each human being is different - actually - we need to recognize that-that what is O.K. for one kid (.5) I would not allow Christopher (.5) to do anything crazy - when I will allow . . . David Lyons (.5) to do something (?) - becus David Lyons is not at the level of Christopher. And - "Christopher - that's not acceptable from you (.5) becus you are at that level". A-and (.5) and that is -

Mag: And he understands why?

Roger: Yes.

Mag: He doesn't feel resentment (?to his peers)?

Roger: No . . . no I don't think so. And I think that we - we spend - a lot of energy at St. Nicholas' working with individuals. Becus it is so important (.5) to - for each individual (.5) to feel important.

The working practices of the staff at St. Nicholas' were orientated, quite generally, to the individual resident, his history and set of needs. The initial contract was drawn up with regard to the child's specific circumstances and his progress gauged accordingly. This practice was a departure from the approved school philosophy with its emphasis upon uniformity and the achievement of collective goals of discipline and obedience. Nonetheless, a framework of generic assumptions continued to undergird the individualized practices. The goal of social and emotional development, and its desirability was, for instance, an infeasible assumption upon which practitioners based their work. For, as Durkheim recognized, individualism is a collective orientation as much as any other.

The declared aim of St. Nicholas' was to facilitate the boys' development and to provide them "with the opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to lead self-determined, responsible and personally satisfying lives", in the words of the brochure. To nurture a sense of independence, the child was encouraged to take on increasing levels of

responsibility for their own actions. This concept is well illustrated by an extract from my interview with Philip Hooper, manager of unit 3.

[I ask Philip how he would describe the general aim of St. Nicholas?]

Philip: Uh (2) uh (7.5) it's alright I'm not gonna give ya - our official philosophy. How to describe it - as an attempt to - help (.5) the kids (2) look at the areas (.5) of difficulty in their lives and - take on some (1) or take on varying degrees - of responsibility - in coping with those areas. So - looking at (.5) what's happening to them - and trying to take on (.5) some of the real responsibility - not us changing it for them (1) but - trying to get them to look at what's happening (.5) and to see-see - not just look at it - but then to actually see it - properly. An-and then (.5) look at ways - of of being able to handle it and (.5) uhm (6) and take on some of the responsibility. . . the kids and responsibility don't always mix - they're very uneasy partners.

John Kenyon, one of the residents, offered a similar conceptualization of the institutional aim in the following extract from his interview.

John: Well . . . the object of this place I think is that (.5) you know that - you - you control what you do - you know - you're responsible for yourself. . . they try and get you used to the - outside world like (1) you know - to-to what you're gonna do when you leave school.

Kim: Yer.

John: You know depend on yourself. So that they encourage you to go out (.5) you know travel by yourself and - all them sort of things you know.

Kim: Yer.

John: Which helps you quite a bit dunnit. (2) It's - just - that's just a good system to work I think.

What may initially appear as the “soft option”, a liberal regime in which the child can do as he pleases, is *in fact* considered more challenging for the staff who must be sensitive to individual circumstances, and the boys who must bear the burden of responsibility. As Mike Griffith says in relation to the latter:

Mike: I think that - very often (.5) when kids come - here from assessment centres - they have a bit of a culture shock first of all becus they're used to - to being (.5) uhm (1) very much more strictly orchestrated than they are - at St. Nicholas'. And I think that they find it (.5) difficult to actually cope with (.5) the decision making if you like - which is actually forced (.5) well not forced - which they're encouraged to (.5) to uh (.5) participate in.

Trust was considered a vital component in the therapeutic process. Boys were given responsibility rather than having rules imposed; an exercise which involved trust and risk in equal measure. As Roger Carter said to the group of visiting residential social workers mentioned on page 93-94 above.

Roger: . . . that's very much what we're into is-is trying to develop this trust - with kids - and ahm - I think that there are a number of establishments actually - don't do it. Ah - I think that they're too frightened to do it - and it's too risky - and - that sort of thing and uhm - er - they're frightened that actually if we - you know - they're not in control ahh - of the situation and uhm - therefore they don't practice it. And I think that one of the things that we do practice - and you have to I think if you're going to be successful - is to develop a level of trust with the kids. And as Kate said - you're going to lose - and I mean gee - you're losing all the time - and it backfires and O.K. so - you go in there again - and you work away on it again and that's what it's all about I believe. And maybe you get to the point where you can't continue . . . and you have to say - “no - we cannot continue with this lad” - and uhm - that happens - it certainly does to us.

An open network of communication was considered a necessary prerequisite of institutional effectivity. An elaborate infrastructure of meetings were thus established to enhance the free flow of information, ideas and feelings. Indeed the staff at St.Nicholas' spent

a great deal of time talking to each other about a range of organizational issues. Such “garrulousness” was also noted by Nijsmans in her study of the Westminster Pastoral Foundation - a counselling organization. She notes:

“The organization in fact seemed to spend a tremendous amount of time discussing what it had been doing so far. Such discussions are an exercise in self-understanding, a way of giving meaning to events retrospectively. In his attempt to understand what ‘organizing’ is about, Weick used the term ‘consensual validation’ . . . a process whereby members spend a vast amount of time negotiating an acceptable definition of what they think is going on.”

Nijsmans continues:

“Such an approach towards ‘organizing’ makes sense within a particular perspective on the nature of organizations. If one accepts organizational order and rational control as given and inherent ontological qualities, then the aim of equivocality reduction by means of consensual validating processes, seems irrelevant. If, on the other hand, one looks at ‘organizing’ as fluid, complex, collective and processual Weick’s theory makes sense.”
[M. Nijsmans (1987) - p. 307-308]

The meetings at St. Nicholas’ were designed to cut across various staff groups and facilitate communication between them. The role of the liaison teacher was also a good example of this attempted cross-fertilization. Each teacher was allocated to one of the four units. In addition to spending lunchtime in the unit with the staff and boys, he or she was also invited to unit meetings. The teacher would thus convey relevant information from the teachers’ meeting to the unit staff, and vice versa. Similarly, unit staff were welcomed into the classroom to participate in the boys’ educational programmes. This sense of fluidity, orchestrated mainly by the education department, was designed to soften the professional boundaries and to create a more open relationship between teachers and social workers.

The sense of the therapeutic which permeated institutional culture extended to encompass managerial issues. Staff meetings were occasions upon which practitioners shared their feelings and grievances with one another in the course of conducting the everyday business of the home. As Nijsmans also noticed, participants:

“were aware of the necessity of listening, of replying in a counselling language: ‘I heard what you are saying, but, would it be feasible that . . . I have the feeling that . . . I wonder how you feel about . . . Could we perhaps

explore . . . ' were frequently used facilitative statements. The 'I wonder if . . . ' language is less confrontational and invited members of the group to communicate."
[Ibid - p.399]

It was this infiltration of therapeutic modes of discourse into more prosaic institutional affairs which:

"pointed to the profound impact of the occupational paradigm on the daily practices of the organizational life."
[Ibid - p.409]

To quote from one of the periodic day conferences at which the entire staff group assembled gives a flavour of this phenomenon. It also demonstrates how managerial and therapeutic issues were intertwined. The topic of discussion in the proceeding extract is the new admissions policy instigated by the contemporary principal - Peter Scott (see pages 83-84 above).

Thomas: I've still gotta feeling inside here - and I'm gonna chuck it in there ... but I still have the feeling inside here - that we're not getting to the nitty gritty (.5) of what all this - is all about. Once or twice it got touched (.5) and I think it - what's being touched is the way the actual referrals - come in - yer (.5) and how that actually created within people - you know - either they weren't participating in it or - they were being directed. And all of that like needs to be brought out in this forum here . . . I'm sure there are one or two around here - who are fucking annoyed - at the way the actual - they were if you like - directed about their referrals (.5) yer? And I think day conferences are - for picking that up - yer?

Peter: Yer - yer.

Thomas: And giving - giving the space for saying - "yes look I - this fellow has arrived - and I didn't even know who it was" - you know.

Peter: Yer.

Thomas: Or something like that.

Peter: Yer.

Thomas: 'Cus if that's happening inside in your units - you're going to have problems -

Peter: Yer.

Thomas: as-as-as a principal here - you're going to have problems - I'll tell you.

And again:

Thomas: It's a very simple thing look - let's open the whole thing up. We started off with the - the aims and objectives inside in this school - yer? and there are cardinal words that go with it - and we as workers - are expected to inject into kids (.5) shared responsibility - consultation and-and - participation (.5) yer (.5) and there are - workers in here who feel that they're not being afforded that courtesy. Now - that . . . and I think we should take the bones out of it.

Peter: Huh hum.

Thomas: Yer - and then open it up - in the very secure way of having it in here - not way outside there so - where we can't do anything about it.

While the preceding extract is an extreme example of the mode of discourse frequently employed at staff meetings it does illustrate a persistent predisposition. Indeed, St. Nicholas' boasted a democratic mode of management, or a "flattened hierarchy" with a wide, though not even distribution of power. The exercise of "legitimate power", as it was known, was founded upon the assumption that all members had the responsibility to execute decisions on the basis of their knowledge of and relationship with a resident.

The distribution of power was most apparent in the special worker system at St. Nicholas'. Members of staff from all grades fulfilled this special role in relation to one or more of the boys, and were thus accorded primary responsibility for coordinating and executing the individual care

plan. The special worker did not, however, wield absolute power; he or she was accountable to the line manager and the case conference assembly for decisions made in relation to the child.

The benefits of a system based upon the distribution of legitimate power were seen to emanate from the sense of involvement and value that members of staff were assumed to experience through its operation. This, in turn, was believed to enhance the effectiveness of working practice since each member of staff enjoyed a sense of autonomy. As Roger Carter said to the aforementioned group of visiting social workers:

Roger: What we in effect say - and what we actually practice is that - I hate the word - but - the most junior member of staff - and I do hate that word - the most junior member of staff can call a conference on a kid - and has done so here . . . And that - the object of that exercise is to make everybody feel two things - one to be effective as workers - because we all like to feel effective. I mean I like to feel I'm doing a good job - and everybody likes to feel they're doing a good job - you know - ah - and that is one thing. But also to say to kids that each person in the place is an effective worker and is in control because it's very easy to say - "well you're going to see the old man" or something else like that . . . But it's passing the buck.

While St. Nicholas' was presented publicly as a thoroughly democratic institution, and most staff corroborated this version in my interviews with them, members did occasionally express scepticism about the extent to which decisions were jointly made. Nearly all criticisms of this kind, though relatively rare, were directed against Roger Carter - principal during the first nine months of my fieldwork - who was claimed to have an autocratic and charismatic streak in spite of his enthusiastic public support for democratic principles.

In addition to the provision of a caring and consistent environment which was conceived as curative in itself, the staff at St. Nicholas' implemented two more specific forms of therapy: that of group work and counselling. The interpretation of these terms and their practical execution varied between the different units and individual practitioners although certain key assumptions were shared in common. All agreed, for instance, that the establishment of a trusting relationship between the boys and members of staff was the prerequisite of any

more sophisticated form of intervention, and that without this fundamental bond very little progress could be realized. But quite how this relationship was employed varied.

In terms of their general orientation, members of staff would often invoke “group dynamics” to account for the boys’ behaviour. In this sense it was a routine part of their repertoire of theories through which appearances were invested with a sense of significance. More specifically group meetings were held daily in each unit. The shared objective was to facilitate communication, encourage the boys’ participation in decision-making, and to make them accountable to the group as a whole. The extent to which deeper psychological meaning was accorded group processes did vary between units, with the staff of units 3 and 4 tending to offer a more elaborate appraisal than those of units 1 and 2.

Individual counselling, as the other most prevalent form of therapeutic intervention, was usually conducted between the boy and his special worker. Some staff set aside regular counselling sessions with their clients. The majority were more inclined to use particular incidents as opportunities to explore the child’s psychological motivation. Counselling was not confined to the boy and his special worker. In practice any social worker at any time may have used a particular incident as an occasion for therapeutic intervention. However, the level of specialized knowledge brought to the performance of this task varied. But even in its more sophisticated guise, the work conducted was not comparable to strictly psycho-therapeutic or analytic work, but more akin to counselling in which the role of evaluation is given freer reign.

A general distinction could be drawn between the members of staff who defined their task in terms of “basic care” and “reality training” most keenly advocated by staff in unit 1, and those who defined their purpose in more broadly therapeutic terms. The “basic care” lobby saw the most important task as the provision of care and consistency, and the erection of firm, though not rigid disciplinary boundaries. Aligned to this was the belief that the staff should respond to the boys’ deviant behaviour in a way which was more “realistic” by the criteria of wider society. This perspective is clearly articulated by Jim Taylor, a social worker in unit 1.

Jim: I think the main quality that you need to ta - to be realistic (1) and not accept something if it - although you have to make - certain allowances (.5) uhm - that you wouldn’t accept in the street. Uh (1) I think it makes this job extremely difficult that we’ve got this sort of (1.5) uh (1) the whole emphasis

of social work has changed - and we tend to get (1) people who are coming in for (.5) varieties of reasons . . . to help the - poor little children perhaps -

Kim: Uhm.

Jim: and they're putting up with a hell of a lot just because they're poor little children in care - it doesn't help the kids - doesn't help us - makes the job (.5) very difficult.

While a "realistic" response did not extend to the administration of physical correction, other more traditional modes of punishment, such as fining and "gating", were approved by advocates of this approach.

A slightly more disciplinarian mode of management emerged during Peter Scott's principalship, partly as an attempt to control the more extreme client group he had admitted in order to increase St. Nicholas' numbers, and relatedly to enhance the institution's public image amongst powerful groups. As Peter said to the senior staff meeting with regard to a group of visiting magistrates due that evening, if they left feeling the way Peter wanted them to, it would make their task at St. Nicholas' a lot easier. He continues:

Peter: That doesn't mean I wanna bias them - course I wanna bias them (a few sniggers). What I wanna do is set the record straight - becus - they've gotta view of us which is actually uh - an unreal one. They think this is a right shit-'ole and the kids can do what the 'ell they like - and all the rest of it. The first thing I'm gonna get into is the points system (.5) and punishments. They love all that - I've handled magistrates before. But I'd be very grateful if Graham Mellor could be kept within fifty yards of this room.

The majority of practitioners however, throughout my observation of St. Nicholas', adopted a more therapeutically infused approach. While this group also recognized the need for "basic care" and the observance of certain "boundaries", they claimed that effective social *work* with disturbed adolescents of the type referred to St. Nicholas' required more the suspension of certain common sense criteria as their embrace. In the words of Mike Griffith, a senior social worker from unit 4:

Mike: I think really sort of in general terms - I think you need to (2) in some cases shu (.5) shut yourself off from (2) normal (.5) uhm (2) as-as uhm - kind of expressed outside (.5) normal uhm (.5) types of behaviour and to be able to actually put up with (.5) what would seem to be (.5) uhm - extraordinary (.5) goings on (.5) outside (.5) for an outsider.

Kim: {Uhm.

{

Mike: {For instance if an outsider came past St. Nicholas' and walked in for a day - and saw some of the behaviour which was - which had gone on (.5) and was allowed to go on (.5) and saw some of the kind of (.5) interaction between (.5) a social worker and - one of the client group - uh a layman might think - "well - you know - what the hell's going on at St. Nicholas' - becus they're allow - they're allowed to more or less do as they please".

From this ideal-typical perspective the more reality orientated response to the boys' past deviance had been palpably ineffective. What the residents needed was not a dose of reality, but a more tolerant and understanding response which would help them talk through and identify the emotional disturbance which underlay their behaviour.

Differences in emphasis such as these did exist without challenging the institutional culture. For, underlying real differences in working practice was a body of assumptions shared sufficiently amongst the staff to create a sense of coherence. For instance, despite pockets of scepticism about a more thoroughgoingly therapeutic approach, a generic mode of psychological interpretation was employed across the institution; a predisposition to which the empirical material bears ample witness.

iv) Education at St. Nicholas'

The education department at St. Nicholas' was situated on the premises and operated upon similar principles to those employed throughout the home. A comparable emphasis was placed upon the need for an informal classroom atmosphere in which the boys could develop a close relationship with the teacher; a process considered necessary to restimulate their educational appetite. Nearly all of the boys who entered St. Nicholas' had been defined as educational

failures, and this sense of inadequacy was seen by the teachers to have infiltrated their self image. Because of this the boys were seen to have lost all interest in learning, and the teachers considered their primary aim was, in the words of the St. Nicholas' brochure:

“to create an environment which is conducive to the attainment of success.

This involves an alternative strategy to education. By conventional criteria most of the boys at St. Nicholas' are educational failures, yet it is our belief that their potential lies outside this conventional boundary. Therefore the aim would be to devise a method of measuring and assessing what is meaningful to boys and where their potential lies. In one sense this may be seen as engineering an artificial success, but we believe their talents and potential is real albeit different to normal standards of educational success.

We further believe that for the development of the whole person it is essential to experience success (an experience sadly missing in their lives) in order to have a realization of self worth which is an essential ingredient for life. Therefore, any educational success we can engineer for a boy, through legitimate means, has a spin off effect on his whole life.”

The fundamental need to “manufacture success” was amplified by the head of education, Kate Lambert, in a document she wrote in 1981 for one of the regular six monthly “support group” meetings. These involved the three principal officers at St. Nicholas' and personnel from the local authority Social Services Department and Regional Planning Committee. Newly appointed to her post, Kate's report articulates the basis of her approach.

“The large majority of our boys arrive with us categorized as “low stream”. They are totally disenchanted with education, where they have been caught in the ‘slip-stream’ of failure.

They come to us with little or no self-respect and see themselves as persons of little worth.

Our first job as educators is to allow them to experience success often manoeuvring situations so that the boy cannot fail to achieve success. Herein in my opinion, lies the true professionalism of teachers, manoeuvring these situations with no feelings of condescension and contrivance.

The boys when seeing themselves through our eyes must see themselves as being worthy of respect. I believe it is not possible to respect others until one sees oneself as respect worthy.”

To help cultivate a sense of interest and success the teachers at St. Nicholas' developed a more practically orientated educational programme than that characteristic of the

mainstream, without reverting to the trade training reminiscent of the approved school. The “basics” lessons were comprised of “english and maths for everyday life”, subjects which required the application of academic knowledge and skills to “real life” situations. To quote once more from St. Nicholas’ brochure.

“In place of the rather abstract knowledge and learning processes which characterize mainstream education, we have devised a system of assessment and examination which has potential to yield success. This is managed by offering a series of subjects which are meaningful within the social context of the boys’ own lives . . . We offer practical and social skills to which the boys can relate in their own lives. For instance, in our basics lessons, the english is geared towards achieving success in everyday communication and cultivating acceptable boundaries of expression.”

The high ratio of teachers to pupils, a maximum of 1:6 in “basics” lessons, allowed for the individual attention considered necessary to make such a pedagogic philosophy productive. Within the context of each lesson the boy was encouraged to follow his individual programme of work, while also participating in occasional group activities and collaborative projects. Lessons only very rarely consisted of the “chalk and talk” characteristic of conventional education. Typically, the teacher would attend each pupil individually, concentrating upon developing the skills required for the educational programme in hand. This *modus operandi* was adopted not only by the “basics” teachers, but also the arts and crafts teacher and, to a slightly lesser extent the woodwork and building studies teachers. Other subjects, such as P.E. and drama tended, by their nature, to be more collective enterprises.

By working within an educational framework specifically devised for them, the boys were encouraged to measure success in terms of personal rather than externally imposed goals. Each child was thus able to work at a pace acceptable to him, and befitting his capacities. Such individual treatment was considered necessary because, in the words of the brochure:

“Intellectually boys here represent a spectrum that ranges from heavily remedial to exceptionally able but under-achieving.”

The different types of child were not segregated since streaming was seen to exacerbate the kind of distinction between success and failure which had marred their previous school experience.

Although the curriculum was not exam dominated, C.S.E., G.C.E. and City and Guilds

courses were available for those boys with the motivation and skills to embark on such a syllabus. Choice of candidates was based upon a criterion of self-selection; no child was compelled to undertake an examination course, though they could be encouraged to do so if they were considered suitable material. It was a matter of some pride to the teachers that they were able to combine an individually orientated mode of education with the provision of examination syllabi, and to realize such a high success rate amongst the boys who entered for examinations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to furnish the reader with an historical and institutional context within which to consider the forthcoming empirical material. In particular I attempted to show how a therapeutically informed and welfare orientated approach can be traced through a series of responses to juvenile deviants. Such socio-historical processes set the broad agenda which is “translated into practical actions” [Dingwall et al (1983) - p 20] by the practitioners within any given institution. In the second half of this chapter I attempted to gloss the working philosophies which informed staff practice at St.Nicholas’. Throughout the remaining chapters I subject certain of these practices to detailed empirical scrutiny to elicit how they constructed an environment of normal appearances. I start with a consideration of therapeutic reasoning itself which, like all other institutional practices, is treated as a practical accomplishment.

CHAPTER THREE THERAPEUTIC REASONING

Introduction

A most striking feature of institutional life at St. Nicholas' was the amount of time and interest devoted to the retrospective scrutiny and analysis of the boys' behaviour. In going about their daily business members of staff not only worked with and talked to the boys, but also regularly talked *about* them to one another. [See also B. Rawlings (1980) and M. Nijsmans (1987)]. My purpose in this chapter is to explore the empirical intricacies of the therapeutic mode of reasoning typically employed in this pursuit. Therapeutic sense making, and the psychological facts to which it gives rise, are treated as an active "on-going accomplishment" [H. Garfinkel (1967) - p vii] which is brought to life when practitioners engage with a body of knowledge and procedures to interpret the meaning of events.

Therapeutic reasoning does not reside in an abstract and reified code of principles. For this reason I do not offer a description, much less a definition of the therapeutic *in advance*, since its nuances emerge most authentically through the analysis of naturally occurring talk and text. The reader is therefore asked to suspend the question of what is meant by therapeutic reasoning in favour of a detailed examination of how it operates upon events to *produce* meaning.

Therapeutic talk is at once familiar and strange; a tension which I consider to be a productive one for methodological purposes. All institutions within a given culture have a sense of familiarity about them because their practitioners draw very largely from the wider cultural reservoir of common sense knowledge. Since the discursive practices through which meaningful *therapeutic* sense is made are so deeply embedded in common sense it requires an anthropological effort to bring them to visibility. The analyst must partially suspend acquaintanceship with cultural objects and processes in order to expose the methods through which they are accomplished. What is needed to elicit such details is a kind of willing suspension of one's normal orientation to the world, and moral judgement of it; a methodological stance which can only ever be partial since the analyst can never wholly abandon her cultural equipment, and neither would this be desirable if it were possible.

The challenge to a reflexively inclined ethnographer is to cultivate a sense of the strange amid the familiar practices bequeathed to institutions by dint of their cultural heritage. But there is also something irreducibly in excess of the most widely shared common sense denominator which lends the institution its peculiarity. The relative specificity of institutional practices is as important a methodological feature as its generality. For, just as engagement with the anthropologically alien may alert us to what is underneath our noses by “displacing that dulling sense of familiarity with which the mysteriousness of our own ability to relate perceptively to one another is concealed from us” [C. Geertz (1975) - p.14], so, too, the exploration of more specialist forms of knowledge can serve to sharpen our perception of the mundane. Therapeutic reasoning, as I said in Chapter 1, can usefully be understood as an exaggeration and adaptation of the practices indigenous to everyday life. Because it plays on and dramatizes an array of cultural practices, it lends them a visibility which they typically lack.

The documentary method of interpretation is a procedure which the therapeutic most hungrily feeds upon and thus fruitfully exposes to scrutiny. It is responsible for sewing the particular to the general, and surface appearance to an underlying reality. Therapeutic interpretations, like all others, incorporate behaviour within a framework of typified knowledge about social and psychological structures. When subjected to the therapeutic gaze, deviant behaviour is construed as the surface manifestation, or symptom of the child’s emotional disturbance. Practitioners thus have an epistemological warrant and a moral compulsion to dig beneath the surface in pursuit of an explanatory key. In this process the *problem child* is transformed into a *child with problems* which are held responsible for his deviant motivation.

What lends a particular emphasis to the therapeutic use of documentary procedures is the routinely figurative relationship which it sets up between the item of appearance, and the cognitive pattern to which it is assimilated. By stressing the coexistence of levels, enshrined in dichotomies such as surface-depth, and conscious-unconscious, therapeutic reasoning invites a symbolic play between “presenting” behaviour as it is often called, and the emotional reality which purportedly underlies it. Theft, for example, may either be seen *metaphorically* to represent the child’s need to compensate for historical deprivation, or *ironically* to express his need for love or acceptance by provoking rejection. The “same” type of behaviour assumes a different significance relative to the emotional context in which it is situated.

The duality of levels to which therapeutic reasoning so dramatically alludes are not

separate entities, one *inside* the other *outside* discourse, language, and the process of social reasoning; the one *factual* the other *mental* or cognitive. Surface and depth are brought into alignment, literal or figurative, in the process of articulation. This sense of duality exists within all modes of reasoning from the most esoteric to the most mundane; a fact to which the ubiquity of the documentary method bears witness. By prioritizing the figurative play between levels, however, therapeutic reasoning casts a perspective on this generic process by exaggeration.

Before embarking upon an analysis of the data certain preliminary issues should be addressed. Firstly, it would clearly be absurd to suggest that the staff at St. Nicholas' were responsible for creating therapeutic discourse. Rather, it is a generic mode of reasoning which has gradually infiltrated many spheres of social life. Yet it is only through the skilled application of therapeutic knowledge to a complex web of empirical circumstances that it is brought to life. It is with this articulation of the therapeutic within the institutional context that I am primarily concerned.

Secondly, the kind of therapeutic reasoning engaged in by members of staff at St. Nicholas' was more diluted and diffuse than it would be in an exclusively therapeutic arena, or in institutions which attempt to create a holistically therapeutic environment, such as the therapeutic community. Although the trained social workers would have had an acquaintanceship with psychological and therapeutic theories and methods, few of the staff had more advanced therapeutic expertise. The culture of St. Nicholas' did nonetheless display a powerful therapeutic strain which staff by dint of their membership in the institutional community imbibed on an *ad hoc* basis.

Thirdly, although a therapeutic mode of reasoning was often employed to interpret events, it did not exhaust the repertoire of sense making methods routinely employed by staff at St. Nicholas'. No one form of knowledge enjoys absolute privilege within institutional life or occupational discourse; there is always a degree of pluralism which gives rise to relative complementarity or strain. For instance, the tendency to criminalize or normalize the boys' behaviour coexisted with the more pervasive tendency to pathologize it, as I consider in the next chapter. The commitment amongst the staff to a therapeutic mode of theorization was chequered. While only two were explicitly critical about its ideological and methodological assumptions, a handful of others expressed their wariness of promiscuous therapeutic theorizing, and the dangers of untutored interventions.

In spite of this pluralism, institutional practices were neither anarchic or random. Systematic tendencies did exist in the methods through which staff made sense of their environment, and in so doing made that same environment “visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e., “accountable,” as organizations of commonplace everyday activities” [H. Garfinkel (1967) - p. vii]. Interpretation of the boys’ behaviour, and the therapeutic sense so often produced by it, was not a sacred and ritualized practice, segregated from the routines of institutional life. On the contrary such practices were an integral part of those “commonplace everyday activities” and were in this respect truly mundane. So much so that interpretative activity of this kind was accommodated within the bureaucratic structure of St. Nicholas’.

In formal reports, *ad hoc* unit notes, regular meetings and informal chats, the therapeutic mode could be drawn upon at any time to invest appearance with a deeper symbolic significance. While the most fertile field of therapeutic theorization was in relation to the boys and their behaviour, it had the power and versatility to convert even the most prosaic of organizational concerns. Any topic, from the provision of food, to the organization of jumble-sales, to the most banal managerial issue, could become infused with therapeutic significance. Since all events are assumed to be emotionally meaningful from a therapeutic perspective, nothing *in principle* exceeds the boundaries of therapeutic perusal, and nothing is exempt from its transformative potential.

I have exercised my analytical prerogative and authorial power in focusing upon therapeutic interpretations concerning the boys’ and their deviant behaviour. In so doing I have sieved and purified elements of institutional life, according some a priority to the exclusion of others. Selectivity is a fundamental feature of *all* forms of sociological analysis, (however naturalistic their tone), which must necessarily prioritize elements of the research environment if they are to provide a sharp enough focus. The irony of the *genre* of discourse analysis employed here is that the closer one remains faithful to the linguistic details of naturally occurring institutional accounts, the less material one can consider, and the more discretionary one’s choice. I have responded to these temporal and spacial limitations by highlighting a particular object of therapeutic reasoning. This emphasis upon interpretations of the boys’ behaviour also reflects the primary therapeutic preoccupation of the practitioners at St. Nicholas’.

A) The Problem Child as Child With Problems

A distinctive feature of the therapeutic orientation to deviance is bound up with how practitioners define the object of their interpretation, in this case the delinquent adolescent boy. Therapeutic discourse transforms the child whose behaviour is publicly defined as problematic into a child with emotional problems. The collapse of the depraved and deprived, the deviant and disturbed into one coterminous category was the result of a series of historical developments in the way young offenders were defined; a process which I briefly considered in chapter 2. The unification of categories could only be accomplished by treating the behaviour as *in itself* an insufficient guide to the child's motivation.

Although therapeutic discourse shares a substantive and procedural resemblance with the medical model and other "psy" professions [in Donzelot's terminology - 1980], it cannot be unproblematically yoked to them, as sociologically informed critics have sometimes tended to. Unlike psychiatry, for example, which is directly influenced by medicine, practitioners of the therapeutic reject the theory of innatism. From the ideal-typical therapeutic perspective deviance is conceived not as the manifestation of its perpetrators neuro-chemical malfunctioning, but an expression of the emotional problems engendered by his upbringing. Roger Carter, principal of St Nicholas' for most of my fieldwork, distinguishes between a psychiatric and a therapeutic approach to Junior Knight's deviant behaviour in the forthcoming piece. It is drawn from an informal discussion between Roger, Kate Lambert and a group of magistrates who were visiting St. Nicholas'.

1 [Roger describes the violence which Junior directs towards staff and boys at St. Nicholas'.]

Mag 1: In that particular instance perhaps there was a mental (.5) element that ought to be looked into . . . if it's very severe violent behaviour?

5 (2)

Roger: I-I'm not sure becus I think that if one looks at background -

Mag 1: Uhm.

10 Roger: ahm - and you look at it and -and-and-and-and say - well you know - hell - I mean - you-you know - what would you expect if you - if-if - this has gone through. And-and -you still try to - to work at it. I mean when kids have gone through - uhm - so much disruption in their earlier life - and uhm (.5) a hell of a lot in my view of deprivation (.5) and such like - in many cases. And deprivation is a-a (.5) the simple word called love anyway.

Mag 1: Uhm.

15 Roger: Uh - when kids are deprived of that (.5) ah - and a number of our kids are - then - then I think - you know - we've got problems that we ought to look at. And (.5) and that doesn't mean there's a psychiatric problem (.5) I don't
18 think. (2) Am I right?

Roger refutes the validity of a psychiatric version of Junieur's deviance as a "mental (.5) element" (line 3) originating within him. The seeds of his violent behaviour are planted in his "background", the disrupted and deprived nature of which gives rise to the expectation of trouble, ("what would you expect" - line 9). Junieur's behaviour is at once distanced from criminal intent, or mental pathology, and situated in the realm of emotional problems which "ought to (be) look(ed) at" (line 16).

Influenced as they were by the predominantly therapeutic tone of institutional discourse and their occupational culture, the staff at St. Nicholas' were predisposed toward typifying the residents in terms of their emotional problems. As nearly all the boys who were placed at St. Nicholas' had broken the law, albeit usually for minor offences, the emphasis laid upon their psychological disturbance revealed the pathologizing tendency of the staff.

The conflation of the disturbing and the disturbed was partially accomplished through the discourse of symptomology which promotes the search beneath appearance. This archeological method is apparent in the Government publication *Care and Treatment in a Planned Environment* (1970) which reported on the community homes project instigated by the 1969 *Children and Young Persons Act*. From paragraph 1:

1 "The new legal framework should enable greater weight to be given in

5 deciding what treatment a child needs, to the background and causal factors underlying his behaviour, although it must still be recognized that presenting symptoms in the form of difficult or anti-social behaviour should also receive attention in the treatment situation.

While the “presenting symptoms” (lines 3-4) could not be ignored, the priority task bestowed upon the community home was to investigate and deal with the “background and causal factors underlying his behaviour” (lines 2-3). A similar prioritization of “the underlying” was apparent amongst the staff at St. Nicholas’. Consider an extract from my interview with Roger Carter:

1 Roger: At the same time - I can say to you - quite honestly (.5) I could not tell you (1) uh (.5) what delinquent acts if any have been performed by the kids in St. Nicholas’. (1) And I think that again (1) reinforces my view - that delinquency is a symptom of something else.

5 Kim: Right - it’s - it’s relatively unimportant.

Roger: It’s an off thing of something else. Uh - (.5) I cannot tell you - I cannot tell you truly - what offences Leon Pryce has committed -

Kim: Uhm.

10 Roger: uh - Samuel Nailer before he came here. (1) Damian Tanner - before he came here - if he did - I dunno -

Kim: Mmm.

Roger: commit offences. (1) But I could tell you (.5) about all three of those boys’ families - and their background.

14 Kim: Right.

The status of the boys’ criminal history is explicitly relegated to a secondary position

as the “symptom of something else” (line 4) in both Roger’s account above and that of David Walsh, social worker in unit 4, below.

Kim: I notice that you don’t cite delinquency as uh - a common (.5) problem.
(2.5)

David: Well - I mean I think delinquency goes in tow (1) with some of the other things. But I mean -

Kim: Yer.

David: in general - the-the - that’s the way they fit. I mean (.5) yes - I mean obviously (1) delinquency is (3) uhm - is there quite a lot of the time - but I - a lot of it seems to be secondary (.5) to (.5) some (.5) either emotional (2) stage - you know . . . I think that (1.5) that the damage - uh - a certain amount of damage has occurred and then (.5) through that - delinquency may occur.

Kim: Right.

David: But I don’t think you become a thief first - and then become emotionally deprived later.

[David Walsh’s interview]

The allocation of causal precedence is apparent in David’s account, in which the boys’ deviance is seen to flow from their emotional deprivation, and expressly not vice versa. The priority is both logical and chronological; a therapeutic insight echoed by Mike Griffith, senior social worker in unit 4, who identifies deviance as the symptom of family pathology.

1 [Mike speaks of how some “kids” are brought up in criminal sub-cultures,
and quoting Matza, how others drift in and out of crime. But, he maintains:]

Mike: Uhm (1.5) there are also other kids i-in St. Nicholas’ . . . who (2) the kind of
(1) the - the - the petty thieving is a sign - kind of symptom of some (.5)
5 deeper (.5) disturbance if you like - in them and that their disturbance very

10 often is within the family. (1.5) And I think it's (.5) the (1.5) their (.5) attempts at coping with some (2) kind of . . . pathology in the family and it's their way of - of actually coping - coping with that . . . with (.5) the majority of kids we have . . . there is an underlying (.5) uhm (.5) family (.5) pathology - whether the kid's scapegoated for that -

Kim: Right.

14 Mike: and that's part of the reason - that you've gotta look - for the reason for ending up at St. Nicholas' as part of the - of - uhm (1) wider sort of (.5) uh pressures within the family.

[Mike Griffith's interview]

Petty delinquency in the "majority of kids we have" (line 8-9), is conceived as the manifestation of "deeper (.5) disturbance" (line 5) or "pathology" (line 7) which Mike locates within the family domain.

The preceding extracts reveal how the staff at St. Nicholas' tended to characterize the boy group as a whole. While such typifications were part of the ghost framework of assumptions which members tacitly brought to their interpretation of any particular case, they were rarely articulated in so many words. Indeed, all but one of the accounts above were elicited by an interview question, and the one that wasn't, by a question from a visiting magistrate. It tended to be on those rare and usually segregated occasions when such principled questions were asked, that such general and abstract answers were given. That this is so does not negate the validity of the researcher asking such questions in the course of ethnographic enquiry as long as they are treated as supplementary to the infinitely more revealing and intricate arena of naturally occurring discourse.

The ramifications of therapeutic reasoning are most fruitfully gleaned from an analysis of particular interpretations; for it is here that the generalizing framework must engage with and accommodate a unique and complex configuration of contextual details. This particularizing knowledge derived in part from the practitioners' direct contact with the child during his residence at St. Nicholas', and in part from the documented record, or case file which preceded his entry. The boy arrived pre-packaged: processed details of his historical and

emotional disturbance inscribed in a dense file of reports. For, once the *problem child* had been identified by the relevant authorities, his past and present, his unconscious and conscious motivation, became public property to be placed “on record”. This process reached a crescendo during the period of residential assessment which the deviant child underwent after being placed in care. Since the assessment centres tended toward a pathologizing bent, the histories or portraits constructed by their multi-disciplinary team were also, typically, therapeutic in tone.

The reports which composed the boy’s case file did not *determine* the sense that staff at St. Nicholas’ made of him and his behaviour in a simple sense. Indeed, many staff quoted incidents of divergence between the written characterization of a child, and their face to face experience of him. Still more expressed cynicism about the methodological validity of the psychiatric and psychological reports often based upon one interview and, in the latter case, the administration of psychological tests. Many such critics accorded greater credence to the “house” reports based upon more sustained everyday contact with the child. In this respect members would often employ the kind of methodological criteria a sociologist would to assess the validity of an account. In spite of the discretionary stance adopted toward the reports they did have the potential to influence present perceptions by providing a typifying pattern to which the boy’s contemporary behaviour could be assimilated.

The therapeutic approach pairs a distinctive style of interpretation to a symmetrical mode of intervention. It is an action philosophy, the point being not only to interpret behaviour but to change it. This pragmatic axis of the therapeutic is clearly articulated below in an extract from my interview with Agnes Turner who specialized in teaching social and practical skills.

Agnes: Oh yer - I-I - it’s quite clear - I see it very strongly as the kids that we’ve got - that aren’t coping for x number of reasons (.5) uhm - that’s the (.5) it’s the symptom of the cause (.5) I see that quite clearly. The difficulty - is in (.5) it’s one thing for instance - for - a group of people to identify the possible cause. (1) But it’s another thing to actually work with the kid (.5) for him to be able to (.5) sort of understand the causation and actually (.5) manage as well as the growing up process in - sort of overcoming that and working - so that he can cope with it outside when he leaves.

Kim: Right - so it’s a sort of translation -

Agnes: Yer.

Kim: the workers interpretation into action.

Agnes: I think the difficulty is that (1) you know - it's-it's - it's not (.5) not enough to actually identify the cause (.5) and then literally contain the kids - uhm - you know in the unit and - through the processes of St. Nicholas'. I think - you know - the important factor is not not only in recognizing it but in actually working -

Kim: Right

Agnes: you know - for the kid to actually gear himself to understanding what - you know - what actually has happened how best to adjust or adapt.

[Agnes Turner's interview]

An emotional reality, like the economic one in Marxist theory, is believed to underlie the frequently deceptive vicissitudes of appearance, and must be defined and worked through if fundamental change is to occur. Without the capacity to identify and deal with the precipitating emotions, the presenting behaviour remains unchecked.

Mike: I mean often - if you (3) unless you actually (.5) uhm (2) deal with the underlying (.5) problem - then-then - your efforts to deal with the presenting (.5) uhm - problems - are gonna be wasted (1) O.K.?

[Mike Griffith's interview]

In the extract below, from Roger Carter's interview, the therapeutic definition is married to a commensurate mode of therapeutic intervention.

[I ask Roger if he thinks the boys that come into St. Nicholas' choose to be delinquent?]

Roger: No - I-I don't believe the boys in St. Nicholas' (2) or the majority of boys in any setting such as a C.H.E. etcetera - freely choose to be delinquent. If they

did - if I felt that (.5) I don't think I'd be in the work (1) actually (.5) becus I think that (.5) uh - I don't think that I (.5) uh - am in this work (.5) uhm (1) to convince kids that it pays not to be delinquent. If I were in that I think I'd probably be - if I were in that game - I think I'd probably be (1) a prison officer ... Whereas I just happen to believe - and I believe very strongly (.5) actually - that delinquency is only a symptom (1) with the kids that we have - of a number of other factors.

Kim: Right.

Roger: So most - to me the most important is the things that I've described earlier - is that the - the kids are deprived (.5) and they have lacked love - they have lacked identity - all those things. I think they're the things a-and what a kid is in effect doing is - is actually in many cases - being delinquent - saying "look at me who I - look who I am". And that's the only way - often (.5) that a kid can actually achieve some i - sense of identification. And so - uh - I see my prime task (.5) as uhm - removing the causes - or helping to remove the causes which have caused that kid to be delinquent.

Kim: Right.

Roger: So to me (.5) uhm (.5) I do not believe that many kids uh - certainly not in St. Nicholas' . . . want to be delinquent.

Kim: Uhm.

Roger: But I think if you - I mean my own experience has told - me this - I think there's no doubt about it - that-that if you actually work hard (.5) at making (.5) uh - the kid's life secure and safe and and uh - a base from which to (.5) to uh - function from you actually then remove the need for delinquency -

Kim: Right.

Roger: becus a kid says - "I know who I am - I don't need to be delinquent". I mean

who the hell - uh - you know - wants “screws” to tell you what to do all the time?

Kim: Uhm.

Roger: They don't.

I quote at such length because this extract captures many of the background assumptions discussed throughout this section. But what I want to draw attention to within the present context is the symmetrical relationship between the identified *cause* of the problem and the proffered *solution*. Roger interprets the boys' delinquent bent in symbolic terms, as the quest for an identity to compensate for the historical deprivation of one. If the lack of a sense of self and security is the emotional *cause* of deviant acting-out the provision of an environment conducive to the cultivation of these qualities provides the logical basis for its eradication.

The catalyst for change is seen to lie in the child's awakened insight into the emotional problems which generate his delinquency; an assumption articulated below.

Roger: I think there are (1) I think after a kid's been here for a while they certainly are aware that - uh - delinquency is a symptom of som - of something else - mainly becus - we I hope - spend our time looking at a kid's difficulties - their problems - etcetera - that surround them. And suddenly they realise (.5) why they're acting-out this way. If we're doing our job properly . . . then I think that there is no doubt that the kids (1) uh - began - begin to see that (1) “gosh - this is why I am behaving this way”.

[Roger Carter's interview]

Since the therapeutic interpretations which staff at St. Nicholas' made were very often about the boys' *deviant* behaviour they also exposed another play of levels. By contravening cultural conceptions of the normal, deviant behaviour provokes a reaction which brings their parameters into sharp relief. Conceptions of the normal and deviant are mutually elaborative: one cannot identify one without the other. Any particular account of deviance draws upon a ghost network of typified assumptions about the normal, right and proper. These assumptions are absent presences: they are not explicitly articulated, but without them there would be no

rules “whose infraction constitutes deviance” [H. Becker (1963) - p.9]. Thus, whenever staff spoke of *deprived* childhoods, or *damaged* personalities, or *immaturity*, or *abnormal* relationships, such characterizations always already presupposed a corpus of assumptions about *normal* childhoods, personalities, behaviour and relationships. I use the term *ghost framework* as explored in Chapter 1, because it well describes the way in which the typifying accoutrements of the normal inhabit accounts of deviance. Institutions like St. Nicholas’, whose purpose it was to process deviance, provide a lush setting in which to explore the diversity of ways in which the normal and deviant reciprocally articulate each other.

B) Therapeutic Figuration

i) Metaphorical Messages 1: Actions Speak Louder Than Words

The Language of Appearance

From a therapeutic perspective the boy’s behaviour is conceived as a meaningful expression of his state of mind. It is my contention that this relationship which practitioners routinely forged between the behavioural surface and the motivating depth can fruitfully be understood in figurative terms. The boy’s actions were thus assumed to speak louder than words; to convey a symbolic message which skilled therapeutic decoders may “crack”. The relationship constructed between appearance and its underlying meaning may be metaphorical or ironical; based upon a resonance between the boy’s emotions and his actions, or a dissonance.

The figurative stance adopted in any particular case was based upon the practitioner’s assessment of a wealth of contextual details. These included her knowledge of the boy’s history and character (who), an evaluation of his motivation (why), a consideration of the timing of events (when) and of the immediate circumstances (what). Some of the criteria of selection will emerge in the empirical analysis throughout this chapter and the next. But I start by emphasising the basic symbolic qualities of therapeutic reasoning.

The first group of simple metaphorical formulations provide a foundation upon which an appreciation of more complex figurative arrangements may be built. In the preliminary extracts the state of a boy’s physical appearance or his bedroom is treated as a metaphorical

manifestation of his state of mind. Consider the following piece from a T.M.

1 [Nicola Hobbs, one of the “basics” teachers, speaks of how Steve Butler has
been looking dirty and scruffy lately.]

Jason: Don’t you think that’s a general sort of pattern though with (.5) boys when
they first come in - wouldn’t say boo to a goose and dress - reasonably - and
5 get up on time. Once they’ve been here a little while longer - they tend to
get a grip of the situation and they ah -

Nicola: I dunno -

Brian: Doesn’t say much {for us does it.

{

Nicola: {I always - I always think that the (.5) when personal
10 hygiene goes - it’s because they’re feeling a bit low.

Jason: Oh I - that-that’s probably {part of it.

{

Nicola: {They push boundaries without - you know - but
they still keep themselves quite neat - you know David Lyons - for example
. . . and Andy (.5) you know - they push the boundaries like mad - but they
15 do keep themselves clean.

Nicola recognizes in the boys’ physical deterioration and lapse in “personal hygiene” (lines 9-10), a kind of symbolic surplus-value; something in excess of the “general sort of pattern” (line 3) of boundary pushing suggested by Jason. Such changes in the boys’ appearance are then transformed into metaphorical statements about their emotional state, “because they’re feeling a bit low” (line 10). In the next account by contrast, Thomas McKinney, manager of unit 4, explores the symbolic significance of Steve Butler’s *improved* appearance.

1 Thomas: I mean (.5) he most definitely - well he has in fact made tremendous strides
- yer? I mean he’s he-he-he’s a much tidier looking lad in his head - if you
know - yer? He’s presenting himself as a (.5) quite a smart young man - on

5 ya hands there - yer? Whereas before like he was (.5) head down - bum-
bum-bum - yer? And - kind of spots that he had on his face - they're kinda
gone - and all-all of a sudden - Steven (.5) Butler actually started liking
Steven Butler. And what we were having was that - a-a new Steven Butler
- yer? And (.5) somehow - yes - I mean he was definitely questioning
authority - but I mean that's what it's about really (.5) yer? But he also kind
10 of was viewing - the world in a slightly different vein.

[Steve Butler's C.C.]

The "tremendous strides" and inner tidiness are metaphorically represented by Steve's improved physical stature. The smartness and even the disappearance of his spots are linked to his new found self esteem: "all of a sudden Steven Butler actually started liking Steve Butler" (lines 6-7). It is interesting how Steve's questioning of authority is interpreted, not as the anomalous symptom of a more retrogressive element, but as yet another indication of his progress: "What it's about really" (line 9). This interpretation illustrates the figurative fluidity between behaviour and what it represents. Even *ostensibly* negative behaviour may be construed as a symbolic representation of something positive. As D.C. Muecke says of irony:

"We must conclude therefore that what is 'appearance' and what is 'reality' in irony are no more than what the ironist or ironic observer take them to be, from which it follows that irony itself is not invulnerable to further irony from a new vantage point."

[D.C. Muecke (1982) - p.31]

The state of the boy's room is also accorded metaphorical potency in Roger Carter's account extracted from a S.S.M.

1 Roger: Uhm - I-I'm concerned I mean I went into a boy's bedroom today and I'm-
I'm - really and truthfully to me it was quite disgusting (.5) uhm - the state of
this boy's bedroom (.5) and I-I'm - afraid we're talking about basic care - and
I'm just - wondering if anyone actually is really taking any notice of me - or
5 if I'm really wasting my time or (.5) whatever. Or if people cannot accept my
(2) my own (.5) view - and that is that if kids' rooms are in a hell of a state (1)
then (.5) we aren't actually helping them (2) with their own thinking about
things. I-I-I believe that your room reflects what you feel and I-I believe that

10 - we as adults have some responsibility to tidy up - or help tidy up that room
(1) but to help a kid - take care of his room . . . we've all seen it - I'm telling
my grandmother to suck eggs - when a kid is blowing around and everything
else - his room is in a mess. When he's feeling not too bad his room is (.5)
13 quite neat and tidy.

Roger's account clearly articulates the metaphorical relationship between the state of a boy's room, and his feelings about himself. What is more, the symbolic connection between the two is assimilated to the shared body of social work knowledge: something which "we've all seen" (line 10). Roger uses a lapse in this basic therapeutic wisdom as an occasion on which to teach his grandmother to suck eggs, and to rehearse the metaphorical theme.

The following excerpt from Simon Wells' C.C. demonstrates some of the subtleties of the metaphorical mode of interpretation.

1 [Philip Hooper, manager of unit 3, speaks of how Simon is colluding with
other boys in the unit to "play games" and defeat the staff group. Philip says
how ultimately only the boys will lose from this attitude.]

Philip: . . . because you've had a fair crack of rollickings lately haven't you. And I
5 think that - I haven't been in your room - but I don't think your room's as tidy
as it normally is - is it?

Simon: Yes it is.

Philip: It is as tidy as it normally is. Well that's interesting to hear that because -
often if one is not feeling too good - your room is affected by that. There -
10 there was a comment - your appearance has changed I think ah - Alan was
saying that uhm -

Jan: But if I can pick you up on the room. Last week - you were so angry with
things you were going to go upstairs and smash the entire room up - weren't
you. I mean you didn't - you didn't do anything. But you were so angry that's
15 what you were going to do.

In the preceding extract Philip employs his knowledge of the typical link between the child's room and his psychological state to furnish a presumptive orientation to Simon Wells' behaviour. Judging from his present state of mind Philip would *assume* a concomitant deterioration in the state of his room. Philip's hypothesis displays how one can move as easily from the problem to the symptom (or the literal to the symbolic) as vice versa. The line of documentary reasoning bobs and weaves between the two.

Simon's negative response to Philip's question shows how a challenge to the interpretative efficacy of a piece of institutional knowledge does not threaten its viability. Instead, "secondary elaborations of belief" [as Evans-Pritchard (1937) calls them] are employed to repair the strain. Thus, Simon's deviation from the norm is categorized as an interesting exception to a rule which is thereby sustained. What's more Philip's reference to the "comment" about a change in the boy's appearance supplements the cogency of his interpretation about Simon "not feeling too good" (line 9), albeit "interestingly" not manifest in the state of his room.

Jan's contribution on lines 12-15 helps elaborate the metaphorical relationship between the boy's room and his emotions, not by recognizing Simon's case as an interesting exception but by drawing upon recent events which appear to confirm the rule. Thus, Simon's recent threat to "smash (his) entire room" (line 13) though not carried out, is assimilated to the typified pattern which is reinforced thereby.

The Family as a Medium of Symbolic Exchange

Actions are accorded a symbolic significance which speaks louder than words in the following accounts which convert the family into a medium of symbolic exchange. In Leon Pryce's psychiatric assessment report for instance his deviant glue-sniffing is conceived as an attempted solution to the propensities of his adoptive family, the M's.

1 "I feel that Leon's problems originate in the family. His parents and
 adopted siblings ooze achievement but the end results appear to be regimented:
 As if the "M" parents have successfully manipulated a whole series of
 difficult children into becoming paradigms of artistic sensitivity. Leon
5 appears to have resisted this process and to be asserting his independence."

Soon after

10

“I believe that Leon took to glue sniffing as a means of standing up to the family’s control. By inducing insanity he was able to challenge them on unreasonable grounds - he would never stand a chance while employing logic. The sniffing gave him courage for rebellion and took him to a position where it was not possible to reason him out of it. It is notable that the sniffing was a hidden pursuit although its results were only too obvious.

15

At (his first placement) Leon felt very rejected by his parents and his flight into self-injurious behaviour appears to have been directed at his adoptive father’s Achilles Heel - the threat of suicide. From the information available both gestures appear to have been attention seeking acts, without serious suicidal intent.”

[Dr. P: consultant forensic psychiatrist.]

We are immediately instructed where to find the locus of Leon’s original problem, in his adopted family, the “M’s”. This early part of the assessment (lines 1-5) gives an inkling of the primary procedures through which the account is authorized. The legitimacy of the version pivots upon the effectiveness with which the “M” parents are discredited and, simultaneously, Leon’s deviation from family expectations credited. For instance, the success of Leon’s adopted siblings (as indeed his own biological sister) is submerged in the rhetoric of force: the hot house fruits of manipulation and regimentation. Their success is dressed as a wound that oozes achievement (line 2). In this context Leon’s refusal to be “manipulated” into a “paradigm of artistic sensitivity” smacks not of temerity but of courage, not inability but independence.

Leon’s glue-sniffing thus assumes the status of resistance, articulated in a metaphorical language with which he can challenge the Logic and Rationality represented by his parents. This explanatory schema extends to the suicide attempts described in lines 12-16 which are conceived as the documentary symbols not of Leon’s wish to die, but to seek the attention of his parents by whom he felt rejected. We are instructed, I suggest, to read Leon’s “flight into self-injurious behaviour” as strategically motivated. It is *directed* at his adoptive father’s “Achilles Heel”, a phrase which suggests a design, conscious or otherwise, to resist and to injure the family in whose contact, “Leon’s problems originate” (line 1).

Thomas McKinney invests two recent incidents during Chris Jones' visits home with deeper metaphorical significance in the forthcoming extract.

1 Thomas: I think it's quite important actually that uhm (2.5) two incidents that ah -
 occurred in your house - yer (1.5) one - where if you like - young Chris - you
 feel he's actually trying too hard. You say - slow down - get someone else to
 do that. I think Chris you see - in his own way - is actually telling you
5 something very loud there. But he'll tell you in his own way in his own time
 like - and so on and so forth (.5) 'cus I don't want to start breaking the
 confidences of the child I work with - O.K.? He is telling you something now
 - that's all. The other thing was that when there was a kind of incident (.5)
 of some kind of law-breaking in the house - yer - he almost took it on board
10 himself - that he was almost feeling guilty about it.

Mrs.J: Yes.

Thomas: Guilty by his actions or whatever - yer?

Mrs.J: I think he was feeling guilty because he was there.

15 Thomas: For whatever reasons. What I'm saying is there's still that part of him - that
 is amazingly unsure - yer - in relation to what's happening inside in the in the
 space of his house (.5) yer? And sometimes if we act - and if we're unsure
17 we almost sort of feel guilt anyway - because we're unsure.

[Peter Jones' C.C.]

Thomas treats both events cited above as split manifestations of the same underlying emotion: namely, insecurity "in relation to what's happening inside in the space of his house" (lines 15-16). Both Chris' tendency to try too hard, and his misplaced guilt at the theft from an electricity meter in his home, are transformed into symbolic messages which are "actually telling you something very loud there" (lines 4-5) but which "he'll tell you in his own way in his own time like" (lines 5-6) because, presumably, he cannot say it in so many words.

Both of the forthcoming extracts allude to the symbolic exchange value of presents

within the family context. They are drawn from discussions about Simon Wells and his family in a unit 3 staff meeting.

1 [Jan Morris, Simon's special worker, speaks of how Simon had said that he didn't want to go home at Christmas because he did not get a birthday present from his family, and there were suggestions that there would not be money around at Christmas.]

5 Jan: And he's feeling - feeling - that the message is that he's not going to get a Christmas present either. And he's saying "I'm not going home (.5) for Christmas if they are not going to buy me a present". But I mean really I think he's saying - "I'm not going home for Christmas if they care that little about me". And - and - I can see exactly what he's talking about . . . But I mean - the whole thing is so rejecting - I mean - O.K. - you can be short of money - but you can buy your kid - a little - something that they feel you've remembered - and you've bought them a present. And I mean - I think it would completely destroy him - to go home for Christmas and find out that no-one had bought him a Christmas present. And he's probably frightened of that. And I think - it's surprising that we haven't had more hassle in the last week or so - because I think he's (2) he's getting a lot of rejection from home.

10

15

17

Within the symbolic currency into which the behaviour of the Wells family is converted, the exchange of presents is invested with a potent metaphorical value. Notice how Jan gives voice to what Simon is *really* saying, although again he does not say so in so many words. His refusal to go home is borne of the sense that his parents care so little for him; a message metaphorically documented by the absence of gifts. Jan thus invests Simon with the interpretative skills to penetrate the apparent and retrieve the underlying message inscribed in family actions. However, while Simon is allocated the power to read between the lines, it is Jan who has written the script. Having defined what Simon's refusal to go home *really* means, she lends authority to his perception: "I can see exactly what he's talking about" (line 9) and, "the whole thing is so rejecting ... you can be short of money but you can buy your kid - a little - something" (lines 10-11). Through this mode of authorization blame is allocated to Simon's parents, and his response is rendered appropriate, under the circumstances. Indeed, Jan is surprised that they

“haven’t had more hassle” from Simon given the rejection he has suffered from home (lines 15-17).

Jan goes on in the same meeting to raise the possibility of asking Simon’s F.S.W. to arrange financial assistance for the Wells family over Christmas, as she felt it would be “sad” for Simon to be stuck at St. Nicholas’.

1 Duncan: Yer - but I mean - that’s not really the point is it. I mean - eh - you’re not really saying it’s the money are you.

Jan: I don’t think it is but I mean -

Philip: It’s the {thoughtlessness behind it.

{

5 Duncan: {So I mean -

Jan: Perhaps - if Simon goes home and his parents are a bit - cold towards him - but he asks for something and they say “yer - O.K.” - and give him a fiver to go out and buy a jumper or something - he can come back and say “Look my mum got me that” which he has done - “my mum bought me this sweat-shirt”
10 - and he can feel good about it - even if they haven’t given him a lot of sort of warmth in other ways. And - you know - that’s part of why he used to steal so very much. Uhm - giving himself presents maybe - I don’t know! But I mean - he always has pilfered - and here is the first time he has conquered that - to a very large extent. Uhm (4) and p’raps the presents and the goodies
15 make up for some coldness - somewhere along the way - and they’re not coming now because there isn’t the spare cash around.

In this extract Jan accords the same symbolic significance to material objects whether presented as gifts or purloined. In Simon’s case both are construed as a form of compensation for lack of warmth in the family. Just as a fiver from his mum this Christmas may give him something to “feel good about” (line 10) so too was this seen to nourish his motivation to pilfer in the past: giving himself presents to compensate for a lack of familial affection. Through this chain of practical theorizing Jan reasserts the importance of financial assistance for the Wells

family over Christmas, to convert into “goodies” to “make up for some coldness - somewhere along the way” (line 15).

Keith Fletcher’s commission of a delinquent act is accorded a complex symbolic rationale in relation to his family in the next piece. The account is extracted from a meeting between the boy’s F.S.W., Roger Carter and Kate Lambert. Keith was a day boy at St. Nicholas’ and in residence at a local childrens’ home.

[The F.S.W. speaks of how a fostering placement was being considered for Keith at a recent C.C., when his mother suggested he return home to live. This amazed them all:]

F.S.W: Becus he had assumed up until that meeting that there was no way (.5) that he was going home. Well we assumed - ‘cus the offence had also happened suddenly that week too - that was (.5) two days or a day (.5) ah - before the meeting - we had assumed that he’d committed the offence deliberately at that time - so that he could then rationalize a rejection from family onto the offence. Becus one of the conditions (.5) from family about him going home has always been “keep out of trouble with the police - and go to school”. And that’s all they expect of him. They don’t expect anything else from him.

The temporal location of Keith’s offence (of Taking and Driving Away) provides a clue to its symbolic significance. His behaviour is divested of his literal meaning, stripped of its immediate circumstances, and placed within the context of Keith’s psychological motivation. From this perspective his behaviour is interpreted as a symbolic strategy to rationalize the rejection he assumed he would suffer from his mother. It should be remembered, of course, that Keith himself did not proffer this therapeutic version of events; his actions are inscribed with a communicative power in excess of what can be articulated in so many words.

ii) Metaphorical Messages 2: The Case of Displacement

In the figurative manoeuvres characteristic of therapeutic reasoning the subject’s actions are constructed as a surface upon which symbolic messages are inscribed. Through the process of practical therapeutic theorizing practitioners forge a metaphorical link between the

boy's behaviour and the emotions it purportedly represents. The following group of extracts display a recurrent mode of metaphorical interpretation whereby the child's deviant motivation is understood as the manifestation of feelings which originate elsewhere. A translocation of emotions is involved which invites a metaphorical play between the behaviour and its psychological origins. The *here and now* is thus interpreted as a displacement of the feelings which derive from *then and there*.

In the first extract the incidence of delinquency outside of the home is treated as a metaphorical displacement of rejection within it. The piece is extracted from the written report by an educational psychologist at a child guidance clinic, and refers to Keith Fletcher, one of St. Nicholas' day boys.

1 "It seems to me an extremely rejecting home background and personal
relationships are the key to Keith's school difficulties. In the short time he
was (at his secondary school) he appeared to invite fights with his peer group
and was involved on the edge of crime with other boys and men. He appears
5 to be "acting out" his anger at the rejection of his family in delinquent acts."

We are encouraged from the outset to recognize Keith's "school difficulties" as the metaphorical manifestation of his extreme rejection at home, since in this, we are told, lies the "key" (lines 1-2). Although the nature of Keith's "school difficulties" is not yet revealed, the use of this phrase has ramifications which structure our perception of his behaviour. It helps frame a preliminary definition of the child as having difficulties with the school, rather than they with him, and thus carries some of the exonerating connotations characteristic of the therapeutic mode.

The therapeutic predisposition set up in lines 1-2 helps alleviate the figurative tension between the emotional cause of Keith's behaviour and his deviant response. Following a description of his aggressively and marginally criminal behaviour (lines 2-5), the piece culminates with a therapeutic interpretation of its significance. Through his delinquency Keith is seen to "act-out" the anger induced by the familial rejection of which we have already heard.

The symbolic conversion of rejection into delinquency, and the translocation of events originating in the home to the school, is discursively realized through the mediating force of

anger. The persuasiveness of this manoeuvre relies upon the cultural co-participation of writer and readers (mimesis (1) in Ricoeur's terms - see pages 252-254) through which Keith's anger can be meaningfully linked to his rejection. That other emotions such as sadness or withdrawal may equally be induced by rejection does not undermine the propriety of anger as an understandable response.

