ADOLESCENTS COMMITTED TO CARE FOLLOWING DIFFICULT BEHAVIOUR:
A COMPARISON OF SOCIAL WORKERS' JUDGEMENTS CONCERNING BLACK AND WHITE CHILDREN

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I have received help at various stages of the research from many people, to whom my thanks are due:

To staff in three local authorities who took part in the first part of the research: social workers who gave time for interviews; research and management staff who discussed plans; and administrative staff in court sections and area offices who located files and notified me of new committals to care. These individuals cannot be named, to preserve the anonymity of the children, families and social workers, but they are remembered.

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Finally, to Karen Bridgman, who got up at crack of dawn for three years to type the manuscript in her spare time and did wonderful things with complicated charts and tables.
The purpose of the research was to explore the theoretical models which social workers applied to the understanding of adolescents coming before the juvenile court for troublesome behaviour; and to ascertain whether different models were applied to the behaviour or family situation of black and white adolescents. The study examined the use of models derived from psychology and sociology, and considered the influence of moral values and cultural stereotypes, both within the previous research tradition in this subject, and as possible underpinning to the social workers' use of theory.

A sample was drawn of 93 adolescents committed to care in London under Section 1(2)(c-f) or 7(7) of the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act. Data was taken from social work reports on the children's behaviour and family background. Analysis focused in detail on those adolescents who had been committed to care within 18 months of referral to the social services department, and from this group a sample of 22 matched pairs of black and white children (44 children) was selected for detailed content analysis of the social workers' reports to the court.

The research attempted to develop grounded theory to aid the sociological understanding of the substantive problem, and refine the understanding of three relevant sociological models: the marginal position of black social work clients in a white-dominated professional culture; the stigmatisation of social work clients, especially those from ethnic minorities; and the use of social work as a means of social control.
Results suggest that social workers' use of theory is more complex than previously thought, with differential strategic use of psychology and sociology in open court and confidential file reports, and when dealing with particularly sensitive subjects such as race. Social workers developed a form of composite theorising which blended sociology and psychology in a coherent whole to meet the complexity of an observed situation. This reflects the impossibility of seeking a whole explanation within any single, pre-paradigmatic discipline. Doubts were also cast on the usefulness of sociological models of marginality, which could not be demonstrated by systematic analysis, as distinct from the use of selective examples. The use of stigmatising mechanisms could be demonstrated. The issue of social control emerged as a multi-faceted negotiating process rather than as a direct two-way struggle between the powerful and the powerless.
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CHAPTER ONE

THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH
CHAPTER ONE

The Research Problem

The research examines the way in which social workers assess the circumstances and behaviour of children who are brought before the juvenile court and committed to the care of a local authority because their behaviour is seen as troublesome or worrying.

The analysis attempts to elicit the theoretical models which underlie explanations of the child's behaviour and influence the decision to commit black and Asian children to the care of a local authority; and to compare these models to the ones applied to white children.

The minority group children considered in this study include representatives of several cultures: predominately Afro-Caribbean, but also children with one or both parents from the Indian sub-continent, Africa, or the Far East. Finding an appropriate collective noun for this group, who have nothing in common except that they have dark skin in a society in which most people do not, proves a considerable minefield. The research, focussing as it does on social workers assessment of dark-skinned children and their families, follows the practice of referring to 'black' children and families, used by the Commission for Racial Equality. It is acknowledged that many members of the groups concerned do not refer to themselves as 'black', but the term has come to represent for a high proportion of minority groups, a political statement of identity and pride, and is therefore seen as the most likely to be acceptable to members of ethnic minorities.
The situation of these children must be seen in the general context of child care services and the way in which they recruit children. There is doubt about how far the situation of children removed from home by the courts is in reality different from those who come into care by voluntary agreement between parents and social services. The form of legislation requires that compulsory committal declares the parents "unfit" to have the care of their child because they are failing to provide proper care and control, whereas voluntary reception into care takes place at the request of a parent who is temporarily or permanently "unable" to care for the child. Evidence from a number of research projects has established that for many children and parents this is a meaningless distinction, and the route into care reflects policies and practices in care agencies as much as the child's or family's circumstances (Fisher et al 1986, Packman et al 1986, Millham et al 1985). There is a considerable amount of evidence that both forms of care operate differently for black and white children. Research over the past 35 years since the present system of services was set up has indicated that a disproportionate number of black children enter care by voluntary agreement; research on court committal suggests that black children are likely to be removed from home sooner than white children exhibiting the same behaviour. The detailed evidence on black children in care is reviewed in Chapter 2.

The selection of court committals for empirical study therefore reflects the choice of a manageable sub group in which issues are crystallised but in which they are not seen as substantively different from those of the operation of social work in relation to all black families and children. The British situation has developed some similarities to
that observed in the USA in recent years, (Bryant Solomon 1976, Simon and Altstein 1977) an indication of the essentially sociological nature of the observed phenomenon, reflecting interaction between majority and minority groups and cultures.

Previous Explanatory Models

There have been many explanations offered in previous research for the apparently greater likelihood of black children to be in care. These will be considered in detail throughout the next three chapters but they can be summarised here briefly.

1. 'Family Circumstances' Models: these suggest that black families are more likely to suffer from combinations of circumstance which are known to bring children into care; single parent families, poor housing, low income, little support from the extended family network. These problems might be seen as the result of discrimination (as in housing or unemployment/low wages), or cultural factors (as in Caribbean single parenthood) or immigration (no grandparents or other relatives in the UK to help out through family crisis) or combinations of these factors (for example Pinder and Shaw 1974).

2. Immigrant 'Extended Family Care' Models in which black immigrant parents are thought to treat the public care system as equivalent to the extended family network in their countries of origin. Children are thus placed in care as they might otherwise be placed with grandparents, aunts or uncles, for a variety of economic or social reasons. This model is sometimes compared to the way in which upper class British families have traditionally used nannies or public boarding schools (for example Fitzherbert 1967, Ellis 1978).
3. **Family Structure Models** are distinct from the above categories because they postulate specific weaknesses in some cultural approaches to the family which lead to a greater likelihood of problems in child rearing or troublesome behaviour in children, and of rejection by parents, (for example Fitzherbert 1967, Lambert 1970).

4. **Social Class Models** in which admission to care is seen as reflecting the class and power systems, in which children of the unskilled working classes are more likely to come into care, and black families seen as a particularly powerless sub strata of the working class (for example Giller and Morris 1981, Parker et al 1981).

5. **Racism Models** are most commonly applied to children committed to care by the courts and suggest either that the children and their families are subjected to racism in judicial and social work processes or that teenagers are alienated by a racist society against which they rebel, bringing them into conflict with the authorities (for example John 1972, Pearce 1974). Some (particularly earlier studies) suggest that community and family racism are influential in the rejection of black children born into white families (e.g. Barnardo's 1966).

Most of the research has consisted of pragmatic empirical studies, often carried out by practising social workers rather than researchers, and generally lacking in sound theoretical underpinning. Hence the models described above have had to be elicited and many studies refer to more than one model in their attempts to explain their data. None offers an adequate general explanation for the situation of black children in care. Most of the models are addressed to a sub-category such as delinquents or children from poor families, rather than the whole population in care. This reflects the fragmented nature of the research and the
extent to which most of it has carried out fieldwork in particular types of residential homes or foster homes. Many models are conceptually flawed or contradicted by available data. Immigration models, for example, take no account of the persistence of care patterns into the present day when many admissions are of second or third generation 'Black British' children, and where extensive family and friendship networks have been established in the UK. Family structure models are unsubstantiated by reliable data and dependent on a 'white sociology' perspective. Alienation theories ignore the evidence that most black teenagers live successful, content, law abiding lives with their families and that levels of anti social behaviour are no higher (and in some instances are lower) than for white teenagers. Family circumstances models receive only very patchy support from empirical results and extended family arguments are contradicted by data obtained from parents themselves as to their reasons for placing children in care. Most importantly none of the models explain the observed phenomenon that a high proportion of black children in care are known to be children of mixed parentage with white mothers, and this holds true whether the population considered is of infants placed for adoption or teenagers in trouble with the police. While the present research necessarily must focus on a specific group of admissions to care as a starting point to the development of a sociological explanation, it must also ground its explanation in the awareness of issues common to all black children in care.

Two further notable features of previous research must be considered. Firstly, it is predominately white research on black people, raising all the issues of bias in interpretation which have affected so much of the research on ethnic minorities, and to which the present researcher (as a white person) must attempt not to contribute. Staples (1976) points out that the intellectual elites which have
dominated research and research funding have come from the
dominant social groups. As a result most research on black
people has been carried out by whites and the effect of
white assumptions and prejudices can be clearly traced in
the history of sociology from Social Darwinism to the
present day. Attention has focussed on the supposed
failures and negative aspects of black cultures, which were
seen in the early days of sociology as the result of
biological inferiority, and in the latter days as the result
of oppression, but in which the black subjects were always
depicted as victims, with an exclusively reactive stance,
with problems and with low self esteem. Milner (1983) has
made the same point in relation to psychological research
and the social sciences in general. He demonstrates how
studies of black personality and individual behaviour
started from the assumption that black people were bound to
suffer psychological problems as a result of racism, and
reinforced their own preconceptions by carrying out most
research in a problem focussed way or using pathological
populations in hospitals and prisons.

Secondly, and similarly, the research on black children in
care assumes that they present a problem to their carers,
either of finding suitable placements or of behaviour.
Social work is by its nature problem focussed, in that
people do not request help nor are they referred to social
workers for control purposes unless they are experiencing,
or causing, difficulties of some kind. The initial problem
focus is then hard to escape when confronting situations in
which it need not necessarily apply. Studies of social work
practice consistently show a tendency to highlight negative
aspects of client's behaviour or circumstances and take for
granted or discount the positive aspects (Rees and Wallace
1982). With the early studies of children in care showing
higher than expected numbers of black children, social
workers and researchers started by assuming that this should
not be so, represented something wrong with the system and
caused a range of difficulties for carers. The first piece of British research to study black children in care was entitled significantly "The Problem of the Coloured Child" (National Children's Home 1954), showing clearly how the problem focus of approaches in social work and to minority groups compound with each other.

The Academic Context of the Research

The history of research on minority groups pinpoints a number of essential requirements, particularly where the researcher is not a member of the minority. A summary by Staples (1976), of the requirements of 'Black Sociology' in the Afro-American context gives a comprehensive view of the dangers to be avoided and stresses that white sociologists can and should take note of these. It can be argued that his criteria could equally well apply to the ethical responsibilities of any researcher to any group of subjects. Those particularly relevant to the present are:-

a) "The researcher should feel responsibility toward the subject group rather than the research project itself."

The particular nature of research on living beings indicates the dangers of an approach to research which is purely exploitative, intended to prove academic points and benefit the researcher's career rather than make a genuine contribution direct or indirect to the wellbeing of the subjects. Staples regards 'Black Sociology' as an applied rather than pure science. I argue that this is a specious distinction and that understanding of the world we live in has benefited as much and probably more from purposive, pragmatic research than from so called 'pure' academic work which has so often (as with Social Darwinism) proved in the end to be somewhat impure. But the present project, while attempting to add to the theoretical development
of sociology, also represents a commitment to increase understanding of the way in which powerful majority groups interact with minorities, to contribute to the enlightenment of social workers as to the (often unintended) effects of their work on the minority group clients whom they claim to serve, and to the belief that knowledge is power, and as such is an aid to the powerless.

b. "To introduce the concept of cultural relativism into the study of Black life....Black and White cultures can be seen as different without being categorised into inferior and superior divisions."

This point is central to the present research in which the nature of social workers' judgements of black families is one of the main issues for examination. It is essential to avoid as far as possible initial judgements of the relative values of different family models. The issue is complicated by the fact that it is part of the ascribed role of the social worker to make judgements about 'good' and 'bad' families in child care cases. The research must attempt to examine the baseline concept of a 'good' family from which the judgements are made.

c. "To study the dynamics of White racism....and how it is related to the functioning of Afro-Americans in the Black and White World."

This is an area in which previous research on black children in care has been seriously deficient: studies of the childrens and families' circumstances have generally taken the social workers' judgements as unproblematic 'hard' evidence. While intentional racism is not seen as likely to be a major factor in the committal of black children to care (particularly as many social workers in London, the fieldwork area, are themselves black) the likelihood of institutionalised
racism of which social workers themselves are unaware is high, since cultural biases are built into many of the academic disciplines which underpin social workers' training and practice. Freudian and post-Freudian models of personality formation are the most notable of these (CCETSW 1982) but there are many other suspect inputs.

d. "To re-evaluate White Sociological theories and studies."
The dubious nature of explanations given, (usually by white researchers), for the observed phenomenon of black children in care is the starting point for this study. It will be necessary to question theories of family life; theories of adolescent behaviour; theories of professional functioning and decision making. It is, however, also necessary to take an initially challenging stance towards the theories developed by the few black researchers as well as those of the many white researchers.

Staples also comments on the need for a historical analysis and for black norms and perspectives to be applied when analysing data and using statistics. I consider that historical analysis is necessary for all sociology, since no observed phenomenon can be fully understood unless it is known whether or not it is a new phenomenon. Likewise analysis of data and use of statistics must reflect the points raised in (b) above; in the maintenance of cultural, relativity and the avoidance of 'white sociological' assumptions. In this effort, as Staples points out, qualitative analysis must be allied to quantitative.
The Legal Context

There are a number of routes into care: children may enter care as orphans; or because they have been deserted, neglected or ill-treated by parents, because parents are ill, or homeless; because children are in trouble with the police or education authorities; as the result of court orders made in divorce or judicial separation; or because parents are otherwise unable or unwilling to care for their children. In theory these routes are reflected through different legislative provisions. Children whose parents are unable, through illness, homelessness, imprisonment, or other personal difficulties, to care for them, come into care through S.2 of the 1980 Child Care Act. Children whose parents are unfit to care for them (have neglected or cannot control them), come into care through the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act. These are the two main legislative routes into care. A number of other measures dealing with divorce, separation and family law, bring the residue of marital breakdown into care. In fact research on admissions suggests that it is often chance, or local differences in policy, which determine the legislative criteria for admission (Millham et al 1985, Packman et al 1986).