What is purportedly being acted-out in the previous extract is a generalized sense of rejection engendered by the events of Keith's family background. Chris Jones' compulsion to act-out, by contrast, is linked to a specific historical trauma in the following piece extracted from his psychiatric assessment report.

1 "I have seen Chris twice, who talked quite readily about the facts, but divorced all feeling from himself . . .

5 Chris hardly knows his father who left when Chris was two, and who has only seen him three times since. His father sends money and birthday cards to his sisters but never him. When I asked him what he felt about that, his reply was "nothing, it is not worth bothering about". He denied missing his dad, saying that he had never had one to compare with what it would be like to have one."

Shortly afterwards:

10 "Chris is not at all in touch with his angry feelings towards his dad or his siblings but acts them out when he becomes violent at home. His complete denial about having any conflict within himself would make any
12 psycho-therapeutic work with him almost impossible."

In this extract, as in the last, the child's violence is seen as the metaphorical expression of anger borne of rejection. The meaningful association between the earlier events and Chris' reaction to them relies upon the reader drawing upon her background assumptions about what it *must* be like to be left by one's father at the age of two, and to be ignored thereafter. The identification of anger as a typical and understandable response provides the requisite cognitive conditions for the link up between a nodal point in Chris' past and his propensities in the present.

The symbolic conversion of one thing into another is thus managed by recourse to a shared body of typified emotional assumptions.

It is notable that *Chris'* acknowledgement of the motives which purportedly underlie his violence is not a necessary part of establishing their existence. The account draws upon the theory of denial; a central plank of therapeutic reasoning. We are told how Chris "denied missing his dad" (line 6), how he is "not at all in touch with his angry feelings towards his dad or his siblings" (lines 9-10), and about his "complete denial about having any conflict within himself" (lines 10-11). Many assumptions are concurrently presupposed in arriving at this interpretation. To say Chris denies and is not in touch with his feelings is to prejudge their existence. Just as the boy himself may be out of touch with the feelings which motivate him, authorized others may be the better judge of them. Indeed it is precisely Chris' dissociation from his earlier feelings which is held accountable for their metaphorical emergence in the present. Like holding down a buoy, the emotions periodically erupt with uncontrollable force. The ironic connotations of denial are considered on pages 161-173 below.

The metaphorical displacement of anger toward mother on to women in general informs the next extract from the psychological assessment of Paul Black.

1 "Paul says he is fond of his mother, but most females are talked about as old
 slags or tarts. Paul finds his mother's grief over the death of Julie as
 something he cannot stand, probably because his mother's grief diminishes
 his own grief and guilt, and also his need for love and approval is lost because
5 his mother is preoccupied with her own depressive feelings and needs.
 Paul's anger against females in general was freely expressed in (a previous
 placement), and in the extent to which he stirred up trouble with his foster
8 parents."

Although the metaphorical link is not overtly bonded, the logic of juxtaposition is such, I suggest, as to convey the sense of a connection. The necessary tension which figurative discourse spawns emerges in lines 1-2. While Paul *says* he is fond of his mother, he is derogatory about most other females. Quite a lot of the discursive work is made to hang on the word *says* (line 1) which is juxtaposed to the narrator's version of what he actually *does*. Since the therapeutic practitioner tends to be invested with an epistemological superiority in defining the

client's feelings, the psychologist's version is not open to evaluation in quite the same way, although it is by no means beyond the reach of question.

Within the first sentence, however, the implied anomaly is not sufficient to negate a literal interpretation. It is possible that Paul's fondness for his mother does not extend to other females; a split for which good psychological reasons could, no doubt, be found. The reasoning contained on lines 2-8 renders such an interpretation more problematic. Paul's fondness for a mother whose grief at the death of her youngest daughter he cannot stand, strains more seriously upon the leash of literal credibility. While the two factors are not *in themselves* wholly anomalous, the discursive emphasis on my reading is upon the creation of a disjuncture which yields to symbolic interpretation. The diminution of Paul's own grief and guilt, together with the deprivation of love which is assumed to flow from his mother's preoccupation with her own grief, gives rise to the anger which Paul purportedly displaces onto women in general and his foster parents in particular.

It was part of therapeutically informed institutional wisdom that the boys may *transfer* the feelings they had toward their parents on to other adults in their lives. This encouraged a symbolic orientation to the boys' contemporary relationships with members of staff which were often identified as the enactment of earlier psychological patterns. Such metaphorical transference of feeling is apparent in each of the forthcoming extracts. In the first, John Townsend, head of social work during the early months of my fieldwork, notes his preliminary response to Paul Black's referral papers.

"He appears to be transferring a lot to male and female staff from his parents, and the splitting of the foster parents is classic."

Or again:

[Roger Carter speaks of how Leon Pryce has a love-hate relationship with his long-term foster mother - Mrs. M.]

Roger: And I think that is why - people like Mavis - suffer so much (1) from him here (.5) because he had this relationship - he identified - he identifies Mavis in particular (1) with Mrs. M.

[P.O.'s Meeting]

Finally,

[Agnes Turner, in her interview, speaks of her contact with a new day-boy
- Mathew Walters.]

Agnes: But - yer - you see his parents - I mean (1.5) it's this transference thing - I mean I've only got to sound in anyway like (.5) mum and dad (.5) and he-he's just up - up in the air.

In these cases, as in many others, the nature and pattern of the boy's contact with members of staff is treated as a metaphorical representation of his relationship with his parents. By dint of assumed resemblance - the keystone of metaphor - the historical and emotional "reality" which is assumed to underlie appearance can be read off from the symbolic patterns inscribed on the surface. Hence, in the following account, Ted Vincent's separate assaults upon two black social workers at St. Nicholas' are treated as the symbolic displacement of the violent feelings he *really* has toward his father. This interpretation was proffered by Lawrence Mansfield, Ted's special worker from unit 2, following the boy's juvenile court appearance for the second offence of assault. As the conversation was informal, and off the premises of St. Nicholas', I was unable to tape record. The account is based upon notes made immediately afterwards.

"Lawrence said that it was interesting how Ted (himself a West Indian boy) had assaulted two black, male social workers at St. Nicholas', and that some of the staff in unit 2 considered that this might be an unconscious assault upon his father. Ted couldn't acknowledge aggressive feelings toward his father, Lawrence said, and probably felt guilty about them. Black social workers acted as ready substitutes for his anger."

Ted's violent assaults, perpetrated against two members of social worker staff, are seen to bear the symbolic mark of Ted's anger toward his father. The colour of his victims provides a clue in formulating this interpretation, since it suggests the bond of resemblance, in this case blackness, necessary for a metaphorical association to gel. It is Ted's denial of anger, induced by his feelings of guilt, in which lay the key to his displacement onto members of staff.

In a further mode of metaphorical displacement the child's orientation to others is understood as a projection of his negative feelings toward himself. In each of the forthcoming extracts the child's difficult behaviour is treated as a metaphorical projection of his lack of self-esteem. As with any symbolic manoeuvre, this involves the recontextualization of events within an underlying pattern which denudes them of their ostensive meaning. Thus, in her written comments about Simon Wells' referral papers, Kate Lambert interprets his lying, manipulating and sly behaviour not as a manifestation of his self-interestedness, deviousness or immorality, but as a metaphor of his depleted sense of self-worth.

"In my opinion this lad sees himself of little worth and sees no wrong in doing unworthy acts - lying, manipulating, behaving in a "sly" underhand way. I believe he badly needs many successful experiences where he can receive the attention he so badly needs for the right reasons."

If the emotional problems derive from lack of self-worth, then the therapeutic solution resides in its enhancement. Kate amplifies the need, so often espoused at St. Nicholas', to engineer successful experiences for a child such as Simon so that he may gain the positive attention whose absence is assumed to be partially responsible for generating the original problem.

A negative self-image is similarly seen to underlie Andy Fisher's behaviour in Roger Carter's account below.

Roger: You're denying actually - it goes back to what Kate says - and we go back again to what Kate says because . . . I think it's so important - until Andy sees himself as worthy (1.5) of respect - she said - he will fail to respect others. And you actually are not respecting the group. I mean she's spot on again here - until you see yourself - ahm as-as ahm - you know - somebody who's got something to contribute - it aint gonna work.

[Extract from Andy's C.C.]

Andy's *external* behaviour to others is treated as a metaphorical deflection of his *internal* state of mind. Similarly, below, the connotations of Leon's conduct are transformed into a metaphorical expression of his diminished self-image. The extract is drawn from a P.O's

iii) Attention Seeking and Testing-Out: From Metaphor to Irony

In this category of extracts deviant behaviour is construed as a metaphorical expression of the child's pursuit of attention. The need to be noticed is classically associated with the child's historical lack of attention for which his present behaviour is an attempted compensation. At a certain point in this *genre* of interpretation the metaphorical shades into the ironical; for acts of deviance are not only seen in terms of the bid for attention, albeit of a negative kind, but also borne of the compulsion to "test-out" the boundaries of love or acceptance by acting in such a way as to challenge them. The boys at St. Nicholas were often seen to be involved in engineering their own rejection. The discursive manoeuvre necessary to restore meaning to such an interpretation is ironical; behavioural appearance turns the emotional reality on its head.

In the forthcoming material I explore both metaphorical resonance and ironical dissonance. Let us start, however, with a consideration of accounts which have a metaphorical tone. In the first group, the child's self-injurious behaviour is interpreted as a desire to win the attention and affection of his parents. It thus stands as a metaphorical symbol of the child's need to be loved. In the first piece Frank Mercer, manager of unit 1, offers a richly detailed synopsis of Damian Tanner's motivational rationale.

1 Frank: Yer (1.5) uh we'll take Damian Tanner. Now (.5) when Damian was first
admitted to St. Nicholas' (1.5) I saw him as (1) being an extremely (1) on
paper (2) disturbed boy. Now (1) he was - prior to coming into care he was
- in - Charing Cross hospital with (.5) rheumatic fever. (2) And the hospital
5 - his behaviour was so diabolical - in that hospital (1.5) uhm (1) refusing all
kinds of medication - even though if he didn't take it (.5) there was a
possibility he may snuff it and die (1) uh that the hospital actually saw fit to
actually write (.5) a report about it (.5) of their concern for him. (2) Now
(2) I read that and I studied that (1) and I looked for other factors (.5) within
10 the assessments that could tie in with that. Now one thing that I tied in with
was the fact that it was a shot in the dark (1.5) that (.5) mum has two sons
younger than Damian - one of eleven - one of eight. The eight year old is
mentally handicapped (2) takes a hell of a lot of mum's time. He's - now in
school - but when Damian was younger he would have been a constant
15 twenty-four hour supervision programme. Damian's dad was working at

20 that time - he's now retired. And I thought - now then (.5) if Damian was
willing to make himself really ill - he would get the attention from mum (1)
that the mentally handicapped child was getting. So I took a gamble and put
that to 'im. I just said - "I've got a theory about the way you behaved in
hospital". And he said, "oh what's that?" I said "I just think that you were
just being bloody-minded - and when they told you - that you might become
severely ill or (even) might have died - that you - said uh (2) 'Phew! I can
get a lot of attention off of mum then'." And he admitted to a certain extent
that was true. (2.5) Now whether he was having me on or not - or whether
25 he wasn't I don't know. But because he admitted to a certain extent it was
true - it opened up a lot of avenues for further discussion on that.

[Frank Mercer's interview]

Frank details the historical detective work he does to elicit the causal origins of Damian's "extremely (1) on paper (2) disturbed" behaviour (lines 2-3), and his discovery of an item which provides an emotional rationale. The intensity of supervision required by the birth of Damian's mentally handicapped brother would have diverted his mother's attention away from him. Frank's train of practical reasoning is given a voice in lines 16-18: "And I thought - now then (.5) if Damian was willing to make himself really ill - he would get the attention from his mum (1) that the mentally handicapped child was getting".

The investigative search occurs along the two intersecting matrices: through the chapters of biographical time and through the strata of consciousness. My present concern is with how Damian's "diabolical" behaviour in hospital, in particular his life-threatening refusal to take medication, is extracted from its literal connotations, and invested with metaphorical significance as a psychological strategy designed to wrestle attention away from Damian's handicapped and demanding brother.

Frank's interpretation of Damian's motivation is not wholly pathologizing. His apparently disturbed behaviour is accorded an element of normality, at least in terms of the internal rationality of Damian's actions. Note in lines 1-3 that Frank speaks of how, "when Damian was first admitted to St. Nicholas' (1.5) I saw him as (1) being an extremely (1) on paper (2) disturbed boy". Two items combine to encourage a marginalization of Frank's tentative interpretation. The first serves to relegate Frank's own perception of Damian's disturbance to

an initial one confined to “when Damian was first admitted”. It also serves to suggest a future modification in Frank’s interpretation which followed in the wake of his initial impression. This itself feeds into a wider cultural presumption that initial impressions can be faulty and subject to later alteration.

The second item which marginalizes Frank’s initial impression of Damian’s disturbance draws upon a distinction which was often made between the theoretical assessment of a child contained in his case file, and the impressions that staff formulated about him through the course of face to face contact. Indeed, it was an integral feature of institutional wisdom that the assessment of a child may distort his “real” character. In this instance, Frank’s adjudication of the Damian inscribed in the referral papers is later subverted by his reappraisal of the child and his bloody-minded pursuit of attention.

Keith Fletcher’s apparently self-injurious bent is given similarly metaphorical treatment in the following extract from a meeting between Roger Carter, Kate Lambert and Keith’s F.S.W.

- 1 Kate: Here the other day he told you he wishes he was dead didn’t he.
- F.S.W: Yes.
- Kate: When we were interviewing him whether he should come here or not - he
5 said he wishes he was dead (1.5) and ah - I found that interesting.
 (1.5)
- Roger: Did he really say that?
- Kate: Mmm.
- F.S.W: I don’t see him (.5) I don’t see him as a suicidal lad in that sense ... that’s why
 - I mean I don’t take it as a serious threat.
- 10 Kate: Oh no no nor - {nor-nor-nor do I.
 {
- F.S.W: {Or actually - or actually as a deeply depressive sort of

character either.

Kate: He does get deeply depressed sometimes though doesn't he.

F.S.W: He does.

15 Kate: Very deeply.

F.S.W: He does - but I wonder whether that's more of his mood - because he can be totally high (.5) and elated about (.5) something - and then - very quickly - he-can-he-can-he-can drop down. You know - more of a mood swing than actually -

20 Kate: Typical sort of manic behaviour.

F.S.W: Uhm - but you see he uhm - again at (the assessment centre) I don't know whether it's mentioned at all in the assessments (.5) uhm (1) he's had - he's played about with glue-sniffing - someone introduced him to glue-sniffing there.

25 Roger: Huh hum.

F.S.W: He's also - which I which I - I tend to feel is a bad sign (.5) in terms of how he feels about himself - to-to-to-to go into that. Uh - and also - he had a go with aspirins - he took - he took a load of tablets (.5) uh - the same day - as we were having a family meeting in the - in the evening. So it may well have just been - a (?hint?) to the family. Uhm - so he's had a go at those sort of (.5) self (1) mutilating (.5) types of things. Uh - but I've-I've always locked onto them not as actually wanting to harm himself - but more to do with - "What do I have to do (.5) folks before you - say you love and care about me?"

30

35 Kate: Huh hum.

F.S.W.: Uh - so that he did them - and then rang home (.5) to his older sister - saying
"ya not to say a word" knowing full well she'd blab everything -

Kate: {Yer.
{

F.S.W: {as soon as mum got home.

40 Kate: Mmm.

42 F.S.W: So that when mum arrived at (the meeting) "What 'ave you done to
yourself? What's 'appened" (.5) you know - which-which - he enjoyed.

The F.S.W. works hard in lines 1-20 to extricate Keith Fletcher's proclaimed wish to be dead and apparent periods of depression from a roundly pathologizing interpretation. She defines him as neither a suicidal or a deeply depressed character, but one responsive to extreme mood swings. The *motif* articulated by Kate carries with it more pathologizing connotations. She finds his proclaimed wish to be dead "interesting" and recognizes "he does get very depressed sometimes" (line 13). This segment on lines 1-20 furnishes a preliminary orientation to the attention-seeking interpretations to come on lines 21-42.

However, for the moment it is interesting to note how the two versions proffered by the F.S.W. and Kate mutually accommodate each other and thus diminish the risk of a "reality disjuncture" [M. Pollner - 1975] with all the morally disruptive ramifications which flow from it. Firstly the F.S.W.'s denial that Keith is a suicidal lad is corroborated by Kate in line 10 ("Oh no - no - nor . . . do I"). Lines 11-15 generate a distinction between depressive characters on the one hand, and characters who get deeply depressed on the other, thus creating the opportunity for cognitive compromise. What signals Kate's acceptance of the distinction (and hence alerts the F.S.W. to her willingness to compromise) is her use of the term "though" on line 13: "he does get deeply depressed sometimes *though* doesn't he". Its inclusion means that Kate's characterization can be encompassed within the F.S.W.'s: Keith is not deeply depressive (F.S.W. - line 11), though he does sometimes get very depressed (Kate, line 13). The term "sometimes" supplements the sense of Keith's depression being a feature of his character rather than being definitive of it; a conception reinforced by the F.S.W.'s pairing of Keith's periods of depression to equally

extreme periods of elation which suggests the propriety of a manic rather than a wholly depressive characterization.

The F.S.W. goes on to describe Keith's involvement in two forms of behaviour which she describes as "self-mutilating" (line 31). Both his glue-sniffing and his consumption of a "load of tablets" (line 28) are conceived as a "bad sign" (line 26), and the manifestation of what Keith "feels about himself" (line 27). However, her account goes on to distance Keith's underlying motive from a more literal interpretation of its meaning; she sees it *not* as actually wanting to harm himself (line 32). Having dismissed the ostensive, Keith's self-injurious behaviour returns as a symbolic call for love which he feels is unattainable through less radical means: "What do I have to do folks before you - say you love me and care about me" (lines 33-34). What's more his "go with aspirins" (lines 27-28) is invested with a strategic rationality both in terms of *when* it occurred (the same day as a family meeting), and Keith's notification of his sister immediately afterwards ("knowing full well she'd blab everything" - line 37), which negates a wholly pathological or suicidal motive. Of course, Keith's need to resort to such behaviour to gain attention could be enveloped within another more pathologizing layer of theorization. I read this account, however, as an attempt to establish a rationality and consciousness at the kernel of Keith's behaviour which undermines an exclusive definition of its depressive or suicidal status. What's more his gesture is apparently gratified: he gained the concerned attention of his mother which, we are told, "he enjoyed" (line 42).

Leon Pryce's self-injurious behaviour culminating in a "suicide attempt" is also interpreted as a metaphorical gesture in the three snippets presented below. To summarize, Leon was initially placed in a residential unit in an East London assessment centre while a long-term placement was sought. During his stay there Leon became involved in glue-sniffing, and made a number of suicide threats while under the influence of glue. This culminated in Leon hanging himself from a light fitting, and being cut down in a semi-conscious state by members of staff. Soon after this incident Leon was removed to the secure unit in an assessment centre close to St. Nicholas' where a series of assessment reports were compiled. The three forthcoming extracts are drawn from this compendium, the first from his psychiatric assessment report.

- 1 A) "At (the previous placement) Leon felt rejected by his parents and his flight into self-injurious behaviour appears to have been directed at his adoptive father's Achilles Heel - the threat of suicide. From the information available

5 both gestures appear to have been attention-seeking acts, without serious suicidal intent.”

Or, in the words of a social worker at the assessment centre.

1 B) “It is not clear whether Leon’s suicide attempts were genuine attempts to
kill himself or not, but there is some evidence to suggest that Leon may have
been using these gestures as a way of getting through to his step-father, a
consultant psychiatrist ‘If I act mad and attempt suicide, perhaps he will take
5 more notice of me’.”

Finally, from the educational psychologist’s report.

1 C) “That there may have been other motives involved in his suicide attempts is
suggested by the report that he had pointed out to his foster father during
a visit to the secure unit, that he was making a “coffin”. This was actually a
4 small box he was making for the craft room I believe.”

In each of the three extracts the author posits an explanation of Leon’s suicidal behaviour which departs from the literal. With different degrees of tentativeness each recognizes in Leon’s self-injury a symbolically encoded message to his adoptive father - Dr. M.

In extract A the metaphorical significance of Leon’s behaviour is more confidently asserted, though not unqualified. An interpretative frame is erected to which proceeding events may be assimilated. The conjunctive “and” following the identification of Leon’s sense of rejection by his parents (line 1) suggests a causal connection between the feelings and the self-injurious behaviour. This association does not in itself denude Leon’s actions of their literal implication. His sense of rejection may - for argument’s sake - have driven him to a suicide attempt. The interpretation inscribed on lines 1-3, however, militates against such a reading. That Leon’s *threat* of suicide was *directed* against his adoptive father’s weakness suggests a planfulness which strains away from the sense of suicidal despair. Lines 3-5 embody a specific rejection of the literal interpretation. Leon’s suicidal gestures were (at least “from the information available” - line 3) without serious suicidal intent. What fills the semantic vacuum

and resolves the tension attendant upon all figurative discourse is an appreciation of the symbolic value of Leon's behaviour as a bid for attention.

Extract B is more cautiously equivocal. The status of Leon's suicide attempts are defined as unclear, although "there is *some* evidence to *suggest* that they *may* have been" symbolic gestures designed to "get through" to and be noticed by his step-father. Whereas the psychiatrist in extract A privileges a particular version of events, albeit couched in the rhetoric of how it *appears* from the information available, the social worker's report in extract B spawns two alternative versions, the ambiguity of which is unresolved: it is unclear whether Leon's suicide attempts were genuine or symbolic.

I include the final excerpt to illustrate how a cognitive canopy, once erected, may be extended to accommodate a range of prospective events, which, in their turn help confirm the original interpretation. (This retrospective-prospective mode of accounting is examined in Chapter 8). Leon's report to his father that he was making a coffin in his craft lesson when *actually* he was making a small box synchronizes with the metaphorical significance of his suicide attempts.

The symbolic search for attention has taken quite a dramatic turn in the cases considered above, involving self-injury and even possible death. Not all interpretations of attention-seeking fed on such extreme types of behaviour, as the following examples demonstrate. The first piece, drawn from one of David Lyons' C.C.'s, shows how attention-seeking interpretations may equally apply to more mundane misdemeanours.

1 Kate: Yes - yes - the mischievous bit - likes to be chased - likes to be cuddled - and
I think it ties in with what George said - the uncertainty he had earlier of
whether he was loved or not. And I feel that - my own impression is that
behind quite a lot of his horse-play and dashing around - is the need for
5 people to notice him and want him and to love him. That may be over
simplifying what I want to say - but that's what I believe. On the one hand
if you want someone to do something for you that requires - quite mundane
work - washing-up - cleaning-up - tidying-up - carry this - fetch that - push
that for me - David is the most willing - and reliable boy in school . . . there's
10 that side of him which is - perhaps - a desire to gain approval.

David's "mischievous" behaviour, his "horse-play and dashing around" (lines 1 and 4) is figuratively linked to his underlying desire to be noticed, wanted and loved. This motivation is given an historical dimension, borne of the earlier uncertainty "whether he was loved or not" (line 3). Kate proceeds in lines 6-9 to describe a helpful, co-operative, reliable facet to David. An interesting feature of this dual portrait is that the different "sides" are defined as split manifestations of the same motivation to seek attention, love and approval, albeit through very different means. This is the power of symbolic interpretation: having slipped its literal moorings, the "same" piece of behaviour may yield a variety of potential meanings, and the "same" motive may be seen to underlie a diversity of behavioural expressions.

In the metaphorical mode of theorizing attention-seeking behaviour a sense of semantic resonance connects the behaviour with the emotions which generate it. Where accounts of attention-seeking shade into those of testing-out an ironical contrast characterizes the relationship between appearance and reality. This shift in emphasis from a metaphorical to an ironic mode of theorization is beautifully exemplified in the forthcoming piece. The intimate connection between theories of attention-seeking and testing-out is most apparent here because the motivation to seek attention is associated with the child's need to "test-out" whether he is loved and wanted by significant people in his life. An elaborate motivational bridge links a contemporary behavioural episode to Paul Black's history in the following interaction from a T.M.

1 [Brian Potter, the art teacher, describes an incident where Paul Black
squeezed paint on the art room floor, and then when Brian asked him to
clear it up, refused and continued to "abuse" Brian for the next twenty
minutes. Kate reports that she had spoken to Paul since the incident and he
5 had agreed to clear it up.]

Kate: . . . It was Paul's way of saying he did it! (2.5) O.K. (1.5) I was saying to Brian
- really a lot of the kids we have in here are genuinely disturbed - and you can
fall over backwards making excuses - so it becomes ridiculous.

Brian: Mmm.

10 Kate: "Oh he's like that because mum ran away with the dustman nineteen years

ago” etcetera. But I think in certain cases of very genuine disturbance - and in my opinion Paul is probably the most disturbed - one of the most disturbed boys here.

Brian: Mmm.

15 Kate: And - squirting paint on the floor - as I said it’s a bloody silly thing to do - it’s not a cardinal sin.

Brian: No.

Kate: It wasn’t the squirting of the paint it was what was behind it.

Brian: Yer.

20 Kate: See - I-I - in my opinion (2) it sounds (2) it sounds very presumptuous to try to talk. . . to try to talk psychologically about Paul without qualification - but you can’t work - for a long time in this work without - picking up what you believe (1) er - are ideas about the kids. And - in my opinion you see - with his dad continually rejecting him - he often engineers a confrontation with
25 someone - that he could see as a good stable father figure (1) ah where he’ll really make you wild and he’ll curse you and swear at you - and if next day he meets you - and you don’t reject him - I think every now and again he needs
28 to prove that you’re not going to turn your back on him.

The procedural plenitude of this extract repays detailed analysis. The lengthy preamble to Kate’s interpretation of Paul’s behaviour (lines 6-23) can be read as an attempt to legitimize her version of events. She first of all distinguishes between historical analysis which falls into the category of “excuse”, and, by implication, that which falls into the category of “non-excuse”, or genuine explanation. By incorporating this acknowledgement into her preliminary comment Kate attributes her prospective account with the status of being genuine and valid (i.e. not an excuse). The psychological substance of Kate’s account is simultaneously authorized through the typification of degrees of disturbance. The reasoning appears to approximate this:

- a) In some cases of genuine disturbance a therapeutic explanation falls within the jurisdiction of an excuse
but,
- b) in other cases of “very genuine disturbance”, (line 11), such as this one, psychological explanation is valid.

While the legitimacy of the latter is not explicitly stated, the reader’s orientation to pairings fills the absence. The rule can be reduced to the following:

- a) in certain cases this,
but,
- b) in other cases that.

Where “this” is stated, and not “that”, the reader may reverse “this” to get “that”.

Having authorized the validity of a therapeutic mode of account “in cases like this”, Kate proceeds to legitimize her own knowledge base. She does so by staging the familiar manoeuvre of pre-empting criticism:

- a) it *sounds* this,
 - b) but that.
-
- a) “. . . it sounds very presumptuous . . . to try to talk psychologically about Paul without qualification . . . but,
 - b) you can’t work - for a long time in this work without picking up . . . ideas about kids.”
(lines 20-23)

Thus, although some psychological explanations may be “excuses” and/or their authors unqualified, Kate’s documented awareness of these possibilities helps demarcate her account from them.

The surface of Paul’s behaviour is explicitly relegated to a superficial status: “a bloody silly thing to do” but “not a cardinal sin” (lines 15-16). Its literal significance is displaced in favour of “what was *behind* it” (line 18): i.e. a history of paternal rejection. The essential route between Paul’s history, and contemporary manifestations of delinquent behaviour, take us

15 Kate: Yer - almost as if this is all going too well - I better have a quick check that
(1.5) ah-ah you you know {I'm

{

20 Jan: {Yes - he seems to enjoy feeling that there's
something hanging over his head. It's a control - it's an external control
which he can then use (.5) for himself (.5) I mean he can say - "well I'd like
to do - such and such (.5) but I know I can't - be-because you know" - and
then he won't! And he seems to enjoy a sort of dire feeling of - of some kind
of threat hanging over him.

Brian: Maybe that {gives him -

{

Nicola: {He does that -

24 Brian: some sort of structure.

The tone of this ironic mode of theorizing is neo-Durkheimian. Durkheim's claim that cognitive and moral boundaries are only crisply adumbrated in response to their contravention is given figurative significance in relation to the individual's behaviour. Dressed in all their insecurities boys "of this kind" are seen to need to test the solidity of "boundaries". By deviating from them they are furnished a) with a sense of where the boundaries lie and b) a concrete sense of structure erected through the administration of punishment.

It is, perhaps, important to explicitly distinguish my approach to the concept of boundaries from that characteristic of functionalism and phenomenology. However different in emphasis, both of the latter prioritize the *analyst's* version of what actors are doing when they engage in acts of so-called symbolic boundary maintenance. An ethnomethodological orientation to boundaries (as indeed any other social phenomena) diverts attention onto the methods through which *members* routinely invest behaviour with a sense of symbolic significance. From this perspective questions of whether actors are *really* engaged in maintaining boundaries becomes less important than an analysis of how they themselves theorize and in the process, construct boundaries. From the briefest perusal of the foregoing account it is apparent that the concept of boundary keeping is not the exclusive property of sociologists. Indeed, it is an integral

part of common sense knowledge in general, and therapeutic theories of testing-out in particular.

In lines 1-6 Kate evokes a *motif* which she has deciphered in Paul's behaviour and which has the tentative status of "how it seems" to her. Jan's response in lines 7-13 lends weight to the burgeoning pattern. The theorization offered on lines 14-24 is dedicated to a retrieval of the motivations which undergird such patterned manifestations. Two candidate explanations emerge to account for Paul's predilection for messing things up when all is apparently well. In the first Paul is testing, or checking out the trustworthiness of the environment and those who reside in it. In the second, Paul's behaviour is interpreted as an attempt to ensure the erection of a structure of external control within which he feels more secure. Thus, Paul's involvement in deviant activities when circumstances are more settled is understood not in terms of his sense of liberation from external constraints, or his desire to go beyond them, as a more literal interpretation would have it, but as an ironic bid for their reinstatement.

Notable throughout this extract is how the more an ironic pattern is identified, the more events are conceived as a meaningful embodiment of it. Rather than treating Paul's unexpected bouts of glue-sniffing as a testament to their randomness, they are brought into causal correlation with the behaviour which preceded them. Periods of reasonably even-keeled behaviour (this) followed by (then) bouts of disruptiveness (that), are transformed into this *because of that*: a procedure which is key to the establishment of causality (see Chapter 7). Paul's behaviour is thus constructed as an ironic expression of his need to test-out the reliability of the world, and impose an external structure of control for himself. The suspension of disruptive behaviour following these episodes is similarly endowed with a consequential status in creating the "even keel" responsible for activating a further bout.

iv) Ironical Messages: he kicked me because he wants to be loved

In metaphor the tension between "reality" and "appearance", or the literal and symbolic, is based upon a relationship of similarity. In irony, the relationship is one of difference; surface manifestations of behaviour are seen to convey the opposite of what they *really* mean. Thus, for example, a child's apparent confidence, strength and bravado are treated as the ironic document of his insecurity, vulnerability and lack of self-worth. There are many dimensions to the ironical nature of therapeutic practice, some of which will be explored throughout this

section. I start, however, with a series of simple but effective illustrations of the ironic mode of interpretation. The first is from Tony Salter's psychiatric assessment report.

a) "Underneath all his bluster (Tony) is a rather confused, frightened little boy, desperately insecure who needs constant reassurance and attention."

b) "Although on the surface he is quite brash - I detect considerable uncertainty underneath. He is actually quite a sensitive boy."
[Brian Potter's art report from one of Richard Ashworth's C.C.'s.]

c) "He was continually testing-out staff barriers, protecting his vulnerability behind the facade of abusive bravado. He was concerned to perpetuate this image of wreckless anarchy."
[Report on Tony Salter by a member of staff at his previous residential placement]

d) "(Andy is) a sensitive boy who makes up for his lack of confidence by putting on a rather ridiculous front of bombastic and attention-seeking behaviour."
[Brian Potter's art report from one of Andy Fisher's C.C.'s]

e) [Kate speaks of an ex-resident called Mark.]
Kate: Uhm - he was a very big burly skin-head lad - very into football hooliganism ... And uhm - he had absolutely no (.5) he had this (.5) pseudo confidence (.5) but he was really very insecure - uhm - but still had to live up to this "big image".
[Kate Lambert's interview.]

f) "To Junieur the image is so important. That image has to be tough, defiant, anti-authority, etcetera. Junieur presents as a young man with very low opinion of self - hence the arrogance etcetera to compensate for this."
[Roger Carter's written summary of one of Junieur Knight's C.C.'s.]

g) "Underneath it was suspected that he was really worried and nervous, and that his confidence was very fragile, despite his display of self-assurance. It

was important to him to look confident, and that everything was going his way.”

[Written summary of Graham Mellor’s assessment conference.]

- h) “Hopefully with the degree of external confirmation of his ability he will in time find it less necessary to constantly express belief in his own talents. This apparent over-confidence is almost certainly borne out of a certain vulnerability but it can provoke negative feelings toward him.”

[Kate Lambert’s written educational conclusion from one of Damian Tanner’s C.C.’s.]

I include a selection of succinct ironic characterizations in an attempt to display how commonplace they were as a mode of interpretation amongst staff at St. Nicholas’ and related institutions. Each contains the essential ironic ingredient: the opposition between surface and depth, appearance and the reality which purportedly undergirds it. Hence, an anomaly is evoked between the child’s outward appearance of confidence and strength and their *real* inner vulnerability. A number of the foregoing accounts also allude to the motivation which gives rise to the boys’ ironic presentation of themselves. It is understood as a protective mechanism, or an over-compensation for the very qualities they lack. Hence the paradox!

The following extract nicely illustrates how much an ironic orientation had been absorbed into the institutional culture of the staff at St. Nicholas’. The piece is from Nicola Hobbs’ education report on Ben Jackson, compiled for one of his C.C.’s.

“He is competitive, both in formal and oral work, but this seems to be more a habit of not always serious rivalry rather than a real insecurity about his abilities.”

This piece relies for its comprehensibility upon the background knowledge that competitiveness amongst “boys of this kind” is often a paradoxical compensation for their lack of *real* security. So tempting is this interpretation that Nicola explicitly distances Ben’s behaviour from it, and places it in the context of “a habit of not always serious rivalry”.

I turn now to some more elaborate examples of therapeutic irony to consider the

discursive manoeuvres through which it is accomplished. The first extract is drawn from a case conference report concerning Junious Knight. Its author is Mike Griffith, Junious's special worker from unit 4.

1 “His chronic desire to dominate at all costs is still unfortunately ever present
in his general behaviour. He is not willing to listen to advice. I believe it is
Junious's deep insecurity that dictates much of his need to dominate his
peers. He cannot bear being contradicted, or being shown to be in any way
5 at fault or wrong. He will try to out shout any boy who disagrees with him.
It is in his relationship with other boys that most of his problems occur. To
members of staff his massive insecurity and consequent over-assertiveness
are obvious - but to other boys he just appears impossibly arrogant and this
9 is highly provocative to them.”

Sandwiched between Mike's description of Junious's *presenting* behaviour on lines 1-6 is his evocation of the source from which he believes it springs: “Junious's deep insecurity” (line 3). Lines 6-9 distinguish between the ironically informed experts for whom the relationship between Junious's “massive insecurity and consequent over-assertiveness are obvious” (line 7-8), and the boys who, in the absence of such ironic awareness are susceptible to being duped by the appearance of Junious's impossible arrogance and provocation.

The following two pieces both refer to the ironic presentation of Samuel Nailer. The first is from one of St. Nicholas' day conferences in which Bob Burnett - manager of unit 2 - offers the following profile.

1 A) Bob: I think he's a very fragile young man - who's (.5) got this (1.5) little pillar that
he is up on. And in order to stop people knocking him off it he sends out all
sorts of vibrations about - you know - “I'm the big tough hero - I'm the big
king-pin around the place - you don't do anything to me”. And really he's
5 very frightened that someone will do something to him. And lots of the little
situations he sets up are designed to perpetuate the image of being (.5) the
big guy that no-one really attacks (1.5). Uhm - I think to shatter that image
would be fatal for him and for everybody else. And so - we've gotta find a way
of letting him down from it gradually (1) and partly that's what this uhm - his

10 current placement in detention centre is supposed to do. To allow him the
opportunity to actually change and come back - and - not start completely
afresh but (.5) but to start from a different perspective (2) to come back and
13 - supposedly have grown a bit - and learned something.

Second, from a T.M. some time later.

1 B) [The teachers discuss how Samuel is now back to his “old ways” after his stint
in detention centre. Peter French argues that he is worse than he was prior
to the sentence.]

Peter: He’s set himself up to be - he’s set himself up to be - a hero. He’s come back
5 from - hell you know (Brian laughs) telling all the boys how - you know -
“they tried to break me but they didn’t” sort of thing.

Brian: Yer (laughing).

Peter: I think - you know - in reality he’s gotta very very low opinion of himself - and
he builds himself up to - and he starts to believe it - you know.

10 Brian: Yer.

Peter: And the boys are frightened of him.

The ironic link between Samuel’s inner reality and his external presentation is forged immediately in extract A. His extreme fragility is held to psychological account for his tough and heroic facade. Having formulated a routinely ironic relationship between surface and depth, Bob is able to assimilate “lots of the little situations” (lines 5-6) to it. Samuel’s phenomenal image is conceived as a protective mechanism from which he must be gradually let down: “to shatter that image”, we are told, “would be fatal for him and for everybody else” (lines 7-8).

The same ironic manoeuvre informs Peter’s account of Samuel’s behaviour in extract B. On this occasion, Samuel’s tales about his time in D.C. are accorded an ironic status. Their very drama and heroism are seen to express the “very very low opinion” (line 8) Samuel has of

(lines 4-5) as “a defence-mechanism” and a “dishonest front” (lines 6-7). He thus paves the preliminary way to a figurative characterization of Andy’s behaviour.

The first step is to recognize a split between the phenomenal and the real, and the second to construct a non-literal relationship between the two. To say that Andy is “nothing like” the *persona* he presents is to forge an incipiently ironic connection to which Brian seeks the “keys” (line 8). From a perusal of Andy’s “insecure background” Brian deduces that “he had very little confidence about anything” and “basically despised himself” (lines 11-12). It is this analysis which provides the *literal* bedrock in relation to which Andy’s hatred of others is accorded a *metaphorical* nuance, and his apparent belief that he is wonderful is rendered *ironical*.

In the forthcoming group of excerpts an ironic contrast is also constructed between the literal ramifications of a child’s behaviour and his motivation. The axis of the opposition differs from the foregoing accounts in which a confident, intimidating facade is assumed to betray a vulnerable interior. Below the child’s apparently hostile or aggressive display toward members of staff is interpreted in terms of his affection and regard for them. In the first extract Joe Duggan, senior social worker in unit 1, proffers a programmatic statement about the nature of this paradoxical relationship.

1 [I ask Joe what qualities are important in doing good social work?]

Joe: I think you have to be perceptive - becus you (.5) uhm (1.5) kids - do - kids at St. Nicholas’ have (1.5) odd ways of sending you messages (.5) uhm - I mean what they they might appear to be (3) telling you (.5) that they ha - that
5 they hate your guts - where in fact they’re asking you (.5) for love and affection.

Kim: Right.

Joe: And - I think you need - I think - you need the ability to perceive that. (1.5) Uhm - you need the ability to (.5) work out . . . what they are trying to tell
10 you. And - they-they - they play lots of games.

[Joe Duggan’s interview]

The perceptiveness of which Joe speaks is entangled with an ironic orientation to the “messages” which the boys send. While these “might appear to be telling you” one thing, they “in fact” convey the opposite: the *apparent* display of hate may *really* be a call for love (lines 3-6). The next example, based upon a similarly ironic interpretation of behaviour, is one which alerted me to the paradoxical strain in institutional reasoning quite early on in my fieldwork. The exchange took place in a S.S.M.

1 [Roger Carter speaks of how Leon Pryce had been in a “funny mood”
recently, and “he’s hit his hand against the wall a few times today”.]

Roger: He’s a funny lad. He keeps coming up to me to make contact today. I’ve just
been very relaxed with him. At lunch-time he was playing snooker. As I
5 walked past he threw the cue down - and he obviously wanted me to follow
him. So I walked straight down to my office and ignored him. The games we
play (says Roger addressing himself to me). But I came back and Leon was
there and he said “don’t touch me” - which meant of course that he wanted
9 me to. So I just gently wrestled with him.

The apparent meaning of Leon Pryce’s behaviour is seen to paradoxically subvert his underlying motivation; an assumption most patently conveyed on lines 7-9 where Leon’s stated wish not to be touched is transformed into its opposite. The forthcoming extract refers to the paradoxical means through which David Lyons expresses his liking for Colin Lynch, one of the social workers in his unit. The piece is from one of David’s C.C.’s.

1 [George Wallace, David’s special worker, describes to David’s mother and
F.S.W. the details of a recent incident which took place between David and
Colin Lynch.]

George: Colin’s one of the - social workers in unit 3. It’s been a funny way that David
5 has actually sort of brought about this sort of - fairly intense close relationship
uhm where (he’d) strike him with a cricket-bat on his head and throw
football boots at him in a sort of (1.5) nasty way as such but it’s-it’s a way in
which he’s sort of relating anyway - uhm - he’s been the only member of staff
that he’s actually done that to - you know.

10 Philip: I mean they sound - sort of - quite violent incidents and they did ah - they did hurt Colin - but it was without the edge of real violence behind it. I mean I think you - when you did those sort of things David you were actually laughing - I don't think you were deliberately intending to hurt Colin. I think it was a game. And it is a way of - {coming across.

{

15 Kate: {Yes I spoke to Colin just after the incident and he felt it was over the top horse-play on that occasion.

Philip That's right - that's right.

18 Kate: And not knowing quite (1) where the line was drawn - between the two.

The preceding account sets up a dramatic and almost comically ironic contrast between what David's behaviour actually means, and how it appears. The seeds of irony are planted from the outset. We - the recipients - are encouraged to treat the prospective material as an account of how David "actually . . . brought about this sort of - fairly close intense relationship" with Colin, albeit in a funny way (lines 4-5). Yet, in the very next instance we are offered a behavioural description of how David assaulted Colin with a cricket bat, and threw football boots at him in a "nasty way"; incidents which are defined as "quite violent", and which actually hurt Colin (lines 6-11).

The irony of George's interpretation pivots on the dramatic distinction between appearance and reality. Taken literally his violent, nasty attacks upon Colin may suggest David's aggressive predisposition or his dislike of this particular member of staff. In George's account they are transformed into an ironic display of the "funny way" David engineered an "intense close relationship" with Colin.

On my reading, George's account does not persuasively establish the propriety of an ironic interpretation. He fails to furnish the motivational grounds necessary for making such a figurative leap. The account is, however, punctuated by certain contextual details which, in conjunction, offer an alternative possible reading to the literal. Notice, first of all, how David's violent behaviour is defined as his way of relating (lines 7-8); a characterization which diminishes its negative connotation by shifting the cognitive context. What partially fills the ironic breach

is the typified knowledge which practitioners bring to bear about the peculiar ways in which “boys of this kind” relate. Quite why David in particular relates in this way, however, remains obscure. The second contextualizing feature on lines 8-9, has an ambiguous status. That Colin is the only member of staff to whom David relates in this way may equally fuel an ironic as a literal interpretation, since it could be his particular *dislike* of Colin which motivates David’s violence toward him.

Philip Hooper offers further mitigation of David’s actions on lines 10-14. He speaks of how David “did hurt Colin but it was without the edge of real violence behind it” (lines 10-11). The conjunctive “but” generates a contrast between the effect of David’s behaviour and his intentions. In the absence of a literal bond between the two, Philip elaborates David’s real motivation. His laughter is conceived not as a sign of his sadistic pleasure, but his indulgence in a game, which is his way of “coming across”.

Philip and Kate collaboratively generate an alternative version of David’s actions on lines 10-18: rather than an ironic display of closeness, his behaviour is defined as games-playing, over-the-top horseplay, and ignorance of where the line is drawn. The empirical evidence may support either George’s or Philip and Kate’s version, although the latter does not necessitate the same leap of the discursive imagination which George’s account, as it stands, requires.

In the following piece, drawn from a T.M., Brian Potter offers an ironic version of Clive Dennis’ relationship with the part-time “pottery lady”.

1 Well I - I think (.5) Clive’s - as Gary and I discussed - has got a sort of a - an
attitude. He-he likes the pottery lady very much but - for instance he (.5) he
made this lamp uh (1) standard - fa - with her - and he wasn’t satisfied with
it so he blamed her for it. And - uhm (.5) he likes her - but if he likes someone
5 - and you know with Clive - every - he’s used to - everyone sort of - telling him
to “shut-up - do this” - punch - sort of thing. But (.5) with-with (slight laugh)
with this lady - she’s - very - she got on very well - with him at first - and I don’t
think he could sort of handle it really - he’s got a peculiar attitude towards
9 her.

The anomaly, in this instance, is between Clive’s real feelings for the pottery teacher,

and the way he treats her. If Clive's liking for her were literally manifest in his behaviour one would expect him to treat her considerately. Conversely, if one were to deduce Clive's feelings from his ostensive behaviour it would suggest - on a literal reading - that he did not like the pottery instructor. The irony of Clive's behaviour is that he both likes the teacher *and* has a "peculiar attitude towards her" (lines 8-9), including blaming her for something which was not her fault.

The procedure at work in generating this anomaly is akin to the "contrast-structure" of which Dorothy Smith [1978 - pages 39-47] speaks. It is in operation where the conceptual rule inscribed in one part of the account is rendered anomalous by the conceptual rule inscribed in a second, related part. What is at stake is precisely the generation of an anomaly which exceeds simple conformity to, or deviation from a rule. Hence, conformity to the conceptual rule of liking teacher would imply being nice/considerate to her, just as deviation implies the opposite.

The resolution to the tension of Clive both liking teacher *and* having an "attitude" toward her is ironic. The chain of reasoning in Brian's account is forged through an intermediate link which is missing from George's interpretation of David's behaviour. For Brian brings his knowledge of Clive's past to service in postulating *why* he behaves in this curious way. *Because* Clive was treated dismissively or aggressively in the past, he cannot handle getting on "very well" with somebody in the present. His behaviour is thus given a motivational rationale which substantiates an ironic interpretation. (For a discussion of the different modes of causal connection - weakly and strongly theorized - see Chapter 7).

v) The Irony of Denial

In figurative interpretation the literal meaning of surface appearance is bracketed in favour of a symbolic appreciation of its significance. Reality itself is not abandoned in this process, but situated at a deeper level. Similarly the therapeutically inclined practitioners at St. Nicholas' tended to treat the boys' deviant behaviour as the symbolic manifestation of their emotional disturbance which resided at a deeper level, and required a degree of expertise to decipher. In this lies the elective affinity between therapeutic discourse and an ironic mode of interpretation. Such figurative proclivities bring with them the assumption of epistemological superiority on the part of the ironically informed practitioner, and a concomitant diminution of

knowledge on the part of the subject. For although, in principle, “irony itself is not invulnerable to further irony from a new vantage-point” [D.C. Muecke (1982) - p.31] the boys’ perspective was rarely accorded the requisite authority to overthrow staff versions.

A strikingly ironic connotation of therapeutic expertise is the assumption that the therapist cum social worker may, and indeed often does, have a more informed understanding of what motivates the child than he does of himself. While the child’s corroboration may add additional weight to a therapeutic account it is not the prerequisite of establishing the emotional reality. Conversely, the boy’s refutation or denial of the authorized version does not necessarily impair or destroy its validity. On the contrary, when filtered through the process of therapeutic reasoning, the boy’s denial may be incorporated into the symptomology of his disturbance and thus made to support the existence of the very thing he denies. In the forthcoming extracts I consider the classically ironic manoeuvre through which denial is transformed into its opposite, and serves to confirm a particular interpretation and the edifice of therapeutic reasoning on which it rests.

Consider first of all an excerpt from Chris Jones’ psychiatric assessment report.

1 “I have seen Chris twice, who talked quite readily about the facts, but divorced all feeling from himself . . .

Chris hardly knows his father as he left when Chris was only two. In the last ten years he has not seen him more than three times. His father sends money and a birthday card to his sisters but never to him. When I asked him how he felt about that his reply was “Nothing, it is not worth bothering about”. He denied missing his dad, saying he had never had one to compare with what it would be like to have one. He doesn’t get on very well with his mum who works at night, neither does he have much attachment for his siblings, except when joining in with (his two brothers) for some excitement.

5

10

Chris told me on both occasions quite categorically that he doesn’t want to go home because he is frightened that as soon as he returns home he will either start stealing or become violent. He could not tell me what exactly makes him angry but looked very uncomfortable when I asked him about the

15 aggressive outburst he had in the school unit here. He told me that he felt
very relieved when he was taken away from home and put at (the assessment
centre), and sometimes he wishes that he didn't have to go home for
weekends.

20 Chris is not at all in touch with his angry feelings toward his dad or his
siblings but acts them out when he becomes violent at home. His complete
denial about having any conflict within himself would make any
22 psycho-therapeutic work with him almost impossible.”

Lines 1-2 contain the germ of reasoning developed throughout the account which resides in Chris' denial of the feelings which the psychiatrist presupposes exist. The use of the term "divorced" (line 2) is instructive, since it implies an enforced separation between Chris' discussion of the *facts* and his *feelings* about them.

The psychiatrist proceeds on lines 3-8 to report the facts, and Chris' denial of the feelings. A gamut of ghost assumptions are brought into play in processing the information about Chris' father's departure and his selective contact with his siblings. These assumptions about how Chris *must* be feeling in the wake of such traumatic events lends ironic potency to his claim to feel "nothing". That Chris *denied* missing his dad, has important connotations for how we are encouraged to read Chris' version. A phenomenon can only be logically denied, if it allegedly exists in the first place. What's more the very vehemence of Chris' denial of certain feelings strengthens the therapeutic case for their existence: me thinks the deviant doth protest too much.

In lines 11-18, the psychiatrist gives voice to Chris' desire to stay away from home for fear his return might engender the resumption of violence and stealing responsible for his removal in the first place. However, the sense of Chris' detachment from the feelings which generate his deviance is bolstered by the psychiatrist's claim that Chris "could not tell me what exactly makes him angry" (lines 13-14). The phrase "could not", rather than "would not" is influential; it implies that Chris was unable to divulge his motives rather than being unprepared to.

Although the precise connection has not been formulated up until lines 19-20, the

astute reader may already have entertained the incipient relationship between Chris' historical grievance, and his contemporary deviance. The final paragraph accords to this tentative association an explicit symbolic status. Chris' denial of anger towards his father and siblings is held to causal account for its explosive emergence in violence at home, which, in turn, is conceived as the metaphorical expression of feelings which, unbeknown to him, Chris harboured all along.

The second piece is extracted from Eileen Walker's interview. Eileen was an untrained social worker from unit 1, whose use of the theory of denial suggests that it was not confined to the more extensively trained staff.

1 [Eileen speaks of Dexter Abrams, an ex-resident of St. Nicholas' to whom she was particularly close. Eileen says how Dexter's parents were different colours, and while he respected his mother's control,]

Eileen . . . he respected his dad far more than his mother becoss of her colour. But
5 he's the last to admit it - no way will he {admit it

{
Kim: {His dad's black and his mum's
white?

Eileen: Yer.

Kim: Ah hah.

10 Eileen: Ahm (2) no way will he admit it . . . even now I don't think he's ever faced it. But that is his real hang-up.

Kim: Huh hum.

Eileen: And he loves his brothers - and he he loves his dad - and (.5) he cares for his mum (2) but - it's there.

15 Kim: So he identifies very much with the black element in the family.

Eileen: He doesn't want to (.5) but he does.

Eileen presents her version as an incontrovertible reality: "he respected his dad far more than his mother becos of her colour" (line 4). Since this is constructed as a fact the only two types of response allocated to Dexter are his acceptance of reality or his denial of it. The word "admit" is a material force in establishing the "fact effect" in Dorothy Smith's term [1978 pages 32-33]. That Dexter is "the last to admit it - no way will he admit it" (lines 4-5), assumes a) there is something there to admit, and b) ironically that Dexter is "the last" to recognize his "real hang-up", "even now". The reference to Dexter's failure to "face it" (line 10) has similar connotations since the "it" which Dexter has not faced is unassailably given, to be acknowledged or, in Dexter's case, not.

The discursive structure of the following account is very similar to the preceding one. It is extracted from my interview with Bob Burnett, manager of unit 2.

1 [I ask Bob to give an account of how he sees Leon Pryce, one of the boys in his unit.]

Bob: Yer - uhm (2) what I see Leon as at the moment is - uhm - a very under-
confident (2.5) uhm (1) schoolboy. Becus he-he's (.5) somewhere around
5 about sort of thirteen-ish at the moment.

Kim: Incredible isn't it - you forget that.

Bob: He's - sixteen years old - but he's operating very much {at thirteen.

Kim: {Huh hum.

Bob: And - he-he's so (1) worried about being able to cope in the adult world. But
10 he won't admit that. Becos he knows he's sixteen becos he knows that other
people of sixteen go out and do all kinds of weird and wonderful things (2)
becos I think he's had this example from the rest of the family who've all
been remarkably successful (1) uh - we're talking about success in terms of

15 them being sort of accountants and (1) doctors and dentists - and all this sort
of thing - you know.

Kim: Yer.

Bob: Uhm - he's pretty well aware that he can't match up to that. And he - really
is frightened as hell of going out and doing that. But he won't say that.

Kim: Mmm.

20 Bob: Won't admit to it. He will keep on insisting he wants to go out and get jobs.

Kim: Right.

Bob: Totally unrealistic. (1) And so what - I think we've gotta do is (1) uhm - it's
not quite like throwing him in the deep-end - becus if we do he-he'll drown
and cause chaos. (1) Uhm - I think we've gotta sort of dip his toes in a bit
25 - then get 'em wet and then shake 'em dry.

Kim: Mmm.

27 Bob: Gradually work through it.

Leon's concern about being unable to cope in the adult world, especially given the remarkable success of his adoptive family, is endowed with the authority of fact. As such it requires no elaboration; it is assumed to stand on its own merits. Although Bob's account solicits partial corroboration ("he's pretty well aware he can't match up to that" - line 17), it is the fear engendered by this recognition to which Leon, apparently, "won't admit" (line 20), and "won't say" (line 18). Not only does Leon fail to admit to the emotional reality which Bob assumes, but he actively insists "he - wants to go out and get jobs" (line 20). From Bob's assumed authority to define reality flows his capacity to recategorize contradictory accounts as unreal. Hence Leon's *claim* that he wants to go out and get jobs is dubbed "totally unrealistic" (line 22). Since Leon's denial of the "reality" is defined as the problem, his gradual working through it (line 27)

is prescribed as the therapeutic solution which will close the ironic gap between reality and Leon's misperception of it.

The next case illustrates how even a logically consistent alternative version espoused by the child may be ironically discredited. The piece is drawn from a report written by a member of the residential social work staff at the assessment centre where Damian Tanner was placed prior to his referral to St. Nicholas'.

1 "Damian seems to have an inability to talk through his problems. When he
has been confronted with them he has either sat sullenly without saying
anything, or has refused to listen, humming very loudly, putting his fingers
5 in his ears or hiding his head underneath his jacket. Very rarely has he
responded positively to attempts to help him look and modify his behaviour.

And from a later paragraph:

 "Damian has never been able to see being in care as being any use to him in
terms of resolving his problems of delinquency or helping him with his
behaviour as he usually refuses to admit that there is anything wrong in his
life. When he does admit to feelings of anger, he usually says that these are
10 because he is here against his will."

Two alternative possibilities emerge from the account: first, that Damian has problems to which he will not admit; second that Damian does not have problems, an absence to which the *staff* will not admit. However, since the account is framed from the perspective of a member of the social work staff rather than Damian, the reader is encouraged through a range of discursive procedures to read his account as the discrepant one. From the outset Damian's problems are portrayed as facts about which he is unable to speak. Even when "confronted" with his problems Damian would respond with a range of tactics designed to evade the reality which is presumed to exist. But facts by their resilient nature do not go away and even Damian on rare occasions would respond to attempts to look at and modify them.

Damian's version remains consistent throughout: he denies the existence of any problems (apart from very rarely) and thus refuses to see being in care as of any use to him.

However, since his problems are not in question Damian's refusal "to admit that there is anything wrong in his life" (lines 8-9) is tantamount to a denial of reality. The boy's claim that his feelings of anger are "because he is here against his will" (line 10) is consistent with the version he has espoused throughout. Yet the weight of authority invested in the official version is such that Damian's account of his own feelings become one more instance of the denial which serves to reconfirm what was known *all along*.

Another method of identifying the ironic discrepancy between appearance and reality emerges in the following two excerpts, the first of which is from Junior Knight's assessment report.

1 "Although Junior affected not to be concerned that his mother did not visit
him during the period at (the assessment centre) he was close to tears in
saying so and his assertions of unconcern are totally lacking in conviction. It
is my impression that the boy does in fact have a very close affection for his
5 mother and is in great difficulty knowing how to repair the relationship
between them.

In both this account and the next the ironic divergence between the authoritative version inscribed in the professional's account, and the child's version, is partially resolved by reference to the child's ambivalent presentation of himself. Thus, although Junior *affected* not to be concerned that his mother did not visit him" (lines 1-2), his closeness to tears suggests the opposite. It is this divergence which, in spite of the boy's denial, gives credence to the "impression" (line 4) that Junior is *really* very close to his mother, and "in great difficulty knowing how to repair (their) relationship" (line 5).

The following account also plays upon the ironic distance between Samuel Nailer's apparent lack of concern and his real feelings which are "patently clear" (line 1). The piece is drawn from Samuel's court report compiled by his F.S.W. for the care hearing.

1 "Samuel affects not to be troubled by this but it is patently clear that he is
distressed and depressed by it. He cannot understand why his mother's not
visited."

And, in a later paragraph:

5 “Although superficially open and co-operative and presenting a somewhat
gentle appearance, Samuel impresses me as being a very contained boy who
probably denies a good deal of his inner distress and finds it difficult to share
7 this with anyone else.”

Just as Samuel “affects not to be troubled” (line 1), he also *seems* open, co-operative and gentle. The rule used to elucidate the ironic distinction between appearance and reality is classic: although Samuel *appears* to be x, he is *really* y. What’s more, y is pretty much opposite to x. Notice the linguistic means through which a sense of anomaly is constructed:

Samuel affects x . . . *but* y (lines 1-3).

Although apparently x . . . really y (lines 4-7).

The conjunctives *but*, and *although*, serve as the pivot upon which the ironic contrast balances. So ensconced is the linguistic rule that the reader/hearer may deduce the reality simply by applying the paradoxical principle and turning appearance on its head. In this case, however, the reality which subverts appearance is explicitly stated. While apparently untroubled Samuel is really depressed and distressed; while superficially open, co-operative and gentle he is really closed and denying.

Another feature of the irony of denial is highlighted below in two snippets from the educational psychologist’s report on Graham Mellor during his period of assessment.

1 “Graham denied anxiety during tests when it would be appropriate to feel
it. Graham refused to believe a (resident at the assessment centre) had
recently died from “sniffing” to hide his real feelings.

And again later:

“Graham coped quite well with the varying demands of testing, but the very

5 strength of his denial of any anxiety made one suspect that it may well have been (at least initially) a difficult experience.”

The account encourages the reader to extend the same mode of interpretation both to Graham’s denial of anxiety “during tests” (line 1), and to his refusal to believe that a resident had died as a result of glue-sniffing. In both cases the cognitive connotations are apparent: Graham’s denial and refusal, respectively, are subjected to a cynical appraisal of their worth and discredited on their own terms. The account relies upon the reader employing her common sense knowledge to plug the ironic gaps. It draws, for instance, upon the shared assumption that anxiety is the proper and predictable response to doing tests. This background or ghost expectancy provides the basis upon which Graham’s apparent lack of anxiety is conceived as denial.

A classically ironic therapeutic procedure is apparent in lines 4-6 where the very strength of Graham’s denial of anxiety is *in itself* identified as the sufficient grounds for suspicion. The rule of thumb in such cases is that the more a child denies a feeling, the greater the proof *ipso facto* of its existence.

The final extract is in certain respects less strikingly ironic than many previous ones. It nonetheless displays certain methods through which practitioners attempt to convert a child’s denial into a confirmation of the feelings they assume must exist. The excerpt is from one of Ben Jackson’s C.C.’s.

1 F.S.W: Uhm - the relationship with ya dad and step-mother here (.5) in London.
Since the news that his dad (and step-mother) will be moving up to Scotland
(.5) uhm - Ben has come out - Ben has found it difficult to visit his dad. I think
he feels rejected (.5) it’s almost as if his dad has chosen (his step-mum)
5 instead of him - which has hurt Ben quite deeply. Uh - I think that’s
something that you actually find difficult - to say (.5) or even to admit.

Ben: What?

F.S.W: I mean out loud. And I think that’s what you feel inside - but I think in this sort of group - it’s not something which you would say easily. I don’t know

10 whether that's come out in discussions that you've had on a one to one basis
 maybe?

Ben: It's his wife innit!

F.S.W: Sorry Ben?

15 Ben: It's his wife innit!
 (1.5)

F.S.W: Well - you're his son. Uh - it's - it's - probably quite a difficult pull for him
 as well.

George: You-you were saying that you can't explain it - but - you know - try.

Ben: What?

20 George: We - we sort of use words like being angry and upset (.5) and - rejected.

Ben: I'm not bothered.

George: Well what?

Ben: I don't feel nothing.

25 George: O.K. - What did you feel at the time? (4) 'Cus the situation has changed -
 you do feel (1.5) uhm - different about the situation now don't you. (1.5) So
 what were you feeling . . . at the time?

Ben: Nothing (with a chuckle).

George: 'Cus I don't wanna start putting words in your mouth Ben - 'cus - you'll
 probably just sort of (.5) you know - brush them aside . . . Try and explain 'cus

30 you-you-you - can explain things quite well.
 (3.5)

Ben: I didn't feel nothing.

George: Well how come you didn't go home then?

35 Ben: 'Cus I didn't want to.
 (1.5)

George: And then that that situation when you found out that dad was going to
 Scotland - brought about this - you see. That's why I'm saying you obviously
 felt something (2.5) yer?

40 Ben: Well in a way I thought "well what's the point in me going home (.5) if he's
 gonna go to Scotland."

George: So you're saying that you felt hurt.

Ben: In a way - yer.
 (2.5)

45 George: Rejected (1.5) 'cus he was going up to Scotland? If you think about it (.5)
 you must have done.

Ben: A little bit.

This piece *could* - and probably *would* be read by the therapeutically inclined - as the ultimate acknowledgment by Ben of the feelings he had all along. What interests me is how, in spite of Ben's repeated denial of being bothered by his father's departure to Scotland, both his F.S.W. and special worker - George - maintain an ironic orientation to his version.

In lines 1-11 the F.S.W. adumbrates his interpretation of what Ben really feels in spite of his inability to say it to others, or even admit it to himself. It is not clear from the account on

what basis the F.S.W. has formulated his theory; whether it derives from an empirical analysis of Ben's behaviour or a body of generalized assumptions about how a boy like Ben *would* feel under the circumstances. What is significant in the present consideration of irony is that the F.S.W.'s theorization of Ben's underlying feelings is precisely not based upon what Ben said in so many words: for it is something which he "find(s) difficult - to say (.5) or even to admit . . . out loud" (lines 6-8).

Ben's first denial of a kind - "it's his wife innit" - is met with the challenge "well you're his son" (lines 11-16). In this move the F.S.W. turns Ben's mode of reasoning against him. For Ben's statement "it's his wife innit" glosses a chain of ghost assumptions, i.e. "it's his wife" . . . therefore it is reasonable and expectable that he would take her wishes primarily into account, to which the F.S.W. responds "Well you're his son" . . . so you too should reasonably expect to be accorded a priority in your father's life, etcetera.

In lines 18-46 George embarks upon a multi-pronged attempt to get Ben to articulate the feelings that he, along with the F.S.W., presupposes. He first of all offers Ben a language through which to express himself: "words like being angry and upset (.5) and rejected?" (line 20). Ben's reply "I'm not bothered" (line 21) is temporarily reconciled with the authoritative staff version through a temporal relocation: maybe he doesn't feel anything *now* because the situation has changed; but what did he feel *then*? Ben's insistence that he felt "nothing" engenders two further attempts by George: he doesn't want to put words into Ben's mouth but he should try to explain; and if he didn't feel anything, why did he stop visiting home when he heard of his father's plans? After one further rebuttal "Cus I didn't want to" (line 34), Ben elaborates his motivation for ceasing his visits in terms of his belief that there was no point. At this juncture George supplies the very words that earlier he refused to put in Ben's mouth: so he did feel hurt and rejected; he must have done (lines 41-45). Ben's responses are a semi-affirmation of George's version, "in a way yer" and a "little bit" (lines 42 and 46).

Interestingly, Ben's corroboration of the official version is repeatedly sought, despite the fact that his denial, in theory, does not undermine, and in certain respects may be seen to prove it. However, the transformation of denial into affirmation, ironic discordance into concordance or, put simply, Ben's final admission of his real feelings, is considered the prerequisite of deeper therapeutic change.

vi) Metonymy and the Family System

The different modes of figurative theorization considered above do not work in isolation one from the other. In the final section of this chapter I consider how the metaphorical and ironical are plaited together, by examining a series of extended extracts from three of Steven Butler's C.C's. To milk their full potential I want to introduce a third figurative mode which is only tentatively developed here.

In *metonymy* one attribute represents the whole. A comparable relationship is apparent in the forthcoming material in which the boy's deviance (part) is interpreted as a symbol of family patterns and pathology as a whole. From this perspective the dynamics of family life are seen to give rise to certain interactional predispositions. One such tendency, that of scapegoating, is conceived as a process through which a member of the family is "elected" to fulfill a deviant role by dint of the interactional workings of the system. In this deft manoeuvre other members of the family group are exonerated of blame, and exorcised of many of the problems which have been displaced onto the appointed carrier. The child's adoption of a deviant *persona* is thus seen to be motivated by the family dynamic which bestows upon him an identity and position within the group. His membership credentials are thus embroiled in his occupation of a deviant status.

From the systemic approach to family life employed by Thomas McKinney in the forthcoming material, the scapegoating arrangement is conceived as functional. It is a solution to the disturbances indigenous to the family as a whole. Benefits of a kind flow from this interactional propensity for both parties: the child is given a stable status within the group and one which attracts attention, albeit of a negative kind; the wider group can expunge themselves of responsibility for family difficulties. The solution, however, is itself conceived as part of the family pathology, and as such it is considered to be ultimately frustrating and emotionally unhealthy.

Since the patterns are seen to unfold upon the surface of the family, the connecting brace is predominantly between the part and the whole. This particular mode of relationship invites a metonymic appreciation *in addition to* the metaphorical and ironic connections between surface and depth explored in the preceding sections.

Steve Butler, the subject of the following accounts, was a child whose residency at St. Nicholas' spanned the year and a quarter during which I conducted my fieldwork. He was referred following the closure of the C.H.E. where he had been resident for the previous year. Steve was originally placed in care because of his persistent stealing over a number of years dating from the age of six. Steve stole mainly from his family and his delinquency was always solitary. This predilection continued sporadically throughout Steve's residential career. While at St. Nicholas' he appeared in court four times, all for offences of theft, and on two occasions received a custodial sentence in detention centre.

A variety of theories emerged during the course of Steve's placement at St. Nicholas' to account for his stealing. These ranged through the normalizing, criminalizing and pathologizing tendencies explored in the following chapter. Thus while some parties, for some of the time, claimed that Steve's deviance was borne of rational self interest and was therefore criminal, other parties maintained that his motivation was essentially pathological; a compulsion over which he had little or no control. In a third *motif* Steve's behaviour was conceived as a response to the scapegoating messages conveyed by the Butler family. The disturbance was thus displaced from Steve - the identified problem - onto the family as a whole.

Thomas McKinney, the manager of Steve's unit, was largely responsible for cultivating a metonymic interpretation of his stealing. It did, however, assume currency amongst other members of staff. While Thomas' orientation to Steve's deviance was bound up in his theoretical preferences his detailed analysis of the case derived from his knowledge of the boy and his written case history, together with the weekly family sessions which he conducted with the Butler family for a period of three months or so.

Before exploring the C.C. material, consider an extract from Thomas' interview in which he offers a general theorization of the Butler family dynamic.

- 1 Thomas: Both (1.5) he - both him and his primary group - desperately want in fact to bring about a change (2) they desperately want - in fact - to love each other (1) Yer? (1) They're are not quite sure how to do it. It's almost like a "Catch 22" (1.5) they in fact - punish (.5) bits of behaviour (.5) that (.5) they see as attention-seeking - but because it's attention-seeking behaviour - he's-he's doing it all the wrong way as far as they're concerned . . . So what
- 5

10 has happened actually is that the family at the primary level - in fact - have anchored into negative responses - or negative behaviour (1) yer? They both recognize - and in fact like it's O.K. for them to do so. Both of them in fact are actually getting rewarded in a strange kind of way (1.5) becus of the "anchoring" (1.5) yer? Now - my job in fact is uh - I-I - I then see my job (.5) in fact - as a part of (.5) re-framing (2) that particular piece of action. (1) Am I making sense?

Kim: Yep.

15 Thomas: Right (.5) in other words to start actually becoming aware of (.5) yer? the kind of (1.5) the-the-the actual anchorings that are going on - yer? And how they're responding - and the reason why Steven is doing it that way - 'cus he knows he will get that response - but at least he's getting - 'cus if he acts that way - he doesn't get any response.

Soon after Thomas speaks of how he sees their job at St. Nicholas' as "purely and simply" to:

20 Thomas: open up a map and say - well look - this is what actually is happening (.5) yer? And at the moment (1) can you actually see - or can you tell me why do you think Steven is actually acting that way. And eventually you get them to see - "oh he's acting that way becus when he's actually good we don't do anything" (.5) yer? "When he's bad we actually act. O.K. it means I'm hitting out but I mean at least I'm acting (.5) and he's getting a reaction".
25 (2)

Kim: Right.
(1.5)

30 Thomas: So what you have to try and do is somehow or other get them - yer - by-by their own perceptions - to move around and to see - yer - the various alternatives that I've actually had. But if this is the - if this is what they actually want - that's still O.K. (1.5) yer? 'Cus it's theirs.

Both Steve and his family are seen to be “getting rewarded in a strange kind of way” (lines 9-10) by the “Catch 22” (line 4) and negative anchorings in which they are enmeshed. However, the attempted solution is only superficially effective. Thomas pitches his therapeutic intervention at the level of the interactional doings of the Butler family which he, in accordance with their purported desires (lines 1-3), seeks to re-frame (line 11). Such re-orientation occurs by making family members aware of “the actual anchorings that are going on” (line 15), by opening up a map (line 19), and getting them by their own perceptions to see how they push Steve into a deviant role by failing to pay attention to him “when he’s actually good” (lines 22).

Thomas’ systemic orientation to Steve’s deviant proclivities is most vibrantly apparent in the forthcoming extracts from three of the boy’s C.C.’s. These highlight the interaction between metaphorical, ironical and metonymic modes of therapeutic figuration. The initial piece is from the first of the three C.C.’s considered here which took place approximately four to five months after Steve’s admission to St. Nicholas’. A discussion ensues about the nature of Steve’s delinquent motivation.

1 Thomas: I’m sure this-this - uhm - uhm - review in here won’t feel that I’m breaking
any confidences at all (.5) but he definitely knows how to - how to get a
response by actually disobeying you - doing something that’s going to (.5)
5 cause you (.5) to kind of (.5) have a blow . . . And he’s anchored in on - “to
get some response from the old man - I need to do this”. Otherwise there’s
long periods of kind of “well - nothing has happened it must - everything
must be O.K.”. And he finds that difficult I should imagine - I mean I don’t
know but -

Roger: I want to test whether dad still -

10 Thomas: Yes - all the time he has to go back and test the water.

Roger: Yes.

[Thomas uses the analogy of a baby learning to walk, taking a few steps, and then returning to his parents.]

15 Thomas: What this young man's doing just occasionally becus he's unsure of where
it's all at . . . But he's unsure - and he comes back - but he has to - the only
reason he comes back - is to hit you with something (.5) that he knows you
will respond to. (1)

Mr.B: It's becoming - it's -

20 Thomas: Well no - I know - we-we all know it's becoming this or that - or the other.
But what I'm saying like is that's where it's at within him.

Or again, soon after:

[Thomas says how Steven needs to tell himself "I told you my old man
doesn't like me - because look at the way he's reacting now". The last time
Steve stole from home, Thomas says, he came back to St. Nicholas' saying
that his parents didn't want to see him again, nor he them.]

25 Thomas: And basically what he was doing like was reinforcing his (.5) wanting to
believe in the fact that you don't like him (.5) for whatever reason. (1) And
he has to test the water that way. And he knows he can get the response he
wants to believe in - by doing something that will cause you concern - yer.
30 That he'll get you to respond (.5) in a negative way toward him (.5) so that
in fact he believes his original decision (1.5) yer? (1) And that - that's what
he's doing.

Mr.B: It's complicated innit.

Thomas: Oh very (1.5) very. But if I want to believe something badly enough - I will
jolly well make sure I set about it.

35 Roger: Uhm.

Thomas: 'Cus he doesn't like being proved wrong. But -

Roger: Deep

Thomas: sorry -

Roger: Deep down of course -

40 Thomas: Deep down of course he's (?)

Roger: crying for dad's love and affection and everything else - yer?

Thomas: How do you cope with your own (.5) stubbornness. (1.5) We'll stop there -
that's what we're dealing with. (1) He doesn't want to be proved he's wrong.

44 Somehow or other - Steven Butler is above all other human beings (1) Yer?

The first section nicely illustrates the interaction between attention-seeking and testing-out; metaphor and irony. In lines 1-4 Thomas interprets Steven's disobedience as his way of getting a response from his father by causing him to have a "blow" (line 4). Thomas goes on to suggest a rationale for why Steve must resort to attention-seeking in this dramatic way. He's "anchored in" on it because "to get some response from the old man - I need to do this" (lines 4-5). The two events are embryonically connected, not randomly but as cause and effect. Steve behaves delinquently *because* this is the only way he gets a response from his dad. His stealing is not what it literally seems, but a metaphorical representation of his need for attention. Steve's behaviour is conceived in terms of his need to "test the water" (line 10) when he's "unsure of where it's all at" (lines 14-15). The reliability of established familial patterns are re-established by Mr. Butler's negative reaction to the deviance with which Steve hits him.

On lines 14-44 Thomas elaborates the ironical manoeuvre through which Steve is seen to provoke a negative reaction from his father despite the fact that "deep down" he's "crying for dad's love and affection and everything else" (lines 39-41). His deviant behaviour is interpreted as being paradoxically bound up in his need to reinforce the belief that his father doesn't like him; a need gratified by Mr. Butler's negative reaction to his thefts. It is this belief that Steven "jollywell make(s) sure" is perpetuated, "'cus he doesn't like being proved wrong" (lines 33-36).

The preceding extracts espouse an ironical version of Steve's need to engineer a

holiday 'n actually committed the offence that he committed (.5) yer?

20 Mrs. B: Well I said - may be he was getting his own back on {us

{

Thomas: {well

Mrs. B: for not taking him. (Mrs. B. laughs).

25 Thomas: I - I don't know - I mean we can go on blaming our - each other - and it's -
at the end of the day the ball must lie in his lap - yer? . . . All I'm saying is
that it's a - it's a "Catch 22" yer? If I want something desperately (.5) and to
get it (.5) and to get the attention of it - yer - I might become deviant - means
that I'm not actually going to get it? Now am I making sense? Am I making
sense?

30 Mrs. B: Well I don't know - I don't think Steven can help himself any more I've just
given up on [?].

Thomas: Yer I don't think see it's a matter of actually Steve now - this is where I'm
slightly different coming in now. I don't think at the end of the day it's a
matter of Steven actually helping himself. He most definitely can't help
himself on this one.

35 Kate: No.

Thomas: Yer? Steven in fact has in fact two parents who can actually help.

Mrs. B: Well - I-I can't.

Thomas: I know you can't - but you know what I'm saying.

40 Mrs. B: Well I don't - becus I don't know - how we can help him - that we haven't
helped him already (3.5) I'm sorry - but I don't.

Kate: I-I agree with you Thomas that he is fully aware of what he's doing -

Thomas: Yes - yes.

Kate: but being fully aware (.5) he still can't help doing it (.5) you know.
(3)

45 Mrs. B: To my mind he needs more professional help than I can give him - or his father.

Steven's deviant behaviour is seen to ironically induce the opposite reaction to the one he so "desperately wants" (lines 11-12 and 25). While Steve eagerly wants his mum and dad, he acts in such a way as to subvert the possibility of their trusting him. In this lies the paradoxical "Catch 22" of which Thomas speaks and to which he goes on, in lines 16-19, to append an empirical incident. Steve's recent theft, on the day his parents were leaving for a holiday without him, is accorded a non-accidental status (line 16): an ironic expression of Steve's need for the kind of attention which, in adopting such deviant means, he negates the possibility of.

While not fully articulated, on lines 31-36 Thomas hints at the origins of Steve's deviant propensity. Steve is himself displaced as the locus of the problem: "I don't think it's a matter of actually Steve now - this is where I'm slightly different coming in now" (lines 31-32). Since his stealing is not interpreted as the result of his free will, or his pathology come to that, Steve is not invested with the power to curtail his own deviance: "He most definitely can't help himself on this one . . . Steven in fact has two parents who can actually help (lines 33-36). Thus, Steven is conceived to know at once "exactly what he's doing" when he steals, while also being incapable of changing his behaviour without the help of his family.

Despite Mrs. Butler's repeated rebuttal of Thomas' metonymic interpretation of Steve's behaviour, it is this thread of theorization which continues to inform his reasoning. His case reaches a dramatic climax in the following piece extracted from a C.C. six weeks later. In it Mrs. Butler reveals to the assembled party how Steve had tried to steal money from her handbag on each of the two previous weekend visits home. He had on both occasions been caught "red-handed" by his mother. Mr. Butler, who had been told by his wife about the attempted thefts only the previous day, responds thus:

Mr. B: I'm very pleased - with his - education (3) and everything he's achieved. But the stealing - I just can't abide stealing - not-not from - his own (.5) so (3) 'til he learns - to uh (.5) stop his stealing (.5) I shall stop him coming home . . . He can come home occasionally - but not to stay (1) not-not - to sleep.

Steven: See I told you it wouldn't work out - I just fucking knew (said in an angry and tearful voice).

[David gets up and leaves, slamming the door, and kicking it on the outside.]

Mrs. B: David.

Thomas: Let him go now. Let him go for a minute . . .

Mrs. B: When did you decide that? 'Cus you didn't tell me (in angry, tearful voice).
(3)

Mr. B: Well you didn't tell me - wan' it.

In response to these events Thomas embarks upon the lengthy monologue from which the excerpts below are drawn. It is here that Thomas most explicitly theorizes the familial patterns to which Steve's deviance is metonymically related. It should be noted that Steven is absent from the C.C. during the course of Thomas' analysis which is largely directed toward Nick Butler, Steve's father.

1 Thomas: Look . . . do you wanna listen to something. I will tell you Steven Butler - your son - is shit scared of you - that's to start off with yer - and he is committed - in his head Nick - that you actually - don't like him.

Mrs. B: Yer.

5 Thomas: He would - look straight at me - and look - "I told you - it wouldn't work". They're his last words at me - yer? Now that's what it's about.

And again soon after:

Thomas: Look (.5) Nick - I mean I - you - I - you must get bored with me - you're his bloody idol man - do you understand that? Yer? And what you're doing is that he is not living up to your expectations and you're smacking him down.

10 Mr. E: But he is (.5) {up - up until the -

{

Thomas: {But he's not - he -

Mr. E: stealing.

15 Thomas: But he is not up to your expectations becus you can take that crutch away immediatly. And there was a nice example of it there. But you're his idol (.5) yer? He wants to be - why he wants to be like you Nick I haven't got a clue (.5) you know.

Mr. E: Nor have I.

20 Thomas: But he actually wants to be like his old man - yer? All his - I mean we've had it over and over when you used to come and see me - all the bits that make (1) Steven Butler interested in the family (.5) in this family system is Nick (.5) you. And I tell you what he's gonna try and do - he's gonna try and beat you at everything - that you will actually take up as a hobby. (3) But you know that you have one thing - that he wants - and you're not gonna give it to him - unless he actually is going to - obey you a hundred percent. And

25 you're not playing a real game with this man at all. You're not - you're playing dirty with him. You're - taking away the emotional support when he needs it most.

(2)

Mr. E: My emotions are gone now.

30 Thomas: That's that's what - the only way I can put it across to you - and I hope you can understand what I'm saying to you Ted.

Mr. E: I know what-what you're saying.

Thomas: Yer? (1) But I have - that man - you know - that young man there - and he's - a young man now - he's not a kid anymore. Yer?

35 Mr. E: Well then he should know.

Thomas: At ten - no not at all. No not at all. At ten - eleven - twelve o'clock at night time (.5) talking about the highlights of you - the old man - yer? God only knows what fantasy he has inside there about you like - yer? And that's not taking away any of the attributes you've got - 'cus no doubt you've got them.
40 (2) But the very thing he needs most - 'cus he can - he's matching you now - bit for bit - in all the kind of trophy hunting bit - yer? He can give you a good game at most things which you were any good at - yer? The thing that he needs the most - you're not going ta give it to him (.5) yer? 'Cus he won't live up to your expectations. And therefore what he becomes is what you - what-
45 what is called in-in jargon - he's the family sin bin (1) and all the vomit and all the pain and all the emotions that we have got - we can chuck it in on top of Steve Butler. (2.5) That's what's happening to Steve Butler at this
48 moment in time.

Steve's commitment to the belief that his father does not like him is held to account here as above for what his deviance is really all about. The irony of Thomas' interpretation lies in his conceptualization of Steve's idolatry of the father of whom he is at once "shit scared" (line 2). For, Mr. Butler is constructed as the gravitational force of the family: "all the bits that make (1) Steve Butler interested in the family system" (lines 19-20). It is this affiliation which defines Mr. Butler's negative response ("you're smacking him down" - line 9), and withdrawal of support ("you can take that crutch away immediately" - lines 13-14) as dirty play: "taking away the emotional support when he needs it most" (lines 26-27).

The metonymic mode of analysis vividly emerges on lines 44-48 where Steve is categorized as the scapegoat; the *part* of the system which contains the emotional “vomit” and “pain” (lines 45-46) which belongs to the system as a *whole*. It is in the final extract below that Thomas’ train of practical reasoning is most systematically articulated. The piece is taken from a later point in the same C.C. at which Kate refers back to her suggestion at the previous C.C. that Steve’s incessant stealing was borne of psychological disturbance beyond his control to which a psychiatric response was appropriate. With this in mind it was agreed that she arrange for Steve to see Margaret Wetherall - consultant psychiatric advisor to St. Nicholas’ - for an initial assessment.

1 Kate: . . . we felt it was compulsive stealing - she disagreed with that - diagnosis -
and (3) she put (that) in her report. My part (.5) in the objectives from the
last case conference - was to ask Margaret Wetherall to see Steven - and to
talk with him. And I believe Steven did say to her that he would have very
5 great difficulty stopping stealing.

Thomas: Yes (2.5) but I also think - like - I mean - here’s McKinney again - look I think
his stealing in your family - serves a very useful purpose for your family (.5)
yer? (2) It actually serves a useful purpose becus in fact he’s living up to your
belief - and your belief is that he’s no good.

10 Mr. B: It’s not my belief.

Thomas: Well I’m telling you it’s the family belief. It’s what he believes. He believes
- O.K. - Nick seems to be the one who’s getting it at the moment - but he has
beliefs about you as well Pam and I don’t need to go into them now - but that
the old man actually believes that he’s no good . . . And if we’re told often
15 enough by people who are important to us that we’re x y or z - we actually
start believing it. And we’re forever actually testing it out. (1) When we are
feeling insecure in a relationship we’re forever testing the blessed thing out
for Christ’s sake.

About a minute later:

20 Thomas: You see I-I (.5) dunno where you're getting this idea that you think that uhm
- Steven - had something wrong in his psyche - yer? And therefore then like
it would be a very easy (.5) coat-hanger to hang a coat on yer? And that -
from once you say "well - yes - he has a psychiatric problem" - no doubt you'll
probably accept him Nick.

Mr. B: We've tried everything else.

25 Thomas: Yer - but I mean what we're actually saying is look - I mean that's (.5) I-I still
think like - he's into - he's into accepting a label that he's been given. (1)
Yer? He's been given a very useful role inside in your family - and he's
actually obeying it. Now I don't think that's anything to do with psychiatry
at all - yer? That purely and simply is - it's carrying out the wishes of.

30 Mr. B: Of whom?

Thomas: Of the family.

Mr. B: Well no-one says he - he's a thief.

Thomas: No - but you've been telling him often enough that he's no good.
(2)

35 Mr. B: No good?

Thomas: Yer.

Mr. B: No - I've always - no -

40 Thomas: Well - I mean I'll tell ya - just try and listen - listen to your son will you? Yer?
I listen to him kind of twenty-four hours a day. And that's why he can turn
to me -

Mr. B: He will say anything.

Thomas: No.

Mr. B: He would say anything.

45 Thomas: Not at all . . . That's why he can turn to me at the end of the day and say -
"look I told you it wouldn't be any good" yer? (1) He's - he's committed that
you in fact like - will make - you don't want him to be good almost (1) yer?
Look - we all know that you do - but I mean that's neither here nor there -
49 it's the message that he's picking up (.5) yer? And he's responding to your
communication.

In lines 6-11, Thomas explicitly alludes to the functional benefits of Steve's stealing: it "serves a very useful purpose for your family" (line 7) by fulfilling the "family belief" (line 11), and particularly that of the "old man" that "he's no good" (line 9 and 14). It is this belief that Steve has purportedly imbibed and which, due to his insecurity, he is forever testing-out.

The very individualization and pathologization of Steve's behaviour by the Butler family is conceptualized as part of their group dynamic: "a very easy coat-hanger to hang a coat on" (line 21) and a stigmatizing label which would ironically promote Mr. Butler's acceptance of Steve, for "once you say well yes he's got a psychiatric problem" - no doubt you'll probably accept him Nick" (lines 22-23).

Thomas continues on lines 25-49 to disentangle Steve's deviance from a psychiatric perspective which would situate it within his individual pathology. His behaviour is re-contextualized as a metonymic representation of family beliefs and patterns; borne of his acceptance of a label which allocates to him a very useful role within the family: that of the scapegoat.

Despite Mr. Butler's remonstrations against Thomas' theorization, he proceeds to espouse it. While Thomas agrees that no-one has said specifically he's a thief, he insists "you've been telling him often enough he's no good" (line 33). Thomas rebuffs Mr. Butler's rejection of his claims by recommending he just listen to his son; an activity which he claims to be involved in twenty-four hours a day. In his *piece de resistance*, Thomas quotes Steve's words on his angry departure from the C.C: "look I told you it wouldn't be any good" (lines 44-45). The words themselves, and Steve's presentation of them to Thomas ("he can turn to me" line 44)

simultaneously authorizes both the *fact* of Steve's belief, and the authenticity of Thomas' *perception* of it. The incident is thus assimilated to Thomas' explanatory paradigm; transformed into one more instance of Steve's sense of failure within the Butler family.

Finally, lines 45-49 generate an ambiguity which haunts much of the foregoing material. Although the overwhelming message to Steve is that the family don't want him to be good, "we all know that you do - but I mean that's neither here nor there - it's the message he's picking up" (lines 47-48) and to which he's responding. This dual assumption echoes a previous expression on lines 1-3 of the first extract from Thomas' interview (pages 175-176) in which he speaks of how the family "... desperately want in fact to bring about a change (2) they desperately want - in fact - to love each other" but "they're not quite sure how to do it". This relationship between what the Butler family want and what they believe and communicate to Steven suggests an ironic split between reality and appearance. Thomas - interactional analyst - steps into the breach to expose Steve's response as functional in relation to a system which is, nonetheless, unhealthy. The *therapeutic* solution - as opposed to the self-negating "Catch 22" in which the Butler family are purportedly stuck - lies in the modification of family perceptions and, in consequence, the interactional patterns in which Steve's problems are enmeshed.

Thomas' characterization of Steven's status *vis a vis* the family is strikingly Durkheimian. By defining the deviant within their midst the Butler family are seen to open up a cognitive divide between he and they, and are, in this process, able to exonerate themselves of blame. As Thomas says in his interview, in response to my questioning the validity of taking the child away from the family if his problems reside within it:

Thomas: Well I suppose it-it really depends on whether you believe the sum is greater than the whole - you know - or the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Kim: Yer.

Thomas: Basically I am - we have Steven Butler inside here at the moment - becus of the - in fact the uhm - way the system works within his own family - yer? . . . He is a scapegoat - a (?school?) goat - and whatever kind of goat you'd like to choose for the rest of his family - yer? And what a nice way for the rest of the family to recognize it. (1) And I uhm - because of my own particular

kind of - I suppose training and bent really I can actually effectively use that.
(2) Yer? I-I would call - I would call uhm (1) Steve Butler the phobia of the family. (2) What would the family do if you haven't got that phobia?

Conclusion

I have attempted in this chapter to examine the variety of ways in which the staff at St. Nicholas' interpreted the boys' behaviour as the manifestation of their underlying emotions. These modes of association between surface and depth can best be understood, I have argued, in figurative terms. Thus, the child's behaviour may be seen to metaphorically represent his state of mind, or ironically subvert it. Alternatively, as we saw in the final group of extracts regarding Steve Butler, the boy's behaviour may be seen to express the feelings which *properly* belong to the family system as a whole.

Whereas in metaphor the relationship between appearance and the underlying reality is borne of resemblance, in irony it is based upon difference. In metonymy, by contrast, the part is treated as a symbol of the whole. I believe that to consider therapeutic reasoning in these figurative terms extends our understanding of the documentary method and the multiple uses to which it may be put. For, it is only by dint of this procedure of practical reasoning that appearance is invested with an underlying significance which constitutes reality for the practical purposes in hand. By examining the discursive mechanisms of therapeutic reasoning *in its actual articulation* one is interrupting the "codes" which are usually taken for granted. But:

"Perhaps emancipatory potential only begins to emerge when the power of the codes is brought into view - when the usually silent machinery is heard. Such viewing or hearing depends upon a certain respect for the codes."
[Silverman and Torode (1980) - p.288]

CHAPTER FOUR NORMALIZATION, CRIMINALIZATION AND PATHOLOGIZATION

Introduction

Therapeutic reasoning is a refinement not only of mundane methods, but also everyday knowledge. In particular it resonates with the wider propensity to doubt the veridicality of appearance. The scepticism which locates the search for true meaning in a subterranean realm percolates up from common sense wisdom into more esoteric forms of knowledge which, in turn, having assumed a more technical vocabulary, filters back down to the roots from which it springs. The quest for a foundation beyond the ephemerality of appearance is apparent in philosophical discourse from the shadow in the Platonic cave, to the Kantian distinction between *noumena* and *phenomena*. In routine interactions actors are similarly motivated to puncture the superficial in pursuit of a deeper layer of meaning. The metaphors which attend this uncovering are instructive. We talk about going to a deeper level, beyond, behind, beneath the surface which may be deceptive, a caution encapsulated in maxims like: never judge a book by its cover; all that glitters is not gold; beauty is only skin deep, and the like.

In therapeutic interpretations, the search beneath the manifest takes the pathologizing turn discussed above. What is sought is the historico-emotional problems of which deviant behaviour is a symbolic expression. The vicissitudes of therapeutic reasoning were subjected to scrutiny in the last chapter. However, no extended piece of talk, let alone the complexities of institutional discourse, can be decanted into one interpretative frame or “pure” type of talk. Other systematic proclivities coexisted alongside the therapeutic predisposition toward pathologization. A perusal of some of the more systematic of these countervailing tendencies help us gain analytical purchase on what is peculiar about it.

A) Routine Cynicism

Accompanying the therapeutic excavation of the behavioural surface was another recurrent practice at St. Nicholas', similarly dependent upon piercing the apparent. Unlike the former, however, which was designed to elicit the emotional forces unconsciously at work, the latter alerted staff to the boys' manipulative powers which they may consciously wield in the

management of appearance. This routine institutional cynicism cautioned staff against being duped by streetwise kids who have well developed skills of deception. Even though the majority of boys at St. Nicholas' were seen to have emotional problems, they were concomitantly endowed with the capacity and motivation to manipulate members of staff. Therapeutic understanding and cynical caution were curiously interwoven in the institutional fabric. The boys were typically defined as at once the victims of events which were beyond their control as well as the skilled practitioners of deception which was within it: a duality which was not necessarily irreconcilable.

The boys' propensity to disguise their real motivation was characteristically bound up in the rhetoric of "fronts" which were donned in order to manipulate events and people. The adoption of a likeable *persona* in each of the following pieces is attributed to the boy's attempt to stage-manage appearance. The first is extracted from a report written by a member of the social work staff at one of Tony Salter's previous placements.

"At times he would be coy and subtly abusive, displaying charm, and an impish, toothy sense of humour. This tactic he would use particularly on female members of staff for whom he would substitute kindness or weakness, thus in his eyes, prime manipulability. He wheels and deals for fags or favours."

The array of ostensibly positive characteristics displayed by Tony are interpreted as a tactical manipulation of staff in pursuit of "fags or favours". Samuel's charm in the next extract is similarly reduced to the status of a veneer which is assumed to obscure his mistrust and deviousness. It is drawn from a court report written by Roger Carter.

1 "His arrival at St. Nicholas' showed him to have absorbed considerable
institutionalization; he displayed a friendly and likeable nature with a great
deal of personal charm. At times it is almost too good to be true. Underlying
this we feel there is a mistrust and a deviousness, whereby if he considers he
5 can get away with something he will take a chance."

Notice, in lines 1-3, how the account encourages a cynical interpretation by the reader. We are told, in the first place, that Samuel's early behaviour at St. Nicholas' showed signs of

institutionalization, and in the second how it was friendly, likeable and charming. The unequivocally negative connotations which attend the term “institutionalization” prompt a particular reading of the apparently positive qualities which follow. The latter, we are led to assume, are the symptoms of Samuel’s absorption of the rules of the residential game. Line 3 displays Roger’s ghost expectations about appropriate behaviour for a child of Samuel’s type. Behaviour which deviates from the network of anterior assumptions, even when it errs in the direction of being “too good”, promotes suspicion.

A fuller exposition of the panoply of skills involved in the art of deception emerges in the forthcoming account by Joyce Page in a unit 4 staff meeting.

1 Joyce: Yer . . . I mean Wayne never used to-to - wasn’t clever enough in-in some
 ways or perhaps not - not sophisticated enough to - like Tony (Salter) used
 to know how to - manipulate the P.O. group - and ah (.5) that was his thing.
 He was really good - he was really clever - at it. And he knew exactly what
5 he was doing. Now Wayne wasn’t like that - but Wayne - has - is beginning
 to learn to be able to do that - so he can use - he can use certain uhm - wiles
 - you know (.5) key words. And he-he can (.5) I’m not saying that-that-that
 that’s what he he’s done totally. But he can (.5) he-he’s now learning
 techniques of pacifying people by changing his mood and using (1) certain
10 - phrases to talk to people - so that - yer - so that he (.5) they then - uhm (.5)
 forget the last two hours of-of - you know (.5) absolutely intolerant behaviour
 - because suddenly he becomes this this - understanding - intelligent - caring
 - hurt - child. I’m not saying - that some of it isn’t real (1) I mean I’m sure that
 with Tony there is a lot of reality at the back of it - and lots of fears and
15 everything - at the back of it. But - I mean - he is learning to do that now. And
 he hadn’t got that before. I mean you could sort of (.5) make him back down
 and-and - really reveal something. But now he’s - he’s becoming able to
 cover that (1) cover what - he’s really thinking and feeling - isn’t he. He
19 doesn’t reveal (.5) so much now does he.

The fact that the manipulative management of appearance involves a set of skills, even a talent which those so endowed consciously execute, emerges in lines 1-5. Unlike Wayne who was lacking in this respect, Tony Salter is presented as being replete: he is “clever”, “sophisticated”

and “really good” at it. Wayne is presented as a student of the art of illusion who is learning the “wiles” and “words” and the adoption of an appropriately sensitive *persona* to pacify staff and deflect their attention from bouts of intolerant behaviour.

However, if this were the whole story it would be difficult to reconcile routine cynicism with the therapeutic tendency to define boys “of this kind” as emotionally disturbed. Lines 13-15 point the way to a solution. The manipulative prowess is wedded to the underlying psychological domain “of fears and everything” which presumably engenders the need to dupe. It is this realm which is presented as “real” (lines 13 and 14) and lying at the “back of it” (line 15). Lines 17-19 echo this metaphorical distinction between a surface “cover” and underlying reality of thinking and feeling which Wayne used to reveal, but has learned to conceal.

The emphasis on Wayne *learning* a technique (lines 5, 8, and 15) and *becoming* able to cover up (line 17) suggests the identity of an apprentice. In the following excerpt, by contrast, drawn from Barry Painter’s psychological assessment report, the reader is presented with the performance of a Master.

1 “Barry was very easy to be with and easy to test, because he geared all his
energies to pleasing the tester and presenting himself as attentive and
acceptable. He had a wide range of strategies for achieving this, ranging
5 from the apparently deliberate use of intensive eye contact and a body
posture which leaned toward the tester (which conveyed flattering
attentiveness) to attempts to be seen as a peer and as someone who should
be let in on the “secrets” of testing. He seemed keen to win his goal of a
return home and also keen to neutralize any dangerous aspects of the tester,
and his investment in working sedulously towards these two goals for more
10 than an hour must have demanded tremendous amounts of effort. Barry
must have been drained of physical and nervous energy after consistently
keeping up this winning persona. One felt that Barry is accustomed to
putting much energy into “survival” and that it is survival skills which are his
best developed feature. His effusive charm was easy and automatic.
15 Unfortunately, as the psychiatrist was later to observe, Barry was so defended
that one saw very little unstudied spontaneous behaviour on which to base
judgements. One saw some very subtle, infrequent signs of considerable

20 tension underlying his habitual wide smile and at one point towards the end of testing (by which time, perhaps, the strain of the effort to please was becoming overwhelming), he spoke very angrily to the tester. He was most indignant that she interrupted him prematurely to make an interpretation before he had fully expressed his meaning, and he responded furiously "You didn't let me finish!"

25 Although Barry was so patently manipulative, one did not find that this elicited feelings of mistrust or dislike, but rather a feeling that he was simply trying too hard.

A distinction is again drawn between the front which Barry presents to the "tester" and the manipulative motives which underlie it. A range of behavioural items from his ease (line 1), to his attentiveness (line 2), to his body language (lines 4-6), to his assumption of the role of equal (lines 6-7), to his "effusive charm" (line 14) and "habitual wide smile" (line 18) are conceived as documentary manifestations of Barry's efforts to please and impress the psychologist *in order to* return home and neutralize any threat (lines 7-8).

The sense that his "winning persona" (line 12) is stage-managed is established first by recognizing it as a skilled operation within the boy's conscious control, and second by acknowledging the amount of work invested in it. In relation to the first point we - the readers - are given a "preliminary instruction" [D. Smith (1978) - p.32-33] for how to read Barry's presentation of self in terms of his manipulation of a range of apparently deliberate strategies (lines 1-7). Secondly, the ease of his manner is paradoxically married to the very hard work he must do to sustain it. An anomaly is generated from the outset. Something which is "very easy" is not normally associated with the expenditure of a great deal of energy, and yet we are told in lines 1-3 that Barry's very easiness required "all his energies". Again, his "effusive charm" which was "easy and automatic" is constructed as the result of sedulous work (line 9) which "must have demanded tremendous amounts of effort" (line 10). The disjuncture is resolved by recourse to a theory of Barry's behaviour as a studied performance which is contrived to give the illusion that it is natural.

The only breach of this fastidiously maintained pattern is when Barry responded angrily to the psychologist's interruption (lines 17-23). Far from threatening the validity of a

theory, instances of deviation often serve to bolster it. The outburst is decoded as “proof” of the prolonged effort which is now “getting too much”, rather than a challenge to this version of events. Its temporal situation (at the end of the testing) further bears witness to the theory of Barry’s sustained effort perpetrated throughout the account.

Only lines 12-14 hint at the origins of Barry’s deceptive prowess and accommodate it within the suggestion of a therapeutic framework. The boy’s highly developed survival skills, and the efforts put into their sustenance suggests, by implication, that survival is something that has not come easy for Barry; it is something that he has had to learn to work hard at. Since the survival of a child in our culture is ensconced in family responsibility, I certainly bring my ghost assumptions about normal families and child-rearing patterns to bear in hearing Barry’s survival efforts as flowing from an up-bringing which was in certain respects deficient.

The recognition of a boy’s manipulative skills, whether embryonic or fully fledged, did not concomitantly de-skill the staff. On the contrary, accounts of this kind demonstrated precisely their powers to see through even highly sophisticated performances and to routinely employ the necessary level of cynicism to avoid being duped. This suspicion extends, in the next group of extracts, to the boys’ accounts of their own motives which are subjected to the scrutiny of doubt, especially where they employ quasi-therapeutic terminology.

The first excerpt below shows how practitioners at St. Nicholas’ did not employ an attitude of indiscriminate cynicism; the extent to which a boy’s account was discredited depended upon the composite picture staff had of him, and the timing of its articulation. In the following piece Joyce Page, social worker in unit 4, responds to my telling her about an incident to which I was witness in the early days of my fieldwork. One weekday afternoon Peter Hughes had absented himself from St. Nicholas’. On his return he was questioned by three members of staff about why he had failed to attend school. Peter replied that he needed to have some “time and space to work out what was going on in my head”. His explanation was met with a mixture of cynicism and mock. I suggest to Joyce that in my experience staff tended to be suspicious when boys employed jargon of this kind, especially when used to account for deviant behaviour. Joyce replied:

1 Joyce: . . . I don’t think it was actually that he said that - but that he said that at that particular time.

Kim: Right.

5 Joyce: And (1.5) and the way in-in which it was done. I mean I don't under-estimate
his need (.5) to-to - to have some space. But Peter to have some space to
think about things - if it's not gonna solve anything. . . I would - I would think
Kim it depends very much on who it comes from. You see he was a
manipulator so (.5) if you're getting that kind of (1) uh - jargon from a-a
manipulator (2) uhm (.5) then I think you're - you would - you would be very
10 cynical about it.

Kim: Right.

15 Joyce: Now - if you're getting (2) and you see the same thing is true of Steve Butler
- Sta - Steve Butler i-is manipulating (.5) all over the place at the moment.
So that once - when he starts (.5) I mean he may be being honest - and that's
the problem. I uhm - when he starts to say things like - uh - you know - uh
- "I - I-I'm a compulsive thief" - and - "and I talked to my mum about it - my
mum's going to get me a - a hypnotist." Now (5) I know where he gets some
of those ideas from - so that (.5) I-I am cynical.

Kim: Right.

20 Joyce: And in a way it's a kind of cover-up for what (.5) what he's really involved in
. . . Becus I know that he (.5) he didn't (2) I mean if he said to me (.5) "you
know when I go out - I just wanna keep pinching" (1) uhm (.5) but Steve
doesn't admit that he pinches you see - so he thinks that if he uses (1.5) uh
24 - this (.5) uh-uh phrase (.5) it's not the same thing.

Joyce's account displays the subtleties involved in selecting an appropriate interpretative framework to explain a child's motivations. She cites three contextual features which influence the extent to which a boy's account is conceived as genuine. Interpretations of *when* and *how* the account is delivered, and by *whom*, combine to suggest *what* sense may be made of it. Of these only the *who* factor is given extensive elaboration in Joyce's account. In instances where the child is already defined as "a manipulator" as is the case with both Peter and Steve, this

facilitates a reading which is sympathetic to the prevailing profile. Jargonesque accounts of their misdemeanours by boys who are known for their deceptive dealings automatically prompt a cynical appraisal of their sincerity, even though they “may be being honest” (line 14).

A sensitivity to whether the account is articulated in the child’s own words, or ones he has “picked up” sharpens Joyce’s capacity to assess its status. Steve Butler’s reference to being a “compulsive thief” rather than admitting that he just *wants* to keep on pinching, throws doubt upon his credibility since, presumably, this does not sound like the kind of description that a boy like Steve would generate independently. Lines 15-18 suggests that Mrs. Butler is a source from whom Steve borrows in defining his delinquency in technical terms and suggesting a commensurate mode of treatment.

Joyce’s subjection of Steve’s self-definition to cynical scrutiny draws, I suggest, upon the rules of thumb employed more generally to assess the sincerity of an account. Where the author is a) seen to use the conceptual language originally articulated by another which b) has exonerating implications and is c) of questionable moral status, then his account is susceptible to suspicion. The three features need not necessarily act in conjunction to prompt a cynical response, but where they do an attitude of suspicion is very likely. Of the three an assessment of a person’s moral character is the most influential in judging his sincerity.

The timbre of Leon Pryce’s description of his deviant behaviour is subjected to doubt in the following two extracts, the first of which is from a T.M.

1 Kate: I talked to him - after he did the windows* - in - unit 2 - last week. (1) I had
 him in my office for quite a long while talking and (.5) what he was saying to
 me was (.5) he said (.5) “I get really - very very angry inside - and I don’t know
5 what I’m angry about”. And (.5) he said - “I look for something to blame my
 anger on” - he said - “I know I do that”. He said - “it might be another boy
 - it might be - staff - or it might be - anything”. He said (.5) “I (.5) I don’t know
 why I’m angry” but ah (.5) now how much he picked up (.5) you know - “this
8 excuses me” (1) type of jargon.

* i.e. smashed the windows

Two of the three elements mentioned above are present in Kate's cynically suggestive interpretation. In the first place the account is described as "jargon" which Leon may have picked up, and in the second it affords an excuse for his deviant behaviour (lines 7-8). The third element is predominantly at work in the informal interaction between Kate and I reproduced below. It follows a discussion between Roger Carter and Kate about how best to respond to a bout of "disturbing" behaviour by Leon Pryce.

1 Kate: Waste of time the two of us to see him.

 Kim: Why?

 Kate: I don't know - I-I think (1.5) ah - ah - I think - it's much easier to talk about
 (.5) things if you ta (.5) I mean Le - old Leon knows all the things to use -
5 "I don't think my mother loves me" - and all this jazz. And - and - it's only
 when you get him to stop acting and start (.5) being honest (.5) you know -
 that you get anywhere with him. (1.5) It's obvious - he's had people (.5)
 saying - "tell me your problems" (in a deep seductive voice) ever since he
9 was a baby. And it doesn't work.

Here, it is Leon's status as an experienced actor which provides the paradigm within which his emotional language makes sense. Only when his performance is interrupted and he is made to "stop acting", a feat presumably rendered more difficult in Roger's presence, can he start to be more honest, and can "you get anywhere with him" (lines 5-7). The manipulative powers with which Leon is endowed are seen to originate in his long history of involvement with the "caring" professions, epitomized by the voice of therapeutic understanding: "tell me your problems" (line 8).

B) Normalization, Criminalization and Pathologization

What, When, Why and Who?

The preceding extracts display a routinely cynical orientation shared by the practitioners at St. Nicholas' and other associated institutions which sensitized them to the potentially

manipulative behaviour of their clients. The attribution of such an ulterior motive to a child did not mutually exclude a therapeutic interpretation of the deeper disturbance which itself may account for their survivalist tactics. A pathologizing schema, however, was not the only or the ultimate one to which the boys' deviant behaviour could be integrated. Two of the more coherent alternatives strained, on the one hand, toward a normalizing framework of interpretation, and on the other, toward a criminalizing one. The sense made of a child's actions was contingent upon a reading of the contextual clues, including the considerations noted above: when it occurred, how and why it occurred, and by whom it was perpetrated. In this respect the interpretation of "what happened" was under-determined by the actual behaviour and over-determined by the practitioners reading of the particulars.

If, for example, a child got into a fight just before his case conference, the temporal location of the event (when) may, depending upon its conjunction with the hows, whys and whos, have been understood either as an over the top reaction to normal anxiety, a conscious attempt by the child to court his own departure, or his need to "test-out" for love by engineering his own rejection, amongst many other possibilities. Similarly, staff may have employed their knowledge of the typical career trajectory through St. Nicholas' to explain the meaning of a particular boy's behaviour. What were acceptable and expectable levels of disruptiveness and disturbance during the early testing-out phase of a child's residency were conceived as quite unacceptable and symptomatic of a child's state of mind if they occurred during the later stabilization period. The timing of events thus entered the core of the interpretative process.

Retrieval of the motivation for *why* a boy acted in the way he did also helped to define the status of his behaviour. The forthcoming example shows how one new piece of information could provide the catalyst for transforming the meaning of behaviour from the essentially pathological to the normal. As my tape recorder was, on this rare occasion, inaccessible, the account is a replication of the notes I made immediately after the impromptu conversation between Kate and myself.

- A) Kate speaks of how, in this business, people like to be able to compartmentalize things. It makes them feel comfortable, and allows them to put things behind them. Kate gives the example of David Lyons and how, when he first came, he would sleep on top of the wardrobe. Unit staff would go into his room to wake him in the morning, and just find him there. Kate says she

initially found David's behaviour very bothering. It disturbed her, until Roger Carter explained that when David was younger, his father would come home at night and beat the family up. "Then it all made sense. I could comfortably put it behind me. I could make sense of his behaviour and start working with the boy".

Again, in an earlier T.M.

1 B) Kate: D'you know - I was thinking - about David - I don't find it surprising that he
sleeps on top of the wardrobe - because his dad - his dad was so violent - and
he used to beat the hell out of his mother and (.5) the kids if he got his hands
5 on them. And I can quite understand when dad - when a big - fight's going
- on at night (.5) he'd crawl on top of the wardrobe (5.) and perhaps go to kip
there for safety. So I can understand (.5) I don't find that unusual - that he
7 - sleeps on the wardrobe.

The "ah hah" clause, as I call it, is operative in both of the preceding accounts. Previously inexplicable behaviour is invested with rationality by linking it to events in the child's past in relation to which it is not "surprising" (extract B, line 1), and quite understandable (extract B, lines 4 and 6). Ah-hah! By deflecting attention away from the behaviour *per se*, a rational motivation may be seen to be at work behind the apparently senseless, and therefore potentially pathological events.

When an act of deviance was committed and *why* were important contextual clues, but knowledge of *who* the act was performed by was the galvanizing thread in arriving at a persuasive interpretation of its meaning. The "same" piece of behaviour may assume a very different significance relative to what was known about the perpetrator; a process to which Mike Griffith's account below is responsive. The extract is from his interview.

1 [I ask Mike how he judges a particular interpretation to be true]

Mike: It sounds incredibly damning doesn't it - if-if I said that it sou - it sounds right to you.

Kim No - I think it -

5 Mike: If you uhm (7) I suppose you-you filter it through your own (2) conception of a of - of a kid's personality. (1.5) Say I've got my own (.5) my own ideas about what I think about a certain kid - O.K.? and I interpret action his actions (.5) through - the picture which I've already built up (.5) of this kid.

Kim: That's right.

10 Mike: Through his (.5) asse - through his reports - through my seeing him - through my own sort of in - interaction with 'im at St. Nicholas'. And if a kid (.5) if one kid - heaved a brick through a window I'd say "well that's typical (.5) you know - I'm not surprised in the least" (.5) if another kid heaved a brick through a window - I'd say - "Jesus Christ - there must be something really
15 (1) you know (1) digging - digging at at this bloke - you know - for for him to do that."

Kim: Yer.

Mike: Uhm (4) my own interpretation wouldn't be to say - well he-he's obviously expressing some - basic uhm - human (laughs) uh - sort of human - drive -
20 going back to Neanderthal man - you know - so -

Kim: Yer
(1)

Mike: I-I don't me - I don't (1) mean-mean-mean to be that flippant. So (.5) what I'm saying is (2) personally I just in-interpret what I see about kids or what
25 I hear about kids . . . through my - through my own - picture which I've - which I've - developed - of them - you know.

Mike's account neatly expresses his awareness of how sense is made by assimilating a child's deviant actions to the picture that has been constructed of him (lines 23-26). Heaving a

brick through the window may thus be attributed to a typical behaviour pattern, or a symptom of disturbance, relative to the *gestalt* within which it appears. Who, in relation to when and why are the indexical features whose elaboration provides the basis for interpretation.

Composite characterizations of a child, which drew upon the aforementioned typifying schemata, were not necessarily unequivocal. Dominant and recessive *motifs* often coexisted within any given portrait. Very rarely were the boys at St. Nicholas' defined as wholly normal, pathological or criminal, since such pure characterizations would contradict the institutional ideology and brief. Thus a child's deviance may have been seen as an extreme reaction to the normal problems of adolescence; or the boy whose stealing was conceived as a symptom of his emotional disturbance may nonetheless have enjoyed the benefits of his ill-begotten gain; or again, a skilled young criminal may have been responding to subcultural or peer group pressures.

Normalization, criminalization and pathologization are ideal-typical constructs, of the sort which lay actors and sociologists employ, notwithstanding relative differences in emphasis. In this respect Weber's methodological apparatus is not exclusive, and the analysis of its operation within everyday "lay" theorizing constitutes a primary focus of the present work. Empirical analysis soon knocks the corners off ideal-typical models by exposing the complexity of practical reasoning, without necessarily invalidating their use. Actors within the "natural attitude" are also aware of how the concrete specifics of the real world confound the best laid constructs of sociologists and men. Given this unavoidable fallibility, what becomes interesting is how actors (lay and sociological) continue to relate specific details to a generalizing framework with relative methodological ease.

A great deal of interpretative work is done by members to select an appropriate typificatory schema. There is no book of rules to turn to in making this decision since no text could cover the infinite series of contextual contingencies which bring rules to life. This is why the accomplishment of sense is both awesome and mundane: awesome because members, as practical reasoners, are in a constant process of structuring the world of which they are a part; mundane because we all (with few exceptions) wield constitutive skills, and take our capacities fundamentally for granted.

Neither rules, nor the contexts within which they are elaborated, could be formulated without the capacity to typify: objects, events, people, behaviour, situations and the like. The

typifying propensity of which Husserl, and following him Schutz speaks, is translated through ethnomethodology into a different terminology. Rather than an attribute of “transcendental consciousness” I consider the process of typification to be an achievement of social reasoning, which proceeds very largely without us even being consciously aware of it. For, the typifying schemata are an indigenous feature of everyday discourse, and are so engrained that they always already structure our perceptions.

The process of typification is a primary means through which the everyday world is organized. It helps make the strange familiar by incorporating it within an established framework of meanings. Because experience is always already articulated in a public language, with all the powers of typification that go with it, it is situated within a schema, or, to quote from Schutz, “a horizon of familiarity and pre-acquaintanceship” [Schutz (1962) - p.7]. In this process flesh is given to the ghost of generality which haunts the specific so that:

“Even the utterly novel and unfamiliar is grasped as such against this pre-established background of normality and typicality.”
[J. Heritage (1984) - p. 51]

The ghost schemata of typification as I have called them (page 27) are, of course, not random or arbitrary. By definition they exhibit routine orientations and tendencies which are not, for the everyday actor, logical and parsimonious. Such precision is part of the value system of the social scientist with her “second-order” constructs. To make this distinction is not to embrace a romantic irrationalism: the thrust of my analysis has been toward disentangling relatively homogeneous threads of reasoning. Nor is the issue whether or not “second order” constructs are legitimate, (they are the *raison d’etre* of any analytic study), but to recognize that they are built upon a fecundity of first-order constructs, shared by lay and expert members, which are primarily constitutive. It is this, the raw material, which has traditionally been considered unworthy of study; thrown over as so much jetsam and flotsom. Hence the ethnomethodological call to make a traditional resource into a focus; to articulate the taken-for-granted and usually silent machinery from which we construct a social world.

It is, patently, not only the more esoteric or specialist horizons that engage in typifying activity; these horizons are themselves built upon the foundations of common sense and the natural language which is its habitat. At the same time the texture and density of each schema or “map” will vary according to the intimacy and familiarity of the actor as well, crucially, as the

practical purposes in hand. The practitioners at St. Nicholas' had collectively cumulated a great deal of knowledge about the *kind* of boys who *normally* come into their care. This allowed them, amongst other things, to elucidate the typical range of motivations which underlay the boys' deviant behaviour.

Having explored the therapeutic process and its elective affinity with a pathologizing tendency in the last chapter, let us explore the cognitive and moral criteria by which a child's behaviour was accorded a definition in relation to a normalizing and criminalizing framework. Normalization was accomplished through a process of mitigation whereby a child's ostensibly deviant behaviour was exonerated on the basis of his age or his circumstances. Thus, a normalizing "rule" converted actions which might otherwise have been conceived as disturbing or disturbed into behaviour which was expectable and/or reasonable . . . under the circumstances. Adolescence, for example, was constructed as a funny time in which a *degree* of emotional disturbance and delinquency is expected. Let us consider two accounts in which the propriety of a pathologizing interpretation is undermined by eliciting a chronological rule through which the behaviour may be normalized. The first excerpt forms part of George Wallace's interview.

[George Wallace speaks of how a psychiatrist that David Lyons had gone to see had diagnosed him as very dangerous, and needing to be locked away for the safety of himself and others. This judgement, George explains, was based upon two situations in which dead birds had been found in David's vicinity.]

Kim: Yer - the blood on the stick -

George: Yer.

Kim: uhm (1) interpreta - well (.5) fact?

George: Mmm.

Kim: Yer.

George: To me I read that as (1) uhm (.5) a kid - finding a dead bird and just -

Kim: battering it around.

George: with a stick - yes - too afraid to actually pick it up with his hand or-or - move it somewhere or - it-it's like (1) kids when they see a hedgehog - they might get a brick and actually stone it to death.

Kim: Yer.

George: You know.
(1.5)

Kim: That's right. Or splatter it if it's already dead anyway.

George: Mmm.

Kim: See what its innards look like.

George: Yer.

Kim: But within the context of the report - that took on quite sinister (1) connotations {didn't it.

{

George: {Yer - and-and (.5) and (.5) and becus of that report he's he (2) he suffered (1.5) greatly.

George's account can be seen as an attempt to wrestle David's behaviour away from any pathologizing connotations by placing it within a framework of normal adolescent behaviour: something which any kid would do. The blood-stained stick is transformed from the instrument of torture it represents in other reports, to a means of distancing the fearful child from the object of his curiosity.

A similarly normalizing re-contextualization of apparently excessive or odd behaviour occurs in the extract quoted below from a T.M.

1 [Nicola “feeds back” the details of Damian Tanner’s C.C. to the teachers, in
particular how the unit report had spoken of Damian’s tendency to “touch”
female staff in a sexual way.]

5 Nicola: I felt it was rather awkward and rather ineptly brought up. It was that (1.5)
apparently Damian’s testing boundaries with female staff in the unit - which
is - sort of what you’d expect really (Nicola laughs softly).

Kate: Uhm.

10 Nicola: But (.5) it seemed to be - felt that it was a thing that - we should all kind of
turn and look at Damian and Damian should sort of (slight laugh) blush and
squirm.

Kate: Uhm.

Nicola: I felt thoroughly uneasy about it and I also felt that (.5) if he’d done
something that needed dealing with (.5) it should - be dealt with - but if he
hadn’t then why (.5) yammer on in a case conference.

15 Kate: Uhm.

Nicola: Because it just set the boy really ill-at-ease.

Kate: Uhm.

20 Nicola: And he sort of seemed to take his cue about being (1) you know ill-at-ease
and a bit aggressive from there. . . He is much more sensitive than he’s given
credit for I think - I think that boy is.

Kate: Well he does this sort of thing - that a lot of lads do - uh - when he’s sitting
beside a female he’ll put his knee beside your knee

Nicola: Uhm.

25 Kate: But (1) uhm - I do - (.5) I don't think it's in a threatening way. It seems a perfectly normal (.5) experience - uh - for a young {lad

{

Nicola: {Mmm

Kate: to be doing.

(3)

30 Nicola He said a very - I thought a very significant thing - when he was actually (1) it was actually sort of requested that he justify himself in some way - you know it was that (.5) kind of thing - and he said "well (.5) they never complained (.5) to me at the time".

Ruth: Oww! (as in - "poor thing".)

35 Nicola: Which (.5) I mean really when you think about it - what one of us hasn't (.5) done things that you'd be really embarrassed if you were asked to defend (what you did at the time).

40 Kate: I-I-I'd (.5) I'd of thought it was the sort of thing that if anything needed to be done about it - very much a one-to-one counselling with his special worker - not brought up - fairly normal adolescent be-behaviour (.5) at a case conference.

Two themes run through this account: firstly defining the appropriate framework for interpreting Damian's behaviour; secondly the impropriety of the unit staff's response to it. Both of these themes harmonize to orchestrate a normalizing version. The ineptitude of a pathologizing interpretation of Damian's sexual forays is established by situating them within the domain of what is normal, predictable and usual . . . for a boy of his age. The ghost network of assumptions about normal adolescent behaviour are employed, in this instance, to reaccommodate the child's behaviour within them.

On five occasions we are offered an explicitly normalizing interpretation of Damian's behaviour, three of which achieve this effect by direct or indirect recourse to the schema of

normal adolescent behaviour (lines 21, 24-25, 39). His sexual forays are aligned to: “what you’d expect really”, what “a lot of the lads do”, “a perfectly normal (.5) experience for a young lad” and “fairly normal adolescent behaviour”. What is being utilized, without explicit formulation, is the ghost assumption about “boys of this age” exploring their burgeoning sexuality, testing females out, feeling confused and ambivalent about their newly acquired sexuality etcetera etcetera. Damian’s touching of female staff is thus conceived as a documentary manifestation of normal adolescent sexual exploration.

The propriety of Damian’s behaviour is brought into relief by antagonistically juxtaposing it with the impropriety of the staff response. A contrast structure helps define the horns of the dilemma - on lines 5-10.

- a) Testing sexual boundaries with female staff is what you’d expect really (for a boy of this age).
- b) *But* it was felt that we should all look at Damian who should blush and squirm.

Part ‘a’ clearly furnishes a normative framework in relation to which part ‘b’ appears anomalous. The ‘but’ initiating part ‘b’ alerts the reader to a forthcoming discrepancy, marking the boundaries between the appropriate and the inappropriate. If testing sexual boundaries is normal and predictable, it is inappropriate for staff to treat it as a matter for embarrassment.

Once again on lines 21-27 the empirical description of Damian “putting his knee beside your knee” is enveloped on both sides by normalizing interpretations: he does what a lot of lads do (line 21); it’s unthreatening and “perfectly normal” . . . for a young lad (lines 24-25). The behavioural scenario is literally embedded in a web of normalizing assumptions. In lines 34-36, Nicola places the rule of “normal adolescent behaviour” within a more encompassing framework of “normal *human* behaviour”: what one of us hasn’t done something about which they’d be embarrassed if called to defend. Since the “us” of this description is a group of “normal adults” it further substantiates the normalizing case.

The two coterminous threads of argument are firmly plaited in the final section of the account which serves to reinforce a version of Damian’s behaviour as being that of a “fairly normal adolescent”. “If anything needed to be done about it” (lines 37-38) which is a matter for

real doubt given the overwhelmingly normalizing emphasis of the account, it is a matter for one-to-one counselling, not public discussion in a C.C.

The preceding account draws attention to a routine method of establishing the propriety of a boy's behaviour (even where deviant or disturbed), by invoking the impropriety of another party in relation to it. In the above case the unit staff's reaction is rendered inappropriate in relation to Damian's normal adolescent behaviour. More frequently, however, the boy's family, or members thereof, are held as the measure against which his reactions are normalized. Consider the following extract from a S.S.M. in which Frank Mercer, manager of unit 1, discusses Simon Cutts.

1 Frank: I mean in many ways he's a (3) if you can actually say this - he-he's a normally
- normal well adjusted kid. Uhm (.5) his home situation (.5) what happens
there - is - he has perfectly normal reactions - to an abnormal situation. It's
not him that's abnormal - it's the actual home situation - and his reactions are
5 perfectly normal - 'cus I'd react the same way if I were in that situation. An
- and all in all - I mean - he should actually be at home. Uh - and if he was
at home and (.5) the situation at home was - as it should be - then he would
8 (.5) cope with it perfectly.