The focus of the present research will be on children over the age of 10 years, committed to the care of a local authority on a long term basis under the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act, by a decision of a court of law, and as the result of the child's behaviour. The order can only be revoked or varied by the subsequent action of a court and gives full parental rights to the local authority, barring a few residual rights such as the right to specify the child's religious upbringing, and the right to apply for access to the child if this is denied by the care authority. There
are however no implicit requirements for the child to be removed from home, and children in care under these provisions can be 'allowed to be under the charge and control of a parent' at the discretion of the care authority.

The 1969 Children and Young Persons Act contains two forms of legal procedure by which children may be committed to the care of a local authority on a long term basis: care proceedings under Section 1(2)(a) to 1(2)(f) or criminal proceedings under Section 7(7)(a). Both forms provide for the natural parents to be deprived of legal rights to the care and custody of their child, through the making of a 'care order' which remains in force until the child is 18 years old* unless discharged by further court action.

Criminal proceedings cannot be instigated against a child below the age of criminal responsibility (10 years) and a care order can only follow such proceedings if the child is found guilty of an offence which would be imprisonable if committed by an adult. The position on care proceedings, however, is rather more complex. These provide for care orders in a range of circumstances including neglect, or ill treatment by parents; or the probability that such neglect or ill treatment might arise (S.1(2)(a) and (b)). In addition, there are a number of conditions framed as protection for the child; these provide for care if he or she is 'exposed to moral danger' (1(2)(c)); 'beyond the control of his parents or guardian' (1(2)(d)); not receiving efficient full time education (1(2)(e)); or 'is guilty of an

* Where the child is over the age of 16 years at the time of committal under 7(7)(a) the order remains in force until his or her 19th birthday. This is rare.
offence, excluding homicide' (1(2)(f)). This final condition is an attempt to divert young offenders from the criminal justice system. It was intended ultimately to replace criminal proceedings, and can apply only if the child is over 10 and admits the offence (as do most juvenile offenders). The intention of the act was never fulfilled, however, and criminal proceedings have remained the usual option for dealing with offenders.

These latter four conditions, like the first two, carry the implication that the parents are failing in their responsibilities towards the child, and indeed care proceedings can only (legally) lead to a care order if the court is satisfied that the child 'is in need of care and control which he is unlikely to receive unless the court makes an order'. In other words the parents are deemed not only to have failed in the past but to be likely to do so in the future.

Thus, while in criminal proceedings the stigma rests on the child, who acquires a criminal record, in care proceedings the parents are stigmatised rather than the child. Yet the evidence for the parents' failure under S.1(1)(2)(c) to (1)(2)(f) may also be taken from the child's behaviour rather than from the parents' behaviour.

The extent to which this happens varies between clauses: evidence for the child being 'beyond control' or an offender, for example, can only arise from the child's behaviour; whereas being 'in moral danger' or not receiving an education may arise from the parent's behaviour in a variety of circumstances. Children committed to care as in moral danger could include for example, the children of prostitutes. Most for whom care proceedings are taken under this category, however, are adolescents, usually girls engaged in 'unlawful sexual intercourse' below the age of consent or boys involved in homosexual activities. With
educational problems, removal of younger children for truancy, or parents refusing to send children to school, are rare, while the majority of committals under this clause are of adolescent truants. Hence, in both of these categories the children's behaviour is widely used as evidence that parents are failing in their responsibilities.

Table 1 shows the numbers of children subject to care orders under the relevant clauses of the 1969 Act. By far the largest category is of offenders. Children subject to care orders under Sections 1(2)(c) to 1(2)(e) of the Act can be seen to be predominately adolescent. Most of those 'in moral danger' are girls, while most offenders are boys. For children 'beyond control' or not receiving education, proportions are rather more even.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>CHILDREN OVER 10 AS A PROPORTION OF ALL CHILDREN IN CARE UNDER THE SECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(2)(c)</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(2)(d)</td>
<td>1546</td>
<td>1192</td>
<td>2738</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(2)(e)</td>
<td>1804</td>
<td>1258</td>
<td>3062</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(2)(f)</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>821</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7(7)(a)</td>
<td>7763</td>
<td>1298</td>
<td>9061</td>
<td>100%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTALS 12007 4545 16552

Source: Children in Care of Local Authorities Year Ending 31.3.83. England. DHSS

* Sections 1(2)(f) and 7(7)(a) cannot be used for children under 10.
Justice, Welfare and Behaviour - The Delinquent and the 'Status Offender'

The stages by which Britain moved from a legalistic and judicial approach to juvenile offenders towards a 'welfare' approach are chronicled by Carlebach (1970), who outlines the original concern as being not simply for the children themselves but for the threat to society posed by the 'perishing and dangerous classes of children and juvenile offenders', (Mary Carpenter 1851). Early pioneers who advocated juvenile courts and reformatory schools, stressed, just as do modern reformers, the ineffectiveness of harsh, punitive measures in preventing or ending criminal behaviour, and the need for care and kindness to reduce bitterness and hostility to authority.

"See (the children) in their homes, if such they have, squalid, filthy, vicious, or pining and wretched, with none to help....and you have no hesitation in acknowledging that these are indeed the dangerous and perishing classes. Behold them when the hand of wisdom and of love has shown them a better way, and purified and softened their outward demeanour and their inner spirit...."

(Mary Carpenter, in 'Reformatory Schools', 1851, quoted in Rose 1967)

The social consequences of juvenile delinquency range from minor nuisance to considerable damage and suffering for the community. An important object of the criminal law is to protect society against such consequences: but the community also recognises the importance of caring for those who are too young to protect themselves....It has become increasingly clear that social control of harmful behaviour by the young, and social measures to help and protect the young, are not distinct and separate processes. The aims of protecting society from juvenile delinquency, and of helping children in trouble to grow up into mature and law-abiding persons, are complementary and not contradictory."