Frank works studiously in this account to disentangle Simon's reactions as indeed his general status - which is, he claims, "perfectly normal" (lines 3 and 5) - from his "home situation" which is not. Or again, re-examine the psychiatric assessment of Leon Pryce on pages 125-126. In it Leon's deviant behaviour (including glue-sniffing and "threat of suicide") is defined as an assertion of independence and a resistance against a family which had hitherto: "successfully manipulated a whole series of difficult (adopted) children into becoming paradigms of artistic sensitivity" (lines 3-4). Leon's response is thus accorded a rationality *vis a vis* his extreme family circumstances.

A normalizing framework can only extend to accommodate a degree of deviation. The status of criminal behaviour which falls *within certain limits*, (whose specifications are contextually contingent), may be neutralized by according to its perpetrator a normal and reasonable motive . . . for a child of this age or type. Thus, for example, a level of delinquency may be deemed acceptable during the teenage years, or again a non-delinquent purpose may be seen to underlie

delinquent manifestations. The desire for peer group approval is, for example, identified as the motivating force in the following extract from one of Ben Jackson's C.C.'s.

1 Peter: . . . we've taken on a lot of (1) boys in the last (.5) nine months - uh - many
of whom the school would not 'ave touched before - and that's upset Ben
Jackson's apple-cart to some degree (.5) and he - finds it - like I guess most
5 people of his age - very difficult to resist peer-group. And he has status and
so occasionally (1) this is an interpretation on my part - I think occasionally
he has to become criminal - just to show the rest of the group that actually
he's still one of 'em. [Peter speaks of two recent incidents of crime from
which Ben got no material benefit]. But I think (.5) there's a bit of 'im which
occasionally pops up - does something naughty - just to reassure everybody
10 else that he's actually still bent you know.

F.S.W.: . . .there's pressure on him to still be one of the lads.

Peter: Something like that . . . They never took spirits - I mean they broke into an
off-license -

S.F.S.W. I know.

15 Peter: and only took lemonade. (chortles)

Thomas: . . . they'd be the laughing stock of D.C. - if they ever go in there over a thing
like that. (Laughs all round).

Peter: I think it's also important to point out who-who else was charged. (2) If you
look at the group he was charged with - they're by and large much younger
20 - they're certainly much more - much less mature - both in terms of age - and
in terms of development. And - in that sense that - I guess - supports to some
degree my theory - that Ben was demonstrating in a sense - to a younger
23 (?group?) that actually he's quite tough.

Ben's delinquency is invested with a motivating rationale which lends normalizing

overtone to it. Like “most people of his age” (lines 3-4), Ben’s vulnerability to peer group pressure and desire to be one of the lads accounts for his presenting criminality. Peter Scott, the principal during the final third of my fieldwork, weaves an elaborate explanatory web linking the influx of harder cases, to Ben’s status being threatened, to his exhibition of criminal behaviour to show “he’s still one of ‘em” (lines 6-7), “still bent you know” (line 10) and that “actually he’s quite tough” (line 23).

The persuasiveness of Peter’s theory is bolstered by his elaboration of certain contextual features of the crimes. The establishment of *mens rea* in the case of theft is contingent, *inter alia*, upon establishing a material motive. If pecuniary gain is an incidental feature, or is eclipsed entirely, as it is in Peter’s version of Ben’s behaviour, an anomaly is generated which prompts a resolution. Not only did Ben enjoy no material benefit from two recent incidents of crime, but in an off-licence break-in they only took lemonade (lines 12-15). In the absence of criminal intent, Peter finds a solution to the puzzle, why does Ben steal, in a theory of peer group dynamics. Identification of the younger and less mature group with whom he committed the crimes adds further weight to the burgeoning paradigm. Their lesser status *vis a vis* Ben, is used to suggest that he was trying to demonstrate his relative authority.

A normalizing interpretation in this instance steps into the breach which separates Ben’s criminal behaviour from his non-criminal motivation. A therapeutic interpretation, however, may equally work toward pathologizing the boy’s behaviour in cases where a mismatch is identified between the deviant action, and the motive which drives a child toward it.

A critical criterion through which deviant behaviour is allocated to a normalizing, criminalizing or pathologizing schema lies in the determination of whether the child is responsible for it. Where practitioners conceive the child to be a) in control of, and hence responsible for, b) behaviour which exceeds or contravenes the allowances for normal teenage deviance, then a criminalizing interpretation comes into play. Paired to the notion of responsibility is the reaction of blame, and therefore punishment. Where the behaviour is identified as outside of the child’s conscious control and borne of emotional disturbance, care or therapy is deemed a more appropriate response. Clearly, once more, cognitive and moral considerations are rampant in investing behaviour with a criminal or pathological status; a determination which involves the assessment of a wealth of contextual particulars including those discussed above.

In the first group of extracts below deviant behaviour is attributed with a pathologizing definition on the basis of a child being out of control. This brings with it a concomitant diminution in the level of responsibility for which the child is held accountable. In proportion to the reduction in blame is the ascendance of the therapeutic call for help. Some of the routine moral practices through which such determinations are accomplished in the everyday flow of institutional life are displayed in the following pieces. In the first Jan feeds back to the unit 3 staff the results of an emergency C.C. held on Paul Black in which she as his special worker, and Philip Hooper as the unit manager, participated.

1 Jan: We went (sighs) to a lengthy and very heavy meeting . . . concerning Paul
 Black and (3) St. Nicholas' uhm (3) querying - whether we should re-examine
 the suitability of Paul's placement with us and - uhm (1) basically - yer I mean
5 just - presenting them with some of Paul's bizarre behaviour - in particular
 the way he switches (.5) from being (.5) absolutely O.K. - to being (.5)
 completely beyond our control - and his own - it seems to be. Uhm (1.5) and
 I think the message that we were saying was that (.5) do we leave him here
 (.5) and risk (1) his leaving us . . . for a secure unit at (the local assessment
10 centre) or borstal or something because he blows it - and he goes too far -
 and the way that the the violence seems to be escalating it seemed like a real
 possibility - uhm -

Philip: That a member of staff or a boy's - going to be seriously assaulted.

15 Jan: Yer - or-or do we actually you know (1.5) look at Paul - and whether we can
 get him some kind of (.5) treatment - rather than - a holding place be it this
 place or a more secure place. And we thought we'd have a fight on our hands
 - and as it turns out we didn't - not particularly - in that (the local authority)
 after a long history of Paul - since he came into care - being recommended
 for psychiatric input - and-and - it never having been - provided. His father
 - put in a strong case for - for Paul having some kind of - uhm - psychiatric
20 treatment.

Jan's use of the term "bizarre" in line 4 with all its pathologizing connotations, provides a candidate schema for interpreting the nature of Paul's deviance. The pathologizing

effect is reinforced in lines 5-6 by the reference to the rapidity and intensity of Paul's "switch" from being "absolutely O.K." to being "completely (.5) beyond our control and his own". This abrupt shift feeds into a Jekyll and Hyde characterization often employed by staff at St. Nicholas to account for purportedly radical splits in a child between two *personas*, one of which is in, and the other out of control. The escalation in the Mr. Hyde type behaviour, necessitating the reappraisal of Paul's placement at St. Nicholas, would risk a punitive intervention (lines 6-12). Since Paul's violent episodes are deemed outside his control, the allocation of blame is rendered anomalous. The diminished responsibility which attends therapeutic categorization is matched with the need for some form of psychological treatment; a call Jan makes in lines 15-19. The "long history" (line 17) of calls for psychiatric intervention corroborate a version of there being something emotionally wrong with Paul of which his violent behaviour is symptomatic.

Kate Lambert's pathologizing characterization of Paul Black's behaviour (below) is similarly made to hang upon the existence of a split between an in control normal child, and an out of control disturbed one. The piece is drawn from her written educational conclusions for one of Paul's C.C's.

1 "I believe Paul has great conflict between the two sides of his nature: one is to conform and be accepted, the other an inclination to self-destruct. When things are going well the negative side has to dominate and contrive his downfall.

5 In my opinion, Paul has no control over the diversity of behaviour and needs specialized help. The fact that Paul has at times referred to himself as Paul ~~White~~ leads me to believe that he is aware of this duality of his nature and his bizarre behaviour is a cry for help.

10 Unless we recognize his unspoken plea I truly believe we will have failed him."

That the self-destructive side of Paul's nature is out of his control is suggested on lines 2-4. For, Kate invests it with an autonomous power to "dominate and contrive his downfall" when "things are going well". Although Paul may be "aware of this duality" (line 7) he has "no control" (line 5) over it, and his "bizarre behaviour" is construed as a "cry for help"

(line 8). Indeed it is “specialized help” (line 6) rather than punishment which synchronizes with Kate’s pathologizing definition of Paul’s behaviour. The inappropriateness of a punitive response to acts of deviance which a child is incapable of controlling is echoed in her description of David Lyons in a T.M.

[The teachers discuss the persistence and extremity of David’s behaviour which threatens the viability of his continued education at St. Nicholas’.]

Kate: I don’t think (the local secure unit) would help the boy at all . . . I think it would be dreadful. Uhm but - you see - it’s all very well - but I don’t think he’s capable (.5) of not behaving in that way - when - desire comes over him. And it seems wrong - to be punishing him - for something he’s - something he’s not capable of (controlling).

Jason: I agree.

I quote the next piece at length because it so eloquently expresses the moral issues at stake in selecting an appropriate cognitive category. The extract is from one of Steve Butler’s C.C.’s.

1 Kate: Uhm - I-I think I’d like to (1.5) ask Steven something - uhm (.5) regarding
the - the delinquency bit - right - the nicking - Steven - uhm - not long ago
- we had a conversation (.5) uhm - I mean there’s no question that in other
5 compartments - he got his examinations - and as Thomas says - he’s getting
together somewhere along the line (.5) he’s looking better. But there’s this
area (.5) that to my mind - I don’t believe Steve has any control over. (1) He
said to me once - that he didn’t think he could stop - that he hadn’t got the
control - internal control to stop himself (.5) taking things (.5) didn’t you
10 Steve. (2) In fact you were talking about the possible help you could get -
with that - weren’t you.

Steve: Yer.

15 Kate: Do you still feel that's the same? Becus (.5) even very recently - I've noticed you on the look out (3) for what you could see. (1) Do you still feel that it's true that you (.5) you can't - you're not really in control of that bit?
(1)

Steve: No.

20 Kate: What - no you're not are you saying? (2) Be honest Steve becus nobody's - nobody's blaming you i-if - we're saying you can't help it (.5) then we've gotta step in somewhere and do that bit that you can't do. Now - how do you honestly feel?

Steve: I am a bit - yer (.5) in control.

Kate: You are a bit in control of it?

Steve: Yer.

25 Kate: You're still doing these things aren't you.
(2)

Steve: {Yer.
{

Kate: {You (1.5) see I don't think you are in control of it - and I think we've gotta find a way of getting in control of it.

30 Steve: Well how will you if I don't know?

Kate: Well that's what I'm wondering - actually (.5) that's what I'm wondering. See I think if you walked out there now (.5) and there were a few cars (1.5) with the doors open - you might be trying them. (2.5) Isn't that true?

35 Steve: No (3) no.
(3)

Kate: Well that - that's my feeling you know - I would like us to discuss (1.5) whether Steven (3) can take this control in his own hands.

Mrs.B: Well I don't think he can.

F.S.W.: He certainly doesn't seem able to at the moment.

40 Kate: No.

F.S.W.: Uhm (.5) as we say in other areas he's making leaps and bounds but there's still this and {it is frustrating

{

Mrs.B: {He can't help himself taking what doesn't belong to him.

F.S.W.: Mmm.

45 Kate: And in a way you see - if we condemn him for something that he can't help doing (.5) without us trying to (.5) to solve that one - we're not helping Steven at all are we.
(1)

50 Mrs.B: The point is - how do you help him? (4) I mean I was thinking of taking him to a (1) hypnotist wasn't I . . . I'm willing to try anything (.5) becus I don't think Steven will stop himself doing it.

[Sam King - Steve's special worker - speaks of how Steve constantly wants the staff to give him another chance and to help him to get home quickly.]

55 Sam: Uhm - and he's asking us to do all these things for him. Uhm - but he's not not actually stopping - stealing - which is the - main problem (.5) as - as he sees it.

Kate: Yes - yes - it-it appears at the moment that Steven doesn't have the option.

F.S.W.: Mmm.

60 Kate: That he has the compulsion to take things. And uhm (.5) it might be very (.5)
in my opinion - as I've said - I'm quite willing for you to disagree - if we look
at - getting specialized help for Steven. And if - as Thomas said - and I totally
agree with him - another spell in D.C. will do - no use for Steven whatsoever.(1)
And if we can say on a court report - "These areas (.5) he has made great
65 improvement with (.5) and in this area - we are - looking at getting this help.
Would you please allow the time (.5) to see if this help will (2) improve".

A group of related themes are decipherable in the preceding excerpt, all of which bear upon the cognitive and moral process through which Steve's behaviour is allocated to a pathologizing schema. A Jekyll and Hyde type anomaly is generated on lines 3-7 between the "other areas in his life" where, "he's making improvements", and the stealing compartment over which, Kate contends, Steve has no control. Kate resolves the puzzle of the uneven cognitive profile she constructs of Steve by ascribing his stealing habit to a force beyond his control. This de-criminalizing lack of responsibility is reinforced by Mrs. Butler and the F.S.W., both of whom join voice with Kate.

It is noteworthy how Steve's solicited account of his own motivation is treated. Having sought his corroboration of her pathologizing version, Kate proceeds to dismiss Steve's claim that he is a bit in control. This instance illustrates a more general tendency whereby, put simply, a child's account tends to be *authorised* if it supports staff theories, and *ironized* if it subverts them. The boys' assessments of themselves stand in this double-relation to the authoritative paradigm articulated by the legitimized experts. The rationale for such a dismissal is inscribed in therapeutic knowledge, since it is assumed that practitioners have a greater understanding of what drives the child to deviance, than the child does himself; an epistemological privilege which Steve himself questions on line 30.

It is not my purpose to subject therapeutic discourse itself to an ironic reduction by recognizing in it an ulterior motive to individualize and de-politicize deviance. More modest, my point is that in spite of the ironic proclivities of therapeutic reasoning, the child's version is frequently solicited, and, where it supports the legitimized line, may be used to bolster a pathologizing explanation. Where it undermines staff accounts, by contrast, the boy's views are

relegated to an inconsequential status, or interpreted as a form of denial (see pages 161-173). The validity of the boy's account, in a nutshell, is assessed in relation to dominant staff versions.

Lines 18-51 above, to return to the text, allude to the exonerating consequences of a pathological explanation: no-one's blaming Steve if he can't help it; and that treatment rather than condemnation is the proper response to deviance which the perpetrator cannot help. Sam's miscreant suggestion that Steve's failure to stop stealing is a matter of choice ("he's not actually stopping" - lines 54-55) is quickly brought into alignment with the dominant cognitive pattern ("it appears at the moment that Steven doesn't have the option" line 57). Steve, we are told, has the "compulsion" to take things.

Identification of the pathological origins of Steve's stealing problem is married to a therapeutic solution, either in the guise of a "hypnotist" that Mrs. B is "willing to try" (lines 49-50), or the euphemistically named specialized helper (line 61) suggested by Kate. For the punitive reaction, in the form of D.C., would be "no use" for Steve whatsoever. The final scenario on lines 63-65 resonates with the preliminary distinction between the in control good Steve, and the out of control bad one whose deviant symptoms recommend a period of psychiatric help.

Below, Brian Potter's incorporation of Leon's split presentation to a pathologizing schema is more roundly challenged by Peter French who claims it is a learned behaviour trait. The distinction again pivots on whether the child is responsible for his actions, or whether he is the victim of emotional forces which exceed his control.

1 [Brian speaks in the T.M. of how Leon Pryce had entered his art lesson the day before, although he was not supposed to be there, whereupon:]

Brian: . . . he just kept on shouting. He was shouting so loud - that no-one could (.5) he couldn't - you know no-one could - you heard all the shouting didn't
5 you? But then today that was arranged he came in (.5) but (.5) he - sat there looking really morose (.5) and I said (.5) when the other boys were doing - their thing - I said-said "What's the matter - are you depressed or something?" "I dunno". So - he did some wood-burning then and he did a nice piece of work actually. But uhm (.5) he - he's sort of almost like a manic depressive

10 - like yesterday - he was shouting and screaming - and was absolutely - over
the top - you know. And this morning - he's right down - like this . . . I'm
worried about the bloke's mental health - I think he's -

Peter: No he - he's learnt all that trick off Samuel. It's all put on - he's learnt it off
Samuel.

15 Brian: I don't think so myself - becus why - you can't just say that becus (.5) he went
(.5) heavy glue-sniffing the other day - he was really high - and that was
genuine - it wasn't put on. And he was really down this morning. I mean -
and the guy has tried to do himself in several times.

Thirty seconds later:

20 Peter: Samuel used to be like that exactly. At one moment he used to shout at you
like nobody's business - and then two minutes later - turn round to somebody
else - and he'd be smiling.

22 Brian: Yer but I think - I think Leon is an unbalanced boy.

This piece captures an institutional tension between the routinely cynical orientation and the routinely understanding therapeutic one. Although the former may be encompassed within the latter, Russian Doll style, the two tendencies may equally pull in alternative directions. The radical extremes between which Leon's behaviour vacillates is rendered symptomatic in Brian's account of his pathological state of mind which assumes the appearance of manic depression. Peter French, however, cynically relocates Leon's behaviour within the context of a trick, learned from Samuel, which the child wilfully "puts on" (lines 13-14).

Since the crux of the disjuncture between the two versions rests upon the issue of responsibility, Brian goes on in lines 15-18 to strengthen his case by finding evidence for Leon being out of control. Since glue-sniffing artificially reduces self-control, and diminishes conscious responsibility, the "high" induced in Leon by it cannot be "put on". The sincerity of Leon's low periods is further reinforced by the succession of previous attempts to "do himself in" (line 18). Since these incidents are irreducible to the boy's artful manipulation of appearance,

a similarly pathologizing rule may be extended to the manic-like behaviour observed by Brian.

The two opposing interpretations of Leon's underlying motivation vie for credibility, without inducing a "reality disjuncture" in Pollner's sense [M. Pollner 1975]. Actors rarely operate with a *pure* epistemological criteria except in specialist modes of reasoning where such issues are prioritized. Because of this they rarely experience differences of perception as the clash of irreconcilable versions which require the stepping down of one in order to restore the unequivocal status of Monolithic Reality.

In both the forthcoming accounts a criminalizing schema is employed to define the very same Steve Butler whose behaviour was so vehemently pathologized in his C.C. two or three months earlier (see pages 215-218). The first report prepared by the consultant child psychiatrist at a local hospital is the one initiated by Kate's call for "specialized help". I quote it in full.

1 "I am writing to confirm the gist of our discussions after my visit to your unit
on the 18th November.

5 As you know, while Steven has settled and his behaviour improved in many
respects since being with you, two main problems remain: His recurrent
stealing and his difficulty in forming attachments except in a superficial
manner. My impression on meeting him was that currently Steven is not
motivated to stop stealing. The immediate reward for his stealing is that he
spends the money and enjoys himself. His long term intention in stealing is
that he sees it as a way of getting home faster, because he is likely to be
10 "chucked out" of St. Nicholas'. Even when the possibility of detention
centre is raised, he still sees himself as returning home after this.

15 It seems that both Steven and his parents regard his stealing as an encapsulated
"problem" over which he has no control. I do not share this view and think
it is important for Steven to be faced with the realistic negative consequences
of stealing."

Paradoxically, the psychiatric assessment does not construct Steve's delinquency as

the symptom of underlying pathology (as theories of professional imperialism would have it). On the contrary, the psychiatrist invests his behaviour with rational motivation which is criminalizing in its connotations. Steve is not motivated to stop stealing: a) because he enjoys the material rewards and b) because he sees it as a way of being “chucked out” of St. Nicholas’ and going home albeit possibly via the route of D.C. Since both are conceived as *choices* which Steve exercises, they are not susceptible to therapeutic interpretation or intervention. Dr.B overtly rejects the pathologizing version of Steve’s stealing as a self contained “problem” (lines 12-13) which is held by the boy and his parents, and accordingly advocates a realistic, and hence punitive response to what he constructs as criminally motivated acts.

Although Dr.B. glosses the contextual work he has done to form his impression of Steven, and these are not retrievable to us, it is apparent that the pivotal criterion upon which he bases his judgement is whether or not the boy’s behaviour is within his control. In a C.C. three month’s after the one in which Kate attempts to establish Steve’s lack of control, Sam and Mrs. Butler corroborate a predominantly criminalizing account of Steve’s behaviour which is matched with the propriety of a punitive response.

1 Sam: Uhm (.5) the conclusions and recommendations are - that Steven has shown that he is capable of promoting himself positively in almost all areas. But in spite of encouragement and help from his home and this establishment he seems (.5) unwilling to control his dishonesty. Uh (.5) I feel - that Steven at
5 this time may hold a particularly singular view of property - and life in general. I feel that Steven’s conceptions of responsibility and acceptable conduct - are unreal (.5) uhm - and that - we should endeavour to get him to face up to the real consequences of his actions.

10 Mrs.B: Well I’m of the opinion that he’ll get D.C. and deserves it. Becus I feel now (.5) he’s been given enough chances (1) uhm (1) everything’s been done - to help him - to stop stealing - and he doesn’t seem to want to know.

Peter

Scott: Mmm.

Mrs.B: And uhm - after the last (.5) court appearance where he was given another

15 chance - even though being on (.5) deferred sentence (.5) he didn't seem to
- to take the hint. So - I don't want to see him locked up for a long time (.5)
17 but where we (.5) at one time I thought it would do him more harm that good
(.5) I now (.5) feel - that it might do him some good to know that.

Steve's capability of promoting himself in all other areas is employed in this instance to erect a paradigm within which to read his refusal to curb his dishonesty as a motivated unwillingness, despite the efforts of family and staff. Steve's stealing is interpreted by Sam in lines 4-8 as a manifestation of his conceptual orientation to life; a world-view which is dubbed unreal (rather than disturbed), in relation to the authoritative voice of Reality. It is the latter with which Steve's criminal deviance must be confronted, and made to face up. Mrs. Butler's collusion in Steve's criminalization constitutes a reversal on her previously pathologizing perspective. From his inability to help himself taking other people's property, a lack of responsibility which required therapeutic intervention, Mrs. Butler now presents his continued deviance as something he doesn't *want* to stop, and to which a punitive response is both deserved and possibly beneficial.

A final series of extracts from a day conference eloquently and succinctly articulates the cognitive and moral distinctions between criminalizing and pathologizing interpretations, and how St. Nicholas' assumed *raison d'être* was to deal with kids whose behaviour was symptomatic of emotional problems rather than criminal intent. The discussion concerns Samson Smith who had recently been expelled from St. Nicholas' because of his persistently criminal behaviour.

1 Duncan: . . . the way we work is open to that abuse because we're working and trying
to build up trust - and work with kids (.5) you know (.5) who I mean may be
bullying and everything else for - like Junious Knight - or something like that
(.5) I felt - you know - he's bullied but it's because of a need in him - whereas
5 Samson seems quite (.5) straightforward. I mean it's very sensible what he
gets off the other kid and things like that (.5) it's not just that "I want - you
know - I've got a need to have these things" - perhaps like for Junious. (1)
And perhaps the system's open to be abused by a boy like Samson who'll be
- you know - who'll be working on that - whereas other kids who have - need
10 of our system to help them through that.

Again:

15 Brian: So are we saying we've got no defence against Samson Smith. You see -
because here - to me (.5) this is a street-wise kid who's cynically using the
system. As he says he wants what he wants - he organizes it (1) and within
an open - democratic - system - he takes over. Do you see what I mean? (2)
20 Not takes over - but to a certain extent he has done - you know - with the boys
with the boys (.5) not with us. But he's organized this nice little (.5) he's got
his runners - he's got people who are frightened of him (.5) they will deny to
us that they are frightened but they are - we know they're frightened. He -
he's got it all worked out hasn't he - so how do we - how do we cope with that
- with a boy like that (.5) or do we take boys like - that?

Mavis: He's got a different value system to ours.

Soon after:

Jan: I s'pose within his own environment . . . he's successful by the measure of
that subculture.

25 Duncan: That's why I said that - yes - I mean (.5) it's not so much disturbed as learnt
behaviour -

Brian: pattern.

Duncan: Where we are dealing with disturbed behaviour - and our - and the way we
deal with disturbed behaviour is open to the abuse of - of -

Brian: people like that.

Once more:

30 Kate: But I'd like to agree totally with Duncan's point that we are really geared to
helping disturbed boys (.5) and a disturbed symptom of the boy may be

35 bullying (.5) and I agree with him that if the bullying is not a symptom of his disturbance - but a means of him acquiring goods (.5) ah (1) then it's a different ball game - and we can't treat the two alike - do you understand what I mean?

Jack: I don't think you're going to help this boy anyway (1) I think he's just going to be a criminal. And I don't think that you're doing him any good -

Brian: No.

40 Jack: by having him here quite frankly. I think you're doing him more damage by having him here to the other children (.5) as much as I like Samson (.5) I think everyone likes Samson (.5) he's a very likeable lad. But I tell you now - he's quite a clever criminal (.5) and he will be - and I think he'll be a successful criminal (.5) if that's the right term (1) uhm (.5) and it's not doing him any good being here - he-he'll-he'll probably end up in and out of nick
45 - half of his life (.5) before he becomes a successful criminal before he learns - before he learns (?his way around?).

One minute later:

50 Jack: The Junieur Knight's from this school who is a far worse bully than-than Samson (1) I'd much prefer to have him here because I think we can do something with Junieur. Junieur is a bully because (.5) ahm (.5) he likes to be a bully.

Roger: It's {true.

{

Jack: {Samson is a bully for gain.

Roger: Because it's a learned thing as Duncan was saying.

Jack: That's right.

55 Brian: Yer.

Roger: It's the only way he can - poor devil - it's the only way he can survive at home isn't it!

Jack: There's no way Samson's ever going to change. That's it (.5) you know - that's his mode of life now (1) for the rest of his life.

60 Duncan: And - and that's the other thing I mean . . . if we did change him he'd be lost when he went. I mean he'd be crucified.

Jack: He would do - yer. (Laughs)

Kate: It's one of the sad things about this sort of job that sometimes a boy arrives and we know instinctively that he's going to go through the penal system (.5)
65 it doesn't stop you trying everything you can (.5) but there are some boys - who are going to do that.

What the preceding extracts illuminate with such clarity is how the documentary method is employed in assimilating a child's behaviour to a pathologizing or criminalizing schema of typification. The "same" presenting phenomena - such as bullying and extortion in this case - assume a meaning relative to the anterior ghost framework in which they are situated. A key to the process lies in the identification of what motivates the behaviour. Unlike deviance which manifests an underlying emotional need, or a pathological liking, as in the case of Junior Knight whose behaviour is thus attributable to psychological disturbance, Samson's motive is presented as criminally calculated: it is "quite straightforward" (line 5), "very sensible" (line 5), a cynical use of the system (lines 12-13), "all worked out" (line 19), "a means of acquiring goods" (line 33).

Whereas, in the pathologizing mode, the relationship between the emotional disturbance and the deviant manifestation is opaque, in the criminalizing mode a transparent and symmetrical relationship is constructed between the motive and the behaviour. Thus, Samson's motivation to steal is *in order to* enjoy the benefits of his ill-begotten gain. If therapeutic discourse sets up a figurative play between the manifesting surface, and the motivating depth, a criminalizing

discourse invokes a literal description of the relationship between the two. Whereas Junious bullies “because of a need in him”, Samson, “wants what he wants” and “he organizes it”. Kate succinctly expresses the distinction between a child’s bullying as “a symptom of his disturbance” and as “a means of acquiring goods” (lines 31-33), and Jack in terms of Junious being “a bully (.5) because (.5) ahm (.5) he likes to be a bully. . . Samson is a bully for gain” (lines 49-52).

Disturbance is, by definition, something from which one suffers, or to which one falls victim. Criminality, by contrast, is associated with an educational process through which certain skills are imbibed. Samson’s deviance is thus portrayed as “not so much disturbed as learnt”; his street-wisdom, cleverness and success, qualities he has acquired, or is in the process of so doing, even if it takes half a life time in and out of nick to perfect (lines 44-45).

The hint of a normalizing exoneration of Samson’s behaviour may be found in the periodic references to his subculture with its alternative value-system (line 21), and its different criteria of success (lines 22-23). Samson’s very survival is presented as contingent upon his cultivation of criminal prowess without which the “poor devil” could not “survive at home” (lines 56-57); “he’d be crucified” (line 61). The cognitive and moral relativism implicit in subcultural theories has normalizing overtones. Samson’s adoption of a deviant pattern flows from his adaptation to the social group in which he is enmeshed. If his survival is contingent upon the adoption of group values, and his success in their cultivation, it would appear that his choice is limited. Samson’s criminal propensities are softened by their entanglement with the normal motivation to find a niche in the group. The normalizing *leitmotif*, however, assumes a recessive status in relation to the dominant criminalizing one. The pervasive tendency is to act *as if* Samson’s deviance is a product of his free will, unencumbered by sociological factors.

The therapeutic parameters of St. Nicholas’ are well illustrated by the attempts to draw the lines to exclude the criminally motivated deviant such as Samson. An institution purportedly built upon therapeutic and democratic principles is more vulnerable, we are told, to the abuse of kids like Samson who cynically use the system, and whose residence does more harm to the other boys than the good it does for him. In this lies the tension between the openness and trust, or *routine optimism* if you will, which accompanies therapeutically informed discourse, and the thread of *routine pessimism* bound up in the cynical institutional orientation to boys’ motives. The strain may appear at any time, but did not threaten to undermine the practical viability of the institution.

The therapeutic approach to deviance is designed to bring about the desired change through the exploration and understanding of the emotional problems which purportedly give rise to it. Samson is allocated to an unchanging category of criminality (“I think he’s just going to be a criminal” - lines 36-37; “there’s no way Samson’s ever going to change . . . that’s his mode of life now (1) for the rest of life” - lines 58-59; “sometimes a boy arrives and we know instinctively that he’s going to go through the penal system” - lines 63-64) which is beyond the pale of therapeutic intervention. Where deviance is interpreted as a rational means to a self-interested end, its criminal status negates the pathologizing possibility.

Conclusion

I have attempted to show how the therapeutic method of reasoning was only one, albeit perhaps the most prevalent and systematic, of a number of institutional tendencies. Alongside the attempt to understand the boys’ emotional problems was a routinely cynical orientation to their propensity to deceive. Therapeutic naivete was forsworn for fear it blind practitioners to the constant possibility that they may be tripped up or duped by the boys’ powers of manipulation. A cynical attitude did not necessarily negate a therapeutic one. The child’s *penchant* for deception may itself be accommodated within a pathologizing paradigm, as a response to his family history. Equally, the juxtaposition of the two contrasting perspectives may give rise to disagreement between advocates of the alternative versions.

Staff assessments of the motives underlying a child’s deviance, itself contingent upon the processing of a morass of contextual particulars, gave rise to three systematic tendencies toward normalization, criminalization and pathologization. I have attempted to elucidate some of the key issues at stake in electing an appropriate schema. When an exonerating rule could be found, by dint of the level of acceptable deviance which attends adolescence, the behaviour may be normalized. The critical feature in distinguishing between a pathological and criminal motivation lay in the adjudication of whether the act of deviance was within the child’s rational control, or whether it was the manifestation of a psychological disturbance. Where deviant means were symmetrically paired to the material ends they achieved a criminalizing process ensued.

The interpretation of who, why and when an act of deviance occurred were all important contextual considerations. The composite picture of *who* was responsible, however,

was the most important component in assessing its significance. The staff employed a range of discursive procedures in typifying the patterns of a boy's behaviour. In the process he was invested with dominant and recessive characteristics: if deemed exclusively bad, mad, or normal, his placement at St. Nicholas' would be considered inappropriate. Hence Samson's criminality and Paul Black's disturbance were considered sufficient to terminate their residence in an institution whose *raison d'être* was to work with the disturbed and disturbing; the problem child whose deviant reaction flowed predominantly from his status as a child with problems.

CHAPTER FIVE DOING HISTORY

Introduction

In the preceding two chapters I explored the ways in which practitioners invested the boys' behaviour with significance in relation to the underlying reality of their emotions and motives. In the second half of this thesis I want to move on from the discursive relationship constructed between the surface and the depth, to the relationship which practitioners set up between the present and the past. For, just as the boy's behaviour was understood as being responsive to his underlying motives, these, in turn, were seen to be embroiled in his history. The emotional damage incurred by the circumstances of the boy's past was thus typically held responsible, to some degree, for his present misdemeanours. To better appreciate the subtleties of this process, I start by offering a theoretical model of time, history and narrative which broadly informs my treatment of the empirical material.

i) The Dissolution of Dualism

The attempt to dissolve dualism, a *leitmotif* of modern philosophy and social science, has been taken up with renewed vigour in the last decade or two. Recent calls for dissolution have assumed a particular nuance characterized by the pursuit of a theory of *structuration* [A. Giddens - 1976], and the insistence upon a thoroughly historical orientation. Recognition of the *in-time-ness* of events equips the theorist with a finely attuned sensitivity to process. Phenomena which are usually kept apart can thus be brought into a relationship of interdependence.

While P. Abrams acknowledges that dualism has been "a stupendously powerful tool of thought, rightly celebrated . . ." as the source of many of the accomplishments of Western Civilization, he also insists: "The weight of two and a half millennia of treating dualism as the obvious basis for effective thought is remarkably oppressive" [Philip Abrams (1982) - p.227-228]. Such cultural dominance makes any attempt to grapple with the dissolution as difficult as it is necessary for a more rounded understanding. In the words of Abrams:

"Properly to appreciate the historical and sociological relationship of individual and society we have, in my view, to make a determined effort to un-think

dualism; to escape from the seductive clutches of the belief that the individual has a being distinct from that of society or, conversely, that society and the individual constitute separate realities. We have to try to convince ourselves that what we call individual and society are in fact aspects or phases of a unified human reality and not essentially distinct, let alone opposed, entities.”
[Ibid - p.227]

The embrace of a dynamic orientation demands that one abandon certain of the core assumptions of Humanism, because:

“In principle the wall of self around the great individual collapses . . . once we force ourselves to see social reality as a process rather than order, structuring rather than structure, becoming not being.”
[Ibid - p.267]

In this respect, a processual approach shuns methodological individualism as much as its collectivist counterpart.

Of course, the intellectual landscape is littered with attempts to undo dualism, only to reintroduce it in another form, or to render one term in the dichotomous pair full and the other empty. The general tendency of sociology, especially that which follows in the Marxist and Durkheimian tradition, has been to “solve” the problematic by making history and/or society objective and replete at the expense of depleting human agency by denuding it of any constitutive power. The solution fails to engage adequately with the “double-relation” [A. Giddens] of man-in-society-in-man. For:

“To enquire into the structuration of social practices is to seek to explain how it comes about that structures are constituted through action, and reciprocally how action is constituted structurally.”
[A. Giddens (1976) - p.161]

From the opposing perspective, phenomenological philosophy built an apparent escape from old modes of thought by prioritizing “consciousness of”, thus collapsing both the observing subject and the observed object. The two are rendered inseparable and it is only their marriage in terms of “consciousness of” which can act as the solid foundation of reality. This sounds appealing until we realize that the kind of consciousness which is “conscious of” is not a social one at all, but the apotheosis of transcendental subjectivity which Husserl certainly believed to be the culminating moment of the Cartesian tradition.

Unlike Descartes the subjectivity proffered by Husserl is in no sense solipsistic. It is a universal structure which acts no less as an objective foundation of knowledge than do the structures inscribed in materialist versions of reality. In this sense phenomenology and Marxism, for example, are equally objectivist, although the location of the Absolute differs.

Schutz's conversion of phenomenology into a sociological enterprise was a significant advance. The "consciousness" posited by Schutz is inter-subjective and typifying. It is a *social* consciousness which shares in a community bonded not by *a priori* mental apparatus, but by its adherence to schemata of typification which define cultural membership. The concept of "typification" is doubly useful: it suggests an inventory of types through which actors link the specific to a generalizing schema; it also alludes to the *procedures* through which sense is empirically accomplished.

Notwithstanding the insights which Schutz's work yields, it is hampered by certain flaws which blunt its radicality. Two are particularly apposite to the present discussion. Firstly, Schutz fails to develop his theoretical assumptions through empirical exploration; a fault shared by many whose pristine programmatic formulations defy the muddled vicissitudes of everyday life. Secondly, the chimera of presuppositionlessness inherited from Husserl infests Schutz's work, giving rise not to the impulse to strip consciousness to its essential, universal bone, but to the belief that the phenomenological observer can shed her cultural skin of presuppositions in order to see what is actually happening. In his denial of reflexive interdependence between observer and observed, Schutz reverts to the comforting arms of dualism.

By embracing both an empirical and reflexive orientation, ethnomethodology offers a most challenging and fruitful development on Schutz's work. It cultivates what is most radical in the phenomenological tradition, while building upon it a new edifice. Ethnomethodology exorcises what Richard Bernstein calls "Cartesian anxiety", epitomized by the search for an absolute foundation which lies *either* in one domain *or* the other.

"Either there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, *or* we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos."

[R.J. Bernstein (1983) - p.18]

[Emphasis is the original]

Yet, despite their persistence:

“There are, however, many signs that the deep assumptions, commitments, and metaphors that have shaped these oppositions, and from which they gain their seductive power, are being called into question. For along with the disquietude that is provoked by these extremes, there is a growing sense that something is wrong with the ways in which the relevant issues and options are posed - a sense that something is happening that is changing the categorial structure and patterns within which we think and act - a sense that we have an urgent need to move beyond objectivism and relativism.”
[Ibid - p.2]

This chapter began by alluding to one such attempt to “move beyond” by emphasizing the fluidity of action and structure which fuse in the process of structuring. Only by halting the incessant social motion and taking a snapshot can we harbour the illusion of stasis and separatism; only by ignoring the flux in which action and structure, the actor and society are involved in a relationship of mutual interdependence, each endlessly and inevitably articulating the other. The dance provides the necessary rules through which the dancer can bring it to life. Without sequential organization, an intrinsically temporal phenomenon, the dancer has no structure with which to work. But only through its enactment can the dance be realized. The relationship is reciprocal.

A processual appreciation has an elective affinity with an historical form of analysis, although the latter by no means offers a guarantee. Time and history enter social processes in a number of senses, distinguishable for analytical purposes. In the first place a most basic anthropological sensitivity alerts us to how socially shared conceptions sculpt our way of seeing the world, and that such conceptions are cross-culturally and historically variable. History is more than a stage upon which actors play a part; it enters the script itself, and how actors conceive themselves and others in relation to it. It is perhaps more misleading (not to mention *passé*) than it is enlightening to pursue a dramaturgical metaphor. We all know life is real. It simply serves to explode a conception of history as a husk within which action occurs. For this leads us to the curious paradox of a history outside of time. Heritage suggests a way of overcoming this difficulty with regard to “context”. I suggest we may learn something by applying his lesson to the *historical* context.

“A solution to these problems can emerge as soon as we abandon our traditional conception of ‘context’ as something exogenous to interaction or

as an external interpretative resource. Instead, we can begin to think of 'context' as something *endogenously* generated within the talk of the participants and, indeed, as something created in and through that talk."
[John Heritage (1984) - p.283]

[Emphasis in original]

This quotation takes us farther along the path of discussion than we have presently reached, but let us take from it at this point the notion that history is not an *external* resource which can be utilized either retrospectively by the historian, or contemporaneously by the participant in a particular historical period. For the nuances of their own respective times have entered their mode of practical reasoning and entwined themselves in common sense thought.

In this sense we belong to history, we are from the outset "in amongst it all" in Heideggerian terms. There can be no doubt, he believed, of this ontological foundation to existence, and it was scandalous that so many philosophers have wasted so much time attempting to doubt it. For Heidegger our being in the world outside of our subjective selves is an indisputable fact. We are not subjects perceiving objects as modern philosophy previously had it. Heidegger insisted that this is not the mode in which human beings relate to the world. As Professor Dreyfus remarks this was a radical turn in philosophy because, from Descartes onward, philosophers had identified subject-object relations in this dualistic way. From this derived the primacy of epistemological questions: how do subjects have *knowledge* of objects, and how do we *know* that knowledge is true? Heidegger's view, expressed in Professor Dreyfus' words, is that we are not:

"separate subjects looking through some invisible plate glass window at an objective reality which is "out there" and to which we try and relate or which we try and get knowledge. We are from the beginning in amongst it all. We are in there in the world . . . coping with it. So we're not primarily observing or knowing beings at all in the way that traditional philosophers have treated us as being - we're coping beings . . . or being beings, and it's from there that we start."

[Professor Dreyfus - on the phenomenological tradition of Husserl and Heidegger - in the series "Men of Ideas" presented by Brian Magee. B.B.C. T.V.]

It is this form of relatedness that ethnomethodologists consider in terms of the incarnate or indexical quality of social existence. We are *practical* beings. We cannot, nor in everyday life do we have any purpose, to spell out how we know the world, others and ourselves. We are in the muddle of social existence prior to attempts to intellectualize it. Social existence

is at once an historical mode of being to which we “belong”, to use Gadamer’s term, prior to our consciousness of it belonging to us. It is here an enlightened philosophy and an aware sociology can constructively meet.

As practical actors first and foremost we are engaged in a range of projects, often interwoven and diverse. Sequentiality enters these programmes of practical action rendering a sense of time, (past, present and future), an intimate feature of them. “Projects”, signifying any form of organized practical activity, always bring with them a sense of the past, filtered through what Gadamer calls “effective historicity”. Objects always appear in one context or another which imbue them with meaning. To quote once more from Drzyfus (Ibid): “Things show up as mattering in a particular way. This is because we’re always already in a situation and it always already matters in some way. We don’t start from nothing”. What I take from this is an allusion to a rich and infinite inventory of background expectations or ghost assumptions, as I prefer to call them, which attend each occasion of practical reasoning. We are thus disposed to reading the significance of items by situating them within a schema of interpretation.

Yet each act of cultural reproduction is at once an act of production. As I attempt to display throughout, *making sense* is an active and artful accomplishment; not a passive correspondence or matching operation. Through discourse, in Heidegger’s sense, whether it be talk or work, the participant is actively engaged in articulating a world and in so doing perpetuates history or, to greater and lesser degrees, changes it.

On the third temporal horizon, our projects “press into the future” (Drzyfus - Ibid). We harbour routine assumptions about the consequences of our actions which we perform “in order to” bring about some future result. This three-fold temporal process alerts us to how present actions are not discrete, nor isolated instances. By utilizing temporal frames of reference as a resource, however, we are able to cut up and reorganize our projects for the practical purposes in hand. Actors may thus add a sense of clarity and precision to their proceedings where necessary. But the cutting up occurs while in the flow.

“There is no extratemporal “shore” upon which I could save myself from the stream. While I reflectively attend to the past phases or even the phase just become present, I remain “in” the stream of consciousness.”
[A. Schutz (1974) - p.53]

Looking at historical structuration at the level of everyday practical action reveals how a sense of history, its appreciation, has nothing intrinsically to do with grandiosity of scale in terms of time or numbers. It is defined more accurately in terms of a researcher's sensitivity to process. Analysis of two minutes conversation can be as much historical as that of Greek Civilization. In some senses potentially more so because in examining the minutiae of discourse one is forced to consider its sequentiality, its retrospective-prospective nature. Our conversation itself, in other words, is a temporally organized affair; only by analyzing it *over time* can we understand the patterns that emerge. No school can have contributed more to an empirical understanding of the sequentiality of naturally occurring talk than conversation analysis. Shunning the promiscuous theorizing which they see certain ethnomethodological parties to be engaged in, conversation analysts bring an acute empirical precision to the understanding of talk as an ordered social phenomenon which exhibits routine patterns *upon analysis*.

Talk brings the three temporal horizons into a structured relationship. Since communication has as its prerequisite an orientation to context, and context is itself "endogenously" generated, it is clear that any sequence of talk is both "context shaped" and "context renewing", to use Heritage's words.

"A speaker's action is *context-shaped* in that its contribution to an on-going sequence of actions cannot adequately be understood except by reference to the context - including, especially, the immediately preceding configuration of actions - in which it participates . . . The *context-renewing* character of conversational actions is directly related to the fact that they are context shaped. Since every 'current' action will itself form the immediate context for some 'next' action in a sequence, it will inevitably contribute to the framework in terms of which the next action will be understood."

[J. Heritage (1984) - p.242]

[Emphasis in original]

Thus, each new contribution extends the contextual canopy to the next and will renew the sense of context generated in previous talk. The sequentiality of talk is thus vital in the formation of communicative patterns.

A critique of conversation analysis, however summary, is inappropriate here, as is a detailed empirical elaboration. We only need consider practices such as turn-making and paired actions to identify the seriality through which meaningful conversation emerges. Inscribed in a conversational turn are the instructions for *how* and *when* to respond and on occasions *who*

should take the next turn. Stripped of all the subtle nuances on which the conversation analyst thrives, consider this:

A: How ya been? Haven't seen you for ages.

B: Oh - not too bad! We've been busy moving.

In spite of being cleaned up in a way quite unacceptable to the conversation analyst, this extract nonetheless displays the temporal organization of talk. Inscribed in A's turn, by dint of its sequential location, is a question directed to a specific co-participant B, who, through her orientation to the paired action of question and answer, hears and responds in the following turn. Sacks uses the term "adjacency-pair" to describe this sub-set of paired actions which follow immediately one from the other. The enactment of the rule of adjacency pairs is described by Schegloff and Sacks as follows:

"given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion its speaker should stop and a next speaker should start and produce a second pair part from the pair type the first pair part is recognizably a member of."

[Quoted in J. Heritage (1984) - p.246]

"Conversation analysis is therefore primarily concerned" says Heritage, "with the ways in which utterances accomplish particular actions by virtue of their placement and participation within sequences of actions. It is sequences and turns-within-sequences which are thus the primary units of analysis."

[Ibid - p.245]

So what, one may rightfully ask, saves this form of analysis from being a highly technical and elaborate corollary of Pavlovian behaviourism. Is this not a form of mechanistic conversational conditioning: turn-taker "A" rings bell, turn-taker "B" salivates. While this may be a splinter tendency within the school, to view the body of conversation analysis in this way is to miss its more enlightened insights. What is identified is not a set of invariant mechanisms, but flexible codes that members reflexively orientate to both in the construction and reception of talk.

The assumptions which undergird members' communicative competence (which here is considered indistinguishable from their "performance") act like any other typificatory schema - as a ghost framework which allows us to quite unthinkingly monitor talk as we do it.

Conversation cannot proceed without the largely unconscious panoply of skills which participants employ in managing interaction. The skills consist in both knowledge of appropriate rules for the situation, as well as the capacity to procedurally activate them. Conversational competence then is grounded in the capacity to monitor talk *as it happens* and reflexively intervene in the flow of events which the talk is itself giving shape to.

The rules of talk are normative in the specific sense that they enter into our working criteria of the typical and normal through which any actual occasion of talk can be assessed. An orientation to the temporal features of talk, its seriality, is a primary aspect of the surveillance, allowing participants to gauge the significance of a conversational sequence. Where the interaction departs from routine assumptions, different motives can be ascribed to explain the deviation. The ongoing assessment of talk in terms of conversational codes is guided by both a cognitive-organizational criteria, and a moral one. Thus if A says “hullo” to B, and B does not respond, A will attempt to repair this deviation by drawing on the rule of adjacency pairs, exemplified in this case by the format of initiation-response. The breach of this pattern constitutes an anomaly which requires reparation. The permutations are multiple: B didn’t hear me; B’s angry with me; B’s going mad; B’s got something on her mind; B’s doing a breaching experiment, amongst many others. The deviation appears against a normative background of what typically *does* happen, as well as a moral background of what *should*. Membership competence is a key component of the ethnomethodological model of agency, which restores its constitutive power, and rebalances the “double-relation”.

Talk is realized through time. Interactants also *use* time as a resource to organize communication. Through a shared orientation to discursive rules co-participants erect what Heritage aptly calls “an architecture of inter-subjectivity” [Ibid - p. 254] built upon the seriality of talk. For, in her response to A’s turn interactant B not only draws upon, but *displays* her understanding of what is said, which is thus made publicly accessible to A. A’s response to B’s response to A offers a similar opportunity. Through public accountability, co-participants can constantly monitor the adequacy of others understanding of their intended meaning. The seriality of talk and its distribution into turns is doubly effective a) in its provision of a method of monitoring inter-subjective communicability; and b) in terms of the way each new utterance builds upon and transforms the hitherto existing conversational canopy, thus driving the conversation forward. The temporality of talk is an important motor in this process, in the words of Goodwin and Goodwin:

“rather than presenting a naked analysis of the prior talk, next utterances characteristically transform that talk in some fashion - deal with it not in its own terms but rather in the way in which it is relevant to the projects of the subsequent speaker.”

[Quoted in J. Heritage (1984) - p.260]

Does this not give a very precise and manageable grounding to Abrams suggestion that:

“it is a matter of treating what people do in the present as a struggle to create a future *out of* the past, as seeing that the past is not just the womb of the present but the only raw material out of which the present can be constructed.”

[P. Abrams (1982) - p.8]

[Emphasis in original]

To summarize then, in Heritage’s eloquent words:

“conversational interaction is structured by an organization of action which is implemented on a turn-by-turn basis. By means of this organization, *a context of publicly displayed and continuously up-dated intersubjective understandings is systematically sustained*. It is through this ‘turn-by-turn’ character of talk that the participants display their understandings of ‘the state of the talk’ for one another.”

[J. Heritage (1984) - p.259]

[Emphasis in original]

Through this circuitous route I come to the central plank of my argument. Everyday discourse, whether verbal or written, is the most fundamental and productive site upon which structuring occurs. Through examination of it we are given access to the procedures through which a sense of reality is accomplished. Discourse also displays the range of theories through which members give substance and shape to their world. The two components, members’ theory and methodology, are aspects of the same structuring dynamic. In the process of making sense the specific is linked into the wider network of typifications and thus becomes part of the shared world. The attempt here is to raise temporal codes to analytic visibility; to render them, in the words of the old ethnomethodological adage, a focus as well as an inevitable resource.

This analytical focus has been notably absent from the mainstream sociological enterprise. Over twenty years since the publication of Garfinkel’s *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, it is striking how few of the insights in this lucrative field of sociological exploration have filtered into the traditional core of sociological wisdom. The neglect is only minimally less apparent

amidst those renewed calls for a new historical orientation to the problem of structuring with which we started this chapter. P. Abrams, for instance, in spite of his eloquence of exposition, ignores the orientations that members themselves have to time and how they construct a *sense* of history. His election of the sociology of deviance as the apotheosis of a processual approach reflects his ignorance of developments on interactionism. For, without wishing to diminish the major contributions that have been made in this fertile field of analysis, interactionism tends to gloss over what ethnomethodologists consider to be the most fascinating problem of all. While interactionist studies are, in the words of Abrams,

“explanations centred on the idea of temporally organized sequence. The crucial explanatory concepts refer to successions of action and reaction and of personal and social change in time: socialization, drift, the formation of sub-cultures, affiliation, the deviant career, signification. In all the varieties of the sociology of deviance deviants are explained in terms of their histories.”

[P. Abrams (1982) - p.269]

... they often fail to examine *members* “explanations centred on the idea of temporally organized sequence”, or *their* “crucial explanatory concepts”. The relationship between the analytical proclivities of lay actor and sociologist is drawn upon as an unexplicated resource in this mode of analysis.

A nice example of the analytical differentiation between classical interactionism, and the *genre* of analysis employed in this study, can be gleaned by quoting Abrams’ admiring remarks about Lemert’s work. He seeks, we are told,

“to specify the interactions, junctures and episodes that mark the decisive passages in the life history of individuals. . .”

[P. Abrams (1982) - p.270]

... who are in the process of becoming deviant. It is clearly the sociologist’s analytical criteria that is being employed to determine the nodal points in the history of becoming delinquent. The focus here, by contrast, is upon the criteria through which members themselves select, organise and narrate the past by specifying junctures, episodes and “decisive passages”.

Notwithstanding a nod in the direction of conversation analysis by acknowledging its,

“significant contribution in stressing that the managing of talk by social actors routinely employs the location of a conversation in time as a mode of organizing that conversation”,
[A. Giddens (1979) - 203]

. . . Giddens fails to take his appreciation further. Replete with programmatic formulations and sophisticated theoretical synthesis, he gives little clue as to how his theory of structuration can be effectively applied to the world in which structuring ostensibly occurs.

ii) The Historian's Task

We not only “belong to history”, in Heideggerian terms, it also “belongs to us”. To embrace one side of the equation to the exclusion of the other, is to lapse into either determinism or voluntarism. Historical traditions, as Gadamer identifies them, are not reified entities which stand over us; they are part of us and work only through our active engagement with them. We, as members of cultural and linguistic communities, *make* history. In our application of common sense theories and methods, we construct a sense of time and history: a collective and collaborative feat. In this lies the concept of historicity and the restoration of human agency to a properly constitutive role.

In reconstructing the past the historian brings to it a panoply of assumptions which derive (temporally and spatially) from her native culture. There is not an ahistorical arbitration on historical facts; they are constructed from the moving perspective of the present. In a nutshell, the historical “object” is inseparable from the observing “subject” who - situated in a different time and place - brings her cultural repertoire to bear. For Gadamer:

“True historical thinking must take account of its own historicity. Only then will it not chase the phantom of an historical object which is the object of progressive research, but learn to see in the object the counterpart of itself and hence understand both. The true historical object is not an object at all, but the unity of the one and the other, a relationship in which exist both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding. A proper hermeneutics would have to demonstrate the effectivity of history within understanding itself.”

[Quoted in R. Bernstein (1983) - p.142]

The reflexive tie between the observer and the observed is not destructive, nor an impediment: it is a productive relationship. Where observer and observed are separated by time and/or space, the gap offers an occasion to explore the hidden assumptions of the here and now. In the words of Ricoeur, it is:

“the dialectic between the alien and the familiar, the far and the near (which is) at the very heart of the interest in communication . . . For to recognize the values of the past in their *differences* with respect to our values is already to open up the real towards the possible. The true histories of past uncover the buried potentialities of present.”

[P. Ricoeur (1981) - p. 295]

[Emphasis in original]

In this lies the arc traced by modern hermeneutics between one point and another. By traversing it the historian, or indeed the anthropologist, may familiarize herself with the strange and, equally important, estrange herself, to some degree, from the familiar. Facets of the observer's own cultural membership are reclaimed through the detour of distantiated signs. To quote from C. Geertz:

“If we want to discover what man amounts to, we can only find it in what men are; and what men are, above all other things, is various. It is in understanding that variousness - its range, its nature, its basis, and its implications - that we shall come to construct a concept of human nature that, more than a statistical shadow and less than a primitive dream has both substance and truth.”

[Quoted in R. Bernstein (1983) - p.106]

Whether anthropology or history, the interface between the then and there and here and now is a productive one which allows for the reappraisal of both. What may be achieved is a mobile inter-play between the near and far, indigenous categories and analytically imposed ones. That we *can* and *do* interpret and make meaningful sense of other times and peoples (with greater or lesser sensitivity to their internal rationale) is a negation of the thesis of incommensurability which logically refutes communication across distances. In the words of Gadamer:

“The closed horizon that is supposed to enclose a culture is an abstraction. The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never utterly bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past . . . is always in motion.”

[Hans Georg Gadamer (1975) - p.271]

The observer can only begin to suspend her structuring proclivities once aware of their constitutive power. Only through this awareness can she consciously bracket certain of her cultural assumptions, for some of the time, in order that the constitutive powers of those she is studying may be propelled into the analytical spotlight. We never start from nothing; but our cultural predispositions need not totally *determine* our reception of the new. Through deliberate methodological effort we can avoid the ethnocentrism of certain forms of history and anthropology which look for evidence of “what we amount to as basic sticker price *homo* and essential no additive *sapiens*” [C. Geertz (1984) - p.268 - Emphasis in original]. Exposure to other forms of rationality and, infinitely less visible to us, our own, cannot be achieved by suspending all presuppositions. It cannot be done. Exposure is achieved by keeping background expectancies at different tensions; by utilizing ones own methods as focus *and* resource.

Through this reflexive process one circumvents the pitfalls of both historicism and sociology, on the one hand, and positivism on the other. In the latter case the facts, articulate as ever, speak loud and clear to the neutral observer whose only concept of “observer-effect” is negatively associated with “bias”, to be eradicated rather than explored. The observer is thus reduced to the status of a mouthpiece through which the object ostensibly speaks for itself.

By encouraging a concept of cultures and epochs having closed horizons which are incommensurable, historicism falls into the self-defeating circle of relativism. When applied to itself relativism becomes a relative system which has no basis from which to justify its universal application. It is classically self-negating. The historicist is motivated to achieve some form of inner harmony by stepping entirely into the native’s indigenous rationale, collective mentality, spirit of the age, or whatever. Now this may be an important *moment* in the research process, but it is ultimately unsustainable and hypocritical. Translation into a communicative mode suitable for the historian’s or anthropologist’s usually academic audience renders the notion of complete faithfulness impossible. It also begs the question about what, or who, one is being faithful to.

The point of it all, if one is interested in the reflexive process through which knowledge and understanding emerge, is not to strip the sociologist bare (which in different ways positivism, historicism and sociology all do), nor to:

“achieve some inner correspondence of spirit with your informant; preferring

like the rest of us, to call their souls their own, they are not going to be altogether keen about such an effort anyhow. The trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to.”
[C. Geertz (1976) - pages 227-228]

Bernstein says how anthropology, and the same could be said for history, displays “two pervasive temptations” in understanding alien phenomena:

“the temptation to impose, read into, or project categories and moral standards that are well entrenched in our own society onto what is being studied, and the dialectical antithesis of this - the temptation to go native, to suppose that we only understand the Azande, Nuer, or Balinese when we think, feel and act like them.”
[R. Bernstein (1983) - pages 93-94]

Geertz’s remarkable anthropological insights are borne of the dialectical inter-relationship of far and near, strange and familiar, external conceptual apparatus and categories employed by the indigenous group. Bernstein offers an excellent example of the work that can be accomplished by this approach in exploring Geertz’s analysis of the variety of cultural conceptions of “self”. Geertz found it impossible to decipher one grand entity in which all cultural conceptions partake. Yet this did not prevent him from employing an analyst’s prerogative in holding a concept of “self” constant in order to make cultural comparisons in relation to it. Without pinning down a loose notion of self, the mobility would have threatened to engulf him. Geertz’ compilation of cultural conceptions of self, fascinating as it may be, is not an exercise in butterfly collecting. It offers a platform for reassessing our own cultural notions by puncturing the “dulling sense of familiarity” [Geertz (1975) - p.14] which keep them hidden from us. What we may accomplish is a sense of how:

“the western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against a social and natural background is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures.”
[C. Geertz (1976) - p.229]

The lacuna between observer and observed opened up by history and anthropology is a productive one. By providing a distancing perspective and opening up the diversity of reason, it provides a sterling opportunity to examine our own common sense world.

History must, at this juncture, be distinguished from first-hand anthropology by its reliance upon indirect material. Historians often depend upon the traces of the past inscribed in documents of various kinds. The documents are themselves of course part of a social organization, and brought to life by the contemporary documentator for particular purposes. The historian resurrects the past by re-organizing and re-contextualizing historical documents. As Ricoeur insists, the historian is not:

“some perturbing factor added to the past that must be eliminated.”

It is a:

“methodological illusion that the historical fact exists in some latent state in the documents and the historian is a parasite on the historical equation.”
[P. Ricoeur (1984) - p.99]

The historical text thus provides an excellent empirical opportunity to analyze the theories and methods through which a reconstruction of the past is realized. It is a site upon which structuring processes meet. The very term “history” has an “intriguing ambiguity”, as Ricoeur points out [Ricoeur (1981) - p.288]. It conjoins “what happened” with the story of these events. The *doing* of history, its discursive construction, is not an external “second-order” operation:

“It is constitutive of the historical mode of understanding. History is intrinsically historio-graphy - or to put it in a deliberately provocative way, a literary artefact.”
[P. Ricoeur (1984) - p.162]

The kind of history with which this chapter deals is the case history. The object of exploration: the child’s past. Unlike a more general biography, it has the specific purpose of elucidating why the child has become a problem. This clear criterion of relevance is in operation both in the construction and the reception of the “history”. Unlike the history of far off times and peoples, the social work case study is couched in a familiarity which, for my purposes, I have attempted to place at a distance. The creation of a sense of anthropological strangeness is necessary in order to *hear* the codes which normally run smoothly and silently.

I also attempt to partially suspend an external criterion of adequacy. In other words,

the prevailing concern is not with whether chapters in a child's history adequately account for his later problems from a social scientific perspective. It is the judgements of the participants, and the methods through which they achieve a *sense* of causality, which is topicalized. However, I inevitably draw upon my membership competence in identifying causal relations, and judgements of adequacy. The art is to keep the components of strangeness and familiarity in productive balance.

The case historian, like any other, is involved in an active construction of the past, in the context of later events. Since the ghost expectations about what is normal (. . . for an adolescent boy) have typically been breached, a search ensues for a series of historical clues which may account for the deviation. The past is scavenged for what went wrong, and in turn biographical items are used as a method for going beyond appearance in search of a child's underlying and often unconscious motivation.

A child's "problems" are thus situated on a two-dimensional matrix: the one longitudinal, offering a chronological perspective; the other latitudinal, tracing a trajectory from the periphery to the core. An archeological metaphor perhaps best characterizes this two-fold excavation engrained in the therapeutic process. The dig proceeds from the contemporary surface to the historical depth. The case historian's, like the psycho-analyst's:

" . . . work of construction, or, if it is preferred, of reconstruction, resembles to a great extent an archeologists excavation of some dwelling place that has been destroyed and buried or of some ancient edifice. The two processes are in fact identical, except that the analyst works under better conditions and has more material at his command to assist him, since what he is dealing with is not something destroyed, but something that is still alive."
[S. Freud (1937) - pages 258-259]

Like any other form of historical account, the case history achieves a sense of pattern and sequential organization out of the interminable flow of events, tangled and infinite. A criterion of selection is at work deriving both from the wider culture, and the case historian's immersion in occupational modes of practical reasoning. The child's past is edited; cut up into manageable pieces conducive to the burgeoning explanation. What is included is given a particular location and emphasis within the text (or talk) according to the significance which the author accords it. Certain items may be propelled to the forefront of the text, and given the status of nodal points in the child's emergent problems; other items recede into the background

as so much narrative furniture. In Dorothy Smith's words:

**"The ordering of events in the narrative constructs the objectivity of the fact, the items which might serve to suggest the opposite are not only relegated to the background, they are also not constructed in the same way. They are merely, as it were lying about."
[D. Smith (1978) - p.37]**

Needless to say, the historical facts do not elect themselves, nor do they give rise to an obvious method of arrangement. The editing and ordering of items is contingent upon the *genre* of historical explanation, and the authors purpose in hand. Although case historians vary considerably in their style, and the extent to which the narrative skeleton is given explanatory flesh, the variations are within a language game. All are concerned with how and why the child developed "problems", and include a series of past events which may, and whose inclusion suggests are, pertinent to the later scenario. Each chapter in the documented history of a child is at once constructed and received in terms of its contribution to his developing problems, although the relationship may be complex. Each new episode is assimilated to, and helps constitute a dominant theme. This is what Ricoeur alludes to in saying that histories are always more than a catalogue of events. From the chronology emerges a configuration which, like the musical score, is irreducible to the sequential succession of notes. While the successive episodes of the history drive it along, they must be "grasped together" in Ricoeur's terms. To follow a story the reader must be able to "extract configuration from succession" [P. Ricoeur (1981) - p.278].

The very *pastness* of events with which historical accounts deal facilitates their patterned reconstruction. Since the events are "over" the chain of causality can be disentangled. Because the chains are traced retrospectively they are treated as if devoid of contingency and chance; imbued with an incontrovertible finality. In Ricoeur's words:

**"This retrospective intelligibility rests upon a construction that no witness could have put together when the events were occurring, since this backward way of proceeding would be unavailable to any contemporary witness."
[P. Ricoeur (1984) - p.157]**

The reader of an historical account of this kind is "teleologically oriented" [Ibid - p.150]. Earlier events are assessed in terms of their relevance to later events which, in turn, assume their meaning in relation to a chain of earlier ones.

“In reading the ending in the beginning and the beginning in the ending, we also learn to read time itself backwards, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences.”
[Ibid - p.67-68]

Also, the reader may be prepared to suspend judgement *for the time being* in the assumption that all will become clear in due course. In this lies the retrospective-prospective nature of discourse, spoken or written, which relies upon the reader or hearer doing much of the collaborative work necessary in making sense. The work is full of “holes, lacunae, zones of indetermination” [P. Ricoeur (1984) - p.77] which the reader bears the burden of repairing. I attempt to highlight certain features of this collaborative process of writing and reading (or talking and listening) in Chapter 7.

Ricoeur treats time, history and narrative as moments in a dynamic hermeneutic spiral, into which they all feed and are created anew. Both history and fiction are seen to exhibit many of the features of narrative to which genus they both belong. Case histories, for instance, like any story, are ensconced in the temporal structure of beginnings, middles and endings. Events in between are galvanized into an episodic chain, each building upon the emergent configuration and pre-empting what may, prospectively, happen. Events thus configure into patterned sequences and *motifs*. The reader is directed through this quagmire of events; pushed forward by the logic of the narrative and expectations about the culmination of events.

Part of the bond of cultural communality which unites the “producer” and “consumer” of discourse, allowing them to communicate, is their shared orientation to different *genres* of story-telling. Ricoeur uses the term “*emplotment*” to describe the process through which narrative events configure into meaningful wholes. He uses the verb *emplotment* rather than the noun *plot*, because it depicts a dynamic process. The “facts” of history only exist in and through plots, and assume the significance that the logic of the narrative accords them. Only through these paradigms are the specific details of a particular case made meaningful. Against the backcloth of a familiar mode of telling, the details of the individual case come into relief.

Ricoeur argues it is the narrativization of (historical) events which lend them this rule-governed quality. Leaving aside the nuances of his complex theorization, much of Ricoeur’s hermeneutic explication of the inter-relationship between time and narrative is useful to our analysis, including his perception that narrativized:

“. . . events are singular *and* typical, contingent *and* expected, deviant *and* dependent on paradigms, even if this is in the ironic model.”

[Ibid - p.208]

[Emphasis in original]

Historical accounts do not stand or fall exclusively on the basis of their narrative architecture. While their encapsulation in a particular mode of organization constitutes one of the conditions of possibility, it is a necessary but not sufficient explanation of how the case history is both constructed and received. Issues of adequacy are crucial, both factually and morally. Accounts of this kind are couched in *procedures of authorization* through which events are established as objective facts whose reportage is motivated, amongst other things, by the attempt to *genuinely* understand what went wrong and why. Facts are constructed through certain discursive procedures. To quote once more from Dorothy Smith:

“The actual events are not facts. It is the use of proper procedure for categorizing events which transforms them into facts. A fact is something which is already categorized, which is already worked up so that it conforms to the model of what that fact should be like. To describe something as a fact or to treat something as a fact implies that the events themselves - what happened - entitle or authorize the teller of the tale to treat that categorization as ineluctable. . . .

If something is to be constructed as a fact, then it must be shown that proper procedures have been used to establish it as objectively known. It must be seen to appear in the same way to anyone.”

[D. Smith (1978) - p.35]

To meet the criteria of factual adequacy events must be seen to have an independent and objective existence. To objectify events is to establish them as the same from any vantage-point. The “fact-effect” is achieved through a variety of procedures which I attempt to draw out and explore in the empirical analysis. Suffice to say for the present purposes that factual accounting tends to be bound up in the rhetoric of constraint. Facts, immutable and ineluctable, exist whether one likes it or not. This works especially well where the author is constrained to recognize a fact which she does not like because it strengthens the conception of facts being forced upon one.

To establish their facticity events must be seen as independent of the author’s interpretation. To accomplish this separation the author must display that she is properly

motivated; that her understanding of events is not borne of an ulterior motive. If the author's own purposes are seen to be at work, this would cast doubt upon her veridicality, and thus subvert the facticity of the account. In this respect a moral assessment is of equal importance to its factual counterpart in judging the adequacy of an account. As Cuff points out, consideration is not only given to whether events accord to the criteria of fact, but whether the author is a credible arbiter of the facts. In the words of Cuff:

“Any account can be scrutinized in such terms, i.e. (1) how does it come off as a ‘proper’ description of what is happening in the social world: and (2) how does it display the teller - as ‘impartial’ or as ‘biased’ or as ‘sensitive’ or as ‘callous’ or as ‘involved’ or as ‘disinterested’ or whatever? The teller, in producing an account of what is happening in the world, is also unavoidably producing materials which make available possible findings about his characterological and moral appearances as displayed in his talk. Alternatively put, in telling about the world, he is also inescapably telling about himself: in seeing the world ‘that way’, he is inescapably open to possible findings that he is ‘that kind of person who sees the world that way’.”
[E.C. Cuff (1980) - p.35]

The issue hinges partly on how one version is allocated privilege of definition given that any set of events can in principle be described in more than one way. The adequacy of the case historian's account is inscribed partly in her status as an expert whose interest in detailing events is borne of professional rather than predominantly personal motivation. Of course a sense of expertise is discursively accomplished, but before she even comes to the case history the reader has already categorized the author and the basis of her authority. The attribution of professional expertise partially negates the necessity for scrutinizing the author's underlying motives.

Simultaneously, through the machinery of “standard relational pairs” (see pages 274-283) the category of expert-professional is linked with that of lay-client. Where the specific expert is a social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist, for instance, the assumption of routine competence on the part of the one, is paired with the expectation of incompetence on the part of the other. By dint of this discursive logic the allocation of authority is skewed; definitional privilege is allocated to one party who is invested with superior methods of knowing what is *really* going on. Through the implicit identification of the other party as a “problem child” his authority is diminished; almost by definition such a category of person is not the best authority about his own state of being. Because the child's “problem” status is the *raison d’etre* of the case history, a

differential of authority is implicit from the outset which serves:

- a) to bolster the privilege of the “expert account”; and
- b) to undermine the privilege of the “subject” who is under the professional gaze.

The case historian is the source of normative judgement; she is both the factual and moral arbiter of events. This does not mean, as we have seen, that the voice of the child, or his family, is excluded. But it is the case historian who allocates a space to the talk and frames it within a chosen context.

The case file typically consists of a range of reports written by representatives of different professions almost always including residential and field social work, education, psychology and psychiatry. The cumulation of accounts is itself significant in authorizing the file as a whole. It reinforces the rhetoric of fact as independent of any one observer. The succession of independent witnesses helps bolster the conception of a cognitive and moral community; each report “. . . uncontaminated by the previous prompting or definitional work which might be interpreted as a source of bias” [D. Smith (1979) - p.37].

The irony of these authorization procedures will not be missed. In order to accomplish a sense of factual and moral adequacy, the author does a great deal of discursive work to make the facts appear to speak for themselves. That most pristine and granite of objects, the fact, is inextricably bound to the occasion of its production. In tracing some of the methods through which history is accomplished and rendered plausible, I therefore start from certain assumptions about members’ competence which lies at the heart of the ethnomethodological project. The case history is a repository of artful practices.

Before we turn to the empirical material it may be useful to distinguish this form of analysis from the semiological orientation to the exclusivity of the text. The *account*, whether textual or verbal, is of central significance for ethnomethodology. It is the location upon which production and reproduction meet; where “new” occasions are assimilated to existing frameworks. Unlike the post-structuralist *genre* of textual analysis in which language is severed from its connections to speaker/ writer and world, the kind of discourse analysis in which I am engaged identifies a much more interactive relationship between the three. From this perspective accounts are the product of discursive procedures which must be activated by authors. The constitutive power of all actors is irreducible to their individual or subjective status; it is a shared propensity which defines membership in the social and linguistic community.

Language becomes meaningful when it is articulated; when the structural pre-conditions are realized in discourse. Ricoeur usefully distinguishes between *language* as a self-referential system, and *discourse*. Unlike language, discourse is realized as a process through time; it has a “subject”, not at its origin in a simplistic sense, but located through signifiers like personal pronouns; and it refers to a world which it claims to signify. For language is not a world in itself:

“This is the ontological presupposition of reference, a presupposition reflected inside language itself as a postulate lacking any immanent justification. Language is for itself the order of the Same. The world is its Other. The attestation of this otherness arises from language’s reflexivity with regard to itself, whereby it knows itself as being in being in order to bear on being.”
[P.Ricoeur (1984) - p.78]

[Emphasis in original]

To emphasize the realization of language through discourse is not to return to the notion of original subjectivity. The producer of text and talk is also the product of the social relations in which she is always already enmeshed. In turn social relations are unthinkable without the skills of discursivity with which actors are endowed. Structuring occurs in this interminable process of reciprocal articulation.

One final concept may be drawn from Ricoeur’s study of time and narrative which helps us to elucidate the process of doing history. Ricoeur offers a particular interpretation of the notion of *mimesis* which he borrows from Aristotle’s *Poetics*. In describing the mimetic qualities of the text, Ricoeur does not wish to suggest it passively reflects, or mimics the social world of which it is a part. What is at stake is an active representation. As a re-working of the world through its signification the mimetic process offers the possibility of new grids for reading experience. Mimesis achieves its organized sense through the process of emplotment which structures narrative events in terms of the paradigms which render them familiar.

Ricoeur identifies three mimetic phases connected through an arc of operations. Mimesis(1) alludes to the knowledge and procedures upon which the author draws in textualizing or accounting for events. The reservoir of social presuppositions is brought to any discursive construction. Mimesis(2) is the location of the text itself which dynamically represents the world from which it comes by weaving a configurational plait of themes from the temporal succession of events. Texts are not idle repetitions of cultural codes; the latter are brought to life through

their discursive representation. Mimesis(3) is the final brace in the arc which defines the intersection of the text and the reader/hearer. Just as the author draws upon shared cultural methods in constructing the account, so too does the reader in making sense of it. Reading is not a passive reception of the word. It requires that the reader actively bring her skills to bear.

Ricoeur's concern is exclusively with textual discourse, and he makes certain distinctions between the written and the spoken word. For instance, while talk is fleeting, text is fixed by its inscription. The spoken word has what Ricoeur calls a "*vis-a-vis*" quality situated in the "here and now". The context of speech is a vital component in its interpretability, witnessed by the wealth of indexical expressions used in verbal discourse. In text, the moorings of ostensive reference, as Ricoeur sees it, are broken and can only be recovered through the long detour of literary signs. The interaction between text and reader is thus conceived as more creative than that between speaker and hearer precisely because the author and world are not self-evidently present.

Here, as elsewhere, Ricoeur is in danger of setting up misleadingly simplistic dichotomies between textual and verbal discourse. While a distinction can clearly be made, Ricoeur invests text with a wealth of subtleties by depriving talk of these qualities. For instance, he speaks of the ostensive "*vis-a-vis*" of verbal communication, as if the clues to what talk means are self-evidently inscribed in the context. I would argue, first of all, that the reparation of indexicality in spoken discourse requires a great many interpretative skills. What fudges the issue is Ricoeur's reliance upon an unexplicated definition of context as exogenous to talk. In so assuming he fails to identify the process through which context is interactionally generated in discourse. So radical a distinction between talk and text can be dissolved, because both endogenously build a context *as they go along*, through the interaction of speaker and hearer on the one hand, and text and reader on the other.

In this respect I make no *a priori* distinctions between the verbal and written modes of discourse. Both exhibit sense-making procedures, and are accessible to scrutiny. From this perspective the age old wrangles about which mode of discourse is superior are unnecessary and academic. I take from Ricoeur's triply punctuated mimetic arc a way of *thinking* the power discourse has at once to produce and reproduce, maintain and modify the world of which it is an integral part. The segment defined by mimesis(1)-(2) can be understood in terms of the *indexical* reliance of discourse upon a ghost network of assumptions which are never simply

present. The segment of mimesis(2)-(3) describes the *reflexive* process through which accounts reconstitute the social scene of which they are a part.

Conclusion

Many of the techniques which historians employ to (re)construct a sense of the past were shared by the case historian whose main purpose was to elicit “what went wrong” with a particular child. In so doing she was engaged in forging a series of links in an historical chain, the composition of which forms a primary focus of the three remaining chapters. Armed with a theoretical appreciation of how time and narrative are socially constructed I turn to a range of accounts, particularly those which offer an historical appraisal of the boys and their problems. I start with a consideration of a story which was often told about how a child’s deprived historical circumstances accounted for his contemporary disturbances.

CHAPTER SIX HISTORIES OF LACK

Introduction

The excavation of a child's past was typically accompanied by guide-lines about where to dig, and what one might expect to find. Assumptions of this kind were sedimented through broader cultural traditions, as well as those relatively specific to social work and associated therapeutic professions. The very fact that a child's history was considered relevant in the first place is an important feature of therapeutic discourse. Fundamental to the latter is a belief that the seeds of an individual's present are sown in the past, whether he is "well-adjusted" and "normal" or the victim of emotional problems. This belief commissions a search into the subject's background to elucidate the biographical antecedents that give rise to his "presenting problems". Historical reconstruction, however, is not the sole or even the primary purpose: it is the vehicle through which a child's underlying motivation can be recovered. In the pursuit of an explanatory kernel, the account continuously bobs and weaves between past and present; surface and depth.

Like any other practice, social work rests upon a cumulative body of procedures and theories which provide the routine grounds for going about one's business. The network of typifying schemata always precede consideration of the particular, and provide the map upon which it is situated. However, there is always an interaction, a kind of mutual "sniffing out" between the strategies of typification and the contingencies of each new case.

In this section we will explore a deep vein of presuppositions which informed the case historian's task and showed up as recurrent *motifs* in the account. As a body of ideas and typifications which pre-dated any specific historical construction, these can be likened to Ricoeur's *mimesis*(1). The core theme which permeated the vast majority of case histories was that of *lack*. Children "of this kind" were typically seen to suffer from histories of deprivation, of a quintessentially emotional nature, which were held to account for later manifestations of delinquency and/or disturbance. How the links were precisely forged is a matter for the close empirical inspection to come. Suffice to say that one cannot be simply "read off" from the other: the relationship must be discursively accomplished.

The recurrent theme of lack, and its position as a central explanatory girder, itself tells a story. If we suspend familiarity with these common sense concepts, we can see how their articulation relies upon a network of ghost assumptions about what children need to develop normally and healthily and what is at stake when such prerequisites are *lacking*. Only by defining the accoutrements of the normal do perceptions of deviance firm up. Inscribed in social work practice are a gamut of theories about normal and abnormal development. Thus, when any specific child comes to the attention of the social services through his identification as a “problem child”, he is subjected to the professional gaze which often takes the guise of an historical perusal. One of the first ports of call in building an explanation of “what went wrong” is anchored in theories of lack. Since children are, for the most part, brought up by parents in families, this is the primary location in which deprivation is sought and found.

i) Characterizations of Multiple Lack

The first selection of extracts deal with characterizations of multiple lack. In the first piece Thomas McKinney, team manager of unit 4, traces the lineage of the problem for “boys of this kind” to their deprived circumstances.

[I ask Thomas how he accounts for the boys’ problems]

Thomas: Well (.5) uhm (2.5) could I just take it out of context for a minute?

Kim: {Sure.
{

Thomas: {and just imagine it was you - yer? And you had gone through the areas of deprivation O.K. - internal deprivation - primary deprivation . . . how would you express areas of your own - uhm (1.5) lack of (.5) need satisfaction?

One minute later:

Thomas: I’m really talking about an unmet need - or . . . I’m re-really talking about what happens at a primary level - yer? With primary groups and so on and so forth. Uhm (.5) and what would happen no doubt - your humanity would be that you would uhm - uh - shout and kick and scream yer - to a lesser or

greater extent yer? As any other human being would.

Kim: Yer.

Thomas: O.K. - uhm - what these lads are doing in fact their-their actions are (.5) symbolic to the uhm - to the deprivations and the unmet needs that they've actually uh experienced (.5) you know. Uhm (1) I'll use the word again they're uhm - powerless (.5) yer? (1.5) of not in fact being able to make decisions (1) for themselves - yer - and ending up - actually when they (.5) chose to make a decision - yer - in fact it's a bad one.

[Thomas McKinney's interview]

In the preceding extract a common causal chain of deprivation is seen to lie at the heart of the problem amongst the population of residents at St. Nicholas'. Let us consider how this generalized mode of theorization operates in relation to specific histories. In each forthcoming extract a background of multiple deprivation is implicitly or explicitly held to account for the boy's later manifestation of problems. The first piece is once more from Thomas' interview.

1 [I ask Thomas to give me an example of a particular boy, and what led him into care. He chooses Steve Butler.]

Thomas: Steve Butler - has suffered from (.5) all of the things that we spoke about - the lack of love - the lack of understanding - the lack of a place in the pecking order (1) lack of care - lack of warmth - lack of power. His life is meaningless (2) he is powerless inside it - yer? (1) Both (1.5) he - both he and his primary group - desperately want in fact to bring about a change (2) they desperately want - in fact - to love each other (1) yer? (1) They're not quite sure how to do it. It's almost like a "Catch 22" (1.5) they in fact - punish (.5) bits of behaviour (.5) that (.5) they see as attention seeking - but because it's attention seeking behaviour - he's - he's doing it all the wrong way as far as 10 they're concerned. 12

This piece exhibits quite an elaborate explanatory architecture, bridged by the theory of psychological motivation to be examined in detail in the following chapter. What is of interest

to us here is how the term “lack” resonates like a drumbeat, particularly in lines 4-5. Having catalogued six areas of deprivation, Thomas goes on to specify their effects: Steve’s sense of meaninglessness and powerlessness within the family. If we turn back to Thomas’ theoretical exposition on pages 256-257 we can detect the symmetry between the generalizing conception of “boys like this”, and its elucidation in the particular case of Steve Butler. Notice also the theme of victimization through deprivation: Steve has “suffered” multiple lack. We will return to this in due course.

The bedrock of compound deprivation is similarly placed at the origins of Nigel Wyatt’s multifarious problems in the following segments. The first is drawn from the case history written by his F.S.W.

“The Wyatt’s first became known to (the local social services) in March 1970. There were then considerable marital difficulties and repeated separations and reconciliations, and both parents received in-patient treatment in psychiatric hospital. Between 1970 and 1972 Nigel’s mother left home on several occasions. Both children were reported as suffering neglect and emotional deprivation. They were left alone for long periods often hungry and not allowed to use the toilet without permission. Nigel’s mother was also reported to be lacking in affection and admitted to hitting Nigel, causing him a black eye. In February 1972 (Nigel’s sister and he) were received into care for two months after their mother had left home.”

The lineage of responsibility for Nigel and his sisters “suffering” is traced back most clearly to the mother who is portrayed as, amongst other things, neglectful, lacking in affection and violent. In the absence of explicit exoneration, which appears in some of the accounts, blame is allocated to a mother who is held to account for perpetrating the “suffering” borne of deprivation. The *motif* of multiple lack is echoed in the summary of Nigel’s final assessment conference.

1 “The psychiatrist gave a detailed outline of the boy’s and the family’s history, and a remarkable list both of presenting problems and of sources for these problems. Overall the list of causes encompassed a wide range of deprivations,

5 including insufficient warmth, care, control, security and predictability. The team felt that these expressed his needs.”

Again:

10 “The team felt that not only has Nigel experienced a devastatingly painful and poor childhood, which has failed to help him to develop adequately, but that his future is a void. His internal world seems somewhat chaotic and confused and he seems to have only disjointed views of part of his future. The result, the team felt, was that he does not know who he is or what he is.”

What is apparent in this extract is the language through which temporally antecedent events are associated with later ones in such a way as to bond a casual relationship. In line 2, for example, we are told how the psychiatrist, an authorized witness, outlines a “remarkable list of *presenting* problems”, and “*sources* for these”. The term “presenting problems”, so frequently used in social work, alludes to the systematic tendency explored throughout to treat surface manifestations of behaviour as merely a point of access to the underlying realms where the real motivations lie. Use of the term “presenting” thus invites us to go beyond the ostensible behaviour to its source, which the account proceeds to do in lines 3-5. The “wide range of deprivations” (line 3) thereby assume the status not of individual items, or contextualizing furniture, but of *causes* of later problems.

In lines 6-7 Nigel’s purported failure to develop adequately is causally attributed not to chance, or his own inabilities, but his experience of “a devastatingly painful and poor childhood”. We will go on in chapter 7 to consider the methods through which casual chains are more or less persuasively forged. What I take from each of the above extracts is the primacy of lack as a fundamental cause of the child’s later problems.

The placement of *deprivation* at the origin of a child’s problems, (including the “presenting” ones which delinquency was usually considered to be), relied upon a range of ghost assumptions about what he fundamentally *needed* for normal, healthy development. The identification of the *need* was a prerequisite for recognizing its *lack* in the histories of “children of this kind”. Since children in our culture are dependent, and therefore immune from the responsibility for supplying their own needs, they cannot be blamed, at least entirely, for the

behaviour to which such lack gives rise. It is this conception which underlies the therapeutic orientation to the delinquent whose misdemeanours are the document of earlier events for which he bears diminished responsibility.

Each of the previous accounts is permeated by a rather vague sense of lack which underscores a child's difficulties and disturbances, whether the association is fashioned explicitly or not. More typical of this mode of analysis is the attribution of a child's problem status to a specific form of deprivation which is given explanatory priority. It is to a series of more precise characterizations that I now turn.

ii) Lack of Love

Lack of love and affection was most frequently quoted as the source of a child's disturbance, relying once more upon the assumption that he *needed* to be given these things if he was to grow into a well-adjusted human being. Failure by those in the child's environment to supply the basic demands thus provided an embryonic explanation for certain forms of maladjustment. Examine the following piece extracted from my interview with Roger Carter, principal during the first two-thirds of my fieldwork.

[Roger says that the most important factor shared by the kids is the level of deprivation they have suffered - most often of love, with a capital "L".]

Roger: I mean I think these kids have suffered (.5) ah - you've only got to look at the history of most of the kids who come to St. Nicholas' and you find that they've all been deprived - somewhere along the line of love. And if they're deprived of that - they also then are deprived of areas of achievement - becous I think the two go - hand in glove (.5) with each other. I think that uhm (.5) uh if you don't feel safe and secure and you're not surrounded by love - you're unlikely to achieve very much - you're going to be on the defensive and fighting so much and defending yourself so much - you can't achieve very much because it's a question of survival. These kids are survivors and they haven't survived very well.

The lack of love which according to Roger punctuates most of the boys' histories, is

held accountable for their lack of achievement, engendering as it does a defensiveness and preoccupation with survival. The identification of an emotional vacuum in a child's past is also categorized under the rubric of deprivation of warmth or affection; a lack which is topicalized in the following segment from Simon Wells' case history. The report is written by his F.S.W.

1 “Simon's home life is extremely unhappy and emotionally deprived. The
members of the family show no signs of warmth or affection towards one
another, except Simon's younger sister, Tricia, who demands attention from
her parents. (Simon's mother) seems to have been the most active in her
5 attempts to control Simon, although neither parent seems to speak a great
deal to him, instead resorting to locking him in his room for long periods and
stopping his pocket money.

Soon after:

 Simon is deprived of positive affection from his parents and from his older
brothers, none of whom takes an active interest in any family life, while
10 Tricia is too young to form any relationship with him. As a result, he spends
long periods alone when he is at home, and receives no experience in
12 socializing.”

The account starts by plotting the typified scenario enshrined in Simon's deprived background. We tap into a stratum of practical reasoning so deep that its logic is axiomatic. It is unnecessary to question the need for warmth and affection in a child's early environment; it is part of our cultural wisdom. The only member of the family who is shown to exhibit these qualities is rendered demanding of attention (line 3); an insistence which serves to marginalize *her* behaviour as well. The recognition of Simon's mother as the “most active” (line 4) in her attempts to control her son is enveloped in such a way as to discredit her capacities. Given that we *know* that Simon comes from an “unhappy and emotionally deprived” home background (line 1), his mother's efforts are already defined as inadequate. This sense of deprivation is supplemented by the recognition that “although” Simon's mother is “the most active” neither she nor her husband communicate with him and resort to punitive methods of control. The account draws to a conclusion by repeating the resonant theme of Simon's deprivation. Tricia, his only apparent escape from this syndrome, is considered too young to compensate in her

relationship with him, and her demands are, in any case, already construed as excessive. The result: inadequate socialization.

In the next cluster of extracts the identification of a child's deprivation of love, warmth and affection provides in each case access to what he needs. If the boy has *lacked* love and affection, he *needs* a belated dose of it to compensate, albeit professionally administered. In the first section, from Simon Wells' case history, the spillover between the areas of deprivation and need are apparent. The account is composed once more by his F.S.W.

“Adults in charge of Simon must be prepared to meet his needs for affection and discourage him from victimizing himself through his attempts at exploiting others. He was seen as emotionally deprived and as he is at present rejected from home, apart from short visits, he needs other adults in whom he can depend to act in a responsive way toward him.”

Where an historical lack is identified the need for compensation is often paired to it; a recognition borne out in the following extract from a senior staff meeting in which Leon Pryce is being discussed.

Bob B: One of the things that - that he seems to have missed out on is lots and lots of cuddles. There's no way -

Roger: Lots of what?

Bob: Cuddles.

Roger: Who - Leon?

Bob: Uhm.

Roger: Oh yer - that kid needs so much love mate - it's {unbelievable.

{

Bob: {There's no way (?any-one?) can go and cuddle him.

Roger: No! But he does - he needs so much affection that kid. Oh God - yer. I've put my arms round him (1) many times.

Two themes run through this account which can be distinguished in terms of voice 1, coincident with Bob's account, and voice 2, coincident with that of Roger. In the version articulated by voice 2, what Leon has "missed out on", i.e. love, cuddles and affection, defines the inventory of what he needs. Voice 1 adds another layer of complexity by drawing upon a theory of how Leon's needs are paradoxically subverted by his behaviour. The lineage of reasoning goes something like this:

- a) Leon has missed out on lots and lots of cuddles;
- b) therefore (it is silently assumed) he needs to be compensated for this lack;
- c) but, (because of his past) there's "no way" anyone can go and cuddle him.

Through a tri-partite movement of reasoning Leon is seen to subvert the very thing he lacked and therefore needs.

A child's family environment is most often held responsible for its failure to supply what he needs. However, this does not necessarily assume the guise of blame; the parents may be exonerated on the basis of their own histories of deprivation and/or inadequate parenting skills. Below, Mr. Hughes is not being accused of not caring for his son, but of being unable to show his love and concern except through the symbolic detour of material gifts. The piece is extracted from a meeting between the P.O.'s and a group of visiting magistrates.

1 [One of the magistrates enquires about a typical St. Nicholas "case". Roger Carter invokes that of Peter Hughes.]

Roger: I can tell you - something about Peter that I think is - very obvious. Peter has just decorated his (.5) his bedroom. And uhm - he comes first of all - from
5 a broken home - as a lot of them do actually.

Mag: Uhm.

Roger: But Peter has just decorated his bedroom - and (.5) his father - for some

reason (.5) came along - with the wallpaper to do his bedroom.

Mag: You sound as if that's a surprise.

10 Roger: Pardon?

Mag: That - is unusual is it?

Roger: Well it - it's not a - well I don't think it's particularly unusual - but it's very sad
- for me - becus father came along with the wallpaper to do the bedroom and
(1) uhm (1) father will supply these things.

15 Mag: Yes.

Roger: I wish father (.5) would do what I do - and that is put your arm around the
kid.

Mag: Uhm.

20 Roger: Because that's what Peter wants. I mean I - Peter came to me - as he did
about a fortnight ago - and cried his eyes out - throwing himself round - my
arms - round me - you know and -

Mag: Uhm.

Roger: and - and but he couldn't do that to his father.

Mag: Uhm.

25 Roger: And his father couldn't do that to him. And - and - to me - I wish dad wouldn't
come along with wallpaper - becus we'll give the kid the wallpaper for his
room - whatever he wanted for his room we'd give him the wallpaper - I wish
dad would come along - and put his arms round his son. And that sort of
thing and (.5) that's - you know -

30 Mag: Uhm.

Roger: that to me is what this kid (.5) has lacked - you know - he needs somebody who really does care - about him - and that's - us - you know - people - adults. But of course he needs his dad -

Mag: Uhm.

35 Roger: to care about him. And his dad is - does care.

Mag: Yes.

Roger: He's a charming {man.

{

Mag: {This is his way of showing it -

Roger: {Absolutely.

{

40 Mag: {of course - isn't it.

Roger: {Through - material goods.

{

Mag: {But the child doesn't appreciate it.

Roger: He's a charming fellow.

Mag: Yes!

45 Roger: And has been terribly supportive to us.

Kate: Yes.

Roger: But when I - when we said to dad at a meeting - "get cross with Peter when he offends" (.5) like we get angry and my gosh we do - you know - I do (.5)

50 dad can't do that. So it's all very inconsistent . . . A-and so - uhm - to me -
that-that's Peter.

Mag: Yer.

54 Roger: That's Peter. A-and what we're offering him (.5) is (1) a hell of a lot of
caring. 'Cus I-I actually am very fond of that boy becus I think he's got a hell
of a lot of good in him.

Mr. Hughes' parenting is subjected to Roger's expert gaze - and found lacking thereby. Clearly a "no blame" clause is in operation: it is Mr. Hughes' own inadequacies which cause him to mistake material generosity for physical and emotional warmth. Withdrawal of responsibility is accomplished by treating Mr. Hughes' poor parenting as beyond his control. He "couldn't" show his son physical affection, or *vice versa* (lines 23-25) rather than "wouldn't" which entails a choice. What's more Mr. Hughes is "charming" (lines 37 and 43), "terribly supportive" (line 45) and *does* care (line 35).

What lies at the basis of Peter's deprivation, and thus his unfulfilled need, is his father's genuine inability to express his care and love *appropriately* - i.e. through physical affection rather than material gifts. His ineptitude is epitomized by the story Roger tells of Mr. Hughes' provision of wallpaper for Peter's room at St. Nicholas'; an apparently positive gesture until the excess in this area is paired with an involuntary lack in Mr. Hughes' capacity to express his affection in a physical form.

Mr. Hughes' inappropriate behaviour is compared with Roger's own relationship with Peter which is rendered appropriate and fulfilling by dint of the logic of juxtaposition. An interesting transference occurs: Mr. Hughes, the "real" father, is depleted of paternal skills in relation to Roger, the professional practitioner, who is rendered replete with them. It is Roger who puts his arms around the kid (lines 16-17) which he "wishes" Mr. Hughes would do; it is Roger who Peter chooses to throw himself around and cry his eyes out with, a feat which he could not accomplish with his father (lines 19-23); it is Roger and the other staff who get cross with Peter when he offends, not his father (lines 47-49). In a nutshell, it is the "professionals" who personify the qualities which the good parent *should* have; they who offer the boy a "hell of a lot

of caring” (line 52-53). The ghost of the ideal parent hovers in the background of Roger’s account as just that: a typified ideal against which actual parents are judged.

The *ideal family* is thus not necessarily enshrined in concrete natural families, any more than professional non-parents are barred from exhibiting certain of these qualities. One of the consequences of the emergence of a family focus, together with the increasing theorization and professionalization of social work knowledge, has been the construction of the family as a quasi-scientific object: a system with complex dynamic functions and capacities. As Burchell points out, while these conceptions of healthy and good parenting are drawn from a model of the natural family, with all the concomitant virtues which attend it, they are also separable from it. In the words of G. Burchell (1979 - p. 128):

“Whilst these norms of upbringing which inform intervention are justified by reference to ‘natural’ virtues, *concretely* they do not depend upon either real or simulated natural familial and conjugal forms.”

[Emphasis in original]

As Burchell continues, residential care of children has decreasingly been modelled on a family substitute, with house-mother’s and father’s assuming the maternal and paternal role:

“but rather depend upon a ‘scientific’ knowledge of the individual’s personality and the determination of his or her developmental needs within a context of the dynamics of total group processes in a ‘therapeutic community’. In this situation an ‘intensification’ of relations between residential staff and children is demanded, but one which does not call for simulated parental roles derived by analogy from the conjugal parental unit . . . One might perhaps say that i) parents are, in a sense, ‘de-parentalized’ and *assigned* determinate functions on the basis of capacities they may or may not possess, whilst, ii) in those communities of residential care which still refer to themselves as ‘artificial families’ there are instituted forms of up-bringing within a set of relations which are non-familial.”

[Ibid - pages 128-129]

[Emphasis in original]

Thus, when Gary Pallin speaks of the need for staff at St. Nicholas’ to cultivate a “warm caring attitude” which,

Gary: . . . should sort of permeate everything we do (.5) as I think kids (1) the majority of kids here - that’s been - one of the elements that’s missing in their

lives - and it's one of the elements they respond to as human beings.

Kim: Uhm.

Gary: I mean they find it very difficult (.5) not to respond to that. (1.5) Uhm - and consistency (1) a kind of firmness I guess (1) you know - a strength.

Kim: Right.

Gary: I think they respect people who are strong (1) in that they're resolute and determined.

Kim: Huh hum.

Gary: And I think people who are resolute and determined can also (.5) put across a very caring (1) and I think these kind of kids respond to that.

Kim: Right.

Gary: 'Cus that's usually something that's sadly lacking all their lives.

[Gary Pallin's interview]

. . . he is not so much advocating the adoption of a parental role, as the cultivation of an atmosphere conducive to a child's development which the natural home background lacked.

The chains of causality are most firmly secured where an historical event or series can be linked to later manifestations of delinquency and disturbance through the bridge of psychological motivation. The nuances of this will be examined in the next chapter. For the present purposes I want to emphasize how the earlier absence of love, care, warmth and affection in the following two excerpts is linked to the later manifestation of delinquency, bridged by a theory of "attention-seeking" behaviour.

[I ask Andrew what typical problems the boys who come into St. Nicholas' have.]

Andrew: I suppose a typical example is - is somebody who doesn't - have a - caring family background - uhm - who is left out or in some cases scapegoated. Uhm (2) and (1) their way of (1.5) uh (.5) seeking of - seeking affection requires some sort of attention seeking - and - the way they're best able to (.5) seek attention (.5) in some cases is is through - acts of delinquency.

Kim: Right.

[Re: Simon Wells]

Andrew: Uhm (1) but he - I mean he-he suffers from an incredible lack of affection (1) in his home I think.

Kim: Huh hum.

Andrew: And I would imagine that that's - partly got to partly the reason for (1) his being - certainly - at least partly if not more so - the reason for his being (1) having been delinquent.

Kim: Right.

[Andrew also mentions Ben Jackson who moved down to London with his father when his parents' marriage ended, and started to steal.]

Andrew: Presumably as a - as a way of saying (.5) "Look nobody cares about me - I'm gonna make you care about me -

Kim: Huh hum.

Andrew: one way or the other".

[Andrew Chetland's interview]

In both Simon's and Ben's case, Andrew defines their stealing in terms of an underlying motivation to compensate for an emotionally impoverished past. David Lyons'

“horseplay” and mischievousness is similarly interpreted below as a document of his underlying need to be noticed and loved to make up for the past. The extract is drawn from one of the boy’s C.C’s.

Kate: . . . the mischievous bit - likes to be chased - likes to be cuddled - and I think it ties in with what George said - the uncertainty he had earlier of whether he was loved or not. And I feel that my own impression is that behind quite a lot of his horse-play and dashing around - is the need for people to notice him and want him and to love him. That may be over-simplifying what I want to say - but that’s what I believe.

[Kate says on the one hand if she needs a boy to do a menial and mundane job like washing up, tidying, carrying etcetera, David is the boy she will inevitably ask because he’s the most willing and reliable]

. . . there’s that side to him which is - perhaps - a desire to gain approval uhm - by David. Ahm - on the other hand there’s the little boy.

The apparent contradiction between the immature, mischievous and attention-seeking child, and the helpful, reliable and mature young man is resolved by yoking both to David’s subterranean need to be noticed and cared for.

iii) Lack of Good-Enough Parenting

In the excerpts above the boys’ “problems” are given focus and shape in terms of their historical deprivation of love, and all the accompanying features considered necessary for healthy development. Another decipherable category of deprivation, interwoven in some of the previous extracts, (especially that regarding Mr. Hughes on pages 263-266) is associated with parental inadequacy. The lack of *good enough* parenting is an assessment which betrays an orientation to a range of ghost assumptions which “appear”, to a greater or lesser extent, on the occasion of their breach. Consider, first, two generalized allusions to the frequency of inadequate or insufficient parenting amongst *this type* of child.

[I ask Brian Potter in his interview what significance the family have in understanding the boys’ problems.]

Brian: I think it's deeply significant - yer - I think uhm (3) I-Iyer - I think that there's
- a lot of the boys are (.5) obviously victims of inadequate parenting - I think.

5 Kim: Right.

Brian: Uhm (3) inadequate mainly in the sense of - well largely anyway - to a great
extent in the sense - of parental neglect (.5) through either the parents
inadequacy or just an absolute lack of interest (slight laugh).

Kim: But (.5) parental neglect can be seen as part of a wider social (.5) thing?

10 Brian: Yes.

Kim: Is that is that (.5) what {you're saying?

{

Brian: {I would say so - yes. I'm not blaming the parents -
13 as such.

And again:

1 [I ask Joe Duggan, senior social worker in unit 1, what distinguishes the
population of kids in an institution like St. Nicholas' from those on the
outside?]

Joe: As I said earlier . . . they may just be victims of circumstances.
5 (1.5)

Kim: Right.

Joe: And there are kids who've (3) had really bad (?) experiences in childhood
8 and (4) are damaged (.5) noticeably (2) through insufficient parenting.

[Joe Duggan's interview]

The *leitmotif* of victimization runs through both accounts (line 4 of the first, and 4 of

the second) exonerating the child from original responsibility for his problems. This line of reasoning extends to the acquittal of parental blame in the first piece by attributing to at least certain parents an inadequacy which they are not in control of. This distinction is reinforced by juxtaposing parents whose “inadequacy” accounts for their deficient parenting with those who “absolutely lack interest” out of choice.

Both accounts refer to inadequacy bound up in lack, rather than the application of inept child-rearing techniques. In Brian’s account the deprivation is named as “neglect”; in Joe’s as “insufficiency”. The latter term suggests a new dimension to the complex network of typifications which attend any specific characterization. Not only are there qualities and skills which help define “good parenting” they also apparently come in optimal amounts! The administration of too little, or presumably too much, can thus disrupt an implicit balance.

In a series of extracts from Jimmy Mason’s case history we see the systematic erosion of Mrs. Mason’s parental authority as an adequate mother. The preliminary piece is drawn from the F.S.W.’s potted history.

1 “The documented background history describes a one parent family in
which the mother is basically caring but suffers severe physical and emotional
handicaps, in part caused by her own deprived circumstances. These have
impaired her ability to cope with the dual parental role and in consequence
5 Jimmy has experienced short but fragmented periods of residential care. He
has acted-out in the home setting and, with his more devious and influential
7 brother R., has demanded attention through aggressive displays and stealing.”

Mrs. Mason’s parental skills are dubbed as well intentioned, but impaired by handicaps themselves partly attributable to her own “deprived circumstances” (line 3). Her inability to adequately play the maternal role (let alone a “dual-parental” one) is temporally linked within the account to Jimmy’s “acting out” (line 6); and his “aggressive displays and stealing” (line 7) are aligned to his demand for attention rather than bloody-mindedness, or the pursuit of gain amongst other possible motivations.

The link between parental inability and the manifestation of delinquency is further secured below in a piece drawn from Jimmy’s psychiatric report compiled during his assessment.

1 “The personality of his disturbed mentally subnormal and epileptic mother
who has spent many years in a psychiatric institution has been described
elsewhere.

5 I understand that much of her unusual behaviour is of an hysterical nature.
She has three children, from three different men, one of whom a girl, the
oldest, is adopted by her sister who will not let her see her mother.

10 The mother has a male friend who visits the family about twice a week and
needs much support himself; he is not liked by the two sons because of his
strictness. In such circumstances it is not surprising that the children go
astray and both boys have committed offences against the law and manifested
neurotic symptoms such as wetting and soiling, etcetera. One does not know
13 which one of the boys is the major culprit and emotions are frequently high
in this completely unstable family set up.”

I want to draw attention to the work being done here, and some of the procedures through which a version of maternal inadequacy is accomplished. Effective work is done, I would suggest, by the invocation of the category of “mother” on line 1 to which the array of related maladies are then appended. We incorporate Mrs. Mason’s disturbance to the status of “mother” rather than woman, housewife, shop-assistant, human being etcetera. This, in coalition with our knowledge that the report is “about” Jimmy, not his mother *per se*, structures our tendency as readers, I suggest, to forge embryonic explanations throughout. The report has been written *because* Jimmy has come to the attention of social agencies, and knowledge of this fact precedes any particular reading. Mrs. Mason, “his . . . mother” (line 1), assumes the position of a link in the historical chain culminating in Jimmy’s problems.

The version of Mrs. Mason-as-inadequate-mother continues in lines 4-9 which compounds her mental instability by alluding to her inability to make stable sexual relationships, and thus provide a secure conjugal base for her children. By dint of the discursive logic of the account, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we assimilate Mrs. Mason’s present relationship with a male friend to the history which precedes it. It constitutes another instance of a relationship destined for failure, especially in view of the man’s own problems. In the

context of Jimmy's mother's inadequacies *qua* mother, his delinquent and disturbed symptoms are presented as a matter for "no surprise" (lines 9-11).

A third onslaught on Mrs. Mason's maternal competence and her implication in her son's disturbance is apparent in the conclusion to the psychiatric report.

1 “(Jimmy) asked to go home to his mother and undoubtedly seeks
 closeness to her physically and emotionally needing a lot of babying which
 he certainly did not get in his unstable home.

5 He still seeks the unattainable stability of home life with his mother which
 he has missed all his life and which has been instrumental in his emotional
 and social problems.”

Jimmy's desire to go home to mother is placed in the context of his delusion that he will receive the "unattainable" (line 4) mothering and stability that he has always lacked. The account rests upon a bedrock of assumptions so basic that they effectively operate without being spoken. Like good puppet theatre we do not see the strings, nor the hands which operate them. We *know* that babies need babying and this is usually and primarily done by mothers whose vigilance provides the basis for the child's security. But Jimmy's search for love is placed in a self-negating spiral: his social and emotional problems predispose him to seek closeness and stability from the mother who, incapable of providing them, was the cause of the problem in the first place.

To better grasp the nuances through which parental adequacy is assessed I want to introduce some of the conceptual tools in H. Sacks' repertoire, and place them within the context of my own theorization. I have attempted to present throughout much of the foregoing material a model of actors as practical theorists, methodologists and moralists. We are constantly in the process of making sense of events both in terms of their factual and moral status. Such scrutiny is nowhere more apparent than where events are seen to deviate from our ghost assumptions about the typical and the normal.

The social unit in which problems are predominantly seen to emerge in this data is the family which thus becomes the site of interrogation and moral excavation in search of a solution

to the puzzle: why is so-and-so a child with problems. If we divide the family into its component parts a major distinction is between parent and off-spring which, in our culture at least, can be mapped on to the pair adult-child. It is this double distinction which, I shall argue, is crucial in understanding a certain class of anomaly.

Members organize the world, as I have argued, with recourse to typifications and categorizations which cluster into groupings bound by their “family resemblance”, to use Wittgenstein’s phrase. The term membership categorization device (M.C.D.) developed by Sacks alludes at once to the existence of these collections, and the procedures through which an item is identified as a member of a collection and assimilated to it. Through this process items are invested with familiarity and significance. The concept of M.C.D. is another way of exploring the sense-making process. It is a “device” of practical reasoning because it is employed in the second by second production of sense.

A sub-species of the M.C.D. which is of value to my exposition here is the standardized relational pair (S.R.P.). Sacks developed this concept in the course of his study of how a “locus of help” is sought for the member identified as suicidal (1972). While the specifics of his research are irrelevant to the problem-in-hand, the extrapolation of S.R.P. machinery is faithful to Sacks’ own project in pursuit of the invariant structures of talk. S.R.P.’s describe the organization and deployment of social knowledge. Members orientate to pairs of items which are standardly related to one another, where the invocation of one item in the pair necessarily presupposes the other. In such cases the paired referent is unnegotiable: the term “parent” necessarily implies “off-spring”, and “husband” is inextricably linked to “wife” as part of the S.R.P.

A series of expectations including moral obligations are attached to the related items as part of the shared body of social knowledge. The actual incumbents of these pairs are judged in relation to the background of ideal-typical assumptions which are brought to the assessment of any particular case. The routine expectations which accompany the S.R.P.’s adult-child and parent-offspring are asymmetrical: one party is assumed to have qualities which the other lacks. The adult/parent is assumed to have responsibility, wisdom and experience borne of age and stage. They are thereby attributed with a power and status over the child. Such moral expectations, descriptive and prescriptive, are embedded in the kernel of the definition.

Standard relational pairs such as adult-child or parent-offspring are abstract ideals which are, in the words of E.C. Cuff (1980) "empty": elaborated in the act of their articulation and reception, which usually deals with concrete empirical cases susceptible to scrutiny. Accounts which concern actual parents and children draw upon the machinery of S.R.P.1 on to which they map the specifics of the case. In this lies what Cuff (Ibid.) denotes as S.R.P.2 which allows the analyst to gain purchase on a wealth of subtle distinctions between concrete adults and children who may be: caring parents and disruptive children; irresponsible parents and neglected children; patient parents and trying children; immature parents and long suffering children; loving parents and monstrous children; wicked parents and victimized children, amongst infinite other possibilities. Through empirical elaboration S.R.P.1. is given substance and specificity. To repeat a major theme of this study alternatively: S.R.P.1. is the ghost which hovers in the background providing the conditions of possibility for S.R.P.2. The former provides an anterior transparency upon which the concrete is superimposed. Ghost frameworks only survive as part of the social body of knowledge to the extent that they are articulated and re-articulated: the typical and specific are cut out together in the same articulation.

Nowhere is this more apparent than where a deviation is mapped on to the ideal-typification of S.R.P.1. And since one of the institutional tasks of St. Nicholas' was to unearth what went wrong with a child, deviations were frequently sought and found. Our focus here is limited: it concerns how S.R.P.1, parent-child is subverted by S.R.P.2., particularly with regard to the issue of parental adequacy.

Judgements of adequacy are premised upon the reasonable fulfilment of expectations, albeit they are often concealed by their very taken-for-grantedness. Judgements of "good enough mothering" thus presuppose a compendium of attributes which given empirical mothers may or may not have. The criterion of adequacy also contains a conception of appropriateness. We may formulate this "rule" in terms of the expectation that the incumbent of the maternal role will behave in a variety of ways toward the incumbent of the paired role - daughter or son - and *not* in others. The point is that the rule of appropriateness is inscribed in the categorized pair of roles in relation to which concrete mothers and children are assessed.

The rule of appropriateness surfaces in all of the forthcoming extracts where it is breached. The first is drawn from Barry Painter's case history compiled by his F.S.W.

1 “Mrs. Painter’s difficult adolescence and family background had an effect
on her later life. She is the first to admit she is a very immature woman who
has a great deal of difficulty in her relationship with her children.

5 [She always found it very difficult to enforce discipline and consistency -
largely because this was lacking in her own childhood. On occasions she
colluded with her children working against social workers].

10 Mrs. Painter seems to relate to her children more as an adolescent sister
than a mother, and she has frequently used the children for her own support
and as confidantes, putting them in a role far in excess of their years.
However, although Mrs. Painter’s mothering has been unorthodox, she is
concerned and in many ways caring and there is no doubt the children’s
behaviour has caused her a great deal of distress. Over the last year there has
been evidence of Mrs. Painter trying to be a more consistent mother to the
children and she has co-operated more with (her local) social services in
15 their plan for the children.”

[Brackets in original]

What we have in this piece is a contravention of expectations which accompany the S.R.P. mother-child. The pair, in its ideal-typical relationship, is unique and cannot be mapped onto other pairs such as husband or wife, or, in this case, the relationship between siblings. For mothers, by dint of their status, are assumed to have qualities in relative excess of their children: it is *appropriate* that they are more mature, consistent, powerful and independent. Mrs. Painter, by contrast, is “very immature” (line 2), cannot impose consistent discipline (line 4), is devious (lines 5-6) and dependent on her children for support (lines 8-9). We routinely graft empirical relationships on to the anterior map of ideal-typical models and judge their cognitive and moral adequacy in relation to it.

The inappropriateness of Mrs. Painter’s behaviour *vis a vis* her maternal role is explained in terms of her own historical lack of stability as a child, because of which she is ill-equipped to deal appropriately with her own children. The diminution of responsibility attendant upon this version is crystallized in lines 10-15. The section starts with the pronoun “however” which alerts us to a forthcoming divergence. Since the preceding section consists of

a catalogue of Mrs. Painter's faults, we listen for compensatory factors. "However, although" invokes familiarity with the linguistic rule "although this - also that": *although* Mrs. Barry's mothering techniques are "unorthodox", *she is* concerned, caring, and distressed by her children's misdemeanours. What is more in the last year there is evidence she has been "trying" (line 13) to imbibe the orthodoxy.

The moral overtones of the assessment of mother-child relations are even more apparent in the following extracts. What is at stake here, as above, is a subversion of the chronological expectations inscribed in S.R.P.1. Each of the forthcoming accounts refers to James Bryan, a boy of thirteen who was resident in unit 1. The first piece is drawn from a psychiatric assessment of James and his mother prior to his arrival at St. Nicholas'.

1 "The striking feature about the session was the relationship between Mrs. Bryan and James which was much more as of a spouse and equal relationship, in no way like a mother and child. There was a total absence of authority . . .

5 Interestingly enough James overtly said that he thought his mother's view of the neighbours was excessively persecutory. James consistently agreed with all his mother said. However, at one point in the session he was almost in tears when discussing the reason for coming to see myself as a child psychiatrist. James himself showed no evidence of an abnormal mental state. His mood was not excessively anxious nor depressed and he was co-operative and helpful. In contrast Mrs. Bryan came across as highly volatile, emotional, labile and totally unrealistic in her view of James, society and social services. She was unable in any way to conceive of herself as having anything to do with the problems of James blaming everything on other people around her."

10

14

We are immediately alerted to the subversion of the S.R.P.1 on lines 1-3 where mother and son are seen to relate more on the level of husband and wife. The assumptions inscribed in each S.R.P. are made explicit: spouses have "equal relationships", whereas the mother exerts authority in relation to her son. By contravening the latter clause (line 3) S.R.P.2 subverts the ideal-typical model of S.R.P.1. Lines 8-14 pivot around a distinction between James as a child of normal mind "in contrast" (line 10) to his mother who is seen to exhibit a cluster of qualities

which verge on the abnormal. In relation to S.R.P.1 the empirical relationship between James and his mother is rendered deviant. The relationship is thus conceived in terms of a range of secondary pairings: stable son-unstable mother; bad mother-damaged son; normal son-abnormal mother, etcetera etcetera.

It might be noted here, as in the forthcoming pieces, that James is constructed both as normal, or at least “suffering from no evidence of abnormal mental state” as well as having “problems”(line 13) which are squarely attributed to the kind of parenting that a woman/mother of Mrs. Bryan’s kind could offer.

For an account to be morally adequate it must be authorized. Particularly where blame is being allocated the author’s own account may be scrutinized for ulterior motives. Certain procedures are thus employed to establish the non-partisan nature of the account. We tend to have as a background assumption the knowledge that psychiatrists are not personally motivated in their assessment of clients (S.R.P.1, professional-client). As a consequence we tend to invest their interpretations with a neutrality borne of professional detachment, and hence authorize their status as arbiters of the normal and deviant. This sense of detachment is partially accomplished by silencing the narrative voice. The only time the author enters is as a character in the story (lines 6-8), not as the story-teller.

Notwithstanding the authority inscribed in professional status, close analysis reveals more specific discursive procedures which accomplish the allocation of blame. I think the key to this accomplishment lies in lines 10-14. We are told Mrs Bryan exhibited “totally unrealistic views” in relation to her son, society and the social services. Her unrealistic attitude brims over to the inability to accept blame for her son’s “problems”. The extremist proclivities of the wording in the extract suggests both an excessiveness and an absolute denial of reality. She is unable in *anyway* to see herself as having *anything* to do with her son’s problems blaming *everything* on those around her. A great deal of work is being achieved in lines 9-10 where James is seen to show appropriate and non-excessive emotion in relation to which the histrionics of his mother appear inappropriate. The normalizing rule embodied in the son is breached by the mother. The extract exhibits a hive of discursive techniques. Of particular interest for our purposes is how it engages the ghost of ideal-typical parent-child relationships which are subverted in this particular empirical case.

Reminiscent of the psychiatric report is the F.S.W.'s comments in one of James' C.C.'s.

[The F.S.W. says how the relationship between James and his mother is more akin to girlfriend and boyfriend than mother and son. The F.S.W. speaks of how, for example, they share little secrets together.]

Kate: Are you suggesting then uh - a slightly incestuous nature to their relationship?

F.S.W: I-I think - probably on an emotional level certainly.

Kate: Uhm - but not on a physical level?

F.S.W: I don't think so - I mean - even though I think mother's capable of that I don't think James would do it . . . I think he's a sensible boy. But in relation to his mother - he is treated as an adult.

The subversion is even more pronounced in the preceding extract where the mother-son relationship assumes the appearance of that between girlfriend and boyfriend, rendering it emotionally and possibly physically incestuous. In a manner similar to the psychiatric report, this account pivots on a description of son and mother which subverts the expectations embedded in S.R.P.1. What concerns us here is how responsibility is being allocated to Mrs. Bryan and how we, as hearer/reader, judge her to be blameworthy. Once again authority is ascribed to the F.S.W. whose version, as a professional in relation to a disturbed family, is given greater validity and clout as an impartial assessment.

We also bring to the account a welter of assumptions about mothers and sons and adults and children, of which a key element is the asymmetrical relationship between the two. Adults/parents are assumed to be more responsible, mature, experienced, wise etcetera than children-offspring in which lies their licence to exercise legitimate power over them. The reciprocity and equality which both the psychiatrist and F.S.W. observe in the relationship between mother and son constitutes a fundamental breach of the S.R.P.1. The sexual connotations invested in S.R.P.2 serve to exacerbate the deviation. As the ideal-typical mother-adult is responsible for nurturing, educating and controlling her child, in the absence of a powerful mitigation she is held to blame where she fails to exercise her moral obligation. This is where the

subversion becomes almost a role reversal. Bad mother-suffering son is elaborated into immature, irresponsible, incompetent, perverse, excessive, unrealistic mother - sensible, mentally stable, mature, adult son.

In the final extract below from one of James' C.C.'s at St. Nicholas' the breach of the ideal-typical mother-child relationship is tantamount to a transmutation. James *becomes* the parent in relation to his juvenile mother.

[The F.S.W. speaks of how James and his sister have managed to muddle through, although they are disturbed and need special care.]

F.S.W: But they're still very very attached to mother - very protective and uhm . . . I think they feel responsible for her - I mean yes - yes - I think that that's important - and they actually do take quite a lot of responsibility for her welfare.

Eileen: This is because she's making them.

F.S.W: Oh yes - they-they in a sense are acting as her parents . . . because she's so juvenile - uhm - that they have to - at the end of the day they're the ones that have to go and swear at the boyfriend to get him off her back - or yes - ball her out - constantly - ah - that's the situation - and they seem to have done that throughout - as far as we know.

An adjacent category of deprivations is witnessed in the next account. What is at stake is not the mother's adoption of an inappropriate "sibling" role, but the child's expropriation from the role of child. The lack, once more, explains the need; or, perhaps, the identified need commissions a retrospective glance toward its possible cause. Consider the following extract from my interview with Thomas McKinney:

1 [Thomas is responding to my request for him to assess the basis of Tony Salter's problems.]

Thomas: He was coping with the confusion of not being allowed as part of a child care

5 programme (1) to become a child (1.5) never knew what it was to be a child
(.5) becos of the - the-the-the - if you like the-the-the-principles of the-the
- beliefs or philosophies of his own family was that I mean - he was the oldest
8 son and therefore then - the eldest child ... so Tony Salter really and truly was
never allowed to be a child (.5) yer?

A similar breach is apparent in the following extract from a S.S.M. The subject of discussion is David Lyons.

1 Thomas: If we give him some sand and water - he'd probably have great fun.

Kate: Yer.

Agnes: Yer.

Thomas: Uhm.

5 Roger: Yes.

Agnes: Yer he probably would.

Philip: Well I mean that's half of the problem he - he's been an adult - since he was
sort of that high (.5) in {so many areas

{
Roger: {Man - man of the family.

10 Thomas: Yes yes.

Philip: Yer - that he's - he's now looking for space to be a child.

In each case a fundamental breach of the assumptions inherent in S.R.P.1 is identified in the parents failure to allow their offspring to "be children" for a circumscribed period of time. Blame in both cases is implicitly allocated to the parent/s who have deviated from the responsibilities incumbent upon them *as parents*. The negative connotations are apparent in lines 1-2 of the first

extract and line 7 of the second. Never being allowed to be a child is responsible for the “confusion” with which Tony is now having to cope, and constitutes “half of the problem” with David. S.R.P.1 is thus the receptacle for a range of more specific moral characterizations which in this case may be postulated as: deficient parent-suffering child.

It appears that empirical mothers can be children, and concrete children deprived of their status. For the conceptions in which these identities lie are typifying ones, measured against the ghost schemata which define our cultural knowledge. The spectre of ideality lurks in the back-reaches of discourse itself.

In the preceding accounts the parents, or more usually the mother, is being implicitly or explicitly blamed for the child’s disturbance, by dint of the expectations which accompany the S.R.P. In other instances, by contrast, the parent may be exonerated of blame either on the basis of her own emotional disturbance, or the intervention of events which exceed her control. In the first extract below Eileen Walker, basic grade social worker in unit 1, traces the lineages of inter-generational deprivation.

[Eileen speaks of parenting being a hard job, knowing where to draw the line and administer punishment.]

Eileen: And if you’ve not had - that - handed down from your sort of parents (.5) uh and you were lacking initially. I mean very (1) very often I would think a small lack (.5) say two or three generations ago uhm - can develop into (.5) quite a wide gap -

Kim: {Uhm.
{

Eileen: {by the time it reaches (.5) the third or fourth generation.

In one of James Bryan’s C.C.’s Eileen places his mother’s maternal incapacity in the context of her own past lack.

1 Eileen: I don’t know Mrs. Bryan’s own sort of uh - history but - from what I (1) sussed out by talking to her - and talking about her problems - and things - I don’t

5 think she had very much of a mothering (1) because - when (I do) the mothering bit to her - in the way of advice and talking and that (.5) she loves it.

F.S.W: Uhm.

Eileen: She doesn't seem to have had any mothering herself.

Frank: Well this is what you were saying also - you told me that ah (1) Mrs. Bryan herself actually wanted a mother - mother figure now.

10 Eileen: Uhm.

F.S.W: Uhm.

Frank: She wants mothering - herself.
(2)

15 F.S.W: Well - that's been part of the problem. She's not actually been a parent to either of the kids - she's been more a (1) a - an older sister or (?).

Eileen: But without knowing her history - I mean I don't know why -

F.S.W: We don't know.

Eileen: she's turned out like this.

F.S.W: No.

20 Eileen: But that might well be why - if she's not had any proper mothering herself - she won't know how the hell to go about it.

The inability of the mother to mother is attributed here to her own historical lack of mothering. Eileen's hypothesis is evidential; "sussed out" by talking to Mrs. Bryan and the

latter's response to Eileen's attempts to "mother" her ("she loves it" lines 4-5); as well as her established incapacity to mother her children. The arm of deprivation stretches back into past generations at least back to James' grandmother who failed to mother Mrs. Bryan. In the absence of a mother model it is not surprising that she "won't know how the hell to go about it" (line 21).

In a second mode of abrogation circumstances beyond parental control are seen to intervene. In such cases as the one quoted below, the adequacy of the mother does not hinge upon her capacity *per se*. The excerpt is taken from Chris Jones' case history, compiled by his F.S.W.

"Chris spent the first year of his life in hospital and physical contact with his mother was very limited. Shortly after returning home, Mr. and Mrs. Jones separated. Almost immediately (Chris' brother) was born and as a result the maternal-infant bond was never really established.