(Children in Trouble, Home Office 1968)
In spite of the early awareness that children often became delinquent as a consequence of deprivation, however, early legislation and the provision of services nevertheless made clear distinctions between the deprived who had not yet crossed the rubicon of official crime and those who had. Carlebach (1970) charts the way in which these distinctions were gradually eroded for pragmatic reasons rather than as a result of principle or long term planning. With the introduction of education and vocational training into reformatory schools and other improvements to the regime and facilities, reformatory schools for delinquents became indistinguishable from the industrial schools set up for the 'perishing' children, who would nowadays be called children at risk of becoming delinquent. Hence, successive legislative and administrative changes made it possible to transfer children between reformatory and industrial schools, and in the 1933 Act they were combined into a national system of 'approved schools'. Children were committed to these schools by being made subject to an 'approved school order' on a variety of conditions, only one of which was the commission of a criminal offence; the others concerned 'moral danger', truancy and being beyond parental control, which were subsequently re-codified into Section One of the 1969 Act.

The blurring of distinctions was made successively easier by the acceptance of explanations of crime couched in terms other than those of morality - the environmental explanations of the 19th and 20th century campaigners against poverty and social injustice, and the psychological explanations in terms of family dynamics which followed the teaching of Freud. The process was also assisted by the development of a range of services and provisions, both statutory and charitable, for deprived, abandoned, orphaned and abused children.
Some aspects of the legislative protection for this latter group were eventually embodied in the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act, through the provision that children 'in need of care and protection' or 'beyond control', be removed from the custody of unsuitable or negligent parents and committed to the care of a 'fit person'. The evidence which demonstrated a child to be in need of care and protection was based on substantially the same grounds as the approved school order, with the additional grounds of neglect or ill treatment of the child, and included the provision that the 'fit person' order could be made following a finding of guilt in criminal proceedings. The Fit Person Order, however, did not permit the placing of the child in an approved school although the choice of alternatives was left to the authority or person having care of the child.

By 1933, therefore, it was open to the courts to treat 'deprived' and 'depraved' children in substantially the same way. Both legislation and the available resources to deal with the children set into a general pattern which has largely survived subsequent upheavals, including further legislation, the creation of successive local authority bodies (currently the social services department) to care for the children, and the blending of the Approved School and Fit Person Orders into a single Care Order by the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act.

For some aspects of child care provision, the 1969 Act was a watershed, since it transferred powers over the placement of young offenders subject to court orders entirely to local authorities. For the purposes of the present argument, however, the 1933 Act was far more important since it was the first legislative recognition of similar remedies for offenders and non offenders. Most attention to the 'justice versus welfare' issue has focussed on its implications for
the way in which offenders are dealt with; as Table 1 showed, they form the majority of children subject to court orders. It is only recently that the implications for the non offenders have attracted the interest of researchers, or those concerned with welfare services.

Even then, interest in this group has been more prominent in the United States than in Britain. The term 'status offenders' is used to describe children whose behaviour leads to legal intervention solely because of their status as children. Teitelbaum and Gough (1977) introducing a collection of papers on this issue, comment: 'Although proceedings involving children who are beyond parental control, have run away, are truants from school, or otherwise have committed acts wrongful only for children, make up a very substantial part of the business of our juvenile courts, there is a devastating lack of information about them'. This statement is equally true of Britain, in spite of the evidence from Table 1 that almost 7,000 children are in public care for 'status' offences, and many others under local authority supervision on these grounds. The writer knows of no British studies of these children, and in studies of general child care or juvenile court populations, the curious features of this group become submerged by the characteristics of the larger categories of offenders or admissions to care.

Yet in some respects British legislation is very unusual. In a review of practice in W. Europe and the United States, Le Poole (1977) describes Britain and Sweden as being the only European countries in which it is possible to bring children to court or remove them from parental control for behaviour which does not amount to a criminal offence. He also comments that in Europe the trends are towards increased similarity of handling for criminal offenders and status offenders, whereas in the United States, the reverse is happening.
Teitelbaum and Harris (1977) link the development of legal intervention over 'children who disobey their parents' with the early Puritan concept of family responsibilities, in which children were born into original sin, and it was the family's responsibility to train them into godly maturity as quickly as possible. This gave little room for tolerance of families who endangered their children's souls by failing to train or control them. Teitelbaum and Harris trace the emergence of contrasting views of the innocence of childhood during the 18th and 19th centuries, in which pressures arose to infantilise larger sections of the youthful population in an effort to keep them young and innocent for as long as possible. In this framework, the 'bad' parent was one who despoiled his child's innocence. Current law and practice can be seen as incorporating elements of both approaches to the child and the family. There also appears to be at any rate some indication that the unusual definition of delinquency reached by Wilkins (1962) is the one which in practice is correct in Britain at least: Wilkins stated that delinquency was 'any behaviour on the part of the younger age-groups of the population, such that the senior groups object to it'.

Some space has been devoted to discussion of the 'status offenders' because their position is both unusual and neglected. Yet in many ways recent developments in ways of dealing with criminal offenders are as sociologically significant and represent a new turn in relationships between social services and other authorities and the family. In 1983, of almost 17,000 adolescents in care in England under relevant sections of the 1969 Act, one in three was a status offender and two were criminal offenders (DHSS 1983). Prior to the development of a welfare orientation in dealing with juvenile offenders, little tolerance was accorded them and penalties were harsh, with those for children as severe as for adults. The development of concern for the children's well-being and reclamation was
accompanied by steady amelioration of the penalties imposed, which mirrored to some extent the general patterns in criminal law and sentencing but was even more marked. Hence, by 1970, the availability of a range of non custodial sentences meant that the ultimate sanction of custody through the approved school order was generally reserved for more serious offenders. Most boys committed to approved school had therefore been in court as offenders on several occasions (Home Office: Statistics Relating to Approved Schools and Remand Homes 1970). With girls, the picture was rather different. They were predominately status offenders and those who were criminal offenders had only minor records (Cowie, Cowie and Slater 1968). Hence we have a pattern in which criminal offenders were in general only removed from parental care as a last resort following several court appearances: whereas status offenders, or those minor criminal offenders whose welfare was thought to be endangered in some way were subject to early intervention.

The 1969 Act appears to have altered this process with evidence from Thorpe et al (1980), Cawson (1981) and Giller and Morris (1981) demonstrating that it is now common for care orders on offenders to have been made at a first or second court appearance, though figures suggest some local variations.

One explanation for this is the increase in sentences to Borstal training (now Youth Custody), and detention centre, which have increased considerably in recent years while the use of care orders is declining (Morris and Giller 1987). With the 'creaming off' of more serious delinquents in prison department establishments, the way was opened for child care institutions to fill up with less serious delinquents, much as air fills a vacuum. Yet for this to happen represents a complete negation of the stated intentions of the 1969 Act, and indeed of most child care legislation in the past fifty years which has been
developed, in theory, to support and help the families, and to prevent admission to care wherever possible (Packman 1981). Since this is the official philosophy and practice of the social services, the question arises as to how the decisions in favour of early removal are interpreted to make them compatible with the arguments against removal.

Themes for Sociological Exploration

In the above discussion there are several emergent themes which connect in an interactive exploration of the practical issues.

The first theme is that of power and social control. Even when couched in protective, rather than coercive 'law and order' legislation, the control elements of the child care structure are manifest. There is the obvious intention to control behaviour defined as 'criminal' or anti-social and posing a direct threat to social stability. There is the more subtle desire of the older generation to control and socialise the younger, the age-old cry: "Would there were no age between sixteen and twenty three, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting" (Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale III iii 58); although changing social circumstances and physical maturity have added five years to the lower age range, and extended the anxiety to girls as well as boys. There is the regulation of family life which has become a prominent feature of many cultural systems through child protection laws, as well as through education systems and legal control of marriage, family formation and dissolution (Donzelot 1977). Finally there is the control of minority cultures which may be seen as a potential threat to the majority by challenging fundamental values and assumptions, in this instance on such emotive issues as family life, child
rearing, gender roles, and possibly issues such as drug use and sexual behaviour. "Why are there no 'hyphenated subcultures' in Britain, like those one finds in the United States (e.g Swedish-American, Japanese-American etc)?" (Watson 1977). Watson suggests that in Britain there may be particularly strong pressures towards cultural uniformity and the assimilation of minorities, but that the nature of those pressures may make it hard for groups to assimilate unless they are willing to surrender cultural identity.

This leads into a second theme, that of **marginality.** The concept of marginal status assigned to groups and individuals who are incomplete members of society is relevant to the present research in a number of ways. The idea of the criminal or deviant as an 'outlaw', a person who has put him or herself outside the normal rules and therefore protection of society has still some currency. If it had not, there would be greater public concern about such issues as deaths in prison or police custody. This is an extreme example of marginality, but the concept also runs through attitudes to minorities (Cross 1982). The ascription of marginal status to both immigrant groups and to minority cultures can be clearly seen in the assumption that to be black is to be a foreigner to be 'hard to place' or 'handicapped', to live in 'ghettos' and to be relegated to sub-strata of the labour market. Marginal people are not inevitably excluded from all community activities and may have a greater freedom to move between groups because they do not fully 'belong'. Marginality, however, has the status of a concept rather than a fully developed theory, having been applied to very specific situations rather than across a range of situations. It is what Glaser and Strauss (1967) term "examplled" by data chosen to support it rather than being grounded in comparative data.
The last theme is that of 'stigma'. Goffman (1963) took the original Greek term for "bodily signs designed to expose something unusual or bad about the moral status of the signifier" and expressed by practices such as branding and mutilation of slaves, criminals or traitors. He examines the way in which the concept has become extended to many forms of social disgrace, manifested in different ways, bodily, behaviourally and through record systems. He designates three forms of stigmata: bodily deformities, deformities of character, (both of which are individual characteristics) and 'tribal stigmata of race, nation or religion which can be transmitted through lineage and equally contaminate all members of a family'. Goffman points out that stigma represents not the attributes themselves (since the same attributes can be stigmatised in one social group and valued or revered in another) but the effect of the attributes on relationships between the stigmatised person and others in the social group. Stigma is a versatile concept which can explain both punitive and overtly protective responses, but in which both serve to highlight the special status of the stigmatised person or group. In the present research it can offer an explanation for social control measures which operate either through criminal laws or protective laws, and provide a route to understanding the conferment and maintenance of marginal status. Most sociological research which has used this concept has been in the field of disability, using the stigma of deformity. For present purposes the use and interaction of character stigmata and tribal stigmata are the more appropriate choices.

These three themes have all a place in the understanding of the situation of families and children in interaction with social services. No single theme is likely to offer a total or even approximately complete explanation for the observed phenomena, but each will be explored in relation to the evidence from previous research and the present research.
Summary

This chapter has outlined the nature of the research problem in its practical, legal and sociological contexts. Children may come into public care by voluntary agreement with parents who are unable to care for them or by being removed from home by action of a court because parents are considered to be giving them inadequate care or control. There is evidence that both procedures operate differently for black and white children. Five models which have been previously applied to the study of this issue are listed: three giving family-based explanations (family circumstances, immigrant extended family, and family structure models) and two giving society-based explanations (social class and racism models).

The present research focusses on a specific group of children (adolescents committed to care by a court on the grounds of their behaviour, either as criminal or status offenders). It aims to clarify the processes by which social workers assess children and parents, whether and how these differ for black and white children and parents. Three sociological themes are seen as potentially helpful in this analysis. These are the themes of power and control, of marginality and stigma. Power and control operates between parents and children, between social workers and clients, and between society and its agents and members. Marginality operates in relation to immigrants, ethnic minorities and to social work clients, who can all for different reasons be defined as not being full members of society. Stigma is a way of categorising the moral status of groups who are commonly seen by others as unusual or bad.

In the next three chapters the evidence on black children in care and the previous explanatory models are examined in detail, and their implications for the research are discussed.
CHAPTER TWO

THE SYSTEM OF PUBLIC CARE AND THE BLACK CHILD
CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

Interest in the situation of black children in care first became manifest in the 1950's. It is indicative of the attitudes towards the issue that the first research paper was entitled 'The Problem of the Coloured Child' (National Childrens Homes 1954) and this set the keynote for both research and for social work practice writing during the next three decades. Black children were 'a problem' to the child care services initially because of the extent to which existing services were seen as unable to meet their needs - the difficulty in finding good foster homes was one aspect commented on frequently in early papers - and secondly because as numbers rose, large proportions of black children were thought to be accumulating in residential homes. This was regarded as 'undesirable' though for whom and why was not usually articulated. Barnardo's (1966) in rejecting the idea of quotas for the admission of black children, commented: "The complete absence of a quota could theoretically mean that one Home had 100% white children and another had 100% coloured children, and in a multi-racial community we regard either of these situations as undesirable."* In this the report is untypical in stressing the link with community structure and the undesirability of 'all white homes'. Nevertheless the report then states that "We consider it inevitable that some Homes should continue to have a high proportion of coloured children, but we recommend....that in all coloured placements Executive

* In this and subsequent chapters the terminology of the original authors will be used when quoting research.
Officers should consider the advantages of dispersal and balanced numbers." The absence of an equivalent recommendation for white placements indicates that the real concerns were not simply those of reflecting the nature of local communities.

In the early days the children's behaviour was not seen as part of the 'problem' and writers specifically recorded that the children presented no difficulties of discipline or behaviour greater than those of the general run of children in care. This situation began to change in the 1970s when attention turned towards the presence of black children in what was then the approved school system, and to the behaviour which brought them there.

The development of social work in this context can be seen to require both substantive theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to explain social worker's behaviour to black children in care and their families, and formal theory linking it to social responses to minority groups and the exercise of formal power within the remit of social institutions established to control and moderate the family. (The legal system and the juvenile courts, with social workers as their agents.)