Mrs. Jones says that despite her attempts, Chris is never able to accept her affection fully. During the past months Chris has consistently reiterated to his mother that he feels she doesn't want him."

A version of circumstantial conspiracy against the formation of the mother-child bond discursively suggests itself. Neither inadequacy or inappropriateness are the dominant rule, although they may have a recessive status. Chris' stay in hospital was, presumably (in the absence of any modifying evidence) unavoidable, and thus in the category of "no-one's fault". Mrs. Jones' conception, and subsequent separation may be considered a piece of bad timing, but do not *in themselves* suggest maternal culpability.

The next and final extract in this sub-section adds a twist of complexity to characterizations of inadequacy. In it Mrs. Jones' self-identified inadequacy is seen to lie in her *excessive* compliance to her children's wishes in an attempt to compensate for their father's absence. In this, one may argue, resides her *lack* of proportion and constraint. The context is one of Chris' C.C.'s.

[Joyce, Chris' special worker, suggests that Chris puts a lot of demands on his mum.]

F.S.W: I think though - to be fair on Chris - the history of it as well - is that his other two (.5) brothers . . . do make a lot of demands on mum.

Mrs. J: Yer they do. It's just because I think because mums there - and (.5) dads not there. I mean any other kid can go to his dad.

Joyce: Uhm.

Mrs. J: And it's always been to mum - to mum - to mum. And I've always said - "yes alright then" - you know. (1) But then the time had to come when I had to stop and say "No - you're growing up - you don't" (1) although they still need me - they don't need me twenty-four hours a die - a day.

iv) Histories of Rejection

Amongst the repository of assumptions about what the child needs for a normal development is the unqualified acceptance by his parents, who may on occasions reject what he *does*, but not, if they are good enough parents, what he fundamentally *is*. Parental rejection was conceived by the staff at St. Nicholas' to be a source of many of the boys' problems; a specific feature of the background instability which nurtured them. In the first extract below historical lack of ongoing support for the boy is seen to erode his emotional stability which crumbles in the wake of the normal traumas of adolescence.

[Peter French, "basics" teacher, speaks of the ages fourteen, fifteen and sixteen as being a traumatic time.]

Peter: I-I just put it down to - you know - it's (.5) hard enough (.5) in a way to get through that time - when you've got a very stable background - with say parents who - care a lot for you - and who are prepared to keep - you know (1) take a lot of rubbish that you're giving them.

Kim: Huh hum.

Peter: I mean I don't know whether this is typical of every kid (.5) but - you know that (2) at that age you're definitely going to give stick out to people around you.

Kim: Uhm.

Peter: People that you know care for you - but you're testing it out or whatever.

Kim: Uhm.

Peter: And it's - and it's difficult enough to go through that period with with people around you who're prepared to take that from you - becus they care for you - becus they love you - and are willing to (.5) uh accept it and - knowing full well that eventually you'll grow out of it. Whereas some of those kids are going through that period with nothing like that behind them.

Kim: Uhm.

Peter: Instead of people who care for them they're just getting rejection - rejection - rejection.

[Peter French's interview]

In the forthcoming piece, rejection is given a central explanatory status as a milestone, or starting point on the road to emotional disturbance. The extract refers to Simon Wells and is drawn from the written summary of his assessment conference.

1 “Discussion of the family and Simon's situation was then opened up. It was
possible that Simon was rejected early on but his mother had always blocked
on this when the subject had been raised. Simon does not know who his
father is and this could have affected his feelings about himself and his
5 identity. Simon's mother was seen as not having the concepts or intellectual
equipment to understand what she might contribute to Simon's problems.

10 She saw her role as looking after the home and maintaining material standards. Simon's step-father had put in an effort with all the boys but was giving up with Simon at present . . ." The psychiatrist, in his report, had found that Simon's problems were in a significant way related to family functioning."

Rejection plays a cryptic part in the historical emergence of Simon's problems. It is given the status of a probable occurrence. Notice, however, how this version of potential rejection is authorized. Simon's mother "always blocked" on the question of his early rejection we are told (line 1-3). Leaving aside the issue of what is meant by rejection here, the rhetorical tone implies that there is something *to be* blocked; it implies an actively defensive manoeuvre. In lines 3-5 we are offered a descriptive slice of Simon's past which, I suggest, bolsters a sense of his rejection. I, certainly, read into the description of Simon not knowing his father, a sense of the latter's early disappearance, engendering the feeling of rejection in his son and the erosion of his identity.

Lines 5-8 lend a particular nuance to Simon's mother's denial of possible early rejection. It is attributed not to her deliberate attempt to distort the truth, but to her inadequate conceptual grasp of her own complicity in Simon's problems. Her impoverished view of the maternal function, as the maintenance of material standards, epitomizes her insufficiency. The allusion in lines 8-9 is to another possible rejection by Simon's step-father who, having put in an effort, "was giving up on Simon at present". In the concluding scenario the psychiatrist adds his authorial weight to this version of Simon's problems being "(significantly) related to family functioning" (lines 9-11).

The rejection-connection is also forged below with reference to Peter Hughes. The occasion is a day conference in which Mike Griffith, Peter's special worker from unit 4, speaks of the family meetings which had been taking place between Peter, his father, his F.S.W. and relevant unit 4 staff.

1 Mike: And I think the (1) main object of them is to look at the kind of family - uhm - set up and how it - how it's actually affected Peter actually arriving in St. Nicholas'. Very briefly what it - what it's about - Peter has felt (2.5) rejection from two very significant females in his life. His own mother and also his step

5 mother. And he's had to (.5) he's had to try and cope with that. We've tried
to sort of coax these - these kind of feelings out - out of him. And his father
seems to have uhm (.5) felt as though he - spilt the beans if you like - to Peter
about how - Peter was treated by his own mother (.5) in his early life.
10 Anyhow - Peter had to - to face up to some - fairly unpleasant (1) uhm - facts
which I don't think he was aware of before. Also we're having to deal with
- uhm - Peter's own delinquency . . . So - we've still got a hell of a lot of work
to do (2) uhm (.5) there's a - it's a (1.5) it is a kind of can of worms which is
- which is being opened. I can't - you know - obviously predict what is what
14 is going to happen but . . .

An implicit connection is forged here between Peter's rejection from two significant women, and his manifestation of later problems. The holes and gaps left in the fabric of the account (regarding *how*, for instance, rejection by mother figures gives rise to emotional disturbance) are plugged by the reader who is able to draw upon the substance of her cultural and occupational knowledge.

The therapeutic voice rings clearly in this account, which achieves its authority by identifying Peter's maternal rejections as a fact which we are constrained to recognize, and which Peter too, for his own development, must come to terms with. Let us consider how the therapeutic fact-effect is accomplished. In lines 3-5 we are told that the two-fold rejection is something with which Peter has had to try and *cope*, thus suggesting something inherently unpleasant which was forced upon him. It is these rejecting feelings which they, the therapeutic excavationists, are trying to *coax* to the surface. The term *coax* (line 6) suggests that these feelings are something Peter is reluctant to admit, but which exist, whether he likes it or not. The "spilt beans" (line 7) again assume the status of immutable facts which the boy must face up to for his own salvation. It is in the opening of this "can of worms" (line 12) that the remainder of the therapeutic work is seen to lie. The unequivocal existence of the worms are constructed as the indisputable basis from which Peter's emotional disturbance derives.

The specific behavioural manifestations of Peter's underlying sense of rejection are not specified in Mike's account above. In the following excerpt, by contrast, Keith's school difficulties provide the occasion for tracing the lineage of his rejecting history. The report is written by an educational psychologist at a child guidance clinic.

1 Ed.Psync: It seems to me an extremely rejecting home background and personal
relationships are the key to Keith's school difficulties. In the short time he
was (at his secondary school) he appeared to invite fights with his peer group
and was involved on the edge of crime with other boys and men. He appears
5 to be "acting-out" his anger at the rejection of his family in delinquent acts.

The construction of historical and behavioural patterns facilitates the assimilation of new items. Oiled by the recognition of Keith's "extremely rejecting home background and personal relationships" (lines 1-2) recent events slide more easily into the framework. I hear this as quite a persuasive account because the connection between Keith's rejecting history and his contemporary difficulties is bridged by a theory of psychological motivation, namely "acting-out", which forges a rational link between them. For an appraisal of this mode of causal connection see chapter 7.

Conclusion

A polymorphous array of deprivations were seen to punctuate the histories of "boys of this kind". However well buried, these were seen to work their way to the behavioural surface in a variety of guises from criminal delinquency, to aggressivity, to a range of emotionally disturbed manifestations. The dominant mode of "emplotment" to show up in the case history was that which unfolded from a kernel of lack. The vast majority of these accounts offered variations on a series of related themes. From this font of typicality and familiarity sprung the specifics of each case whose precise configuration was unique. To repeat Ricoeur's words:

" . . . events are singular *and* typical, contingent *and* expected, deviant *and* dependent on paradigms, even if this is in the ironic mode."
[P. Ricoeur (1984) - p.208]

[Emphasis in the original]

And the stories which cast the historical events into an organized whole are also both familiar and strange. The traditional themes are never simply played through; each enactment is always a creative production as well as cultural reproduction.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE ARCHITECTURE OF CAUSALITY

Introduction

In this chapter I am primarily concerned to examine the methods through which historical accounts forge causal links between events in constructing a more or less persuasive version of “what went wrong”. Like facts, causes reside in the procedures through which they are encoded as such. To construct or identify a causal connection requires the employment of a mode of reasoning which is practical in nature. What the logician or philosopher topicalizes as “the problem of causality” appears to be managed by the participant in everyday life without too much trouble. I now turn to this practice of mundane causality to *make* a bit of trouble, though not by subjecting it to philosophical doubt, or by suggesting it is defective. The disruption is caused by asking radically naive questions, like how is a sense of causation accomplished? Through what methods are events, whether temporally segregated or juxtaposed, causally related? In a nutshell: how do we *do* cause?

To gain purchase on the mechanisms of causal explanation I consider a variety of accounts, most notably those drawn from the written case histories which accompany children in care. In biographical accounts of this kind a series of events are implicitly or explicitly linked together, as well as being interwoven into the narrative fabric as a whole.

Orientation to time and narrative is a necessary prerequisite of achieving such causal connection. Time enters into conceptions of cause because sequentiality is a necessary component of them, and sequentiality is inherently chronological. For a cause to be established a preceding event must be seen to give rise to a consequent one. Pure Logic differs from mundane reasoning in its demand that certain *a priori* conditions be met. For A and B to be causally related it must be proved that B could not have happened without the presence of A, its necessary and sufficient pre-condition. We need venture no further into Logic, a mode of reasoning whose purity has only a degree in common with the pragmatism of everyday life. The latter entertains a more tentative, hypothetical, wait-and-see quality, more flexible in its application.

The *raison d'être* of historical analysis is its capacity to create a reconstructed sense of

order inaccessible to participants who were in the thick of it. Precisely because history has happened, a sense of what caused it to happen may be disentangled. What the past has made happen, in the kind of account considered here, is a problem child and the attempt is to unearth why by an exploration of his biography. This historical reconstruction is based upon a range of secondary sources, including the verbal recollections of significant figures such as parents, and the written accounts of various professionals who may have been involved with the child or his parents, such as teachers, doctors, psychiatrists and the like. In the service of this pursuit *good enough* reasons are sought; causal connections which are persuasive and meaningful. Logic enters into the endeavour, for what is it if not an attempt to sieve and purify the common sense reasoning from which it is drawn? The difference is that the contingencies and vicissitudes of the everyday render this too rigid a criterion.

Mundane causality, if we can call it that without casting aspersions on its validity, is accomplished through setting up a relationship in which A and B are meaningfully related through, most effectively, the inscription of motives. Thus a child's deviant behaviour is seen to bear the trace of his underlying disturbance engendered by historical events. For example, early rejection and later delinquency may be bridged by a theory of "testing-out". The behaviour is read in terms of its underlying motive, (often unconscious to the child himself), itself borne of earlier happenings. The child "tests out" for love, approval, acceptance, etcetera, in the present *because* he was deprived of them in the past. Through the construction of a motivational bridge, temporally distinct events enter into a causal relationship. [For a discussion of "testing out", see pages 146-151].

Present events and behavioural items are thus conceived as documentary in a double sense: as inscriptions of the past, and of underlying emotions and motivations. The search for causes operates on these two trajectories of the longitudinal and latitudinal. The two paths cross at a number of nodal points where one helps elucidate the other. Since historical events are believed to *cause* a child's problems, rather than their being innate, they are important sign-posts in the search. Similarly, later manifestations of deviant behaviour are held to signify a child's state of mind, level of disturbance, or whatever. But the fundamental bridge which connects earlier events to later behavioural scenarios is a motivational one, at least in the *rational mode* characteristic of institutional discourse at St. Nicholas'. To engineer the connection participants must interpret the underlying significance of events. In the process of attributing motive and meaning an extensive body of assumptions are brought into play. These include, as we have

witnessed repeatedly, ghost assumptions about what is normal and healthy in, for instance, the upbringing and parenting of a child. Only in relation to this normative backcloth are deviations detectable.

The theory of psychological motivation being proffered here places it firmly in the public domain. By employing the documentary method of interpretation the practitioner is able to accomplish a sense of the motivation underlying a piece of behaviour for the practical purpose in hand. My intention is not to deny, with Garfinkel, that there is anything of interest under the skull. Judgements of this kind are suspended in favour of an analysis of how the *sense* of an emotional realm is achieved by drawing upon and galvanising an array of documentary traces.

While all accounts rely upon a body of unspoken assumptions, the extent to which the line of reasoning is explicitly articulated varies. This brings us to a tenet fundamental to an understanding of how such accounts work. However explicit or implicit the explanatory architecture of an account, the making of sense requires the mutual collaboration of both the producer of the account and the recipient. It is not my purpose to explore what differentiates talk from text, nor to deny the differences. But in spite of these a core of communality unites both spoken and written discourse which lies in the onus of responsibility being shared between both producer and consumer. For although the author wields a number of skills bequeathed by cultural membership, the product is never complete. As Ricoeur says, the work:

“consists of holes, lacunae, zones of indetermination, which . . . challenge the reader’s capacity . . .”

The reader, abandoned by the text,

“carries the burden of emplotment.”

For the text:

“is a set of instructions that the individual reader or the reading public executes in a passive or creative way.”
[P. Ricoeur (1984) - p.77]

The historical analysis of a child’s problems, like any other account, relies upon the utilization of a range of membership skills. But the extent to which the reader has to work to fill

the gaps is inversely related to the level of explicit theorization. This is not to suggest that more explicit accounts do not necessarily challenge or stretch the reader. Precisely because the reader has to follow a line of reasoning espoused by the author, she cannot necessarily rely upon a bedrock of familiar assumptions to forge the connection.

Ricoeur suggests that for history to make sense, it must be tacked onto a narrative organization. Without exploring the complex nuances of Ricoeur's understanding of time and narrative (1984) certain rudimentary points should be made. Firstly, history as a discursive artefact provides the contextual kernel within which events are brought into alignment. We know narrative events are connected - *even if they do not appear to be so at present* - because they are all part of the story. Operationalization of the "everything relevant" (until further notice) rule of narrative instructs the reader to treat all items, even if ostensibly unconnected, as potentially significant. Thus events, simply by dint of the narrative context, assume an inchoate connectedness. We read them in relation to their contribution to the unfolding story. In the words of Ricoeur:

"an event must be more than a singular occurrence: it must be defined in terms of its contribution to the development of a plot."
[P. Ricoeur (1981) - p.277]

We have seen in previous sections how social workers and related professionals have a bank of typified plots which they employ in recognizing "another instance of . . ." and "the same old story". Lack is a central pillar of the paradigm. What is more, both in producing and reading the historical account, participants share the typified knowledge of where the unfolding events are going to lead. Episodes are read as a series of clues which help explain the emergence of a problem child. Ricoeur alludes to many of these points in the quotation below:

"To follow a story is to understand the successive actions, thoughts and feelings as displaying a particular *directedness*. By this I mean that we are pushed along by the development and that we respond to this thrust with expectations concerning the outcome and culmination of the process . . . So rather than being *predictable* a conclusion must be *acceptable*. Looking back from the conclusion toward the episodes which led up to it, we must be able to say that this end required those events and that chain of action. But this retrospective glance is made possible by the teleologically guided movement of our expectations when we follow the story."
[P. Ricoeur (1981) - p.277]

[Emphasis in original]

Three modes of causal connection are identified for the present analytical purposes which I gloss the *configurational*, the *rational* and the *paradigmatic*. The configurational is the most weakly theorized mode of connection which draws a bond of causality from the narrative context and the logic which attends it. The plethora of ghost assumptions about the nature of causation come most explicitly into play where the connection between episodes is poorly articulated. It is here that the reader/hearer must draw most obviously upon her own resources to make sense. The rational mode, as distinguished here, is accomplished by constructing a psychological bridge between the boy's behaviour and its purported motivational underpinnings. The paradigmatic mode is characterized by the assimilation of items to a burgeoning pattern; a procedure which I explain more fully in the following chapter.

The adoption of one mode does not mutually exclude the others, but entails a difference in emphasis. In practice the three modes were usually intertwined, though one may temporarily have assumed dominance, driving the other two into a recessive status. What is more, in each of the compendium of reports which composed the child's case history one mode of causal connection may have been given priority over the others.

i) Constructing the Causal Chain

Biographical Sketches

As a preliminary to more detailed analysis of various aspects of the architecture of causality I want to consider a series of extended biographical sketches. In particular I juxtapose two extracts which exhibit the configurational mode of causal connection with two that are predominantly rational in tone. The comparison of weak with strong causal connections will help us gain analytical purchase on the different procedures of causal accomplishment. Consider, first of all, the lengthy biographical account of Simon Cutts' life extracted from his case history. This offers a classical example of the configurational format.

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1	August 1967	Birth	Born at home. Midwife delivery. Simon did not breath straight away. Kiss of life administered by midwife. As far as Mrs. Cutts knows there was no brain damage.
5			Simon weighed approx. 7lb.
	1970	3 years	Simon gave himself nervous diarrhoea when he attended his first play school.
10	1973	6 years 6 months	Teachers spoke of it being a "pleasure" to teach Simon because he was so keen on learning. Simon is described as "polite, well-mannered, angelic". He joined a swimming club at his own instigation.
15	1976	8 years 6 months	Simon "very worried" when his sister contracted suspected meningitis. Primary school: Simon in choir and football team.
20	1976	9 years	Joined table-tennis and swimming club. He also took up trumpet and joined school orchestra. He would like to have played the clarinet but his fingers were not long enough so he took up playing his own trumpet. He passed three music exams in one year and his teacher said he had a photographic memory for sheet music.
25	1977	10 years	Continued sporting activity - though it did tend to affect homework.

	1978	11 years	Went to Wales for 10 days with school.
30	1979	11 years	Mr. Cutts' mother dies. Simon very upset as it was sudden and she was a close and important member of the family. Mr. Cutts had a nervous breakdown following his mothers death and this caused much distress to Simon and his mother. Prior to this they had both considered him a strong character and one to rely on.
35	1979	11 years	Simon homosexually propositioned by a Y.M.C.A. friend. He saw this as a betrayal.
	Early 1980	12 years	Developed headaches which disappeared when he heard about the transferral of schools.
40	July 1980	12 years	Gained a good report in last year of junior school.
45	Sept 1980	13 years	He went to the school of his choice where his friends were. He was the member of many sports teams and the orchestra playing trumpet: but he did not continue long with the orchestra.
	Sept 1980	13 years	Member of cross-country running team, good at gymnastics. Very active at the Y.M.C.A. club and athletics club, and tennis club.
50	Easter 1981	13 years 9 months	First senior school exam. Simon very anxious.

	Sept 1981	14 years	Back at school. However severe headaches reappeared (formerly had them in Spring 1980). They were migraine in character. Simon vomiting and being very sick.
55	Oct/Nov 1981	14 years	Started missing school, helping the milkman with milk-round instead. Simon started dabbling in crime, stealing money from houses. He confessed this to his parents - he wasn't caught.
60	Nov 1981	14 years 6 months	Simon referred to adolescent unit. Diagnosed "depressed and school refuser". G.P. felt Simon needed treatment to protect his mother from his "murderous intent".
65	Xmas 1981	14 years 6 months	Although emergency admission, Simon kept in family over Xmas.
	Jan 1982	14 years 6 months	Admitted to adolescent unit of a psychiatric hospital. Mother takes course in shorthand.
		14 years 9 months	Simon ran back to hospital from a weekend at home.
70	June 1982	14 years 9 months	Police involved in Simon and a group of other boys making a disturbance. He was cautioned.
72			

The above synopsis of Simon's history requires a high level of reader participation to achieve a sense of significance and connectedness. The individual entries, organized chronologically, configure into a meaningful whole largely through the knowledge and assumptions which are brought to them. The identification of the document as one in which a child's history is being told, instructs the reader to search for a relationship between different biographical episodes

and between each episode and the narrative context as a whole. Knowledge of where the story inevitably leads provides a further yoke upon which to hang reported events.

Notice the very first entry, “birth”, on lines 1-5, which in itself points to some of the procedures through which we accomplish a configurational reading. Since we know this is a story about Simon’s emergence as a problem child whose disturbance is sufficient to necessitate entry into care, we structure our reading of events accordingly. In spite of Mrs. Cutts knowing of no brain damage, this does not detract from our reading of Simon’s initial failure to breath as a candidate solution to the puzzle: what went wrong with Simon and why? It is an embryonic explanation we may keep in mind until it is either further corroborated, or subsumed under a more plausible version. Similarly Simon’s “nervous diarrhoea” (line 6) on his attendance at play school feeds into our search for historical traces, and suggests itself as an indication of Simon’s general state of mind.

Although no explicit causal canopy connects the events sketched from 1970 to 1978, they are thematically conjoined in their identification of Simon’s progress and success in his education, attitudes and his sporting and musical abilities. With the exception of only minor blemishes we are led to assume that Simon’s achievements, until the age of eleven, are significant. However, as readers armed with a knowledge of what the story is “about”, we read Simon’s progress in the context of a general scheme of things. We *know* the progress does not last and thus assign to it a transitory status. The reader, I suggest, anticipates a juncture in the narrative flow from which the boy’s problems begin to emerge. The very positiveness of his earlier life begs for a pivot upon which a before-after picture balances.

A textual turning point occurs in line 27 with the death of Mr. Cutts’ mother. The event is depicted as not only upsetting for Simon in itself, but in terms of his father’s reaction. Mr. Cutts’ “breakdown” is seen to shatter the image Simon had of his father as a strong and reliable character. The sense of a bad break in Simon’s hitherto sunny existence is reinforced with reference to a homosexual proposition he received from a Y.M.C.A. friend soon after his grandmother’s death. While these events, once more, are not explicitly associated, they coagulate thematically in terms of their sense of threat to the security of Simon’s world. The turnaround in his fortunes, however, is not unequivocal. In spite of preceding episodes, and the emergence of “headaches”, Simon goes on to succeed in the spheres in which he had previously done so.

The second nodal juncture occurs in Easter 1981 when Simon is reported to have experienced extreme anxiety due to a school exam. Periodic episodes thereafter serve to firm up a conception of Simon's emergence as a problem child. The migraine headaches which appear during his second year at secondary school resonate with an earlier entry (line 36). At least two different versions of the significance of these headaches are possible. They may, on one version, be traced back to the traumas of birth, Simon's failure to breath immediately, and the allusion to brain damage. On a second version, the one which informed my reading of the account, Simon's headaches resonate with his nervous tummy (lines 6-7), his worry about his sister (lines 13-14), and his headaches at the age of 12. What I hear this group to signify is Simon's high levels of anxiety which tend to express themselves in somatic symptoms.

An incipient causal connection suggests itself in lines 50-73. This collection of episodes neatly displays how the account is structured through the reader's interpretation of the instructions embedded *in it*, and the assumptions brought to bear *on it*. The exam anxiety feeds into the re-emergence of migraines when "back at school" which implicitly connects with Simon's starting to miss school in Oct/Nov 1981. By dint of this truancy and "dabbling in crime" a professional diagnosis is made which culminates in Simon's admission to a psychiatric adolescent unit. The allusion in lines 61-63 to the need for Mrs. Cutts to be protected from his "murderous intent" (apart from the curious exclusion of any empirical substantiation of the circumstances which may have given rise to this interpretation) is the first clue to there being something seriously wrong, and the only item which of itself would seem to justify psychiatric intervention. In conjunction with the clinical diagnosis of "depression" these two sequentially juxtaposed items assume a pathologizing connotation.

If we bracket some of the procedures through which we "read" connections between events, we may begin to see how a sense of alignment is achieved through the reader's utilization of the codes of narrative and interpretation of instructions which, in the configurational mode, lie implicit within the text. In contrast with the foregoing account consider a comparably full biographical sketch where the more explicitly theorized rational mode is operative. The juxtaposition of extremes facilitates analytical vision as well as heightening the sense of drama. The extract below which was partially reproduced in earlier sections, is the full psychiatric report on Jimmy Mason which composed part of his case file.

1 "I saw this boy at (a named assessment centre) on 30.6.77.

The personality of his disturbed mentally sub-normal and epileptic mother who has spent many years in a psychiatric institution has been described elsewhere.

5 I understand that much of her unusual behaviour is of an hysterical nature. She has three children, from three different men, one of whom a girl, the oldest, is adopted by her sister who will not let her see her mother.

10 The mother has a male friend who visits the family about twice a week and needs much support himself; he is not liked by the two sons because of his strictness. In such circumstances it is not surprising that the children go astray and both boys have committed offences against the law and manifested neurotic symptoms such as wetting, soiling, etc. One does not know which one of the boys is the major culprit and emotions are frequently high in this completely unstable family set up.

15 In August 1975 the brother was recommended for a boarding school for maladjusted pupils and apparently did not go, but frictions between the boys and their mother, accompanied by aggressive behaviour, became more frequent.

20 When the mother had to be admitted to hospital in May 1976 the two boys went into a children's home where they settled down during the nine weeks in a satisfactory manner. Other placements were equally successful until the mother seemed to have upset Jimmy sufficiently for him to act out his conflicts in an unacceptable manner.

25 When away from home for a few weeks and after they were sent back home Jimmy seems to have reacted by unruliness and stealing. His brother went to a boarding school in 1977 but once he was away Jimmy made considerable problems with which his mother could not cope. He also began to truant from school and was investigated at a child guidance centre. There was

30 concern, both for non-attendance in school and delinquent behaviour,
some of which was quite dangerous. He was sent (for assessment) with the
possibility of suitability for placement in a community home.

35 He was seen by (a senior registrar of child psychiatry at X hospital) on
15.5.77 and no evidence of formal neurotic disorder was found. The boy
denied problems but his mother said he would not go to the lavatory on his
own and required a light at night unless someone watched outside.
(The psychiatrist) described the unusual way Jimmy treated his mother at
the joint interview when she described him, in his presence, as a 'little
monster'.

40 (Educationally) he is slightly slow and unsophisticated and has little
understanding for more intellectual and subtle aspects of life. He asked to
go home to his mother and undoubtedly seeks closeness to her physically
and emotionally needing a lot of babying which he certainly did not get in his
unstable home. He still seems to seek the unattainable stability of family life
with his mother which he has missed all his life and which has been
45 instrumental in his emotional and social problems. He seems to have, at
times, simple childish phantasies and day-dreams largely due to regression.
He needs to regress and this would best be accomplished within a small
48 group setting of a therapeutically orientated community home.

It is not a coincidence that the account begins with a description of Jimmy's mother, and particularly the disturbances and disabilities which impair her status *as a mother*. We have already explored this extract, on page 273-274 above, but what is of interest at present is how we hear a connection between Jimmy's disturbance and that of his mother. Since the reader knows that the story is about Jimmy, she accords a significance to what is said about other members of the family in relation to him. The descriptions of Mrs. Mason which configure into a document of disruption, disturbance and deprivation, are explicitly held to account for Jimmy's problems in lines 10-12. It is "not surprising" that he exhibits delinquent behaviour and "neurotic symptoms" in such circumstances. His disturbance (this) is *because* of his unstable background (that). The causal link is expressly articulated.

Lines 15-33 accord to the “dates and places” mode of presentation. But even here there is not the apparent segregation between episodes characteristic of the configurational mode. A period of intensifying conflict is described in lines 15-19, in the nine month period between August 1975 and May 1976 when Mrs. Mason had to be admitted to psychiatric hospital. That the frictions and aggression apparently diminished during the brothers’ nine week stay in a children’s home implies a causal association between the disruptive behaviour and their indigenous home environment. Indeed the onus of responsibility is shifted once more to Jimmy’s mother, linchpin of the “home”, in lines 21-23. An authorization procedure is at work here, based upon the cumulation of instances which militates against any accusation of coincidence. That Jimmy and his brother settled into the first children’s home “in a satisfactory manner” may have been chance; that “other placements were equally successful” suggests that the causal key to their problems lie not within themselves, but in relation to their mother. All is well “until the mother seemed to have upset Jimmy sufficiently for him to act out his conflicts in an unacceptable manner”. The causal connotation is apparent: it is *because* Mrs. Mason upset her son “sufficiently” that he acted-out his conflicts.

The account moves towards an inexorable climax which, I suggest, the reader is already looking for. Jimmy’s unruliness and stealing in lines 24-25 are, again, interpreted as a reaction to his return home which reinforces the link of causality. During his brother’s absence Jimmy exhibited considerable problems at home, truant from school and was involved in some “quite dangerous” delinquent behaviour. It is this deterioration which is held to precipitate Jimmy’s formal assessment, and the intervention of authorized experts.

A discursive alignment is achieved in lines 32-38 between the psychiatrist and Jimmy which serves further to discredit his mother by treating her version with a degree of cynicism. An anomaly is generated within the text between the “expert” evidence which finds no formal neurotic disorder, and Jimmy’s own denial of problems on the one hand, and Mrs. Mason’s detection of disturbance on the other. Since the weight of authority tends to be situated with the professional knower, strengthened by Jimmy’s corroboration of his version, systematic doubt is placed upon the mother’s competence and legitimacy *qua* mother. The gravitational pull is once more toward incriminating her.

The conclusion on lines 40-48 supports the established nexus of causation. Jimmy’s paradoxical wish to become close to the mother who has forsaken him is precisely borne of his

need to compensate for the historical lack of maternal nurturing which lies at the heart of his problems. The solution posited is a form therapeutic intervention in which *professionals* may help elicit and partially repair that which was missing in the *natural* mother-child relationship.

Jimmy's psychiatric report relies both upon the configurational and a rational mode to achieve a sense of causal association. However, its overall frame is rational in that the text quite forcefully instructs the reader to treat the boy's problems as the behavioural manifestation of his mother's psychological disturbance.

Educational Breakdown

The comparison of two further accounts, one drawing predominantly on the configurational and the other on the rational mode, serves to elucidate the broader differences between the weak and strong modes of causal theorization which characterize each respective type. Both refer to a child's educational breakdown which culminates in their entrance into care. The first extract is from David Lyons' case history compiled by his F.S.W. We hear first of all how:

"He claims to have enjoyed school but reports state that he was always aggressive to a troublesome degree. Mrs. Lyons was unaware of . . . his problems at school.

'78 It became increasingly obvious that David was easily led into wrong company. Mr. Lyons would beat him for his misdemeanours, which led to David holding his father in awe and fear.

'78 The school reported David to be continually causing trouble with one other boy in his class in particular, and that he was frequently getting into fights.

[When the school requested interviews, Mr. Lyons would attend them alone, not informing his wife who remained oblivious to David's difficulties.]

'79 David began at X comprehensive school. At the first open evening the teachers mentioned David's odd behaviour, in particular his lack of

concentration, inability to sit down for long, his malicious fighting with other children and his threatening behaviour. Mrs. Lyons remained unaware of these traits in David's behaviour, because he did not exhibit them at home. David was referred to a (local) child guidance clinic, but many of the appointments offered were not kept. At this time David was also pilfering money from his mother's purse, and had been sent home from school for causing a small fire.

1981 (David interviewed by school's psychological service after)
11th bad behaviour including sexually exposing himself in front of his class,
March maliciously hurting other children, damaging school property. He claimed that he didn't like school, and that things were "better at home", preferably on his own. He was described as a rather sad and depressed character, being generally uncommunicative and uncooperative.

11th David attended (disruptive pupils unit). He remained there for only two
May days, because they were unable to contain him, describing him as "uniquely disturbed".

30th David was suspended from X school. [The Lyons' did not appeal as there
Sept. had been much previous discussion with them about David's disturbance.]

7th David was expelled from X school. Home tuition began at the Lyons' house
Nov. while Mrs. Lyons was present and not at the tuition unit because of his violent attitude toward his peers.

1982 Home tuition ceased, because his first home tutor could not cope. The
March tuition was not maintained further.

March [David involved with juvenile bureau because he'd been rude to local residents and kicked an old man and a security guard.]

May David threatened a man with a knife

August/ [After two court cases David was committed to the care of the local
Sept. authority and placed in an assessment centre.]

[Bracketed sections summarized in my own words]

The second piece is drawn from Paul Black's secondary school report which charts his progressive deterioration. Initially the reader is told:

1 "It was soon apparent that Paul found it difficult to settle in Y high school."

And, a few lines later:

It was noticed from early days in Paul's schooling that he was attention-seeking.

Soon after:

5 During his first Autumn Term at Y high school the head of year wrote to Paul's parents inviting them to visit the school to discuss Paul's difficulties and inability to settle to the high school routine. Only Mr. Black came to discuss the matter with Mr. B who drew the conclusions that there was a great deal of aggression within the family, and frequently Paul had head-on clashes with his mother before leaving for school. Probably the reason for the outbursts in school. Mr. Black wanted the school to discipline Paul even to the extent of corporal punishment if necessary. Mr. B. was going to control Paul in a caring way.

15 During the Spring term there seemed to be little improvement so Mr. B. interviewed Paul's father once again. The request still came that Paul should be disciplined by being kept after school and given extra work, and to be withdrawn from lessons where he proved to be too disruptive and uncooperative.

20 A comment was noted about the death of Paul's grandfather, which might have brought out more resentment and aggression. Not long after this Paul's youngest sister died, after which Paul was very angry. Two bereavements in close succession must have had a deep impression on Paul.

25 During the Summer term Paul's behaviour became more anti-social. He had been reported for vandalising a heavy glass door at school, and very soon after a complaint was received from a neighbour of the school that milk had been stolen from local doorsteps - Paul was caught drinking milk in the vicinity.

30 A fresh start was given to Paul at the beginning of his third year but very early in the term he was behaving in a disruptive manner in the classroom. One day he was so bad he was sent out of the class. There was at the same time a complaint of Paul being locked in the boys' changing room on purpose, then money was stolen. He was also truanting from lessons. Paul was placed on report and a letter was sent home.

35 Mr. Black accepted the invitation to discuss some of the problems with Mr. H and Miss W. Although he was expected Mr. Black did not turn up for the interview so it became an interesting observation for this was the first contact made by Mrs. Black. It was obvious she had lost control over Paul and he resented the discipline being imposed by his father.

A series of superficial similarities unite both accounts in their description of the boy's deterioration toward educational breakdown, and the father's involvement in school discussions to the virtual exclusion of the mother. Beyond this the emphasis of the two accounts differ in their level of causal theorization. In the first account regarding David Lyons the reader is furnished with a wealth of behavioural details and definitional labels from aggressive, troublesome, odd, malicious, sad, depressed, uncommunicative, uncooperative, to uniquely disturbed. Apart from a passing reference to Mr. Lyons' physical punishment of David, we are offered no framework to explain the boy's underlying motivation to behave in such deviant ways. While reference is made to David's emotional state this plays only a tangential part in an account whose main concern is with *what* happened rather than *why*.

The second account provides just such a *because* motive in relating Paul Black's "presenting" behaviour at school to an underlying and possibly unconscious motivation which derives from his circumstances at home. Through the detour of Paul's psychological rationale, a bridge is built between his school disruption and the home background from which it emanated.

The account commences (line 1) with clear instructions about how it is to be read: as Paul's difficulty in settling at high school. To whom "it was soon apparent", and who "noticed from early days" is unclear, but the effect is to situate Paul's behaviour in a realm which is apparent, noticeable, *clear for all to see*. What is being encouraged is an interchangeability between the empirical observer who was there at the time, and the reader who was not, but had she been would, presumably, have made the same sense.

Two explanatory *motifs* are present in lines 3-20 which causally account for Paul's behavioural difficulties. The first accounts for his outbursts in school as a displacement of the aggression which is rife within the Black family. Mr. Black's solution of yet more punishment to curtail Paul's school misdemeanours represents the very attitude in which the problem originated. His solution is discredited through this paradoxical operation. The second *motif* treats Paul's disruptive behaviour as the documentary manifestation of his resentment, aggression and anger at the death of his grandmother and, in close succession, his sister. In both instances Paul's behaviour is linked to earlier events at home, and in the wider familial environment which give rise to emotions which are displaced onto the educational context.

Through the analysis of quite lengthy historical extracts, an attempt has been made to elicit some of the broader differences in theorizing causal connections. I now turn to a consideration of the more narrowly circumscribed nuts and bolts, comparing once more accounts which err more towards a configurational mode of operation with those where the emphasis is rational.

ii) Nodal Points in the Child's Biography: the Nuts and Bolts

Beginnings

Like all good stories we will begin at the beginning. Stories must, of course, begin somewhere, though by no means always at the chronological genesis of the train of events which

the story describes. One of the incarnate features of all stories, fictional or factual, is the “all things relevant” rule. It is assumed by the competent reader that what is included contributes, in some way, to the chain of narrative events or our appreciation of them. And this is especially so where the account takes place as part of a field of practical intervention, such as social work.

The beginning of a story is material in furnishing a preliminary interpretative frame. It is read in its prospective connection to a series of events which we have not yet heard. We are prepared to suspend the ultimate sense of opening events in the knowledge that their significance will become clearer as we go along. While the conclusion may be the magnet of attraction (as Ricoeur claims), it is, in the social work case history, broadly known in advance. “What happened” is a problem child. What remains is a search for the specific historical routes through which the problems developed. The competent case historian and her reader will thus attend to openings, and all that follows, with an *a priori* criterion of relevance. They will, as it were, lend an appropriate eye and ear.

By dint of narrative logic, then, the reader may use an opening to orientate herself to a sense of what is to come. Historical starting points create a domino-effect; they act as the catalyst for a dynamic chain of happenings. We expect beginnings to instigate a series of changes which together compose the stories *point*. Such expectations, driven underground by sheer cultural familiarity with the narrative mode are, like many other social phenomena, brought to visibility when they are breached.

A mannered, but apposite example of such a breach is found in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, which roundly challenges our narrative assumptions. The point of the play is that it has no point. The story goes nowhere, and there is nothing resembling what we might conceive of as a plot, at least in any conventional sense. *Waiting for Godot* ends where it begins; or alternatively begins where it ends. And what happens in the middle? Well nothing! Nothing? Well talk happens, walk happens, indeed degradation happens. But quite unlike conventional drama or narrative these events do not propel the drama forward; they do not crystallize a scenario. Much of the action, or inaction, is designed to “pass the time” while waiting. At the end of each scene the promise of action going somewhere is curtailed by the voice of stage direction.

End of Act I:

Estragon: Well, shall we go?

Vladimir: Yes, let's go.

[They do not move]

CURTAIN

End of Act II:

Estragon: Well, shall we go?

Vladimir: Yes, let's go.

[They do not move]

CURTAIN

We expect the drama of a narrative to go somewhere, although part of the pleasure of the tale, and engagement with it, is in not knowing exactly where it will go, or how it will reach its destination.

Openings, in synopsis, are not just where things begin. They provide a dynamic orientation to the forthcoming events. This may include the provision of what Dorothy Smith [1978 - p. 32] calls "preliminary instructions" for how to read the significance of later events as "instances of" a particular category. This is part of the complex process through which an account is reflexively constituted. The events do not speak for themselves; they are invested with sense through their contextualization. To quote from D. Smith:

"(The account) is not just a record of events as they happened, but of events as they were seen as relevant to reaching a decision about the character of those events. This is a common feature of the kinds of records, etc., etc., with which the social scientist in the field of deviant behaviour is concerned. The various agencies of social control have institutionalized procedures for assembling, processing, and testing information about the behaviour of individuals so that it can be matched against the paradigms which provide

the working criteria of class-membership, whether as juvenile delinquent, mentally ill, or the like.”
[D. Smith (1978) - p.24]

We commence with the examination of a particular mode of opening where an actual historical point or event is identified as the genesis of a trend. The point of origin is attributed with different kinds of significance. It may be incorporated in a purely chronological sense as a date or age at which a child's problems initially appeared. In most accounts however the opening events enter into the architecture of explanation by being set up as responsible for what follows. A rational connection is forged, though sometimes embryonic in stature. In isolating various nodal points in the narrative I attempt once more to compare the loosely theorized configurational mode of causal connection which prioritizes *what* happened, with the rational mode in which the motivational substance of the account offers a more or less explicit theorization of *why*.

The elicitation of an identifiable starting point - *when*, without any allusion, apparent or otherwise to *why* a child developed problems - appears to be the primary purpose in a number of historical accounts. This temporal referencing is effective in constituting a sense of order manifest in the conception of *when it all began*. Consider, for example, the following extract from Paul Black's court report composed by his F.S.W.

“Mr. and Mrs. Black began to experience difficulties in controlling Paul when he was about six years of age. They claim that prior to this he was a “normal” child in every respect. As concern grew about Paul's behaviour his parents felt it necessary to consult child guidance (although they didn't continue this due to the very personal questions asked). As Paul got older Mr. and Mrs. Black began to find him more and more difficult. Since Julie's death they have been unable to exercise any control over Paul.”

[Brackets in original]

This extract offers a purely chronological account of the origins of Paul's behavioural “difficulties”. The schema of deterioration is punctuated by a visit to child guidance and the death of Paul's sister. But these events do not enter into an explanatory matrix; they are simply presented as temporal markers in tracing the trajectory of Paul's regression. A temporal preoccupation with *when* the problem first emerged similarly infests the next two pieces drawn from Kevin Mead's and Keith Fletcher's case histories respectively.

“Kevin has a history of illness and is reported to have had difficulty with social relationships and behavioural and learning problems from the age of eight. He has had a number of changes of school and educational provision during this period. Kevin’s behaviour and educational difficulties over the last three years have caused some considerable concern for a number of agencies involved with the family (which led to a court appearance and his admission into residential care.)”

[Bracketed section - my summary]

And again:

“Mrs. Fletcher tells me that Keith has been a difficult lad since he was about ten years old, when he began stealing from home and became more difficult to control. Although he is usually a quiet, shy lad, on several occasions he has become very aggressive towards his sisters and mother.”

In each of the preceding extracts a specific dating procedure is employed. The child’s chronological age is used as a resource to mark the genesis of his problem and nodal points in its deterioration. Such temporal specificity lends a sense of concreteness to the historical analysis. But the identification of *when* it all began more typically harbours an incipient explanation of *why*. The story begins with an event in the child’s life which for reasons more or less explicitly stated assume the status of a primal cause. In the next group of extracts the mode of derivation is only poorly, impartially or implicitly drawn and as such is reminiscent of the configurational mode. In the first piece extracted from my interview with Damian Tanner, one of the residents in unit 1, the event with which the story begins instigates a chain reaction which culminates in the child’s commission of delinquent acts and eventual admission into care. The web of causality is a superficial one, and notably excludes any detailed reference to the underlying significance of such events, or how they may furnish the boy’s motivational rationale.

[I ask Damian to remind me a little bit about how he came into care.]

Damian: Well I’m in care becus - uhm (1.5) dunno - about (1) two - three years ago (2) maybe a bit more alright - it started off - I went into ’ospital with rheumatic fever - right?

Kim: Huh hum.

Damian: Then I started missing school - where - when I was in 'ospital for ten weeks.
Then I - and I s'pose I got in the sort of habit of not going to school . . .

Kim: Were you worried about being behind when you got back?

Damian: Not really - and then uhm -

Kim: This was how long ago Damian?

Damian: 'bout four years - three four years I think.

Kim: Huh hum.

Damian: Then I started getting into trouble and then -

Kim: What kind of trouble did you get into?

Damian: Well (.5) stealing and things like that.
(1)

Kim: Huh hum.

Damian: Right - and then (1) then they put me - then - no - I had to go to a psychiatrist
(.5) place down uhm (.5) Hammersmith - and (1) 'ad to see this doctor - and
'e goes that I was (2) uhm - suicidal or someink - I 'ad suicidal tendencies and
things like that.

Kim: Why - what did he base that judgement on?

[Damian explains that because he had been run over riding his bike across
the road, and picked up a "diphtheria bug" by swimming in the Thames, the

psychiatrist claimed he was trying to kill himself by getting ill. Damian finds the interpretation laughable and untrue.]

Damian: ... and then (.5) he - and then he also classified me as maladjusted. So I went to this school in (N. town) . . . Then (.5) I went out (.5) one day - 'ome for 'oliday (1) then I (.5) on the last day I didn't want to go back so I got myself nicked.

Kim: Huh hum.

Damian: That's - and ever since then I started getting nicked.

[I ask what happened then?]

Damian: I refused to go back - then I started - you know - getting into more and more - getting arrested about six times in a row - in a couple of months. (1) And my social worker asked for a care order - and she got it.

The demarcation of the nodal point of Damian's hospitalization with which the story begins suggests that prior to this occasion nothing happened of any relevance to his ultimate admission into care. Of course what is *relevant* is relative to the purposes in hand. Damian's emphasis is upon a chain of behavioural episodes rather than of psychological motivation and as such contrasts with the professional accounts quoted on pages 319-321 below.

One can see in Damian's account how the nexus of events are yoked together. The illness and hospitalization are seen to create a chain reaction: *because of this* he got out of the habit going to school and started truanting; *because of this* he started getting into trouble for stealing; *because of this* he went to a psychiatrist who diagnosed maladjustment; *because of this* he was sent to a residential school which he hated; *because of this* he got himself "nicked" while on holiday to avoid returning; *because of this* he continued stealing, getting arrested on six consecutive occasions; *because of this* his F.S.W. recommended a care order; and so on and so forth. And all because Damian was hospitalized for ten weeks.

A single calamitous event is seen to lie at the temporal and emotional origin in both

forthcoming extracts. The drama itself does sterling work in provoking the “ah hah” response in the reader who nonetheless has to bridge the explanatory gap left by the author. The first excerpt is drawn from the introduction to the file of reports compiled during Paul Black’s assessment.

[We hear how Paul had been admitted to the assessment centre on a care order in early 1981, having run away from home and “lived rough” for a few weeks. He was dirty and hungry, although:]

“Paul remained polite and willing to talk about his circumstances. He pin-pointed some major events; everything at home had been “magic” until the death of his sister, Julie, last year. After that things started to go wrong, Paul started stealing and began to have problems with his father and got the blame for every misdeed in the home, although he had not been guilty for all of them.

The second piece is extracted from an informal counselling session between Kate and Andy Fisher to which I was witness.

[Kate raises the question of Andy’s parents separation and asks if there had been lots of fights in the house prior to it. Andy replies that there had not, they just split up:]

Andy: That’s when I started - not going to school and (2) mum used to get me up in the morning “I ’aint going to school mum” . . . “let me ’ave the day off”. And she used to say “ooh - I dunno about that!” . . . but always in the end I used to know she’d say “yes”. It was then that the trouble started.

In the first of the above extracts the child is allocated a voice through which to tell his story. In it he nominates his sister’s death as the nodal point from which events took a dramatic turn. A before-after dichotomy is set-up giving weight to the temporal anchor: *before* his sister’s death everything was “magic”; *after* that “things started to go wrong”. The stealing and the “problems with his father” which flow in the wake of Julie’s death are associated with this event, although the architecture of causality is weakly construed.

Andy's account exhibits a similar procedural style by causally associating his parents separation with the advent of his truanting and the genesis of trouble. Notable by its absence is any explanation which would give substantive grounding to the relationship between events. Their causal association is accomplished simply by dint of their configuration. We nonetheless read them, through the skilled interpretation of narrative codes, as more than randomly related.

Although the boys were more inclined toward a configurational mode of causal accounting this was not exclusively the case. In the next extract Julian Pines offers a more explicit theorization of the connection between earlier biographical events and his later adoption of a pattern of (deviant) behaviour. Of course significant differences do exist between professional versions and the lay ones of the boys, not least in the complexity of psychological reasoning and the procedures of authorization. But for the present purposes it is also important to note that the rational mode was not confined to the staff any more than they were exempt from the configurational mode. The boys too were capable of forging more explicit connections in telling their (his)story. Examine, for example, the forthcoming extract from my interview with Julian. In it he offers a rational motivational account of the origins of his truancy.

1 [I ask Julian why he started to truant from school, which was the primary reason for his admission into care].

Julian: First of all me nan died.

Kim: Huh hum.

5 Julian: And after that I never really sort of - wanted to go to school after that.

Kim: It upset you so much?

Julian: Yer - 'cus I didn't have no sort of - me nan used to be me incentive to go to school sort of fing.

Kim: I see.

10 Julian: But - I just didn't wanna go. And then - uh - then - that Christmas me uncle

(who lived in the same household) had a bad stroke. So that's two fings - I didn't - well that really stopped me at all - I didn't wanna go at all then.

Kim: Uhm.

Julian: I didn't wanna le - I didn't wanna leave the 'ouse.

Kim: {I see
{

Julian: {With me mum and me uncle (.5) so two fings 'appened within the space of a year.

Kim: Uhm.

Julian: Never knew what could 'appen to me mum - so - I didn't wanna go to school for that reason.

In lines 3-5 Julian brings two events, A and B, into sequential alignment: first A *and then* B. The remainder of the account is an attempt to convert the temporal coincidence into a causal relationship between one event and the other. To accomplish a higher level of adequacy and plausibility as a causal explanation, the connection must be rationalized. Event A must provide *good enough* reasons, if event B is to stand up as a reaction. The mode of rationalization characteristic of this type of account brings events into causal alignment through the bridge of psychological motivation. In this case the bridge is two-fold: on the one hand the incentive for Julian to go to school embodied in his nan had been removed; on the other this death, in conjunction with his uncle's stroke soon after, made him fear that things "could 'appen to (his) mum" (line 19) if he were to leave the house.

Julian's account erects a plausible explanatory architecture, built from the material of subjective feeling. Explicit rendition of this kind is not an essential prerequisite in identifying causality. We saw in the previous class of extracts how the reader/hearer may draw causal inferences from the temporal juxtaposition of events. However, where an *internal* nexus of causality is rationalized, a more therapeutically persuasive case is made.

The point is that causal plausibility is not *a priori* but bound up in the procedures of practical reasoning. Dorothy Smith's exposition on the nature of facts may equally be applied to causes. Where she says fact in the forthcoming quotation, also read cause:

**"The actual events are not facts. It is the use of proper procedure for categorizing events which transforms them into facts. A fact is something which is already categorized, which is already worked up so that it conforms to the model of what that fact should be like."
[D. Smith (1978) - p.35]**

And these "proper procedures" are components of the social knowledge which all competent social actors wield. In Giddens' words:

**"The reflexive monitoring of behaviour operates against the background of the rationalization of action - by which I mean the capabilities of human agents to 'explain' why they act as they do by giving reasons for their conduct - and in the more 'inclusive' context of practical consciousness."
[A. Giddens (1979) - p.57]**

While the capacity to rationalize action is a generic feature of practical reasoning, it is particularly prevalent and polished amongst the therapeutically inclined professions such as social work. A typical source of divergence separating the boys' and their parents' accounts of origins from those of the professionals lie in the nature of the explanation being proffered. "Expert" analysis, by those in the business, tended to exhibit a more elaborate mode of psychological reasoning and specialize much more in articulating the invisible "hidden hand" which operates behind appearance. Boys and their parents, by contrast, were more likely to focus upon the manifest surface of behaviour. In this respect Julian Pines' account quoted above is untypical in that he gives voice to his emotional fears. The conceptual distinction between his analysis, and that of the F.S.W., quoted below, is nonetheless apparent.

1 "He has further developed a phobic fear of actually being in school though
he finds it impossible to articulate such primitive fears which originate from
separation anxiety. School has become both a feared and a hated place
which he will not now test out in reality. The dog, attention-seeking for love
5 in the meeting, seemed to symbolize very nicely Julian's central conflicts
over separation anxiety and unmet needs for security and affection."

The divergence between the two accounts is both temporal and theoretical. While Julian dates the emergence of his problems to specific events which engender them, the assessment report assimilates his emotional disturbance to an altogether more primal experience of which the events are a documentary manifestation. For Julian, his grandmother's death and uncle's stroke *caused* his school refusal; for the expert it prompted a re-awakening of a primal fear. A hint as to why Julian should be so disabled by an anxiety which most children are held to overcome in the course of their psychological development is provided on line 6. His unmet needs for love and security have, we assume, deprived him of the prerequisites necessary for the growth of independence.

The distinguishing features of the configurational and the rational modes (or the professional's and the client's accounts in the extracts considered here) is even more dramatic if we juxtapose the accounts of two boys - Damian Tanner and Paul Black - on the origins of their problems (see pages 312-314 and 314-315) with those of the practitioners who were involved with them. On Damian's account, for instance, his problems originated in a spell of hospitalization. A minor difference separates Damian's analysis from that of his parents who are allocated a voice within the F.S.W.'s report.

"Mr. and Mrs. Tanner report no difficulties with Damian until January 1980, three months after he started secondary school. He began to truant, ran away from home to Scotland and committed an offence which resulted in an appearance before the court on 20th March 1980."

This contrasts with the psychiatric assessment from which we will quote snippets:

1 "Damian is a depressed and turbulent youngster who urgently requires a
secure environment in which he can be held and contained . . . It was very
clear in hospital that his behaviour can be erratic in the extreme and
dangerous to himself (e.g. he refuses medication, even though this is a
5 severe threat to his health). The seriousness of the aforesaid behaviour
should be recognized by the court. It is not to be mistaken for a childish
prank because it effectively amounts to a self-injury and even suicidal
strategy . . . Damian's depression and his disordered psychological state
reflect the rifts, antagonisms and tensions that are chronic in his family. In

10 conclusion, Damian is a sick boy who requires chronic treatment for rheumatic
heart condition which he is self-destructively inclined to refuse or sabotage
and he is severely psychologically disturbed. His psychological disorder
precedes the rheumatic illness and it has reached a point where he urgently
15 requires to be held in a caring environment away from home until a long
term placement in boarding school is arranged for him.”

[Bracketed section - my summary]

The logical priority given in the F.S.W.'s conclusions to her court report are similar:

1 “As I have stated, in my opinion Damian is a boy with a lot of emotional
problems and his offending must be seen in the light of this. He appears to
be the pivot for conflicts within the home, and unfortunately I do not think
4 his problems can be resolved there.”

A patent discrepancy is apparent between Damian's assessment and that of his parents on the one hand, and that of the professionals on the other. In the former two cases, a temporal juncture is found, albeit three months apart, from which time Damian's problems are seen to emanate. In the boy's own account the explanation is without recourse to deep-seated emotions which generated his deviant behaviour. It is construed, rather, as an habitual pattern engendered by a chain of prior events. Mr. and Mrs. Tanner are similarly involved in the process of assimilating the *origins* of their son's difficulties to their behavioural *appearance* in January 1980. There is no reference to the parents judgements about *why* Damian developed disturbances. Indeed, their exclusion from insight into the emotional antecedents is apparent in another part of the court report where Damian's F.S.W. noted that Mr. and Mrs. Tanner “have been reluctant to accept the reality of . . . Damian's serious emotional problems”.

It is this original emphasis which differentiates Damian's and his parents' accounts from both the psychiatric and social work ones. The latter two are united in their attribution of Damian's behavioural disturbances to the emotional domain. Throughout the psychiatric report Damian's delinquent behaviour is clearly relegated to the status of a *presenting* problem. The *real* issue, which is seen to underlie it, is an emotional one which, the psychiatrist insists, pre-dates his physical illness and, other segments of the full report suggest, is responsible for it. In this respect Damian's account of origins is irreconcilably different.

The exact time of the emergence of Damian's problem behaviour on the therapeutic version is unimportant relative to the earlier scenarios which gave rise to it, because the manifestation of surface disturbance is seen to proceed from what is already present. The cause of Damian's disturbance is thus on another dimension both temporally prior and logically anterior to his delinquency. In both professional accounts the emotional dimension is located within family life.

As well as their reluctance to acknowledge the ineluctable fact of Damian's emotional disturbance, in both accounts the Tanners are held at least partially responsible for it. Their implicative role in Damian's problems is discursively accomplished, to some effect, in lines 1-2 of the psychiatric report without being explicitly named. That the depressed and turbulent Damian urgently needs a secure environment in which to be held and contained suggest that this quality is lacking at home. The theme is echoed in lines 13-15 in which his urgent need to be "held in a caring environment away from home" has obvious connotations, and in lines 2-4 of the F.S.W.'s account in which the removal from the family is judged the prerequisite of any solution to Damian's problems.

It should of course be recognised that accounts are written in a particular context, for specific purposes. Part of the context effective in shaping discourse is the author's identification (whether speaker or writer) of the purposes of the report and the audience to whom it is, or will be, addressed. In this instance the professional accounts form part of a court report written for the purpose of securing a care order. The recurrence of themes, and the emphasis they are given, is a feature of the attempt to make a persuasive case. By *defining* Damian's troubles in terms of the emotional effect of family instability, the *solution*, by logical extension, is to remove him from the problem-generating context.

As the above accounts suggest divergence may occur over *when* and relatedly *why* a child's problems developed. The meaning of events and incidents is in this respect mercurial; they have no fixed status. It is the architecture of the account, its plot if you like, that confers a particular significance on the individual item. Thus the occurrence which is seen to catalyze a chain of reactions in one account, may be seen merely as a symptom of altogether more profound emotional problems in another.

This distinction between the configurational and rational modes of causal connection

is nicely illustrated in the following series of extracts. Although they do not explicitly link the nodal point of Paul Black's sister's death to his later manifestation of deviance, they nonetheless reveal how different levels of significance are accorded events. Return, first of all, to Paul Black's version of these biographical events as framed by the residential staff in the assessment centre (see page 315). Consider, by contrast, the account below which is drawn from the case history compiled by Paul's F.S.W.

1 [The report speaks of how Paul had said that his strongest tie in the family
was with Julie who died as an infant after a three day illness.]

5 “Paul said he used to take Julie everywhere with him and he used to fight all
her battles and suddenly she wasn't there anymore. His parents blame the
7 doctor for Julie's death. Paul at a conscious level blames his parents and the
doctor, but at a deeper level he blamed himself. He was in fact sometimes
teasing and unkind to Julie.”

[Bracketed section - my summary]

That this mode of theorization is assumed to yield a more fundamental understanding is apparent in lines 5-6 of the F.S.W's account. Here, Paul's conscious and unconscious orientations betray a contradiction; the former blaming the parents and the doctor for Julie's death, the latter himself. That his unconscious beliefs are considered more profound is apparent from the metaphorical reference to their being “deeper”; a phrase which reveals the therapeutic persuasion of the account. A clue as to why Paul is motivated to blame himself is contained on lines 6-7. *Because* Paul was sometimes unkind to his sister during her life, he unconsciously felt responsible for her death.

This gloss disguises an elaborate chain of practical theorizing. The assumptions requisite upon a sensible interpretation of this account include, as mentioned, a dual level of motivation - conscious and unconscious - and concomitantly the belief that what appears at the surface of consciousness may subvert that which lies at the deeper, unconscious level. A linchpin of this mode of reasoning is the belief that the outside agent, especially if therapeutically informed, is better equipped to interpret the child's unconscious than he, himself, duped by the conscious mind is. The reader does not have to explicitly articulate this line of reasoning; it is processed at lightning speed.

Finally, examine the informal comments made by Kate Lambert upon receipt of Paul Black's referral papers to St. Nicholas'.

1 "When Paul was one year old his sister, Karen, was born. About this time
father came out of the army; suddenly two more people competing for
mother's attention; and there is some talk of her child-minding during the
early years - more competition!

5 His problematic behaviour appeared to begin in 1973, when he was six,
coinciding with the birth of Julie - another competition for mother's affections.
When she (Julie) died, 1980, aged 7, I believe the feeling of guilt about his
animosity towards her birth put an unbearable burden upon Paul. It may be
10 that until he can come to terms with such feelings it will be impossible to help
him."

As well as displaying increasingly more elaborate webs of causality, this group of extracts manifest a divergence as to when the problems began. For the child the temporal juncture between *before*, when everything was "magic", and *after* pivots on the death of his sister. Both the parents' and Kate's version are united in their perception of this tragic event as a point of exacerbation rather than genesis. Both date the origins of Paul's deviant behaviour from his sixth year.

More significant for the present purposes is how events are invested with a different causal status in accounts which "speak for" Paul and his parents, compared with those in which the professionals offer their interpretations. The latter exhibit a more therapeutically elaborate explanation of nodal points in Paul's life. Characteristic of the rational mode a psychological predisposition is set up in Kate's account which is temporally punctuated by the birth and death of Paul's sister. The coincidence of "problematic behaviour" (line 5) with Julie's birth is construed as more than accidental: not "this *then* that", but "this *because* of that". What distinguishes this category of accounts is the way in which the causal relationship is overtly formulated. The breach between "this then that" is filled by a theory of psychological motivation.

Kate's comments, which are obviously influenced by the F.S.W.'s case history, prioritize

Paul's unconscious motivation. The feelings of guilt which Paul experienced attendant upon his sister's death are, again, causally connected to his feeling of animosity towards her birth. The theorization is more comprehensive in Kate's extract since the arm of causality traces a trajectory not only between the surface and the depth, but the present and the past. The two intersect upon the nodal occasions of Julie's birth and death. The former - Julie's birth - is portrayed as another instance in a long line of his mother's diversion of attention from him, thus accounting for the animosity felt towards the offending object. The latter - Julie's death - is the occasion upon which Paul's bad feelings about her are converted into guilt. The interplay of historical events and psychological affect, render the web of causation quite effective in this account. An even more tightly-joined rationale emerges if we probe some of the hidden assumptions which form a shadow support for Kate's argument. The absent-presence in her theorization goes something like this: Paul felt guilty upon Julie's death because he unconsciously experienced his hostile feelings towards her to have been responsible for actually killing her. Regardless of whether we accept this as a substantively plausible explanation it does - I contend - provide the hidden foundation of Kate's explanation.