**Black Children in Care: Numbers and Values**

Research and practice writing shows a very marked concern with the numbers of black children in care throughout the past 30 years. There are no national statistics and estimates of over or under representation have always relied on 'commonsense' comparisons with general populations in care, with school populations or with census data (see for example Harris 1971, Pearce 1974). These are problematic, since children in care are not generally representative of all children, but include disproportionate numbers for lower
socio-economic groups, more families suffering income and housing disadvantage, disproportionately more boys, and more of certain age groups (Community Relations Commission 1975, House of Commons 1984). The assumption which appears to underlie many of the studies of numbers, that there are 'too many' black children in care or in residential homes, is therefore an indication of the problem focus in relation to black children, rather than a reliable indicator of differences in criteria for admission to care or greater incidence of problems in the families of black children.

The numbers question is, however, of great significance in that it crystallises the differences in perspectives and values taken towards the study of black children in care over the past 30 years. The various population comparisons used to demonstrate that there were 'too many' black children in care form the basis for changing interpretations. Initially 'too many' children meant that families were not coping with their children, with the result that black children were being unacceptably concentrated in some sectors of the care system (e.g. Barnardo's 1966, Antrobus 1964). Hence in all early sources admission to care is unquestioningly described as resulting from parental (especially maternal) failure: illegitimacy, extra marital pregnancy, desertion by mother, mental illness of mother and similar causes. In the earliest period this was linked with the nature of the group of children considered: a high proportion were children of mixed parentage fathered by African or American men. In the 1950's the picture appeared to be one of 'war babies', and children of black USA or Commonwealth service men based in Britain.
During the 1960's the growth of immigration from the Commonwealth changed the nature of the population in care, and hence the nature of explanations for 'too many' black children. The introduction of some teaching on the cultural background of immigrants led to explanations couched in terms of immigrant misuse of the child care services. West Indians, for example, were thought to regard care as a substitute for boarding school education:

"The prospect (of having a child in care) was attractive. The mother could continue to work or study without the problems or expenses of a daily minder or the build up of moral obligation to a relative. The child was getting an excellent training and education. The parents looked forward to the day when they would receive home cultured ladies and gentlemen" (Fitzherbert 1967).

Fitzherbert also links parental attitudes to public care with the West Indian tradition of extended family care, leaving no stigma attached to the parent who allows another to raise her children. This point is also made by Ellis (1971) in relation to West African children:

"Part of the answer then, as to why West African students turn to fostering in this country, is that fostering is a traditional part of their culture." Furthermore "there is a general belief that parents are not the best suited people for bringing up their children; they tend to pamper their children."

Finally, some studies also comment on misperceptions of the role of child care services leading to inappropriate requests for material help (Boss and Homeshaw 1974).

The most recent phase in explaining 'too many' black children has been the development of a belief that white social workers and foster parents are stealing children from the black community, removing them from parents and bringing them up to value white standards and cultural patterns rather than their own (Lambeth SSD 1981, Gill and Jackson 1983). This has become enmeshed with the arguments about
transracial placement of black children in white foster and adoptive homes and in children's homes with exclusively white staffing. The Lambeth report, for example, quotes parents views that "too many placements.....were too far away from the black community and therefore family.....did not or could not cope with the social, psychological, physical and cultural needs of black children. One of the main consequences....is that black children, especially those who have been in care a long time, become alienated from the community whence they came."

The interpretation placed on 'too many' black children has led in turn to a different range of practical solutions to the problem: initially the imposition of quotas and dispersal of children in the child care system were solutions often discussed (Barnardo's 1966, Harris 1971) and intensive campaigns were begun to find foster and adoptive families for black children (Raynor 1971). In Phase 2 social workers were urged to resist pressure from immigrant parents to admit children to care (Fitzherbert 1967, 1968, Ellis 1971), while Phase 3 criticises social workers for applying the wrong standards to the assessment of black families and intervening inappropriately to remove children from home (Lambeth 1981, Stone 1983, Heptinstall 1986). While the starting points of the three phases clearly reflect the changing external world, the fact that all three overlapped shows the time lapse which can arise before new ideas enter general thinking and, once they have entered, the tenacity with which they are retained and incorporated into value structures. Quota systems, for example, were still being advocated as late as 1977 (Smith 1977), (until they were clearly established as illegal under the Race Relations Act 1976). 'Immigrant extended family' arguments are still in use (Francis 1986), in spite of severe criticism from anthropologists (Goody 1973) and demonstration of their inappropriateness in subsequent research (Holman 1973).
The process bears considerable resemblance to movements in the USA described by Simon and Altstein (1977). They demonstrate that evidence on the nature and effectiveness of placements for children from ethnic minorities had little influence on the development of adoption services, which were primarily affected by changing power structures between child care agencies, white adopters, and black pressure groups. This process can also be seen in British services and is illustrated by the lack of interest in developing a cumulative body of research evidence on black children in care. British studies of black children in care are listed in Appendix Three. Although a number of studies have been carried out, they have not in general built upon each other in order to refine and develop understanding of the issues. Very few studies use other work as a starting point and they adopt different population definitions which reduce the value and comparability of their data. So, for example, the different approaches towards definitions of ethnic groups make it harder to explore the nature of differences in the referral patterns and services offered to families of Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin. The very big differences found in several studies between the care careers of children of mixed parentage and those with two black parents, have not led to further analysis which might explain those differences. In the early studies this appears to be because it was taken for granted that children of mixed parentage would be unwanted and have particular problems (see for example Shapiro 1968) and in the more recent writing because of the belief that the common experience of black people in a racist society transcends other differences and makes them irrelevant. Hence the most recent comprehensive study (Lambeth SSD 1982) divides its subjects into 'black' and 'white' with no further detail, although this inevitably means that likely differences between ethnic groups are concealed by global statistics, and (even more confusingly) it is never clear whether the families described as 'black families' really are black
families or are instead the families of black children (which in the case of children of mixed parentage are at least 50% white). Hence statistical comparisons of, for example, parents' employment and economic status with Lambeth's black population as a whole are suspect.

In examining the findings of previous research therefore it is important to bear in mind not only the methodological limitations of the studies, but the value-context in which they were undertaken. There is nevertheless a recurrent core of themes and findings which must be taken into account in any further study of admissions to care.

a. Children of mixed parentage

Of these, the most notable is the high proportion of children with mixed parentage, nearly always with a white UK born mother, and a minority group father, found in all studies of black children in care which have considered the issue. In early studies the proportions were as high as 80% - 90% of the black children in care having mixed parentage, but this was linked with several factors: the young age of the children; their predominately illegitimate birth at a time when illegitimacy was heavily stigmatised, the carrying out of research in voluntary organisations which had particular links with adoption services and services to unmarried mothers; and the nationality of fathers, suggesting that many were servicemen. As the population changed with changing social conditions and immigration, so the proportion of children with mixed parentage dropped, from 88% (NCH 1954) to 74% (Barnardo's 1966); 62% (Foren and Batta 1970); 57% (Fitzherbert 1967); 63% (Rowe and Lambert 1973) and 49% (Pinder and Shaw 1974). These were all general 'in care' population studies, and none known to the writer record figures lower than 49%. Study of this question linked to local populations in the Bradford area concluded that children of mixed
parentage were markedly the most likely of any group of children to come into care (Foren and Batta 1970, Batta 1972), recording that 1 in 12 of these children come into care compared to fewer than 1 in 100 for white children and children with two minority group parents.

A slightly different and more confusing picture, however, is given by studies of adolescents placed in approved schools (later Community Homes with Education or CH(E)s). In the earliest study Lambert (1970) reported a subjective impression that many of the black children in care or in approved schools were of mixed parentage, but was not able to give figures. This however was in a context whereby ethnic minorities (particularly Asians) were considered under-represented in approved school committals from Birmingham. In a national study of approved school children, Harris (1971) considered 'children of immigrants' over represented compared to numbers in the general secondary school population. In a subsequent analysis of his data Cawson (1977) found 22% of black approved school children of mixed parentage, and a later national survey of 'West Indian' boys in CH(E)s, Pearce (1974) found only 18% (also in a study in which he considered West Indians overrepresented compared to the general population). At this period many adolescents coming into care were recent immigrants, whereas younger children were usually UK born. This alone might explain the differences between adolescent and general 'in care' studies. This suggestion is given further support by a later study of boys in a classifying (reception) CH(E) in the N.E. of England, which found the highest overall proportion of black children in any study of children in care (42%) and of these 52% were of mixed parentage (Smith, Batta and McCulloch 1975). Commentaries on
child care services, both in general and on specialised services for disturbed/difficult adolescents continue to report that very high proportions of children with mixed parentage can be found (Knight 1977, Cheetham 1981, Stone 1983). Local studies in inner city areas support this view (Wilkinson 1982).

In the absence of any thorough explanation of the reason for the high proportions of these children in the general care population, most researchers seem to have made 'commonsense' assumptions. Barnardo's (1966), for example, comment that black illegitimate children of white mothers came into care when earlier white illegitimate children of the same mothers had been accepted by their mothers' families. Admission therefore was seen to reflect prejudice in the mothers' families. Suggestions that children of mixed parentage are more likely to have psychological or identity problems are not uncommon (e.g. Wilson 1981, 1987, Watson 1973) though there is no general population research on mixed families in the community which supports this position. It is however an important issue for consideration in the present study, whether children of mixed parentage are seen by social workers as having different problems, or different prospects, to others when the decision is made as to their committal to care.

If there has been a rise in the proportion of troublesome adolescents in care who are of mixed parentage, this may also reflect decision making processes rather than the children's circumstances or behaviour. After 1971, responsibility for placement rested with social workers rather than courts. In addition to Smith et al (1975) there is other evidence of a rise in the total numbers of black children in CH(E)s (Pearce 1974, Stone 1983). This clearly reflects
social work decisions on placement as much as court committals to care. Cawson (1981) showed that since the abolition of the approved school order, placement patterns of young offenders have changed in some respects to resemble those of other children in public care. The admission and placement of black children could be an additional manifestation of social work processes.

b. Legal status and reasons for admission

A second consistent finding is the greater frequency of voluntary admission to care among ethnic minorities than among the indigenous white population and the concomitantly smaller proportions in care through court orders. This was reported by NCH (1954), Lambert (1970), Foren and Batta (1970), Pinder and Shaw (1974) and Lambeth SSD (1982). Many of the differences found in care careers and age structures are likely to be linked with this feature of the populations, since until very recently the majority of children coming into care were young children coming in by voluntary agreement for short term care during a family crisis. This picture has been slowly changing towards a greater use of compulsory powers and predominance of adolescents in care and coming into care (House of Commons 1984, DHSS 1985).

Foren and Batta (1970) found a difference between children of mixed parentage and other black children in legal status, the former being closer to the white children than to children with two black parents.

Yet when children from ethnic minorities do come into care via the courts, their patterns of admission seem different. Several studies suggest that black juvenile offenders, while not everywhere overrepresented in care (Lambert 1970, Lambeth SSD 1982) are likely to come into
care earlier than white offenders and hence to be less delinquent than their white counterparts (Lambert 1970, Harris 1971, Pearce 1974, Cawson 1977, Bradden 1981, Tipler 1986). Girls (predominately status offenders rather than criminal offenders) seem to have higher rates of committal than boys. Giller and Morris (1981) found all but one of the girls and 29% of the boys in their study of London committals were black. Harris's and Pearce's studies of approved schools and CH(E)s found higher 'over-representation' of black girls than of boys. Where court orders of other kinds are concerned, Lambeth SSD (1981) suggest that more black children than white are committed for care and protection under the 1969 Act, but fewer are committed for truancy. Some studies suggest that, regardless of legal status, behaviour problems are more likely to be given as the reason for a black child's admission than with a white child (Pinder and Shaw 1974, Lambeth SSD 1981).

Again, speculative interpretations for these findings often represent researchers values and beliefs, whether the assumption is of police prejudice (Pearce 1974), greater family problems (Lambert 1970), socially aspiring immigrant parents rejecting children who do not conform to expected behaviour (Harris 1971) or social workers' misunderstanding of the dynamics of black family life (Lambeth SSD 1981).

c. Differences between ethnic groups
This issue raises all the problems which surround definitions of ethnicity, particularly since the largest single group in all general studies are the children of mixed parentage, whose ethnicity is the most problematic (Stone 1985). The terminology used in research and practice writing over the past 30 years reveals the
shifts in values and emphasis in trying to identify, describe and classify in social terms a physically defined minority. It further highlights the absence of symbols denoting ethnic subcultures within British culture: Watson's "hyphenated-subcultures" are once again missing.

Throughout, ethnic and racial categorisation is a blend of concepts, usually confused. Most common is skin colour description: coloured, fully coloured, half coloured, white, non white (and even in one paper non-coloured!) and ultimately, black. Racial categorisation is rarer, though 'negro', 'Eurasian', 'half caste' and 'mixed race' are found. Geographic labels, 'Non-European', 'Asian', 'British', 'West Indian' etc. are the most common, while from the mid 1960s 'immigrant' status is ascribed even to those born in the UK to British mothers. The ascription of geographic labels and immigrant status are important issues to be considered in the development of theoretical models for social work actions. As Pinder and Shaw (1974) point out "they enabled our society to evade responsibility for our own problems. We could blame geography, as Americans like to blame history". They also pinpoint whole populations as outsiders, foreigners or at the very least, marginal members of society.

The most recent papers make a broad categorisation into 'Afro-Caribbean' and 'Asian'(both labels which distance their holders geographically and nationally), or use a general label of 'black', sometimes with an acknowledgement that Asians do not accept this term (e.g. Community Relations Commission 1975). Using these categorisations as applied to earlier studies, suggests that very different processes bring children from different ethnic groups into care. In particular,
studies which examine the 'numbers' issue consistently suggest that Afro-Caribbean children are the largest group and may be over represented (NCH 1954, Barnardo's 1966, Lambert 1970, Harris 1971, Rowe 1973, Pearce 1974, Pinder and Shaw 1974, Lambeth SSD 1982). Different perspectives may emerge, however, according to whether children of mixed parentage are classified separately or ascribed to the ethnic status of their minority group parent. While it appears extremely rare for children of dual Asian parentage to come into care, for whatever reason, children of mixed Asian/British parentage are rather more common and in some studies (particularly of children placed for adoption) are a group as large or larger than the Afro-Caribbean group (Barnardo's 1966, Raynor 1971, Batta 1972, Rowe 1973).