The preceding extracts deal with nodal points in Paul's biography which, in the latter two accounts, are given causal status in explaining the emergence of his emotional disturbance. The precise nature of the connection between these earlier episodes and the later manifestation of deviance is, however, unstated. A death in Simon Cutts' family, in the forthcoming extract, is similarly invested with psychological significance without specifying its relationship to the behaviour which later brought him into care.

1 "The family have not really been right since the death of Mr. Cutts' mother
 some three years ago. This led to a serious depression in him which he
 decided to cope with by deciding not to show his feelings ever again. I think
 Simon and Mrs. Cutts were deeply shocked at seeing Mr. Cutts in such deep
5 distress. At the same time Simon began to feel that his father was weaker
 than he would have liked he was homosexually propositioned which he felt
 to be a betrayal by a male friend and this made him even more distant from
8 his father."

Witness in this account the chain reaction instigated by the death of Simon's grandmother. Unlike the surface configurations quoted above (see pages 311-316) this piece provides not only

a sequential exposition, but a rational chain of causation. The extract starts, once more, by establishing the temporal association between events: “The family have not really been the same *since* the death of Mr. Cutts’ mother some three years ago” (lines 1-2). These events are then sewn together with the thread of psychological explanation. The *sense* of double betrayal by significant men in Simon’s life, especially his father, is called to account for Simon’s distantiating from the relationship.

While the boy’s psychical perception is brought to bear in constructing a *sense* of causality, the line of reasoning nonetheless requires heavy input from the reader. To question the basis of the apparent connection may seem pedantic because you and I have already done the work necessary to achieve it. We tend to read the homosexual encounter as a *further instance* which may be assimilated to Simon’s already crumbling faith in masculine authority. But a gamut of ghost expectations materialize in coming to such an understanding.

What is more, the preceding account does not detail either here or subsequently the impact these events may have had upon Simon’s emergent behavioural problems. Reliance is placed upon the background assumptions which the reader brings with her as a cultural being and the member of a professional body of knowledge. This occasions a sense of what it “must be like” for a child to have the image of his father’s strength undermined and, through a homosexual proposition, have his trust in the male world challenged. But precisely why this may have led to his later behavioural disturbance is obscure.

Of course, the wider institutional context furnishes the reader with a framework for interpreting the significance of nodal episodes, even if their relevance is not expressly articulated. Since the reader knows that the story leads to the child’s exhibition of deviant behaviour in one form or another, prior events are scrutinized for their potential contribution to the emergent pattern.

How far the historical search should go is a moot point. We have seen, in a cluster of excerpts, how the arm of deprivation is seen to stretch into past generations. The boy’s parents are thus construed as victims whose short-fall is borne of their own deprived backgrounds. The point is articulated by Eileen Walker in her interview.

[I ask why some boys from the same environment do well, and others do badly.]

Eileen: Well again I think it-it-it-it comes down to - uhm - what's been instilled in the parent from their parents.

Kim: Huh-hum.

Eileen: I think it's an on-going thing.

In principle the search for ultimate origin could go on indefinitely; in practice the purpose in hand renders this as unnecessary extravagance. Exploration extends only to the parent's history, usually the mother's, and only then when her childhood circumstances are seen to have a direct bearing on those of her problem child. In the cases of Barry Painter and James Bryan (quoted on pages 276-279 and 283-285) both mothers are presented as caught in the nets of their own past lives which have inhibited the development of their own parental competence.

In some case histories the point of the opening scenario is obscure in itself; open to clarification only in relation to the reader's knowledge of where the story leads. Through the rule of "all things relevant", it is incorporated into the tale. Consider, for example, the following snippets from Tony Salter's case history. His social worker has chosen the logical juncture of Tony's birth as her starting point from which to piece together the clues which may account for his later difficulties.

1 "Mrs. Salter was in labour for thirty-six hours with a difficult forceps birth, the baby eventually being placed in an incubator to relax him - he was very tense."

And again:

5 "Mrs. Salter was not allowed to see or touch her son for a day. Tony was a screaming baby."

Further:

7 “his toilet training appears to have been neglected and Tony was not “dry”
 until over five years of age.”

The long, difficult birth, the forceps delivery, the baby’s tenseness requiring placement in an incubator, the mother’s separation from her screaming baby for the first day of his life, are events which, individually, are not altogether out of the ordinary. Collectively, however, we hear them as an inauspicious start to life. Lines 6-7 suggest another layer of difficulty. While the other events are out of anyone’s control, the term “neglect” (of Tony’s toilet training) has more incriminating connotations regarding parental, and more particularly maternal competence. Had Tony not developed into a child with problems the events of his early life would be accorded no particular relevance. It is the reader’s prospective awareness of what transpires in Tony’s life that lends prior events a retrospective significance as a candidate cause of later difficulties.

Each of the following three extracts forges a connection between rejection in the child’s early life and later emotional problems. In constructing a rational causal relationship between one thing and another they go one step further than the preceding snippets regarding Tony Salter. What is not articulated in so many words is how or why the disturbance incurred by earlier events led to the child’s later deviance. The reader, versed as she is in therapeutic knowledge, is left to plait the causal threads. The first piece is drawn from Chris Jones’ case history.

“Chris spent the first year of his life in hospital and physical contact with his mother was very limited. Shortly after returning home, Mr. and Mrs. Jones separated. Almost immediately (Chris’ brother) was born and as a result the maternal infant bond was never really established. Mrs. Jones says that despite her attempts, Chris is never able to accept her affection fully. During the past months Chris has consistently reiterated to his mother that he feels she doesn’t want him.”

The account above silently traces a line of filiation between the early events in Chris’ life, and his later difficulties in relationship to his mother. The onus of sense making is very much a collaborative project between the assumptions buried in the account by the writer, and

retrieved by the reader. That adequate “bonding” is considered a necessary prerequisite of normal, healthy development is witnessed by the fact that its lack or insufficiency is held responsible for Chris’ *later* inability to accept maternal affection, and his feelings of being unwanted. We enter a naturalistic discourse, couched in a plethora of background expectations about what the mother-child relationship should instinctively be like, in respect to which any empirical instance can be judged.

While the emotional impact of Simon Wells’ possible early rejection has greater clarity in the forthcoming extract, the looseness of the link is premised upon its hypothetical nature. The “trigger” event identified is one which lies in the realm of supposition and conjecture. The extract is from the written account of Simon’s assessment conference prior to his admission to St. Nicholas’.

“Discussion of the family and Simon’s situation was then opened up. It was possible that Simon was rejected early on but his mother had always blocked on this when the subject had been raised. Simon does not know who his father is and this could have affected his feelings about himself and his identity.”

Because the reader *knows* Simon has gone off the rails in some way, his history becomes a hunt for clues. While the therapeutic reasoning in this account is more elaborate, based as it is upon a rational mode of causal connection, its empirical substantiation is weak. In the first instance there is a “possible” early rejection, and in the second a definite event - the premature departure of Simon’s father - which “could” have affected his sense of identity. Quite how such incidents bear upon Simon’s contemporary deviance is ill-formulated, though the song is sung so often the reader will almost certainly be able to join in the chorus.

Contrast the story of how Simon’s *possible* early rejection *could* have caused the later development of problems with Mavis Baron’s account of Leon:

1 [I ask Mavis in her interview what she sees as being the source of Leon Pryce’s problems.]

Mavis: Well - I think rejection - when he was two (2) yer.

Kim: Uhm.

5 Mavis: Yes - rejection - that's the problem - just can't deal with it.

Kim: And - also - his rejection (.5) since that age or his perception of being (.5)
{rejected - becus of
{

10 Mavis: {No - no I think - that - the perception - the-the - what had happened - uhm
(1) mentally - or unconsciously (1.5) uhm - that he hasn't ever worked
through -

Kim: Huh hum.

15 Mavis: from the time he was adopted which was - or not adopted - or taken in by the
"M" family - his family - I don't think he's ever actually worked through
those initial first two years - when he was rejected . . . and I think any sort
of sign of rejection since that time has - has just . . . he just doesn't know how
to deal with it.

17 Kim: Uhm.

Two related features of this account are noteworthy. Firstly, Leon's rejection when he was two is not presented as merely a catalyst for a chain reaction. As a trauma in his emotional history it is part of the psychological composition which attends him throughout later life, resuscitated at each "sign of rejection since that time" (line 15). Secondly, the sense of rejection which has entered the unconscious strata of Leon's mind nominates the therapeutic solution of "working through" in order that the irrevocable fact and the psychological connotations of it, can be come to terms with by being made conscious.

The accounts considered above all deal in one way or another with the causal origins of the boy's emotional disturbance, if not their manifestation of deviance. Very often, however, the practical point of interpretation was to account for a particular bout of deviance rather than to reflect upon its ultimate origins. In such cases a causal nub was often constructed from the conjunction of events by invoking the child's underlying motivation. In the first excerpt Damian

Tanner's F.S.W. transforms the temporal coincidence of two events into a causal connection.

1 “Damian’s relationship with his father continues to be quite a difficult one
and I feel Damian senses rejection from him, for instance, when Mr. Tanner
threatens to send him back to St. Nicholas’ when his behaviour at home was
a problem.

5 [Also Damian committed his first offence in nine months after his father
refused to collect him from the other side of London when he had run out
of money].

For his part, Mr. Tanner believes this is the only way of exercising any
control. When Damian is well behaved however, Mr. Tanner gets on well
10 with him.”

[Brackets in the original]

My focus here particularly is upon a snippet contained in lines 5-7 parenthetically bracketed in the original. Lines 1-4 furnish an interpretative framework: Damian’s *sense* of rejection from his father. This antecedent knowledge provides the reader with the rhetoric of motives necessary for the two events on lines 5-7 to gel. For it precipitates a reading of Mr. Tanner’s refusal to pick Damian up as, from the boy’s perspective, *another instance* of rejection. Damian’s commission of his first offence is nine months *after* this refusal is imbued with significance in relation to the child’s sense of being spurned.

The temporal juxtaposition of events is similarly converted into a causal connection in the next excerpt from Chris Jones’ case history.

[During 1981 following the application of care orders upon the three youngest Jones’ boys and a stint in care, we hear how the F.S.W. and his senior established contracts with each of the boys whereby the care orders would be revoked in return for improved behaviour.]

“Chris’ immediate response was to declare that he did not wish his care order to be revoked, but was unable to outline his reasons for saying this.

During the following week, Chris and his brother were involved in two offences . . .”

[Bracketed section - my summary]

The onus is upon the reader to secure the narrative link, although a causal filiation is suggested in the account. Chris’ delinquency is seen to carry a message. In coalition with his verbal resistance to having the care order rescinded his acts of delinquency may be seen metaphorically to signify Chris’ opposition to being taken out of care. A sense of causality emerges from the sequential juxtaposition: a) Chris verbally resisted the revocation of the care order; b) Chris committed two acts of delinquency the following week. Since we have been told that the dissolution of the order was contingent upon improved behaviour, Chris’ participation in increased levels of delinquency symbolically reinforces what he has said in so many words.

Since crime was considered to be meaningful as the document of a child’s conscious and/or unconscious motivation, it was “fair game” for interpretative sports. The money, in the case below, is upon an institutional favourite: peer group pressure and one-upmanship. The extract is from one of Ben Jackson’s C.C.’s.

1 [A discussion ensues about a recent break-in at an off-license in which Ben was involved. The F.S.W. says that it sounds as if they wanted to be caught. Peter Scott, the principal, suggests that he can shed some light on the matter.]

5 Peter: We’ve taken on a lot (1) of boys in the last (.5) nine months uh - many of whom the school would not ‘ave touched before - and that’s upset Ben Jackson’s apple-cart to some degree (.5) and he - finds it - like I guess a lot of people of his age - very difficult to resist peer group. And he has status and so occasionally (1) this is an interpretation on my part - I think

10 occasionally he has to become criminal - just ta show the rest of the group that actually he’s still one of ‘em.

[Peter speaks of two recent incidents of crime from which Ben got no material gain.]

15 But I think (.5) there's a bit of 'im which occasionally pops us - does something naughty - just to reassure everybody else that he's actually still bent you know.

F.S.W: . . . there's pressure on him to still be one of the lads.

Peter: Something like that.

Soon after:

Peter: They never took spirits. I mean they broke into an off-license -

20 F.S.W: I know.

Peter: and only took lemonade (chortles)

[Thomas says they'll be the laughing stock inside D.C. if they get a sentence for this.]

25 Peter: I think it's also important to point out who who else was charged. (2) If you look at the group that he was charged with - they're by and large much younger - they're certainly much more - much less mature - both in terms of age - and in terms of development. And in that sense that - I guess - supports to some degree my theory - that Ben was demonstrating in a sense - to a
29 younger (?group?) that actually he's quite tough.

Although assigned to the status of "interpretation", Peter's account provides a causal formula for Ben's recent acts of delinquency. The account brings both a typified stratum of assumptions and the specific contingencies of the case together. It is in relation to "boys of this age" in lines 7-8 that Ben's lack of resistance to peer group is normalized. However, the context in which he has to exhibit his authority and one-upmanship (especially with reference to the tougher referrals to St. Nicholas') is defined as "criminal" (lines 9-11). Ben's incentive to commit crime thus appears doubly motivated by his desire to be "one of the lads", as well as a leader amongst them.

The recent off-license theft stands as a documentary metaphor of this double motivation. The line of reasoning suggests that since Ben stole lemonade from the off-license, his motivation was not pecuniary. This identified, we may search around for an alternative solution. The puzzle of Ben's behaviour may be resolved with reference to peer group politics. In terms of Ben's motivation to seek authority over his peers Peter cites his co-participants in crime, all of whom are defined as chronologically and developmentally less mature than Ben, as evidence for his burgeoning theory (lines 24-29). The crime thus neatly documents Ben's membership credentials in the delinquent group, while at the same time, demonstrating his relative superiority in the pecking order.

iii) Divergence and Convergence in the Practice of Causal Accounting

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to illustrate the different methods through which an architecture of causality is constructed from the details of the boys' biographies. I considered first of all the configurational mode in which the connection between events is loosely theorized, and the onus of responsibility is placed more roundly upon the reader to piece together the causal threads. In accounts which tend toward the configurational format the preoccupation is with *what* happened *when*. The rational mode, by contrast, spins a more coherently theorized web of causation which attempts to explain not only *what* happened but *why*. The causal link is characteristically forged by invoking the boy's underlying motivation, often unconscious to him. The rational mode is not homogeneous. In particular, the complexity of psychological reasoning varies; witnessed by the differences between Julian Pines' account of his truancy and that of his F.S.W. for instance (see pages 316-319).

A characteristic distinction between the configurational and rational mode lies in the significance given to when the deviant behaviour appeared. While configurational accounts give greater emphasis to the behavioural manifestation, rational accounts typically prioritize the child's underlying motivation. Such accounts are more likely to treat the behaviour itself as the symbolic expression of emotional disturbance which derives from the child's history. In this lies an elective affinity between the rational mode of causal accounting and therapeutic reasoning.

The boys and their parents typically tended toward the configurational mode, just as the professional practitioners characteristically employed the rational mode. This led on

occasions to divergences between the two groups regarding when and why it all began, as I attempted to illustrate above.

Such divergence, especially between boys and the staff, rarely, if ever, developed into a fully fledged “reality disjuncture” [Melvin Pollner - 1975]. This is partly because social work practice is recognized and treated by members as an interpretative pursuit, facilitated by qualities of sympathy and understanding rather than scientific experimentation. More than one explanation may emerge and coexist without challenging the epistemological foundations of the practice. Of course, each advocate may be convinced of the rightness of her own version, but interpretative discourse is *in principle* democratic, admitting a pluralism irreducible to one authoritarian voice.

In practice however, members of staff would often undermine the boy’s version or that of his parents, by recourse to their lack of therapeutic insight, and in so doing deprive them of a democratic voice. The authority vested here is based on therapeutic principles. Since the child’s motivations may be unconscious, and hidden to him through their very primitiveness or subjection to the mechanism of repression, he was almost always not considered the best judge of his problems. By percolating the information supplied by the boy, his family, and the army of experts who had produced his case file, the practitioner at St. Nicholas’ was given access to the origins of his disturbance which, for the time being, may have been closed to the subject who bore them. The authority at work in enforcing the legitimacy of one version over another (what we might call, borrowing from theorists such as Laing and Pollner, the politics of everyday life) was based upon the assumption that it was in the child’s “own best interests” to do so. The therapeutic aim, for the practitioner thus motivated, was to give the child himself access to his own motivation. But this was ironically achieved, in many cases, by denying his own version of reality.

Another method of deflating divergence between the accounts of boys and staff was to place them at different points of the historical scale. The more recent events which Julian invoked to explain the instigation of his truancy, for example, (pages 316-317), may indeed have been an influence. *Why* these events affected him so profoundly may also be incorporated as part of an older story, stretching further back into his history and which he is unable to articulate. Jim Taylor, in his interview, offers such an understanding of the routine discrepancies which separate boy and staff versions. He aligns the split more to a chronological criterion of

difference between adults and teenagers than a professional criterion between expert and problem child, and thus accords to adult versions an authority borne of age and stage.

Jim: Oh yer - I - you see - I mean (.5) comes back to interpretations. We're trying to find out why they did it - I mean - teenagers can't see any further than the ends of their nose. I'm sure if they sat down and thought about it - they'd realize why they were bored.

Kim: Uhm.

Jim: But (.5) they're telling you . . . they're bored - which is right - on the day in question - on the time in question - they were bored so they did x y or z.

Kim: Uhm.

Jim: What we're doing is we're going much further back - and we're saying "becus of (.5) this (1) he was bored (.5) which is why he -
(1)

Kim: {Right.

{

Jim: {you know - went into the (1.5) whatever he did" y'know.

Kim: So it's part - it's the same - part of the same explanation that they're using . . .

[Jim explains that it wasn't until he came into this work that he was forced to look at things - including himself - which can be quite painful. And he started thinking about things that happened to him as a child and began to ask why he drove a motorcycle up the road at the age of thirteen. He did it because it was fun.]

Jim: But did I - when you start looking back (1) you know? What was going on?
(1) Was I trying to get at dad or (.5) you know - I mean it's putting a

glamorous interpretation on the thing. But (.5) there are (.5) sort of - fairly hard and fast interpretations that you can make.

Kim: Uhm.

Jim: But the kid isn't going to see that. (2) He might adore his mother who beats him up - you know.

Kim: Uhm.

Jim: So - he's not gonna see that - that he's bored becus . . . 'cus he's not gonna turn round and say "that's the reason" - becus then he's being disloyal to somebody he loves. (1) I think we do a lot of things on impulse you know (.5) kids more than anybody probably . . . But they're you know (Jim sniggers) you're asking them - they're telling you (Jim laughs) you know "I was bored".

Kim: Yer - that's right.

Jim: So (.5) I think that's why we (.5) we clash sometimes. (Jim laughs)

[Bracketed section - my summary]

In this instance the incongruity is borne not of the child's exclusion from professional expertise, but of their chronological status as teenagers, with all the ghost assumptions which attend it.

Divergence was a routine feature of institutional life. Staff were familiar with it and the methods through which, if necessary, it may have been satisfactorily repaired. Such procedures entered into the everyday doings of social work. However, the diversity betrays a profound congruity which lies in the capacity to make meaningful sense of origins, beginnings, starting-points and the like. All the members of staff and boys' who I interviewed shared the capacity to hear and orientate to my question (about why a child ended up in care) as a request for an historical origin from whence the problem began.

The nature of the explanation between the two groups tended to differ, as we have seen. For instance most staff accounts did not begin in so clearly circumscribed a way as did those of the boys. Since the genesis of “the problem” tended to be conceived as more nebulous, the propensity to date an exact temporal event from whence it all began was rarer. The emotional origins were propelled to a position of greater significance in expert analysis which accounts for the temporal vagaries in defining beginnings. But the differences should not obscure the shared reservoir of narrative competence which united them. Each group displayed their capacity to hear the request for a starting-point, and furnish me with one.

Consider the boys’ narrative orientation to beginnings exhibited in the following snippets, mainly from previously quoted extracts.

Andy Fisher:

[Kate asks about Andy’s parents separation in 1979.]

Andy: That’s when I started - not going to school . . . It was then that the trouble started.

John Kenyon:

John: Right - I’ll start when my first step-mum left my dad - yer?

Kim: Right - what age were you then?

John: I was (.5) uhm (1) I was about (1) I don’t know man (.5) you know about six - about six I was . . .

Julian Pines:

[I ask Julian why he missed so much school. What put him off?]

Julian: First of all me nan died.

Kim: Huh hum.

Julian: And after that I never really sort of - wanted to go to school after that.

Clive Dennis:

[I ask Clive to remind me a little bit about his history and why he is in care.]

Clive: What tell you (.5) about what happened?

Kim: Yer - if you - yer - as you see it.

Clive: From the start (.5) from the start d'you wanna know?

Kim: Ah - from the start as you see it - saw it leading up to come - to coming into care.

(1.5)

Clive: Yer - I was ah (.5) I used to do - when I was (.5) when I was in primary school I was alright. But when I - when I went to the secondary school (.5) I started bunking off in the third year - I mean first year.

Kim: In the first year.

Clive: And it carried on . . .

Damian Tanner:

[I ask Damian to remind me a bit about how he came to be in care.]

Damian: Well I'm in care becus - uhm (1.5) dunno - about (1) two - three years ago (2) maybe a bit more alright - it started off - I went into 'ospital with - rheumatic fever - right?

Kim. Huh hum.

Damian: Then I started missing school. . .

In each case a decipherable starting point is found from which the origins of the history date. The “history” in question is thematically circumscribed by the purpose in hand; in this case to decipher the lineages of the child’s propulsion into care. The faculty of knowing how to start at the beginning was shared by boys and adults, clients and professionals, who employed their narrative skills in doing history.

In discussing this notable symmetry in the boys’ response to my question with sociological colleagues I was met with very similar explanations of this propensity to define *when it all began*. Their response revealed the routine cynicism familiar to seasoned social scientists: “they’ve clearly learned the rules of the game” I was frequently told. This reply nicely illuminates the distinction between the methodological proclivities of this study and that of mainstream sociology. From my perspective, such cynicism becomes a crucial object of analysis if the actors themselves systematically doubt the veridicality of appearance, which in this study was certainly the case. The structures of doubt themselves become an object of interest.

The point is not to deny that the boys, ensconced in an institutional culture, learned some of the codes which defined it. That they were asked about their past so much must have facilitated the ease and rapidity of their response. But these capacities to recognize the request for a chronological starting-point were not learned exclusively in the institutional context; they were skills which the boys had before they arrived. In this sense the raw material from which the institutional edifice was built was already there. The capacity to tell stories, and from the beginning at that, is inscribed in wider cultural knowledge. Such rudimentary skills, along with a multitude of others, form what Heritage calls the “architecture of inter-subjectivity” [Heritage (1984) - p.254] from which particular institutional forms emerge.

Conclusion

In this chapter I subjected the mundane methods through which a sense of causality is accomplished to empirical scrutiny. In so doing I distinguished between two modes of causal connection: the configurational and the rational. In the configurational mode the association

between events is weakly theorized and relies more heavily upon the reader/hearer to forge the incipient connection. The rational mode, by contrast, is more explicit in terms of its causal theorization, often linking events through a bridge of psychological motivation. Each, however, relies upon a narrative competence on the part both of the producer and the consumer of the account, in their capacity to grasp events together, to use Ricoeur's terminology.

While the boys and their parents - the "lay" participants if one prefers - tended more toward the configurational mode, the professional participants were more adept at formulating rational causal connections. The distinction was, however, by no means absolute.

In the final chapter of this thesis I consider how accounts so often exhibit both a retrospective and prospective quality: how a *sense* of the past and the future meet in constructing a contemporary account. While this feature was particularly prevalent in professional child care accounts, it is a generic feature of all forms of practical reasoning and its elucidation thus has a general application. To open up the retrospective-prospective nature of accounting I introduce a third mode of causal connection, which I call the *paradigmatic*. In the process of paradigmatic patterning the past, present and future are brought into a structured discursive relationship, as I attempt to empirically demonstrate below.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TELLING THE PAST, TELLING THE FUTURE: THE RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTIVE NATURE OF INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTS

Introduction

Practitioners at St. Nicholas' squatted Janus-like in the present, with one head turned towards the boys' past in whose circumstances the foundation of their present was seen to lie, and the other head turned towards the boys' future which, through their interventions, they wished to influence. In this, the final chapter, I want to explore the processes through which a sense of the past, present and future are brought into structured temporal alignment in a variety of institutional accounts.

To better appreciate the temporal features of discourse I introduce one further mode of causal connection. The *paradigmatic* may be employed in the service of either the configurational or rational mode. Its distinguishing feature lies in the procedures through which items are invested with meaning in relation to a pattern of associations to which they are assimilated by dint of their assumed resemblance. The detection of a pattern is intimately entwined with the application of a range of ghost schemata through which events are typified. That is to say, patterns are inextricable from the procedures through which they are organized: they are reflexive accomplishments.

In the process of examining and re-examining the data I have disentangled four categories which differ in emphasis, though all are united by certain procedural similarities, in particular their paradigmatic format. The four categories fashion an arc between the retrospective, contemporaneous and prospective. Analyzed collectively they enhance our understanding of the temporal nature of practical reasoning, particularly as it was employed by staff in a community home for deviant adolescent boys.

i) Telling the Past: Retrospective Accounting

In the first category of extracts, the emphasis is *retrospective* in as much as the pattern being woven is purely historical. In certain instances the pattern is sewn together with a thread of psychological theorization. In others, an amalgam of episodes or stories are accumulated

which bear the traces of an incipient pattern. In these accounts which employ the configurational mode the significance of the pattern - the rule which unites the disparate elements - is left to the recipient of the account to decipher.

In the first cluster of accounts the point of the paradigmatic exercise is to identify an habitual historical pattern in the boy's behaviour. In the preliminary extract Melvin Hardy, Leon Pryce's special worker from unit 2, adumbrates the sequential patterns which characterize Leon's mood cycles. The piece is drawn from a written report prepared for a C.C. in which Leon's future at St. Nicholas' was being considered.

1 "Leon initially presented a polite, well-mannered young man, well skilled in the social graces.

5 Christmas was possibly the time when Leon displayed the first signs of his depressive nature; a depression that has continued intermittently and increased.

10 The depressive periods (time wise 1 hour approx.) follow a fairly regular pattern. After unacceptable incidents in which Leon has been involved or instigated (these being of an abusive, threatening or destructive nature) Leon complains of a medical condition. His complaints continue until he appears to have convinced himself he is suffering acutely and hence deep depression sets in.

When Leon's depressive period is nearing an end he wants to be cuddled and reassured he is cared for.

15 Overall, the extreme facets of Leon's nature from diabolical verbal abuse, extreme threatening behaviour to both boys and staff (which incurs fear in the recipient) deep depression to baby-like charm, raises the question as to
17 the suitability of Leon's placement.

Melvin's detection of a recurrent pattern in Leon's behaviour is not purely academic. It is used as evidence to support his case for questioning "the suitability of Leon's placement"

(lines 14-17). Indeed his patterned predisposition is treated as the manifestation of Leon's "depressive nature" (line 4). Notice how this "nature" is construed as something which inherently belongs to Leon, but which only emerged on the behavioural surface after an initial period at St. Nicholas' when Leon *presented* a polite, well-mannered, socially skilled *persona* (lines 1-2). The recurrence of cyclical patterns since that time enforces a version of Leon as a boy who is depressed underneath it all, and whose placement is thereby rendered potentially problematic. Having constructed an over-arching canopy of meaning a variety of behavioural items - from Leon's abusiveness and threats, his deep depressions, to his baby-like charm - can be assimilated to a monolithic cause: Leon's depressive nature.

In the three forthcoming excerpts all drawn from the same C.C., Paul Skinner, Colin Lynch and Thomas McKinney respectively, identify the patterns inscribed in Ben Jackson's behaviour. The first piece is concerned with the sequence Ben goes through "where he's done something wrong". Paul Skinner's adumbration of this process alludes to a history of repetitions of a theme which is known, identifiable, and thus a conceptual platform from which present and future behaviour can be understood.

1 Paul: He goes through a process where he's done something wrong - he won't acknowledge it initially.

S.F.S.W: Yer.

5 Paul: Now we might find that (.5) difficult to handle becus I can speak to 'im now and if he's done something wrong I know full well he'd say.

S.F.S.W: Yer.

Paul: And we'd be able to talk it through.

Thomas: Yer.

S.F.S.W: Yer.

10 Paul: Whereas for the first - so many hours or whatever after he'd (?) depending on the seriousness of it -

S.F.S.W: Yer.

Paul: he will not even acknowledge the presence -

S.F.S.W: No.

15 Paul: of a member of staff. And in fact he will make it worse - he'll be rude or abusive and swear (.5) and get into a temper tantrum. Then - you can gradually see him coming round. (1) If we could perhaps (1) learn from our experiences - from our experiences that ultimately he will come round.

Thomas: Yes.

20 Paul: And he will be - he will (??) But we've just gotta go through that sort of - storm (.5) period - to get to the other side.

Like the first extract regarding Leon, Paul's identification of a typical sequence of events in Ben's behaviour is placed in the context of a higher cause: it is something from which he suggests they should "learn" (line 17); "we've just gotta go through that sort of - storm (.5) period - to get to the other side" (lines 20-21). What the repeated scenario can apparently teach practitioners is a method of reading contemporary and prospective events, investing them with a predictable conclusion; a skill which allows Colin Lynch and Thomas McKinney, below, to pre-empt future patterns on the basis of a typical past.

Colin: Uhm (1.5) it's worth noting that Ben - always returns from home leave in a very (1.5) positive frame of mind uhm (3) very sensible - reasonable - not too reasonable - you know - he's still fifteen but ah (.5) great for two or three days and we can almost predict now that - within two or three days he's gonna take a dramatic dive and (.5) and get into the (1) messing around that goes on in the unit - which is (2) more disappointing - when it comes from Ben becós he is (.5) or can be - one of the most mature (.5) boys in the group.

The sequence is echoed in Thomas' account.

1 [Thomas speaks of how Ben is making "great strides forward" and he can
also tell from the way Ben approaches them on return from trips home that
he's had a good time.]

5 Thomas: We also know like that in two or three days time he's almost gonna go back
into his pram again - yer? (1) and kind of blame - almost blame us (.5) for
his (1) present situation if you like - yer? And it's (1) picking up - Paul's bit
there (.5) Ben actually always having to blame (.5) outside here somewhere
- yer - for the way he's feeling or the way he's acting or whatever. And he's
gonna have to - take on some of the (?strains?) to manage it, and have these
10 feelings himself.

Colin's predictive powers reside in his capacity to *read* the patterns embedded in the past. Similarly, Thomas McKinney's identification of what typically *has* happened structures his knowledge of what *will*. However, Thomas' account goes one step further than each of the preceding three. He endows Ben's behavioural tendencies with a psychological motivation which lends them a rational status. For, underlying the pattern deciphered by Paul Skinner, Thomas recognizes Ben's habitual tendency of "actually always having to blame" external forces for the way he is feeling or acting, instead of managing and having "these feelings himself" (lines 7-10).

This process of psychological penetration is also at work below. In this instance the identification of a recurrent pattern affords a theorization of the deeper unconscious motivation which undergirds Paul Black's behaviour. The author is Kate Lambert who offers the following synopsis in a T.M.

1 Kate: He-he-he's thrown up all-all sorts of odd behaviour in the past. Er - at times
he let himself be known as Paul White - when he was younger - and being
Paul White seemed to be associated - with when he was being very - very
difficult. Almost as if - "this is the opposite of what I want to be - I'm Paul
5 White when I'm like" - I mean again this is being too glib - I know that - but

- you-you know - I can understand someone wanting to to {call themselves -

{

Nicola:

{It's a nicely

8 simplistic way of presenting the polarity of your character (laughs).

The detection of patterns is very rarely the object in itself. Practically orientated, it equips the theorist with a mode of access to what makes the child tick. The routine tendency for Paul to call Black White is inscribed with a significance which penetrates the surface. In the account Kate gives voice to Paul's hidden motivation. He calls himself Paul White when involved in very difficult behaviour: "Almost as if - this is the opposite of what I want to be - I'm Paul White when I'm like" this (lines 4-5). The pattern is thus sewn together with the thread of rational argumentation.

In the next group of accounts the paradigmatic pattern emerges through a kind of molecular accretion. A series of episodes are linked together into a chain which is more, or less, explicitly theorized. In the first piece below, the theme is being woven in the very process through which various participants articulate a series of events. Andy Fisher is the topic of discussion in a unit 3 staff meeting.

1 [The unit 3 staff discuss how, unlike Ben Jackson, Andy can't stand up for himself.]

Tina: He's a very frightened boy.

5 [Jan speaks of how, on an occasion when Samuel Nailer had Andy by the throat, he wasn't defending himself but just waiting for Jan to come and save him.]

It's as if he just gets a bit sort of numbed - and doesn't do anything . . .

[George tells of the occasion when Leon Pryce came into the unit and before he left he and Andy had a "tumble".]

10 George: But Andy made it into a sort of play fight but I think that was a way to sort

of gain some trust - and friendship with Leon - you know - rather than try and show Leon - "I'm stronger than you" which he isn't anyway.

[Philip says how he banned Samuel from unit 3 one night.]

Philip: And come to think about it - Andy was quite pleased - and it didn't click.

15 Tina: He's very frightened.

[Andrew Chetland says how Andy had asked him to ban both Samuel and Leon from the unit.]

20 Tina: He won't stop them - he'll invite them in. But you're asked to go out and do the dirty work - you're like - the Guardian Angel at the gate - protecting him all the time. He's very frightened - that's what worries me.

Through the sequential association of a series of empirical episodes a galvanizing theme emerges. To grasp each of the stories together as a paradigmatic whole requires that one elicit a generic rule germane to each situation. A clue lies in the preliminary instructions, and those scattered throughout the text, for how to read it; what the events are collectively "about". Tina's identification of Andy as a "very frightened boy" (lines 3 and 15), fashions our hearing of the account. We search for evidence which may corroborate or challenge the predisposing contention.

Andy's fear is one *motif* that runs through the interaction, but it is overlaid by another. While underneath it all Andy is "very frightened" of Samuel and Leon, he attempts to appear to the contrary. A paradoxical subversion operates here to structure the discursive relationship between Andy's surface behaviour and his underlying feelings. While underneath he is very frightened, his overt behaviour gives the impression of friendliness, by for instance inviting Samuel and Leon into the unit when he *in fact* is scared of them. By paradoxically displacing the apparent a homogeneous theme emerges from the conjunction of episodes.

A paradigmatic pattern similarly emerges in the next account through the compilation of stories. Resonance is once more achieved through the operation (and identification) of a

general “rule” which unites a group of events or stories through the principle of “one rule for all”. Once the rule is “cracked”, each new item can be incorporated to it. The following piece is drawn from a T.M.

1 Kate: So it looks as if Damian Tanner might be on the way out. See the trouble is that that boy - when the papers for him first came to us -

Brian: Uhm.

5 Kate: it said - “there’s one boy who must not be allowed to visit him - the two of them together are a disaster”. It was a kid called Billy Ryan. And in fact when we got papers asking us to take this Billy Ryan - we refused on the grounds that we already had Damian Tanner. Then there was Nicky Wicks - he teamed up with Nicky Wicks. Nicky Wicks got borstal.

Brian: Mmm.

10 Kate: Damian very much involved.

Brian Mmm.

Kate: Then he’s teamed up with Perry and Richard Ashworth you know it-it just - I’m afraid is Damian.

Brian: Mmm.

15 Kate: He’s got a very nas ah-ah - one of the things that’s been causing trouble - young uhm - Ja-James (1.5) his mum - had him when she was thirteen - and she is (1.5) uhm - well - she acts as though she’s about thirteen still! She-she has got - what the doctors call uhm - an untreatable -

Brian: personality disorder

20 Kate: personality disorder. She wears tiny little skirts - ribbons in her hair -

25 although she's in her thirties now - and uh - behaves as if she's a young teenager - very much - and goes around with different men (she's always got a different boyfriend to sleep with). And they rigged this tape recording. Now I don't know whether they had - some idea of what his mum is like - or whether it was just (1.5) saying - "James' mum's a slag and a whore and a (1.5) prostitute" - and all the rest of it - and kept playing it to James - and James was getting - very upset about it. And so he went to (2) ah (2) Samuel - and Samuel decided to play the Godfather and he's been threatening Richard Ashworth in particular.

30 Brian: Well he's very uhm - he's much brighter than the others - in that group - and he's incredibly manipulative - and he's got the use of them - like a shield - like he used uhm - Nicky Wicks like a shield. And really - it's a classic of Nicky Wicks going down and -

Kate: and Damian Tanner still here!

35 Brian: and Damian Tanner still here!

Kate: Yer - and so I think it's being decided that we may be able to do good for Damian but how many kids can we let him destroy before - we get rid of him.

38 So - that's the unit 1 situation.

The reader is immediately instructed to configure events in the context of their being sufficiently serious for Damian to be possibly "on the way out" (line 1). Thereafter a series of deviant episodes are quoted, each of which involve Damian in a Machiavellian seat of power. He is implicated on three occasions where some deed, specified or not, is perpetrated, and for which another collaborator "takes the buck". A rhythmic beat is built up through the presentational procedures. First there was Billy Ryan . . . then there was Nicky Wicks . . . then there was Perry and Richard Ashworth. A sense of continuity engendered by "this-then-that-then-this" - etc. helps identify the generic rule through which separate items can be assimilated to a paradigmatic framework.

The boy's motivational rationale is articulated more clearly in lines 30-32 of this

account than in the prior one. Brian defines it in terms of his clever and conscious manipulation of his less able peers into positions of danger which shield him from exposure. We are guided throughout the piece to read Damian's behaviour as a cynical and conscious manipulation of those around him, laced with an element of nastiness rather than emotional disturbance. The emphasis is, if you will, criminalizing rather than pathologizing.

In the next account a rhythmic resonance is orchestrated between a series of sequential episodes during Leon Pryce's stay in the assessment centre. The piece is extracted from a written report composed by the head of Leon's residential unit.

1 "With regards to Leon's contacts with his foster parents, these have been
 bizarre to say the least.

 Initially Mrs. M. visited regularly if briefly. She was always ready to have
 Leon stay weekends in the family house in Sussex, but Leon invariably
5 refused. He wanted to visit their town home in (S.E. London) which he was
 forbidden due to the proximity of his old mates on the glue-scene.

 Then Mrs. M. took Leon out for the day, but arrived with another boy in tow
 who was French and spoke not a word of English and with whom Leon had
 to share his day out with his mother.

10 Finally "dad" called to see if Leon would like to go to Sussex with them for
 the weekend and if so he'd pick him up immediately. For the first time Leon
 agreed. Fifteen minutes later Dr. M. 'phoned back to say he'd 'phoned his
 wife who'd informed him they had full house - and there was no room for
 Leon.

15 Why Dr. M. could not have ascertained this fact before, or instead of ringing
 to invite Leon there is, alas, only too typical of the family dynamics and staff
 here felt that such incidents as the two described above illustrated how
 undervalued Leon must have felt in his "family" . . . On the latter occasion
 Leon just took the cancelled invitation in his stride and manfully concealed
20 any disappointment or anger."

We are instructed in lines 1-2 how we are to “read” the forthcoming episodes which configure under the rubric of the “bizarre”. In each of the following scenarios a paradoxical contrast is constructed between two parts. In the first part the good intentions of Leon’s foster parents are set-up, only to be undermined in some way by their subsequent behaviour.

- A) i) Mrs. M. would invite him to the country house where he didn’t want to go,
ii) but forbid access to the town house where he did.

- B) i) Mrs. M. took Leon out for the day,
ii) but brought along a non-English speaking stranger to share it.

- C) i) Dr. M. invited him to the country house in Sussex for the weekend, and for the first time in ages he accepted,
ii) only to hear fifteen minutes later that he couldn’t go because the M’s had a “full house” that weekend.

In lines 15-20 the final subversive episode is incorporated into a schema held to typify “M” family dynamics, and to epitomize Leon’s sense of being undervalued. Even before the reader has reached this point of interpretation, however, the thematic resonance accomplished through the cumulation of three instances encourages her to find the rule through which they can be “grasped together” in Ricoeur’s phrase. Although the first episode (lines 3-6) may, in its singularity, be read as a sign of Mrs. M’s good intentions to protect Leon from his old glue-sniffing mates, its formal symmetry with the next two episodes suggests a collective reading in retrospect. The discursive use of bi-partite contrasts to characterize each of the three chapters facilitates the identification of a series of paradoxes through which the benevolent intentions of the M’s are subverted by their behaviour which, consciously or otherwise, verges on the malevolent.

The final extract in this sub-section is perhaps the most elaborate, and nicely displays the interaction between the rational and paradigmatic mode. It well illustrates how, once a pattern has been identified, it offers a framework to which a range of items may be assimilated. This, in turn, confirms the validity of the original pattern. Clearly this process of mutual elaboration depends upon the documentary dynamic.

Brian: Maybe that {gives him -
{

Nicola: {He does that -

Brian: some sort of structure. Maybe he {feels -
{

25 Nicola: {Yes

Brian: he hasn't got enough structure - you know.

30 Nicola: He does actually - con (1.5) conversationally he uses - that kind of structure
- much more than most boys could think of it 'cus he's always saying - "I want
to do such and such but I won't because" and then he'll go round the room
and give all the different opinions that he thinks he'll get back and why he
therefore won't do it. He's done that - you know - quite a lot - it's quite a
common conversational device with him.

35 Jan: It's quite common within his family as well (clears throat) not so much "I
want to but I won't". Paul says - "Oh - I'm going to do - such-and-such-and-
such-and such" which he knows isn't acceptable - and his father - sort of
semi-joking - semi-seriously - says something like - you know - "Oh well - fine
- you do that I'll break both ya legs" or something. And then Paul will say -
"Oh alright dad" - and that's the sort of pattern within the house is that Paul
40 says something which he knows he's not going to get away with - dad - half-
jovially threatens him - and then Paul backs down and then dad is sort of
boosted up a bit as as the (2) the father-figure - and the the authority figure
and Paul - you know Paul enjoys it.

44 Nicola: So Paul attributes other people being the reason for him never taking the
initiative.

Kate primarily identifies in lines 1-6 the kind of retrospective gloss which furnished the accounts on pages 342-346 above. A paradigmatic schema is sketched which has the tentative status of "how it seems" to Kate. Jan responds to Kate's provisional observations in a way that

displays her understanding, as well as lending her authority to the burgeoning pattern. She does so by offering an empirical example of how a recent spate of glue-sniffing, culminating in a handbag snatch, took place after a successful summer holiday. The procedures employed here smack of those considered in the next section.

The theorization contained on lines 14-26 is dedicated to a retrieval of the motivations which undergird such patterned manifestations. Two candidate explanations emerge to account for Paul's predilection for messing things up when all is apparently well. In the first Paul is testing, or checking-out the trustworthiness of the environment and those who reside in it. In the second, Paul's behaviour is interpreted as an attempt to ensure the erection of a structure of external control in which he feels more secure.

Notable throughout this extract is how the stronger the identified pattern, the more a sense of randomness is systematically reduced. Rather than conceiving Paul's unexpected bouts of glue-sniffing as a testament to their randomness, they are brought into a causal correlation with the behaviour which preceded them. Periods of reasonably even-keeled behaviour (this) followed by (then) bouts of disruptiveness (that), are transformed into this *because* of that: a procedure which is key to the establishment of causality.

A pattern is established then by investing Paul's behaviour with a psychological motivation toward either testing-out the reliability of the world, and/or imposing an external structure of control for himself. The suspension of disruptive behaviour after these episodes is similarly endowed with a consequential status which in due course will itself produce the "even keel" responsible for activating a further bout.

The edifice of paradigmatic and rational reasoning erected on lines 1-26 is further strengthened by the cumulation of two more instances of behaviour which exhibit *the same* recurrent pattern. The unfolding of Paul's behavioural map provides the requisite organization through which Nicola is able to identify conversational patterns in the classroom (lines 27-32). Finally, on lines 33-42 Jan extends this characteristic conversational mode to the family in which Paul suggests the unacceptable *in order that* his father will impose an external structure of authority which Paul seems to "enjoy".

If a pattern is to be shown to inhere in a child's behaviour rather than the environment,

it must be trans-temporal and trans-locational. Without historical and geographical resonance paradigmatic patterns are weakened, or transferred to another candidate bearer, such as the institution for example. That Paul's behaviour exhibits typical scenarios through time and across different settings, strengthens the paradigmatic case.

ii) Assimilating Present Events to a Historical/Paradigmatic Pattern

The last account points toward a mode of paradigmatic accounting whereby a contemporary event is brought within the fold of an established pattern. In so doing the present item is temporally aligned with the past as another instance of . . . the same thing. Consider, first of all, three extracts in which the boy's recent relationship with his peers is explicitly identified as the manifestation of his historical tendencies. Ben Jackson's patterned predisposition toward making destructive relationships informs the interpretation of his recent relationship with David Lyons in both extracts below.

1 George: Uhm (.5) Ben then (.5) began a similar love-hate relationship with David
 Lyons. In the past - uhm - two case conferences - you know - we've uhm -
 mentioned about this sort of - love-hate relationship which Ben and - this
 other boy - Simon Wells - had. And you know - he seems to be - taking that
5 sort of (1) into the actual relationship with uhm David Lyons - a West Indian
 boy.

[George Wallace - Ben Jackson's C.C.]

And similarly:

1 Philip: Uhm (1) Ben was very involved in (.5) things with David (Lyons) (2) and it
 was quite a destructive relationship. And - one of the jobs we're left with
 now is getting - Ben to look at that (.5) more - and not just say - "well I was
 winding him up - but I won't do it again". But to look at why - how he gets
5 into these sort of relationships. And when 'e first came in here - it was a sort
 of love-hate relationship with Simon Wells. And as soon as David (.5) came
 (1) most groups have a fight for - position of the top dog - of the - place. He
 had a position - fight for the position of bottom dog. And the two of them
 - were fighting out for who was the mascot of the group. (1.5) Uhm (.5)

10 an-and that was a very destructive relationship - for-for both of them. And
- you know - why does Ben get himself into these things?

[Philip Hooper - day conference]

Both extracts explicitly map a connection between Ben's relationship with Simon Wells and David Lyons. Ben's relationship with David is grasped together with the earlier one and placed within the same mantle. The protocol of patterning is such that events which were hitherto isolated and specific assume the status of collective generality. What is at stake is not just Ben's destructive relationship with two individual boys, but his propensity to have destructive relationships in general, of which these two cases are examples. Hence we hear in George's account how "he seems to be - taking that sort of (love-hate pattern) into the actual relationship with uhm David Lyons" (lines 4-5), and in Philip's, how the point is not to look at the specifics, "But to look at why - how he gets into these sort of relationships" (lines 4-5) in the first place.

For the relationship between temporally distinct events to gel one factor must be held constant as the connecting brace between the different episodes. What unites the two events here is the continuity of "Ben" who is thus conceived as the bridging agent. Through this discursive manoeuvre the problem is attributed to the boy and his psychological predisposition. The boy, Simon Wells, is similarly the "factor x" which is held constant across past and present events in Roger Carter's *resumé* of a holiday period in the extract below. The context is a day conference.

1 Roger: Now (1) the (.5) holiday with the exception of the fair - has been I think very
quiet on the whole. Uhm (3.5) Simon Wells uhm (2) it was arranged that he
actually spent some time with his girlfriend - and lived at - the girl friend's
5 house. But as - always with Simon - it became a very intense relationship -
and it broke down uh - as for living there - and at the present moment she
- this girl comes in - but (.5) he-he seems to get so intense this kid - that ah
7 - it blows hot and cold so - so often.

The thread of continuity is secured in lines 4-5: "as - always with Simon" his relationship with his girlfriend became "very intense" and "broke down". This sense of repetition is reinforced by Roger's recognition that Simon "blows hot and cold so - so often" (line 7). The uniqueness of recent events is displaced in this process of paradigmatic assimilation.

The break-down in Simon's relationship with his girlfriend thus assumes the status of "another instance of" the same old pattern.

The preceding three accounts all present the boy's contemporary behaviour as the expression of a pattern which is already established. It is thus a matter of no surprise. In the next piece a recent episode prompts Kate Lambert and Tom Paine - the bursar - to cast the line of paradigmatic reasoning back to a previous event which is thus brought into conceptual symmetry. The discussion takes place in a P.O's meeting.

1 [Paul Skinner, head of social work, describes a recent occasion where Sam King had lost his temper and "blown a fuse" after a series of incidents which upset him, and started "f-ing and blinding" in front of boys and staff.]

Tom: He seems on a very short fuse doesn't he.

5 Paul: It was good - I think it was good the way he came round.

Tom: Oh yes - I mean - yer.

Paul: I mean he was saying - I-I then walked out with him on Tuesday night - I think he had had enough. And I said "Well you know (.5) it's not like you".

Tom: {That's right.

{

10 Paul: {"It's not - what we'd expect -

Tom: Yer.

Paul: of you" - and he seemed to be quite (?). He said "I was going to do some apologizing this afternoon but I didn't get round to it - I was a bit frightened" he said "but I'll make sure I do it tonight".

15 [Tom says a lot of good things are said about him and it does seem to be a bit "out of character".]

Kate: Yer (.5) i-it always amazes me how he came here - it was becus - wasn't it -
at (his previous position at a children's home.)

(1)

20 Tom: {Yes.
{

Kate: {he'd had a big (.5) blow up with the staff there.

Tom: That's right {yer.
{

Kate: {That's why he came here. And-and I've always thought - "I've
never seen any of that".

25 Tom: Yer well that's right - I think that was at the back of my mind - becus I knew -

Kate: Yer.

27 Tom: you know what happened there.

The fact that the person under scrutiny - Sam King - is a member of the social work staff, does not alter the discursive devices through which a sense of continuity is achieved. Sam's "blown fuse" provides the occasion for re-evoking an incident from his past of which it is remindful.

That the recent occurrence is portrayed as a matter of surprise ("not like" Sam, line 8, not what they'd "expect", line 10, "a bit out of character", line 16), only serves to authorize Kate's identification of a connection. That she is "amazed" how he came to St. Nicholas' (line 17) has connotations for how we read the legitimacy of her account. In spite of appearance, and the lot of good things said about him (which provide the grounds for being "amazed") Sam's recent behaviour is assimilated to a previous episode categorized as sufficiently similar to suggest an embryonic pattern. That they are surprised, amazed and dismayed, implies that they had not been looking for or expecting the repetition of previous aggression. If accorded a singular status Sam's recent outburst may have been defined as "one-off" and out of character; in conjunction with a previous incident an emergent paradigm is brought into tentative

existence. Historical knowledge which may remain at the “back of the mind” (line 26) is brought to the forefront when resonant events occur. Hearing repetitions of the same or similar items is the precondition of identifying a paradigmatic pattern.

A prerequisite of accomplishing a patterned relationship is the assumption that the patterns belong to the *same* person. In the preceding piece, for example, “Sam” is the entity which is held constant in relation to which behaviour *then* and *now* can be meaningfully connected. What is assumed is a quality of “Samness” about Sam in relation to which isolated occasions and events can be paradigmatically aligned. What Sam’s recent loss of temper may be assimilated to is a violent streak which had lain in wait since the last episode. Symmetry and asymmetry are only decipherable against this ghost background.

In the final extract below concerning Steve Butler, recent information invites not the confirmation of a previous trend, or the reawakening of a hidden propensity. Rather, a *gestalt-switch* occurs which transforms the meaning of earlier events. The setting is one of Steve Butler’s C.C.’s.

Peter S: Is that a fair summary (.5) Sam (.5) of what you said? Is there (.5) anything that you would want to add to what I’ve just said? Or are there any questions that you might wish to raise - any one of you - not just Mr. and Mrs. Butler? (1.5)

Mrs. B: Well - with Steve coming home (.5) I didn’t know there was still - he was still trying to get out of it becus - the other weekend Steve asked us if he could stay permanently (.5) and come in on a day basis. Whether - that was just - becus he’d (.5) taken something from here at the time - I don’t know.

Peter S: Yes I suspect it might be becus he was worried about coming back.

Mrs. B: Yer.

Peter S: Yer.

Steve’s desire to become a day-boy is subjected to cynical scrutiny in the context of

later knowledge of his theft from St. Nicholas'. The attribution to Steve of an ulterior motivation messes up appearance and commissions a search underneath.

iii) The Retrospective-Prospective Nature of Institutional Accounts

In this class of extracts the *genre* of accounting is both retrospective and prospective in that a chain of prior events is seen to lead to an ineluctable conclusion. The final scenario thus provides the occasion for retracing antecedent events, investing them with a significance that is only fully apprehendable in the light of later ones. Accounts in this category are *retrospective* in that they create a sense of semantic symmetry by reorganizing the past in accordance with later events. They are *prospective* in that they perceive in earlier events the seeds of later development.

The first excerpt from a T.M. nicely elaborates the ways in which retrospective-prospective accounts forge links between past and future events, galvanizing them into a chain.

- 1 [Kate, as P.O. on duty the previous night, speaks of it being "hell".]
- Jason: See I-I said to you last night didn't I - that - it seems to me that in an evening (.5) like last night (.5) you could see what's 'appening - they were working themselves up from very early on.
- 5 Kate: Uhm.
- Jason: And they were getting higher and higher. So - bound - something was bound to happen eventually . . . it seemed to me that instead of the staff being sort of (1) uhm (1) grouping - and actually attacking the problem - and doing something (.5) all the staff . . . all-all drifted away . . . And it's - again easy to
- 10 see 'cus they were all milling around the school getting wound up . . . But I-I mean that-that's - those were just my thoughts on it - and I - you could see it 'appening - they were getting higher and higher and more excited. And when one staff (.5) came out - they would sort of (1) uhm (.5) wind-up that member of staff . . . it just seemed - generally around the place when you
- 15 walked through - there were (.5) groups of boys - and a number of staff (.5) over there somewhere.

Kate: Yer.

Jason: And no - there didn't seem to be any involvement.

[Kate asks if this all happened between six and seven p.m.]

20 Jason: Yes on (.5) but the build up - I mean - it was - obviously straight after tea - whatever they (.5) they got into - they got up to they-they (.5) it looked like - it was gonna get worse - and it was - bound to - I mean if I can see it - surely everybody else can see it.

Kate: Uhm.

25 Jason: By the end of the evening there's gonna be a confrontation. And that's the sort of evening where somebody's gonna get badly hurt.

Three recurrent *motifs* are rhythmically interwoven in Jason's account. One theme, which does not concern us here, consists of Jason's allocation of blame to the staff (lines 7-9, 14-18). The other two themes are pivotal in the retrospective-prospective construction of events. The first theme is embedded in Jason's assumption that the events he perceived were clear for all to see (lines 3-4, 9-10, 11-12, 22-23). Jason's admonition that you could "see it 'appening", it was easy to see, and if he saw it, surely everyone else must have, relies upon a theory of the world in which meaning is unequivocal; where the reciprocity of perspectives, based as it is on the same sensory stimulus, is perfect.

The second theme lies in the retrospective capacity to read in events a chain of prospective inevitability which could be seen (at least by those who looked) "all along". A past point is cited from which the future was foreseeable: a procedure well encompassed by the term "hindsight". The account skilfully bobs and weaves between past and future events, linked through the discursive dynamic itself.

3 has been David Lyons (.5) and his (.5) departure. (1) Uhm (1.5) it ended up in an incident that (1.5) we knew had been coming (.5) for a number of (.5) well for quite a while. It's (1) it was one incident which got out of hand. It could have been any one of another dozen incidents (1) in the previous - two to three months quite easily.

David's career at St. Nicholas' ended, we are told, with an event they *knew* would happen all along. The culminating occurrence, retrospectively fixed in the past, is also fixed, pincer-like, in the trap of *a priori* inevitability. The future *then* (now past) could thus be "told".

In each of the three forthcoming accounts Samuel Nailer's deterioration at St. Nicholas' is treated as the manifestation of a predictable pattern which the staff either *should* have expected or *did* expect all along. In the first excerpt drawn from an emergency C.C. Melvin Hardy, Samuel's special worker, directs the following observation to the boy himself.

A)
1 Melvin: I was talking to a member of staff this morning who said (1) when Samuel
 first came here he said "Oh I'm a nice boy - I'm a really great boy now. But
 you wait 'til I've been here some time - then you'll see what [?]" I mean -
 that's what's coming out - but it's not just happened here - it happened at
5 (names a previous placement) it's happened at your boarding schools. The
 majority of placements you've had - you've been there for so long - and it's
 started to break down - and the same thing's happened. (2.5) Why? There's
 a limit to how much we can help you - and how much every other place can
 help you - you've got to help yourself some of the time. For us to help you
10 you've got to help us.

Again, from a T.M:

B)
1 Jason: I mean - when he first came here butter wouldn't melt in his mouth - he was
 such a nice boy and everything.

Kate: Yes.

Jason: Well behaved - intelligent - you know.

5 Kate: What the hell's he doing here?

Jason: But we all know from read - if you read his reports - his file - every establishment he's been in his done exactly the same.

Brian: He's deteriorated.

Jason: So it was bound to happen sooner or later.

10 Brian: Uhm.

Kate: Uhm.

12 Jason: Uhm (3) So I mean - you know - we shouldn't all be so surprised.

And finally, from another T.M:

C)

1 Brian: I mean - I was chatting to uhm Melvin - Samuel's special worker - and he was saying that uhm (1.5) now Samuel's showing - when he read Samuel's notes he couldn't believe it was the same boy . . . and now he's displaying everything - Samuel just about everything that's written - but the shame is (.5) it's far too
5 late -

Kate: Uhm.

Brian: for Samuel really - not only as regards this place - but as regards Samuel really.

9 Kate: If he gets borstal.

In the preceding extracts a resonance is set up between Samuel's career at St. Nicholas' and at previous placements. Through this connecting causeway history is seen to repeat itself.

Where the pattern of behaviour can be shown to be translocational it can more readily be identified as a feature of the child than another candidate bearer, such as the institution. Since Samuel's behaviour had "not just happened here", but at a number of previous institutions (extract A, lines 4-6), and at "every establishment he's been in" (extract B, lines 6-7), his recent deterioration at St. Nicholas' is treated as something which staff may reasonably have expected *all along*.

Samuel's degeneration is thus incorporated into an historical pattern, according to which his exhibition of "really great" (extract A line 2), "butter wouldn't melt" (extract B line 1) type behaviour in the early period of his stay is relegated to a deceptive and preliminary status, prior to the appearance of the "real" Samuel. The identification is both retrospective and prospective. On the one hand Samuel's deterioration fulfils the prospective expectations inscribed in the written reports. On the other hand his initial behaviour is retrospectively subjected to cynical scrutiny as a temporary facade which is repetitively donned by Samuel for his own ulterior purposes. In spite of the initial appearance which threatened to dupe them, Samuel's behaviour is categorized as "one more instance of . . . the same old pattern".

In the next piece Thomas McKinney sees in later events the confirmation of prior anticipation which itself feeds *from* and *into* a network of typifications about what we might expect from "boys of this type".

1 [A discussion ensues about a fight which Richard Dickens had that morning at work where he "lost control" over a petty incident. Richard was an ex-resident of unit 4 who was presently in the "half way house" on the premises of St. Nicholas].

5 Thomas: 'Cus that just again highlights in inverted commas - I know it's not the right kind of - "the damaged kid" - you know - when things are going fine - when things are going - hunky-dory - kind of thing - there's no problem at all - y'know. They tend to main-maintain a pretty (2.5) pretty reasonable equilibrium ... they are O.K until they're faced with conflict and they cannot
10 cope with it at all - yer? In fact it's a total break down. And sometimes (.5) it's a break down where there's a total imbalance between the thing that's triggered it off (.5) and the action taken. And normally kind of thing - it's

punished at the level of-of - at the level of action - yer? Where in fact what it is is a whole series of - a build up.

15 David W: But I mean . . . I would have anticipated something - you know - it's getting near him going out - and he's gonna try and piece - a whole series of things together.

Thomas: Yes-yes-yes-yes-yes.

David: And he's stuck.

20 Thomas: Yes - yes - it's not just the Richard Dickens' but I mean most of our kids - most of our kids.

Caroline: Uhm.

David: Oh yer - but I mean it's just that-that - we've had a whole series of things - from Richard being -

25 Thomas: Oh yes and will continue to. That is - I mean that's a - that's almost a pre-determination now.

David: Uhm.

30 Thomas: I mean a beautiful example I s'pose is the Junieur Knight's - look (.5) I mean when Junieur Knight was good I mean he was excellent. In fact when he was good he was a pain in the arse - 'cus he didn't really know how to manage that one either.

David: No.

Thomas: But like when he was faced with stress - look what happened to him.

David: Uhm.

35 (1)

Thomas: As soon as they're faced with a problem for which there is no immediate answer (Thomas claps his hands and blows a loud raspberry). (3) And (.5) they're not quite sure - somehow or other like - they the-the actual strategies needed - yer - to succumb to that next problem - that next barrier - next
40 hurdle - they actually haven't got it yet (2) and that's - that's a kind of psychological kind of thing - a kind of psychological threshold - where they
42 become almost inhuman.

Richard Dickens' fight provides an occasion upon which to incorporate his behaviour into a pattern which is held to characterize not only Richard *per se*, but the class of damaged kids from which he is drawn. It is Richard *qua* "kids of this kind" who "maintains a pretty reasonable equilibrium" when "things are going hunky dory" but who "cannot cope" and "totally breaks down" when faced with conflict. Thomas adumbrates the typical response of the disturbed kid to conflict, a model to which the individual cases of Richard and Junious are assimilated: "It's not just the Richard Dickens' but I mean most of our kids most of our kids" (lines 20-21) and "I mean a beautiful example I s'pose is the Junious Knight's" (line 28). Thomas maps the typificatory process onto individual boys - the Richard Dickens' and Junious Knights' - who are thus denuded of their individual status and return as representatives of "the damaged kid". This "gallery of rogues" method was sometimes employed by staff at St. Nicholas' as a typifying shorthand.

The schema Thomas uses to typify the response of "boys of this kind" to conflict welds together past, present and future by identifying in behaviour a "pre-determination". Richard's behaviour can thus be reflexively assimilated to a pre-existing pattern of interpretation. This process is also apparent in David's account (lines 15-17), which has a prospective flavour. David would purportedly have "anticipated something" given Richard's imminent departure. This assumption itself feeds from the pool of institutional wisdom about what one might typically expect from the boys at particular stages of their career at St. Nicholas', in this instance, near leaving.

In the next extract, like the last one, the author generates an eloquent

retrospective-prospective account which weaves between a typified past and a specified present; between this particular boy and boys “of this kind”. Enjoy the artistry of this court report written by a member of staff at the institution where Steve Butler was situated prior to his admission to St. Nicholas’.

1 “He is always very vulnerable to any delinquent excitement within the school, and if his circumstances become at all insecure he will invariably act-out in a delinquent way. In general terms we feel that Steve was well placed with us and he was responding well to our treatment.

5 Serious difficulties arose for Steve and a number of other children . . . shortly after the announcement of (the home’s) impending closure. Your Worships will appreciate the whole basis of our work with emotionally disturbed boys and girls is based on our providing them with a secure and stable base from which to move forward. The proposed closure of (the
10 home) the provider of this stable and secure base, undoubtedly created considerable anxiety and significantly three days after this announcement was made Steven became involved with (other boys) in the incident which brings him before this court. Since this incident Steven has tried to block out the facts about (the home’s) closure and because of the uncertainty of the
15 future, we have decided to curtail his home visits because of his vulnerability to acting-out.

 While accepting that these offences are of a serious nature, it is important to indicate that they are in our view very closely linked to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. Given a more stable base then the prognosis for
20 Steven is much more positive.”

 This account is *retrospective* because its author presents a reconstruction of events already past, the pattern of which could not have been known contemporaneously. It is *prospective* in as much as the author attempts to situate what happened in the context of what may have been expected *all along* from an “emotionally disturbed” boy (line 7) such as Steve Butler.

Lines 1-3 identify an habitual association between “this” - Steve’s feeling insecure - and “that” - his “acting-out”. The propensity itself is placed in the context of Steve’s vulnerability to delinquency suggesting an “elective affinity” between the two. The typifying framework “if-this-then-that” offers a method of assimilating the empirically specific instance in lines 5-6: the closure of the home. We progress in lines 1-6 from Steve’s typified propensity to behave in predictable ways under certain circumstances, to a depiction of events which represent the necessary catalyst (“if this . . .”).

The emphasis shifts once more in lines 6-9 which wrap the foregoing account in a further discursive layer. We are transported from the case of Steve to “children of this kind” who are emotionally disturbed and of whom he is representative. The threat to the security through which they work with these *kinds* of children is thus seen to give rise to a generalized anxiety.

Provided with a key to fit Steve’s behaviour into a biographical and categorical pattern the account returns on lines 9-12 to the specifics of the offence. Its temporal situation, three days after the announcement of closure, is imbued with a significance which resonates throughout the layers of the account:

- i) A secure environment is the prerequisite of work with emotionally disturbed kids.
- ii) The home’s impending closure threatens security and hence causes anxiety.
- iii) Steve “acts out” when he’s insecure and has a propensity to delinquency.
- iv) Steve commits his offence three days after the announcement of the closure.

And so we return to point (i).

From this web of practical reasoning a preventive awareness emerges in lines 13-15 culminating in a curtailment of Steve’s home visits. Why? Because as we the readers already know, he is vulnerable to acting-out. Steve is subject to the rhetoric of underlying motives in which his behaviour is seen to “block out the facts” (line 13) which are incontrovertibly there for the experts to see. The “case” concludes on lines 16-20 by reinforcing the “if-this-then-that” formula. Thus if “this” is removed then “that” will disappear.

The accounts analyzed so far in the retrospective-prospective *genre* invest events with a “pre-determination” to use Thomas’ phrase; an ineluctable sequentiality. We now turn to a

selection of extracts where later events serve to confirm what was previously constructed as “just a suspicion”, or which prompt a re-examination of previous interpretations on the basis of “new evidence”. We are in the realm of intuition, gut feeling and vague suspicion which later events serve either firm-up or slacken. The first piece is extracted from a P.O’s meeting.

[Roger tells the story of how Samuel and Leon asked him for permission to go out over the previous weekend when he was on P.O’s duty:]

Roger: And - so - I just sort of smelt a rat there - I said - “O.K. - fine. Now off you go” - we’re in the risk game - “off you go!” sort of thing. And at eight-thirty a telephone call came through from Samuel - very responsibly actually - Leon Pryce is paralytic (Roger laughs) down by the uhm (.5) Mercedes Benz place - down there ... So ah (.5) it sounded very - so I thought - O.K. - well I’ll get in my car and go and pick them up - so I drove round and found the place.

The rat that Roger smelt is given authentication by later events. In the forthcoming piece Roger tentatively smells a whole pack of rats in accounting for his growing suspicion of Brenda Derby, a member of staff who had recently been promoted to a senior social work rank within the institutional hierarchy. It was planned that Brenda would move from unit 2 to unit 3 to fill the vacancy in that unit for a higher grade social worker.

1 [Roger reports back from the weekend - in particular the day before - Sunday.]

Roger: You know my-my views - my-my beginning concern with Brenda Derby don’t you.

5 Kate: Yes.

Roger: I think I’m being confirmed . . . uhm - to a point where I don’t think I’m going to put her into unit 3 - becous she is thick in - with Tina Wait - and the Waits’
(1)

Kate: Uhm.

10 (2)

Roger: And yesterday lunch-time you see (.5) we had (1) difficulty in getting the kids to lunch - some of 'em because they were playing the galaxy machines (i.e. "space invaders").

Kate: Uhm.

15 [Roger details the difficulty they had in getting the boys off the machines.]

Roger: And then (.5) at about one o'clock (.5) casually arriving (1) was Brenda Derby (2) for her lunch (2) but there wasn't much left - so I said "Where have you been Brenda?" - "I've been for coffee". So I said "I'm sorry Brenda you haven't been for coffee" - jokingly I said "you've been for drinks" which is obviously what she'd been doing - she'd been drinking (.5) at the Waits' house. What - was a concern of mine is that - we're trying to say to kids - you know - "here is a meal - we sit down and have a meal together" and she arrives at one o'clock for it . . . I'm very angry with Brenda Derby.

20

A minute later:

Roger: Uhm (.5) but I think I've gotta get hold of Brenda Derby. At - at the moment you see - I (.5) do not want Brenda Derby working in - unit 3.

25

Kate: Uhm.

Roger: Because ah - she's ah - I think quite dangerous actually - and I think there's a lot going on at the present moment and I - happen (.5) becus of my anxiety - you hear more things - when you're anxious than you actually (.5) realize you're going to hear.

30

Kate: Uhm.

35 Roger: Uhm - and that depends perhaps on what you want to hear. But uh (.5) I understand she's also spewing out an awful lot about (.5) things going on. Ah - so I'm (1) I'm fairly anxious about the lady at the moment. I've always told you I'm anxious about her.

Kate: Yes.

Roger: I'm more anxious about her now . . . But uhm (1.5) I'm afraid my lady's causing me some worry.
(1)

40 Kate: Uhm.

Roger: . . . she's not going into unit 3 with with Tina Wait - no way.

Kate: No - well - you've (1) with the Jan Butler business - you've felt she was somewhere in there.

Roger: Without any doubt at all. I'm now more convinced than ever.

45 Kate: Well if-if-if -

Roger: She's in the games (?stuff?) I'm afraid my dear.

Kate: Really?

Roger: Uhm - at our expense too - management. I think she's very anti-authority.

Kate: Yes.

50 Roger: Huh-hum.
(2.5)

Kate: Well you've always said that - haven't you.

Roger: Well I've (.5) felt so - but ah . . . But I think uhm (.5) our Mrs. Brenda Derby's right in the middle of this lot.

55 Kate: Uhm.

Roger: I-I would love to have been a fly on the wall when she left her last place - to see what people were saying then.

Kate: Uhm.
(1)

60 Roger: Now - with hindsight. But we've made her a senior too.

Kate: Yep [softly].
(8)

63 Roger: Mmm!.

I quote at length from the above account because it reveals so richly the temporal processes through which tentative suspicions are galvanized into a definite sense of Brenda being a "dangerous" member of staff. Lines 3-6 show how later events serve to invest earlier suspicions with the status of "confirmations". Just as earlier suspicions inform the interpretation of later events, the latter at once serve to justify or give credence to prior doubts. A reflexive relationship is set up between the past and the present; individual examples and the interpretative framework to which they are assimilated.

The episode in which Roger describes Brenda coming late for Sunday lunch (lines 11-23) is fringed with presumptions (about her fraternizing with the Waits', drinking, doing her work casually and the like) which assume significance as an exemplification of a wider trend. It serves to bolster an apparently rather vague anxiety that Brenda is "quite dangerous" (line 27) and that "there's a lot going on at the present moment" (lines 27-28) upon which firm decisions to cancel Brenda's transfer to unit 3 are based.

The knowledge of Brenda's "spewing-out" of information about St. Nicholas'

(lines 32-33), which Roger himself attributes to his heightened sensitivity or selective perception borne of anxiety, serves to further validate the anxiety which Roger “always” had about her; the retrospective confirmation of doubts he had “all along”.

Each new episode at once takes its place within the conceptual schema (Brenda is a trouble-maker, dangerous etc.) while also reinforcing it. For instance in lines 42-43 Kate alludes to Roger’s suspicion about Brenda’s involvement in another scandal involving Jan Butler, about which he is “now more convinced than ever” (line 44). Niggles and doubts in the past are given certainty in the present, just as present observations are authorized in terms of what Roger has “always said”. The sense of temporal fluidity is accomplished through the conceptual apparatus embodied in the account which forges an alignment between what is past, passing, and to come.

iv) Telling the Future: Prospective Pessimism

In the final category of extracts, the emphasis is upon a prospective orientation to the boy’s future based upon a reading of the patterns inscribed in his past. The tone of these forecasts is characteristically both probabilistic and pessimistic, though not exclusively so. They are probabilistic in the sense that such projections are couched in the rhetoric of what is *likely* to happen in the future, given the past record. The skill of telling the future, or “preventive awareness” as it was often called by the staff at St. Nicholas’, lay not in the capacity to foretell the future with *absolute* certainty; a feat which is impossible within our temporal model of the universe. Rather, it resided in the practitioners’ capacity to utilize a range of ghost assumptions in constructing historical patterns which may bear the traces of what is to come. Interpreting the past was thus a vital component in telling the future.

Overlaying the capacity to “learn” from the past was a recurrent institutional tendency to forecast disaster in one guise or another; a capacity enshrined in what I call prospective pessimism. This orientation was a component of the deep vein of routine cynicism which ran through the institutional culture and gave rise to the suspicion about appearance (see pages 191-199). Forecasting disaster is a way of pre-empting the worst which cannot then trip you up. If the most disastrous expectations are realized, it was what you said all along; if they are not then nobody minds being happily surprised. A range of “secondary elaborations” can be brought to bear when an expected breakdown has not in fact occurred.

To speak of prospective pessimism as a theme which *overlays* much of the material we have already explored is to recognize a) that there are always many things going on in talk at any one time and b) that I am employing a theorist's prerogative in highlighting different threads of discourse at different times.

In the first cluster of accounts the prediction is premised upon an interpretation of what is *likely* to happen in the future. An orientation to the prospective possibilities allows Thomas McKinney, for instance, to interpret Leon Pryce's present behaviour as the genesis of a future trend. The extract is drawn from a S.S.M.

1 Thomas: But I-I-I think young Leon you see is - just - probably very similar to a lot of
 young lads that we've actually dealt with in the time here - the Wayne Tallis'
 of this world - where in fact - the Paul Black's ... where in fact they haven't
 got it within themselves to say "right - thank you for the service" and walk
5 out the door. And I think like - there's a strong possibility Leon will use this
 next two or three weeks - yer - to create a kind of disturbance inside here (.5
 yer? (1) And I think last night might quite easily be the beginning of it - yer?
8 That's all I'm saying.

Thomas draws upon his institutional knowledge to identify the way in which boys typically leave St. Nicholas'. The obliteration of Leon's individuality helps facilitate his incorporation into a typifying schema. Like a lot of young lads they've dealt with, the Wayne Tallis' and Paul Black's, Leon might not be able to leave graciously through the front door (lines 1-5). Against this ghost backcloth Thomas predicts the "strong possibility" that Leon might create a disturbance in the following fortnight which will culminate in his forced departure (lines 5-7). An appropriate schema identified, Leon's behaviour the previous evening can be placed in the context of the rumblings of a typified end (lines 7-8).

Note the qualifiers in which Thomas' prospective interpretation is embedded. Thomas "thinks" that Leon is "probably" similar to other lads who cannot thank them for the service, and he "thinks" there is a "strong possibility" that a typical ending is in sight. Since we cannot *know* the future (at least within the dominant cultural conception of time) its prediction is usually articulated in the language of probability.

The institutional inclination toward prospective pessimism often manifested itself in the practitioners' tendency to predict a future of institutionalization for a boy. For instance Peter French, one of the "basics" teachers, situates the fate of many of the boys at St. Nicholas' in an escalating spiral. The piece is extracted from a casual conversation between Peter and I which was covertly tape recorded.

- 1 Peter: Difficult to see what kind of a future a lot of them have got really.
- Kim: Yer (in a gloomy tone).
- Peter: . . . I think for a lot of them it's going to be a life of - ah - in and out of institutions.
- 5 Kim: Uhm.
- Peter: You know.
- Kim: Just the type of institution will change.
- Peter: Yer.
- Kim: And get less pleasant (1.5) as time goes by.
- 10 Peter: As for people like Junieur - I can't see anything there.
- Kim: As much as you can understand what sort of social prac - processes lead to that kind of dreadful -
- Peter: Uhm.
- Kim situation.
- 15 (2)
- Peter: But he brings a lot of it on himself.

Kim: Uhm.

Peter: He - if he wasn't such a big bastard -

Kim: Yer.

20 Peter: at times - he wouldn't be treated -

Kim: No - that's right.

Peter: you know -

23 Kim: But why is he a big bastard?

The institutionalized gloom to which Peter's predictions are responsive is apparent in his forecast of "no future" (outside of institutions) for a lot of the boys. For Junious in particular Peter sees "nothing there", by which he means "nothing worthwhile", an assumption which is itself a gloss for a repertoire of others. You might also note the voice of the sociologist fighting for authority in the early days of her fieldwork; who draws attention to the "social processes" (line 11) that lead the boys to being "big bastards".

This mode of prospective logic is employed in the next two extracts to predict the probable cycle of institutionalization in the case of two particular boys. In the first piece Agnes Turner forecasts a catalogue of disasters following Simon Wells' recent departure from St. Nicholas'. The account is extracted from my interview with Agnes.

Kim: Has he gone back to his - family - in Hackney is it?

Agnes Well he's gone back to (.5) the the (.5) the discharge address which is mum's. But I-I (.5) you know I really can't see him staying there - and I think (1) that - you know the nature of (.5) you know the obvious move is that he-he'll eventually sort of commit offences - he'll-he'll obviously go and squat somewhere - and - commit offences to get money (.5) and then he'll be back in institutionalized living again.

Agnes' account traces a full circle back to institutionalization punctuated by her projection that Simon will move out of his home, squat, and commit offences for gain. Juniour's future is also subjected to a pessimistic forecast in the next piece drawn from Roger Carter's interview. After being sentenced to three-weeks in D.C. Roger predicts:

1 Roger: And uh (2.5) Juniour I suppose will go inside again some time becus he will
injure somebody - and he will go inside - uhm (2) I-I make it sound as though
he's you know - not a (.5) very nice kid. But actually I-I-I'm - personally very
fond of him. I-I think that he has a really very lovely (.5) side to his nature.
5 (1) But he spends so much tjme doing his best to convince you that is actually
very short lived an-and uh - you know - most of his is a pretty nasty (1) uhm
(.5) a nasty boy - whereas in effect he's not - he's a very nice lad. (But unless
there's a Roger Carter around to give him one to one attention) he'll just
be a survivor - and he'll go in and out like a yo-yo.

10 Kim: Uhm.

Roger: So that's my description of a - of a - a kid who was presenting very disturbing
behaviour - and trying to understand why he was and - and I don't know what
13 we achieved - I don't think we achieved too much really - you know.

[Bracketed section - my summary]

Roger's predictions that Juniour will go inside (lines 1-2) and "in and out like a yo-yo" (line 9) sandwiches an authorization procedure in lines 2-7. The non-partisan nature of Roger's forecast is legitimated by his disclosure of a fondness for Juniour who has a "really very lovely (.5) side to his nature" (line 4) which he tries to conceal. Roger's pessimism can not be attributed to a personal grudge or dislike for Juniour. On the contrary, in spite of Roger's good relationship with the boy and the achievements they have tried to bring about through their work with him, Roger is constrained to recognize a gloomy future.

While probabilistic in tone the following three extracts are united in the dramatic extremity of their projections, all expressed from the security of relatively intimate professional grouping where opinions were not rigorously called to account, nor formally recorded. The first

two predict the possibility of Wayne Tallis' future death. Both were uttered in unit 4 staff meetings, the first by David Walsh:

1 David: I think we've hit - we hit a point about two months ago where we were really
 trying to work out the drugs thing - work out - trying to find out what was
 happening. And (.5) we've still (.5) got nowhere in that . . . And uhm - he
 - it's - the two things that worry me are - one - his (2) his lack of self-image
5 and his total abuse of himself. I mean this week I guarantee he stabbed
 himself in the arm - he says he got stabbed.

Joyce: And sat burning his arm at lunch-time.

David: I mean I'm - it wouldn't surprise me if one morning when someone goes to
wake him up that he's - he's dead - that he's actually lying on his bed. I mean
10 I'm getting to that sort of stage. I mean he's not really bothered. It's just lack
 of - total disinterest with everything. That's one of the things.

A series of increasingly ominous statements about Wayne culminate in David Walsh's projection of his potential fate - death - which would be a matter of "no surprise" (line 8). We are offered in lines 4-5 a glossed formula for interpreting Wayne's behaviour in terms of his self-image and self-abuse. Lines 5-7 nicely illustrate how the bringing into play of an explanatory schema facilitates ease of interpretation. The "stabbing" wound becomes evidence for further self-injury which is echoed in Joyce's observations about the burning of his arm. In this context the death-bed scene (lines 7-10) becomes a meaningful prospective scenario.

Wayne's probable death is also predicted by Sandra Crossley, his special worker, in another unit 4 meeting.

1 [Sandra says that she doesn't feel confident that if Wayne had a regular
 income he wouldn't blow it all on drugs - not just a bit of dope or booze,
 but he'd mix it, he'd really go over the top.]

Sandra: He'd probably end up killing himself or something. It's an awful thing to say
5 - but -

David: Well that's it! I'm not worrying about having a death within St. Nicholas' -
7 I mean - but I just think - there may be an alternative to uhm . . .

The fatalistic foresight proffered by David is firmed up by Sandra's statement that Wayne would probably end up killing himself (line 4). This realization prompts the necessity for intervention to search out an alternative to this pessimistic future path. If Wayne's fate is seen to lie in his probable self-destruction, Ted Vincent's is seen to lie, in the next account, in his potential to destroy others. Kate is speaking in the wake of Ted's court appearance in which he was charged with Actual Bodily Harm for his assault on a social worker at St. Nicholas' and sentenced to six weeks in D.C.

1 Kate: And - the guy at the court - the policeman was saying (.5) ah - he knows Ted quite well - and he was saying - it's such a shame - ninety-nine point nine percent of the time you couldn't wish for a nicer lad -

Brian: Uhm.

5 Kate: he said - "but in one of his rages he's going to kill someone someday". And (.5) you know - he could see it as being inevitable and -

Ruth: He was quite a favourite at (the D.C.) according to Len.

Peter: Uhm.

Kate: Oh was he?

10 Nicola: He was a favourite here - remember the - they clapped when he did his -

Kate: Yes.

Nicola: woodwork just (1) after he joined.

13 Kate: Yer - he was for ninety-nine percent of the time - a lovely lad.

[Extracted from a T.M.]

The identification of Ted's capacity to kill is authorized in two principle ways. Firstly through the method we saw in Roger's account of Junior's future on page 378. This procedure removes the possibility that the prediction is borne of a dislike for, or a grudge against Ted, but a realism about his potential to destroy despite being "ninety-nine percent of the time - a lovely lad" (line 13). The second mode of authorization lies in the proliferation of expert versions. A collection of separate groups are seen to like Ted: the policeman; staff at the D.C.; and those at St. Nicholas' where he was "a favourite". The forecast of disaster is authorized by a similar means. A sense of neutrality is achieved by invoking the words of a policeman who, entirely separate from St. Nicholas', is seen to confirm Ted's destructive capacity as an objective reality. The method of objectification at work here draws upon the common sense assumption that if something is objectively real, it will appear the same to everyone from which ever perspective they stand. Reciprocity of perspective is assumed to be based on the same external stimulus. If a policeman predicts what members of St. Nicholas' have always known, it serves to bolster its status as an independent fact.

It is attention to the rich detail of events and relationships and their psychological machinations which affords Melvin and Brian in the two extracts below an orientation to "what will happen when" a relationship ends. Predictions of this kind are similarly structured through the marriage of the ideal-typical and the specific-individual both in terms of how "boys like this", and "this particular boy" will typically react. They differ slightly from the preceding accounts in that the pre-emptive thread of reasoning is contingent upon an intermediary event. The first piece is from one of Leon Pryce's C.C.'s.

[Melvin speaks of how Leon has a good relationship with his older sister.]

Melvin: But I think we're going to see a disaster in that area fairly soon if and when his sister finds another interest - which I think is going to happen . . . Leon's going to feel very let down and we're going to see more problems with Leon.

And again, in this elaborate account articulated by Brian Potter in a T.M.:

1 [Brian speaks of Leon's tendency to emulate Samuel Nailer.]

Brian: The thing is it's almost grotesque in the sense that he's become (.5) Samuel.

And that - we saw him - we were looking at him going down the corridor and he - could have been Samuel . . .

5 Kate: Their walk is identical.

Brian: He was wearing the same clothes - it's just unbelievable . . . And he adopts the same poses and attitudes and (.5) it's like he's sub - he's such a weak personality . . . he's submerged himself totally in Samuel's identity.

Peter F: Uhm.

10 Brian: You know - and once Samuel goes - I think he might - have some sort of
12 minor personality collapse becus - he hasn't got much personality himself
you know.

To understand why Samuel's departure threatens to provoke a minor personality collapse in Leon one must appreciate what it purportedly represents. The intricacies of Leon's emulation of Samuel are set-up in the account as a document of his "weak personality" (lines 7-8), thus explaining the need for Leon's submergence to a stronger identity. In articulating the invisible, i.e. Leon's unconscious motives, Brian finds a key to unlock his future . . . "once Samuel goes".

Unlike the preceding two accounts which predict disaster for Leon *when* "his sister finds another interest" or "*once* Samuel goes", the following group of accounts replace the *when* clause with an *if*. Since the projected problem will only emerge *if* an avoidable event intervenes, such accounts incorporate a means of avoiding the disaster. Indeed, such accounts are often designed to warn of the danger, and thus attempt to remove the possibility of *this*, which *if* allowed to occur may lead to *that*. In the first clutch of extracts the *if* refers to the boy's removal from St. Nicholas' to another institution which, it is argued, would be bound to lead to disaster. The first piece is from a T.M.

[Brian speaks of the propulsion of Perry Sanders into a deteriorating state if he were to be moved on from St. Nicholas'.]

Brian: I think you see they feel that (2) if - I think the dilemma is - that if - he went somewhere else he'd almost certainly get worse . . . because if the pattern is that - like he talks about (a previous placement) as if it were Nirvana. When he was there he actually hated it - or said he did. But if he went somewhere else - it'd probably make him worse - whatever - unless it was an intensive care sort of place.

A similar prediction of failure concerns Perry's fate if he were to return to a big Comprehensive from the small teaching unit at St. Nicholas'. The discussion occurs in a T.M soon after Perry's C.C.

Brian: Ah - the education bloke - I didn't think he was -

Kim: He was a psychologist.

Brian: A psychologist.

Peter: Uhm.

Kate: Yes.

Brian: Well he wasn't very - he more or less said "well I don't agree that you should go home. But if you are going to go home we're going to send you to the biggest Comprehensive possible". That's what his drift was wasn't it - "and therefore you're going to fail - and come back here". That was - he was totally unconstructive wasn't he . . . But I personally feel that if Perry goes to a Comprehensive he'll be back with us. The option is that if he fails - rather like Mark Smith's thing - that he comes back with us.

The issue in hand here is not *whether* Perry will fail at a big Comprehensive, Brian "personally feels" that he will, but what arrangements there are *when* he fails. In the case of Charlie Hudson, presented below, the emphasis is upon proving beyond reasonable doubt the inevitability of failure if he were to go home and return to a local Comprehensive for the last two terms of his education. The F.S.W. raises the issue broached at the previous C.C.

1 F.S.W.: And I just don't see (.5) in any way - how Charlie will fit into a large Comprehensive school for two terms.

Thomas: That's right.

F.S.W: I think he wouldn't go and I think you think that too don't you?

5 Mrs. H: I don't think he would.

Caroline: No - Charlie didn't himself either think so.

[Thomas says that was just one of the ideas that were floating around. The F.S.W. says it might have been viable if he were a year younger.]

F.S.W: I actually think that (3) that just wouldn't - that-that wouldn't work - so ah -

10 Thomas: Oh yes - probably not - yer? In fact it wouldn't. But it'd be wrong not to look at it.

F.S.W: Yes.

Thomas: It would be wrong in the service we're giving Charlie Hudson -

F.S.W: Oh yes.

15 Thomas: and Mrs. Hudson not to look at it.

F.S.W: Yes.

Thomas: Yer?

F.S.W: Yer.

Thomas: But here we come out and say - it doesn't actually work - or it isn't on (.5) now

20 that's fine! O.K. - we go along with that. But it would be wrong - to pretend that-that - the possibility isn't there - O.K. (.5) and then hopefully like we can look at other possibilities.

Malcolm: We-we've tried it before - and it's -

Thomas: Yer.

25 Malcolm: fallen flat on its face!

Thomas: Yes.

Malcolm: There is a hell of a difference between this school and (1) so-called ordinary -

30 Thomas: Yer - and most schools are dead frightened of taking lads back in - yer? (1) 'cus you've been to community school - good God - they've got horns sticking out of their heads there - you know. I mean that's the system we have.

35 F.S.W: I just think it would be asking a tremendous amount (.5) of Charlie - to go into - you know (.5) a school for two terms really (1.5) which is different from here.

Thomas: Yer.

37 F.S.W: Which is much - more (.5) subject orientated.

A community of opinion is galvanized within the account that lends authority to the claim that Charlie's return to a Comprehensive would not work. In lines 1-4 the F.S.W. states his failure to see how such an arrangement would work. The ball is then thrown to Charlie's mother who lends weight to the rolling version (lines 4-5). Furthermore Charlie himself is given a share in this increasingly authorized claim albeit Caroline who gives Charlie a voice (line 6). In lines 10-11 Thomas expresses his affiliation to The View which is expressed first in probabilistic

and then in fatalistic terms: “Oh yes - probably not - yer? In fact it wouldn’t.” The growing weight of authority mounting around the (wouldn’t work) version renders necessary an explanation of why it was raised at all which Thomas provides at length in lines 10-22.

Lines 23-37 involve a triple cumulation of reasons for the predicted failure, each embodying a different mode of justification. In Malcolm’s account present pessimism is informed by past experience in which such transfers have fallen flat on their faces. Thomas blames the educational system for its attitude towards boys who’ve been to a C.H.E. The F.S.W. shifts the emphasis to Charlie for whom it would be a tremendous effort and too much to ask. A triple package of justifications wrap up the case. Each acts as a documentary support for the underlying contention that it would break down.

The “if this” in the next extract relates to the possibility of Pete Hughes being “put away” at a forthcoming court case. The discussion occurs in the T.M.

Jack: 'E's been recommended to stop 'ere 'asn't he?

Kate: Yes.

Jack: Which I think - I think if he goes - if he gets put away it'll do him a lot of damage. Quite frankly he'll go right through the system. Uhm - at the moment he is behaving himself - I don't know about other peoples classes (1.5) he is in mine anyway. 'E's a very good lad.

Jack’s reasoning procedures follow the classical “if-this-then-that” format in his expression of future pessimism: *if* Peter is given a custodial sentence *then* it will do him a lot of harm and he will go through the penal system.

The two forthcoming accounts differ in as much as the *if* concerns the dangers incurred by the child *remaining* at St. Nicholas’ beyond a certain point, or being transferred from the status of day boy to full-time resident. An orientation to disaster *if* Simon Cutts stays on beyond his exams is found in the following interchange in a T.M.

[Brian asks if Simon will be leaving after Christmas if he's taking his exams in November. Gary says that decision will be made in his December C.C.]

Brian: You see I mean I think after his exams it'll be disastrous becus (.5) he may be into something in his exams - I dunno - to what extent . . . this is relative you see becus (.5) certainly outside the exam based (1) subjects he just completely - doesn't give anything at all - you know (.5) in fact he's a bloody nuisance around the - unit - he's always in confrontation si-situations and he's just bored out of his brain. And to take - uh -once you take that away from him - then you know there's nothing we can do for him.

Gary: I mean I don't want to pre-empt the decision -

Brian No.

Gary: of the next case conference but - I mean - it's pretty certain he will be going -

Brian: Yer.

Gary: I would think unless he radically changes.

Brian: Which he won't - yer.

Gary: You know - the responsibility is his.

Brian: Uhm.
(1)

Gary: We have to give him the opportunity to do that.

In the preceding case the potential trouble is contingent upon the child remaining at St. Nicholas' beyond a specifiable point. Brian Potter culls evidence from what Simon is like outside of the exam based subjects and in the unit to predict disaster after the exams are finished

if he stays in residence. Below, Roger Carter forsee break down if Keith Fletcher *becomes* a resident.

Roger: Yer - I-I just believe this is right - and I-I - what I don't want to do - we don't want to spoil it - becus (.5) he is such a complex kid that (.5) to bring him in I am actually convinced (1) it will blow. And uh - you've got . . . nothing then.

F.S.W: Yer.

Kate: I mean it seems to me we're all in one mind {over that.

{

Roger: {But we might be absolutely wrong!

The routine cynicism embodied in forecasts of gloom provided a guard against a naive embrace of incipient optimism and positive thinking which constituted another apparently contradictory thread in the institutional cloth. The following interaction, taken from Perry Saunders C.C., illuminates both of these aspects.

1 Ed. Psy: Perry has said that if he goes home he'll be able to cope. But let's be realistic. We're already building up crutches for him - demanding special educational attention and what have you.

5 F.S.W: Perry has a care order and it might be thought that we're doing ourselves out of business. But if he's now unsuitable to be kept at St. Nicholas' then it's negative and potentially harmful to keep him here.

S.F.S.W: And just because there isn't the right resources within the borough - it doesn't mean that Perry shouldn't be allowed to go home.

Ed. Psy: Would you like to withdraw that statement?

10 S.F.S.W: No - I don't know why I should. Just because there's not the right resources - and there's not the capacity for low ratio teaching doesn't mean that Perry shouldn't be allowed to go home.

Ed. Psy: Well if you're not prepared to withdraw that statement I'd like it put in the minutes. . . . You seem to have a crystal ball but I'm afraid that my picture of Perry isn't so bright.

The educational psychologist takes issue with the optimistic certainty that it will work out for Perry when he goes home, given the right educational provision. The latter he sees as a "crutch" (line 2) and calls for a "realistic" attitude (line 1), tantamount to the routine cynicism in which many such accounts are enshrined. The allusion to a "crystal ball" (line 14) suggests a breach of the attitude of probabilism, and the suggestion of a bright future breaches the rule of pessimism. Interestingly greater certainty is allowed to attend pessimistic projections, so that the educational psychologist can forecast the probability of problems without this being seen as a form of professional crystal ball gazing.

Orientation to future possibilities, when plaited into the thread of routine cynicism, often resulted in the prospective pessimism which I examined above. But, the institutional culture of St. Nicholas' also exhibited an intersecting thread of positive thinking or routine optimism. On occasions the cohabitation of the two tendencies, pulling in alternate directions, created a level of discursive tension. Prospectively optimistic accounts tended to emphasize, in a more consistent and deliberate way than their pessimistic counterparts, the basis of the forecast being purportedly contingent upon the continuance of present patterns of good behaviour, hard work and the like. Only "if this then that". The forthcoming extract is taken from one of Simon Wells' C.C's.

1 Roger: If he carries on like this - this kid's future's very light. He's got no problems
in my view - ah - O.K. - he's got to work at the basics and that sort of thing
- you know - and he will. And I'm sure that as he's getting better he'll
continue to do so . . . And the thing about him - that I think's important - is
5 that if things get - a bit dicey - you can talk to Simon and he responds - and
that's - pretty positive stuff you know. So uhm - the reason I've come in - I
wanted to come in because it's - very good indeed - and we're very chuffed
with him. I've had a horrible feeling he's going to leave fairly soon. I'm
9 delighted to hear he's not actually . . . so if he keeps this up he'll be O.K.

Simon's very light future (line 1) is premised on him continuing as he is: working at the

basics (line 2); and talking when things get “a bit dicey” (line 5). A canopy of meaning is thus erected from Simon’s past and present behavioural patterns from which, all things remaining equal, a rosy future is foreseen. A comparably optimistic tone is apparent in the following extract from Kate Lambert’s written educational report composed for one of Karl Fowler’s C.C.’s.

“During these early days of Karl’s stay at St. Nicholas’ he is proving to be a pleasant - considerate member of the educational group. In my own dealing with him he has been polite and friendly. He is certainly very socially mature and initiates contact in a very open way. He has undoubted academic potential and if he continues in the responsive - intelligent manner he has commenced - I am sure it will come to fruition in his examination work.”

Once more the realization of Karl’s academic potential is predicated upon his continued exhibition of the glowing qualities with which Kate attributes him. *If* he continues in this way *then* he will be successful in his exams.

The extract below from Leon Pryce’s first C.C. nicely demonstrates the tensions which exist between prospective pessimism and optimism which manifest themselves in two alternative versions.

Melvin: Conclusions (3) Leon’s made a good start at St. Nicholas’ - though it’s early days. I feel that there’s a great deal of anger bottled up in him and this may well come out in the future. However should he continue as he has done so (1) as he has done so far - he should turn out to be a responsible young man.

The possible scenarios are split between the following:

a) Leon should turn out a responsible young man if he continues with the “good start” he has made at St. Nicholas’.

Or:

b) Leon may give vent in the future to the “great deal of bottled anger” he has inside him.

While not mutually exclusive the two versions strain in different directions; a tension which arguably betrays a dual affiliation to positive thinking coupled to the mocking partner of routine cynicism. Put simply, Melvin's account exhibits an attempt to eat his cake - and have it!

The level of pessimistic certainty expressed about the likelihood of break down and the extremity of the projected disaster fell along a continuum depending on a number of considerations. The more informal and off-guard the statement, the more the author felt able to indulge in unqualified certainty. Formal assessments, by contrast, especially those recorded and logged, were steeped in qualifications, thus negating present and future criticisms. Note, for example, how the extracts above which articulated greater certainty and/or extremity of disaster were drawn from more intimate arenas like unit meetings, P.O.'s meetings and the T.M. where a greater play of speculation was tolerated. Occasionally predictions would breach the rule of probabilism attendant upon most readings of the future.

In the final two accounts the typificatory rationale suggests an inevitability based upon the child's deep seated historical propensity. The first piece is from a T.M. in which the building instructor, Jacko, complains about what he sees as discrimination against Ted Vincent, who had been removed into police custody after a violent episode at St. Nicholas', while the likes of Junior Knight and Samuel Nailer were allowed to continue with their delinquent behaviour.

1 Kate: You see (.5) the point is (.5) Ted has already been to court once - for
 assaulting a member of staff. . . he assaulted Lawrence - so it was the second
 time (.5) and ah (1) I mean the first time (.5) he assaulted Lawrence - it's
5 when he threw the electric cooker across the room (.5) and the (.5) heated
 food trolley - when he went berserk - he really did - he was (.5) such a terrible
 danger - I think that was the (1) and people thought he would go on until he
7 killed someone unless (.5) he was stopped - you know.

A prospective awareness of Ted's potential as a "terrible danger" who would "go on until he killed someone" provides a justification for removal to prevent the occurrence which the proclivities of his past would suggest. As part of the P.O.'s group who collectively authorized Ted's removal, Kate makes a persuasive case in support of the decision that Jacko criticizes.

The extremity of Kate's prediction that Ted "would go on until he killed someone"

may be compared with the extracts on page 380 which forecast similarly dramatic events for the boys. Unlike the latter, Kate's account is couched in terms which exceed the probabilistic. Nonetheless, Kate employs certain devices which soften the edges of her certainty. First of all she authorizes her version of Ted as a "terrible danger" by extending it to an unspecified community: "and *people* thought" (line 6). That they "thought", rather than knew, accords to a theory of time whereby it cannot be known in advance. Kate also introduces a prevention clause: "people thought he could have gone on until he killed someone . . . unless (.5) he was stopped" (lines 6-7). Since Ted was stopped, by dint of his removal from St. Nicholas', Kate's prediction is never put to the test. Indeed, Ted's removal is implicitly held to have prevented the very thing - i.e. murder - which "people thought he would go on to commit".

In the final extract below from one of David Lyons' C.C.'s George Wallace, his special worker from unit 3, both exceeds the rhetoric of probabilism *and* fails to employ the kind of softening devices which characterize Kate's account.

[George suggests that David Lyons should become a day boy. The F.S.W. insists that for this arrangement to work both David and his mother must be persuaded of its merits which they are not at present.]

S.F.W.: And unless you've got her cooperation and Dave's I can't see it being successful.

George: Well yer - I-I'd certainly agree because you know (2) ah - I still state that uhm (3.5) even if it's - a year from now - David's still not gonna change his mind - no matter how much - and - you know - there shouldn't be - no pressure - I-I-I'm-

S.F.S.W: It's wrong for us to make that assumption.

George: I-I know - I know but I'm just saying - well I've been right so far in everything which - you know I've said about David.

[A few people laugh.]

Roger: I wouldn't say that about anyone mate.

By asserting the ineluctability of his prediction George Wallace steps beyond the rhetoric of tendency in which such accounts are usually couched. When preventive awareness and prospective sensitivity are converted into a language of certainty they breach an incarnate criteria of authorization and thus become the object of institutional criticism.

Conclusion

The focus in the last two chapters has been upon how professional child care accounts, particularly those of a more historical bent, employ the procedures of their own causal rationalization. Identification of these methods requires the displacement of our normal everyday engagement with the world, as well as an inevitable reliance upon it. The sociologist's account also exhibits practices and procedures amenable to discourse analysis. Her account too is in a process of *rationalizing* reality at the point of *realizing* it in written and verbal discourse. Absolute privilege is forsaken in favour of a liberation:

“from the straightjacket of what Bloor (1976) has called the ‘sociology of error’ which arises whenever the attempt is made to grant an absolutely privileged status to social scientific constructs of social reality.”
[J.Heritage (1984) - p.67]

With this acknowledgement in mind, the reader is invited to reconsider my own account to detect the patterns of causal association and the retrospective-prospective procedures which it employs in making sense of members methods of making sense.

CONCLUSION

In general terms the aim of this thesis has been to cast an anthropological perspective on a range of institutional practices in a community home for deviant adolescent boys. In particular I wanted to explore the broadly therapeutic mode of reasoning which practitioners often employed to interpret the boys and their behaviour. The success of the project hangs upon the persuasiveness with which I have demonstrated the *accomplished* nature of institutional realities. I attempted to achieve this feat by detailed empirical analysis of verbal and written accounts. These revealed both the social knowledge and the methods through which actors invested appearances with a sense of significance by assimilating them to an underlying framework of typified assumptions. In this lies the dynamics of the documentary method of interpretation.

Like all ethnomethodological enquiry, the present piece of research was inspired by a paradox: that the accomplishment of sense is an everyday miracle; an extraordinary achievement which is at once truly mundane. This fascination with the steadfastly familiar (as well as the institutionally peculiar) requires a similarly paradoxical methodology. On the one hand I started from the assumption that in a vital sense institutional meanings are generated endogenously. As Garfinkel recommends:

“. . . any social setting (should) be viewed as self-organizing with respect to the intelligible character of its own appearances as either representations of or as evidences-of-a-social-order. Any setting organizes its activities to make its properties as an organized environment of practical activities detectable, countable, recordable, reportable, tell-a-story-aboutable, analyzable - in short, *accountable*.”

[H. Garfinkel (1967) - p. 33]

For this reason I believe that institutional and occupational settings should be treated:

“as self-organizing domains of recognizably competent work practices which ‘compose themselves through vernacular conversations and the ordinariness of embodied disciplinary activities’ (Ibid). And work practices are found, not in the privacy of individual consciousness, but as publicly observable courses of specific, local and temporally organized conduct.”

[J. Heritage (1984) - p.302]

If meaning emerges from within the institutional context as an indexical feature of it,

and realities are the product (not the condition) of a range of reflexive procedures, it follows that the ethnomethodological researcher must situate herself very firmly within the setting, either as a participant, or non-participant observer. Only through this level of immersion can she fully appreciate the complex nuances of institutional practice.

On the other hand, while the cultivation of such intimacy is a necessary prerequisite, it is not sufficient in itself. For the researcher is always already immersed in the sea of assumptions which she shares with the people she is observing. Only by struggling to partially suspend these assumptions, to place them at an anthropological distance, do their constituent features begin to appear. In this, I believe, lies one of the real skills of ethnomethodological enquiry; for it takes an enormous effort to even temporarily displace that which resides underneath ones nose. Yet this is essential if one is to translate it into an object of investigation. Thus, the reflexively inclined ethnographer is involved in a dual manoeuvre: she must attempt to acquire increasingly intimate knowledge of the institutional context, while subjecting it to a process of analytical alienation.

In treating reality as a practical accomplishment ethnomethodology is anti-essentialist. Its exponents claim that there is nothing fixed or *a priori* about the way in which reality is constructed by a particular social group. I, for instance, was not concerned to judge the validity of a therapeutic version of the boys' deviant behaviour (as the manifestation of their underlying historical and emotional disturbance), nor to counterpose it with another version of what it was *really* underneath it all about. Such questions of "truth status" are simply suspended for the methodological purposes in hand, in order that alternative questions may be propelled into the foreground.

Just as it is not my concern to embrace a particular version, nor is my purpose to deny it. It is not a case of refuting the existence of reality, or claiming that it is produced out of thin air, like a rabbit from the conjurer's hat. The interpretations which give shape to reality do not exist in some autonomous realm, but *engage* with a set of empirical particulars. What is interesting, from an ethnomethodological perspective, is the way in which empirical appearances are attributed with a sense of significance by assimilating them to a ghost schema. In this material process appearances are patterned in a particular way.

This process of documentary interpretation is not mechanical, as I hope this thesis

amply demonstrates. The kind of sense that *is* made of appearances, is not the only sense that *could* have been. Otherwise, there would be no particular skill involved in this procedure, and one would simply be replacing the normative dope of Parsonian theory with a more sophisticated cognitive dope. As Heritage says:

“A ‘scripted’ analysis of action in which the actors’ actions are treated as determined by hierarchies of preordained cognitive schemata is just as capable of ignoring the common-sense rationalities of judgement (cf. Garfinkel, 1967:68) as its sociological and psychological forerunners. Such an analysis would profoundly threaten the theoretical gains of the past twenty years.”
[J. Heritage (1984) - p.308]

Any interpretation must take into account a unique configuration of items or events which may *suggest* the propriety of this interpretation, or *hint* at that one. But there is, at the same time, a systematic tendency to reproduce the underlying schemata of typifications, whether these are generic cultural assumptions, or specifically institutional or occupational ones. What is more, a similar panoply of procedures is employed in this pursuit. The point is that *reproduction* is never passive, it is always at once an active *production*.

By bracketing common sense assumptions about the “given-ness” of reality, thus constituting it as a serious topic of empirical enquiry, one is gaining a great deal more than one is giving up. Reality *per se* does not disappear, but it loses its absolutist dimensions. What re-emerges as the product of such analytical investigation is a version of reality as a robust and sinewy product of a sustained body of knowledge and practices. There is nothing fragile or illusory about it. Producing an account of reality (which contains within it the accoutrements of reality production) is, to adapt Wittgenstein’s analogy, like “spinning a thread”:

“we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.”
[L. Wittgenstein (1958) - paragraph 67]

This interaction between a body of knowledge and the empirical world, which I previously referred to as a kind of mutual “sniffing out”, also characterizes the research process. While I was committed to empirical exploration, I started with a theoretical model which was, broadly speaking, reproduced along the way. This is not to say that the empirical experience did not teach me a great deal at a substantive level, but that such learning took place within a

framework of infeasible assumptions which were less likely to be challenged.

To identify reality as a practical accomplishment which is bound up in members' methods of making sense is not, as I hope to have made quite apparent, to adopt a subjectivist orientation. Indeed here, as elsewhere, a reflexive approach challenges the validity of traditional distinctions between the subjective and the objective, and the range of dichotomies which tend to flow from it. For, the knowledge and procedures through which the environment is organized are shared amongst a cultural and linguistic community.

In this sense methodological individualism is as misplaced as its collectivist counterpart. The very distinction should be dissolved in favour of what Knorr-Cetina [1981 cf. pages 7-15] usefully defines as "methodological situationalism". For, it is within particular situations that actors bring their repertoire of skills to bear in elucidating a precise configuration of events. Making sense of the world is never devoid of these contextual contingencies, how ever well sociologists have usually managed to conceal them. In this sense, as Knorr-Cetina insists:

"The ultra-detailed observations of what people do and say *in situ* is not only considered a prerequisite for any sociologically relevant understanding of social life, but concrete social interactions may also be considered the building blocks for *macro*-sociological conceptions."

[Ibid - p.7]

[Emphasis in original]

Of course, a commitment to "the ultra-detailed observation of what people do and say *in situ*" does harbour certain limitations which are well rehearsed. Clearly such an approach cannot cope with large-scale phenomena, whether in terms of time or numbers. But this complaint is only valid from an external perspective. For it criticizes micro methodologists for their incapacity to deal with an order of phenomena which they are neither particularly interested in, nor do they believe it is possible to investigate in a straightforward way.

What is more, micro methodologies are by no means a homogeneous group. Conversation analysis, for example, certainly engages in "ultra-detailed observation" of the unfolding minutiae of discourse without, classically, engaging in ethnography. But even those who do conduct ethnographic research may differ radically in the perspective which they bring to it. This, in turn, will influence the way in which they appraise and deal with the problem of selectivity, and how they define the junctures between micro and macro data. To proceed then it is necessary to

elaborate the distinction already made (see pages 32-36) between mainstream, or classical ethnography, and that which entertains a more reflexive orientation.

To start with, the reflexively inclined ethnographer tends to be more responsive to the infinite complexity of institutional reasoning which, like Geertz's account of "thick description", reveals:

"a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them super-imposed upon, or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular and inexplicit, and which (the anthropologist) must contrive somehow first to grasp and then render."
[C. Geertz (1975) - p.10]

For this reason no piece of research, however "thick" its descriptive propensity, can hope to "grasp and then render" the nuances of institutional life in their entirety: firstly because of the very complexity involved; secondly because the process of analysis and literary representation imposes an order which is different from the institutional one. Selectivity is thus at once unavoidable and necessary as the prerequisite of any form of analysis. But there is a difference in the way the two traditions of ethnography deal with the issue. Practitioners of the "naturalist" school of ethnography are more predisposed toward attempting:

"a comprehensive overview, wherein the ethnographer sets out to condense into one volume as full a description of the structures, operations, procedures and activities of whatever organization or group he is examining as possible."
[B. Rawlings (1980) - p.1:10]

In this process, the ethnographer assumes an aura of expertise:

"He becomes a sort of oracle, who, knowing everything there is to know about one particular field, however small, is capable of producing wise and carefully considered pronouncements about matters that have to do with that field."
[Ibid. - p.1:11]

But such completeness can only be implied by glossing over the practices through which members account for their environment, and in so doing render it coherent. To seriously attend to the unfolding minutiae of accounting practices is to sacrifice the ideal of comprehensive description, and the attendant image of expertise.

Different theorists offer alternative solutions to such necessary and unavoidable limitations. One "solution" is to deny the validity of ethnographic enquiry as, on the whole, conversation analysts have done [cf. Atkinson and Drew (1979) - pages 22-33]. Another alternative is to concentrate upon one small piece of data, even if one has been engaged in lengthy ethnographic investigation, as both T. Walker (1986) and B. Rawlings (1980) have done. Both choose to prioritize a particular piece of data which is subjected to lengthy and meticulous analysis, both, interestingly enough, drawing liberally upon the methods of conversation analysis. While Rawlings does devote the first half of her thesis to the perusal of more general topics, she reserves the serious analysis of members' methodology to the second half in which she examines a short piece of transcript.

While this mode of response is certainly a pragmatic solution to the constraints of reflexive analysis it did not satisfy my own requirements. I wanted to examine a *range* of institutional practices, albeit limited, on a *variety* of occasions of their articulation, without stretching the analysis too thinly. I outlined some of the ways in which I attempted to manage this compromise in chapter 1. But in meeting my own demands for the detailed analysis of a slightly wider range of institutional particulars I had to leave out a great many of the themes and practices which I had found fascinating. My eventual selection of topics was based upon two equally balanced criteria of what I considered the most prevalent and important from an institutional perspective, and what I considered most interesting from my own.

One whole empirical area which I almost wholly neglected was, for instance, the boys' accounts of themselves, their behaviour and their situation. I chose to concentrate predominantly upon staff discourse; a decision largely guided by my interest in the therapeutic sense to which their interpretations of the boys' deviant behaviour characteristically gave rise. While I have, on occasions, attempted to illustrate how staff accounts accommodated those of the boys through the processes of assimilation, modification or refutation, any more extensive elaboration of the boys' versions would have detracted from my consideration of the primary topic.

Such parameters are a necessary discipline if one is to conduct in-depth analysis. But by excluding the boys' accounts I do not wish to suggest, by implication, that they were "judgemental dopes" in Garfinkel's phrase, whose identities were formed, like waxen images, from staff interpretations. They too were competent social actors who brought their skills to bear in *making* sense of their environment. The *kind* of sense they made was relatively distinct

from that of the staff, while their discursive capacities, though in certain respects less polished, were much the same.

Having said this it appeared that the power to define reality was not equally shared amongst the boys and staff. For a start, the boys already came to the institution characteristically labelled as “problem adolescents”, this itself being the reflexive product of their entanglement with a range of social agencies, usually over many years. While in my experience at St. Nicholas’ the boys tended not to concur with this assessment, their placement in a community home suggested that others had more control over defining their status, than they themselves. This lack of power was reinforced by their chronological status.

More specifically, the therapeutic discourse so often employed by practitioners at St. Nicholas’ tended to deprive the boys of their autonomous powers of definition, particularly when in disagreement with the staff. The staff rationale for imposing their definition of the situation was inscribed in the therapeutic mode of reasoning itself. Since the boys were typically conceived as the victims of emotional disturbance engendered by their historical circumstances, they were not considered the best judges of their own motivations. Hence, while their corroboration of a staff version was frequently sought, this was not a prerequisite of establishing its validity, any more than their denial would necessarily undermine it. Indeed, as I considered on pages 161-174, a boy’s “denial” may be incorporated into the symptomology of his problems and thus made to bolster the very claim the child was attempting to refute. As a general rule the boys’ accounts tended to be *authorized* if they supported staff versions, and *ironized* or *ignored* if they did not. Their version of reality was thus characteristically defined in relation to the staff framework which was treated as more reliable for the practical purposes in hand.

No account, let alone a descriptive analysis of anything as complicated as an institution, can be complete in so far as it says everything there is to say about a given topic. The principle of indexicality alerts us to the fact that there are always holes in the filigree of threads, which the recipient of the account, whether reader or hearer, must sew together. Not that the producer or consumer could fully articulate the incarnate assumptions upon which they draw. It is these which constitute the abiding preoccupation of the ethnomethodologist, who must nonetheless employ the very same assumptions which she at once attempts to topicalize. It is for this reason that reflexive analysis only really appeals to those who enjoy the conundrums of irony.

Reflexive ethnography, much more than its classical cousin, attempts to dissolve the split between the micro and the macro. Its practitioners strive to demonstrate that through the close examination of local practices one may jointly elucidate both aspects of the institutional fabric, and the threads of wider culture from which it is woven. In this respect the ethnomethodologist is not *exclusively* concerned with what is unique or newsworthy about a social group or institutional setting, although this is part of her ethnographic brief. As Woolgar says:

“the strategic role of ethnographic study is that it provides an occasion for reflecting upon, and reaching a greater understanding of, those aspects of our own culture which we tend to take for granted.”
[S. Woolgar (1982) - p. 486]

But just as the failure to winkle out the wider ramifications of ethnographic study is a missed opportunity, so too must one exercise extreme caution about the kind of inferences which may legitimately be drawn. Two studies which do not, in my opinion, exhibit the necessary caution are those conducted by Pat Carlen (1976) and Paul Willis (1977). Starting with a structural bent, both authors employ their ethnographic knowledge of the local setting as a vehicle for making grand theoretical statements about the nature of capitalist society *without adequately explicating the methodological link between the two*.

Thus, for instance, having examined a range of genuinely fascinating details about the workings of the magistrates court, Carlen proceeds to draw gross theoretical conclusions, like the following:

“The court is not a theatre. It is an institutional setting charged with the maintenance and reproduction of existing forms of structural dominance. Courtworkers, unlike stage actors, have to account not only for the way they interpret their parts but also for the authorship and substance of the scripts . . . called to account for the mode and substance of their performance, courtworkers, using the imagery of the theatre, claim that they perennially tell a tale of possible justice. To conserve the rhetoric of justice in a capitalist society such a tale is as necessary as it is implausible.”
[P. Carlen (1976) - p.38]

My purpose is not to refute the substance of Carlen’s claims, but to question whether her empirical material warrants such a reading.

Paul Willis’ study (1977) starts by offering a colourful description of the (counter)

culture of “a group of twelve non-academic working class lads” (p.4) at a secondary modern school in the North of England, which he couches in a conventional ethnographic mode. Having furnished the reader with the empirical data, he starts part 2 of the study (which he entitles “Analysis”) with the following remark:

“Although we have looked in some detail through case study at the experience and cultural processes of being male, white, working class, unqualified, disaffected and moving into manual work in contemporary capitalism, there are still some mysteries to be explained ... We have seen how their genuinely held insights and convictions lead finally to an objective work situation which seems to be entrapment rather than liberation. But how does this happen? What are the basic determinants of those cultural forms whose tensions, reversals, continuities and final outcomes we have already explored?”

Willis continues:

“In order to answer some of these questions and contradictions *we must plunge beneath the surface of ethnography in a more interpretative mode.*”
[P. Willis (1977) - p.119]

[Emphasis added]

And there are no prizes for guessing where this “plunge” takes Willis; on to the familiar ground of structural analysis.

Through a commonplace sociological manoeuvre, both Carlen and Willis ultimately subsume the “micro” data under what Atkinson and Drew call those “favourite metaphors, namely the ‘macro’ social structure of capitalism” [1979 - p.14].

The kind of ramifications which derive from the present study are of a very different order, and one much more amenable, I believe, to empirical verification. How far I have been substantively successful in at once elucidating *local* aspects of institutional practice while also teasing out *wider* features of cultural reasoning is, of course, the reader’s prerogative to judge. I want to conclude, however, by detailing some of the achievements which I believe this piece of research with some success yields. These can be arranged on three inter-connecting tiers.

At the first and most basic of local levels I hope that the present research reveals something about St. Nicholas’ as a specific institution at a particular point in time. This attempt to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the institution is made more poignant by the closure of St. Nicholas’

in 1987, and the decline of the community home system of which it was a part. The therapeutic approach to juvenile deviance which emerged in the 1960's and 1970's has been eroded in the process.

The reader may also have cultivated an acquaintanceship with some of the more distinctive institutional characters during the course of the thesis. She may, for instance, identify a piece of talk as "typical of Roger Carter" or recognize Thomas McKinney to be "on his hobby horse", just as members of St. Nicholas' and I myself routinely did. I do not deny the significance of such specificities, and indeed recognize that for some readers they form part of the pleasure of the text. It is not my purpose or desire to reduce the local colour to a grey and lifeless stock-pile of common denominators. But there is, I contend, something in excess of the peculiar and unique characteristics which provides the background against which they appear as such.

My primary purpose in this thesis has been to identify and examine some of the key institutional practices through which the staff at St. Nicholas' organized their environment. In particular I think that the empirical analysis does illuminate the typifying processes through which the boys' behaviour was accorded a dominant status, most typically as the manifestation of their underlying emotional disturbance. I also attempted to illustrate the recurrent modes of causal connection through which the boys' contemporary disturbances were linked to a series of historical events which were seen to engender them.

Through the "ultra-detailed observation" of a concrete institutional setting, populated by empirical actors who made sense of events in the unfolding flow of everyday life, I hoped:

"to disclose the detailed, reticulated textures of practices through which culturally transcendent objects are created as their project and as their embodied, yet disengageable outcome."

[J. Heritage (1984) - p.304]

The "culturally transcendent object" which was the "embodied, yet disengageable outcome" of the "detailed, reticulated texture of the practices" performed by the staff at St. Nicholas', was the "child with problems", whose construction has been well documented throughout the thesis.

On the second tier, I want to argue that by analyzing a multitude of concrete therapeutic interpretations, certain thematic patterns began to emerge which characterize

therapeutic discourse in general. More specifically, I became increasingly aware of the relationship which was being constructed in therapeutic accounts between the boys “presenting behaviour”, as it was known, and their underlying motivation. The empirical analysis thus opened up an appreciation of the structured play between surface and depth which can fruitfully be understood in figurative terms. Thus, for instance, a boy’s manifest deviance may have been treated as the *metaphorical* representation of his depleted self-image or the displacement of the anger he *really* felt toward his parent/s. Alternatively his behaviour may have been construed as an *ironical* expression of his need to “test out” for love by apparently subverting the possibility of it. On a third figurative horizon, his deviance may have been seen as a *metonymic* condensation of the interactional patterns which belong to the family as a whole. Which explanation was proffered depended upon the practitioners reading of the contextual clues.

What a close consideration of institutional accounts also revealed on the second tier was the historical dimension which therapeutic discourse typically employs. This historical form of analysis helped practitioners erect an architecture of causality by linking past and present events into an episodic chain. I was able to identify three modes of causal connection which, I suggest, extend beyond the specific institutions to all forms of historical and causal analysis, whether “lay” or professional. The distinctiveness of each mode lay in the nature of the links it forged between events, and the explicitness with which they were articulated. But a feature which traversed all modes was their reliance upon what one might call participants’ narrative competence. Episodes from the boy’s past were selected and edited and ordered in such a way that they “told a story” whose conclusion was, loosely speaking, known in advance. Events may thus be “grasped together” as part of the narrative whole. Analysis of the historical accounts so prevalent at St. Nicholas’ thus reveal features of historical narrative and therapeutic discourse which extend beyond the institutional context.

The empirical material not only revealed the discursive relationship between surface and depth, past and present, but also the deviant and the normal. Since institutional accounts so often concerned the boys’ *deviant* behaviour they also had the capacity to promote a deeper understanding of the *ghost framework* of normalizing assumptions in relation to which any particular interpretation appears. This reservoir of taken for granted knowledge emerges nowhere more clearly than in accounts of deviance which, by breaching conceptions of the normal, bring their parameters into sharper relief. Thus, any characterization of problem children relies upon a complex anterior web of assumptions about normal ones, just as the identification of

emotional disturbance presupposes a conception of emotional health, or bad parenting assumes a knowledge of good parenting, and so on. Accounts of deviance thus offer a sterling opportunity to consider the range of ghost assumptions which inhabit conceptions of the normal.

Since the therapeutic has become such a pervasive mode of cultural reasoning, especially with regards to certain forms of deviance and categories of deviant, a more systematic analysis of its discursive features seems important in itself. The present study may also provide a useful basis for comparison with other institutional forms of therapeutic reasoning. But, on the third tier of theorization, by exploring the empirical intricacies of therapeutic reasoning in the process of its articulation, one may simultaneously cast a perspective on the workings of perhaps the most important procedure of practical reasoning: the documentary method of interpretation. The latter is responsible for assimilating appearance to the ghost schemata of typifications which invest it with significance. Part of the artistry of documentary interpretation lies in the recognition that appearances may be deceptive. While this knowledge, and the attendant skills of reparation, are part of common sense wisdom, they are given priority status in therapeutic discourse. Practitioners of the latter offer a systematic analysis of the cryptic ways in which the underlying emotional reality may manifest itself on the behavioural surface. This "reality" is typically deciphered, and meaning restored, through the kind of figurative penetration considered above.

I have spoken many times of how a special effort of the imagination is required if one is to articulate the common sense foundation of social reality. Certain forms of discourse do, however, aid the imagination. By dramatizing the play of levels between surface and depth, past and present, normal and deviant, therapeutic accounts of deviance cast a *quasi* anthropological perspective on the ordinary workings of the documentary method. By so doing they demonstrate how such levels are brought together in the process of their articulation: the ghost is always already in the discursive machine.

Such common sense practices, driven underground by sheer cultural familiarity, are so primitive that at first they look peculiar. We are ordinarily unaware of such machinery because we employ it so elegantly and unthinkingly. As Tom Stoppard says:

"All your life you live so close to truth, it becomes a permanent blur in the

corner of your eye, and when something nudges it into outline it is like being ambushed by a grotesque.”
[T. Stoppard (1967) - Act One - p. 29]

My purpose in this thesis has been to nudge the common sense blur of practical reasoning into outline, and thus propel some of these everyday aliens into the foreground. For, I believe with Geertz that:

“Looking into dragons, not domesticating or abominating them, nor drowning them in vats of theory, is what anthropology has been all about.”
[C. Geertz (1984) - p.275]

Having taken its bow, and uncomfortable with celebrity status, common sense returns to the wings where it is at home. Modest as ever, it might describe its performance in the preceding pages like the Tragedians from *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*:

“We keep to our usual stuff, more or less, only inside out. We do on stage the things that are supposed to happen off. Which is a kind of integrity, if you look on every exit being an entrance somewhere else.”
[T. Stoppard (1967) - Act One - p. 22]

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