None of the studies further explore the reasons for these differences. The supposed greater protectiveness, cohesiveness and exclusiveness of the Asian family compared to the Afro-Caribbean family is taken for granted as an explanation of the figures. There are, however, alternative possible explanations, for example the cultural tradition that troublesome Asian adolescents will be 'sent home for rehabilitation' (Taylor 1976) rather than placed in care, or social workers' inability to recognise signs of serious problems in Asian families (Ahmed 1978, 1986). Nevertheless the limited statistical evidence does indicate the possibility of differences in the way Asian and Afro-Caribbean parents seek to use the child care service and/or are assessed by social workers.
d. Differences in placement practice and 'care careers'

A number of studies indicate that there are differences in placement practices and care careers between ethnic minority and white children, and in some instances between children of mixed parentage and other black children. As the present study is focussed on admission to care, placement practice after committal to long term care will not be examined, but previous findings are important in hypothesis development because decision making is known to be affected by the availability of placement resources, and by beliefs about placement resources. A study of assessment centres in the South West of England showed that most social workers found it difficult to make distinctions between the 'ideal' placement for a particular child and the placement finally recommended. They could only conceptualise 'ideal' placements in terms of resources with which they were familiar and which they knew to be realistic options for the child concerned (South West Children's Regional Planning Committee 1976). Giller and Morris (1981) demonstrated the way in which preconceptions about available resources prevented social workers from giving serious thought to some options: there was no point, for example, in considering fostering for difficult teenagers because it was impossible to find foster homes willing to take them. Lindsay-Smith, in a review of arrangements for the care of black children, comments that social workers "do not make efforts to find families for older black children....because they think that it is impossible" (1979). Similar comments are made by Raynor (1971) and Tizard (1977) about social workers' assumptions on the fostering or adoption of black children, in which assumptions might represent the social workers' own prejudices.
In this way, beliefs about whether suitable placements would or would not be available influenced social workers' thinking about whether children could be helped in care and thus whether they should come into care. Similar findings are reported in a recent study by Packman et al (1986) which suggests that marked differences between two local authorities in the number of difficult teenagers in care were linked to the differences in available residential places: one authority had a number of CH(E)s which were considered suitable resources for these children, and therefore suitable placements were more likely to be available. This process of course is self-fulfilling - if placements are available, children come into care; if children come into care, the institutions are needed to receive them.

Some of the findings in research on black children in care indicate that similar factors may be at work. Most apparent is the evidence that the proportions of black children placed in approved schools and CH(E)s rose sharply after the 1969 Children and Young Person's Act, at a time when their overall use was declining and the numbers of care orders made by courts were dropping (Department of Health and Social Security 1974-1980). The decrease in the population formerly admitted to the schools quite simply left more room for black children with less serious offending records.

Findings on fostering in the placement careers of black children also illustrate the tenacity of beliefs held about placement issues in the face of contrary evidence. Although practice writings record a very common belief that it is harder to find foster homes for black children (see for example Jenkins 1963, Raynor 1971, Lindsay-Smith 1978, Cheetham 1981) studies which examined the issue report few problems in finding foster
homes and a higher proportion of black children in foster homes (e.g. NCH 1954, Barnardo's 1966, Shapiro 1968, Foren and Batta 1970, Lambeth SSD 1982). In the early period the concern was about the lack of white foster homes, in the later period the lack of black foster homes. This does not however affect the substantive point: if more black children were placed, the 'problem' did not really exist in the terms in which it was defined by social workers at the time.

In 1964 Antrobus warned against taking negative approaches to the placement of minority groups, suggesting that treating the children as 'hard to place' or warning prospective foster parents to expect problems due to the child's colour simply created self-fulfilling prophecies. In 1974 the warning was repeated by Pinder and Shaw: "The trap from which social workers must first extract themselves is that of reducing colour to a problem - colour as a handicap, a physical deformity and a symptom of cultural and emotional deprivation". In contrast, Raynor (1971) and Tizard (1977) both comment that social workers did not adequately prepare white foster parents or adopters for the needs of a black child. The contrast is more apparent than real, since all writers are concerned with the creation, sustainment or challenging of racial myths, the misinterpretation of behaviour or problems as being caused or not caused by the child's race. As Pinder and Shaw demonstrate, Antrobus found no support in the child care services during the decade after her paper, and it became common to categorise minority groups, along with the disabled, mentally retarded, sick or maladjusted children as 'hard to place'. Indeed, some early categories specifically described black children as 'handicapped'. Rowe and Lambert's study, 'Children who Wait' (1973) gave great impetus to the attempts to find long term foster or adoptive homes for children in care and in the context
of such programmes the handicap analogy had two uses. Firstly it recognised what was thought to be an administrative reality, that some children were harder to find homes for and therefore were more at risk of long term institutionalisation and unsatisfactory care. Secondly it stressed the disadvantage which minority groups are under due to racial prejudice and the need to have positive discrimination to counter these disadvantages. Yet the handicap analogy also reflects the prejudices of the professionals as much as those of society, by depicting black skin as abnormal, a stigma, a deformity to be pitied and compensated for.

Two further issues potentially contribute to perceptions of whether admission to care will or will not be needed or helpful for black children. There are indications from several studies that contact with parents is more vulnerable for black children than for white, especially for children of mixed parentage (Gale 1963, Jenkins 1963, Barnardos 1966, Fitzherbert 1967, Shapiro 1968, Pearce 1974, Cawson 1977). Some early studies suggest that this was contributed to by social workers' lack of interest in the putative fathers of illegitimate children, which was particularly inappropriate for West Indian children given the West Indian tradition of fatherhood (Fitzherbert 1967, Shapiro 1968). Secondly two studies which considered placement careers both report that placement breakdown and moves occurred more often with black children (Pinder and Shaw 1974, Lambeth SSD 1981). Several studies report more absconding from care by black children, though when ethnic group is considered, higher rates appeared to be accounted for by children of mixed parentage (Pearce 1974, Cawson 1977, Lambeth 1981). Although the Lambeth studies report that more placement breakdowns due to behaviour were found
among the black children, all other studies found no generally greater difficulties in behaviour in care, though Pearce (1974) suggests that a greater tendency to form boisterous groups and question staff decisions could lead to West Indian boys acquiring a reputation for difficulty.

'Reputations' are the key to this subject, since social workers beliefs about the likelihood of a child responding well to being in care will be influential whether or not those beliefs are well founded. Stone (1985) quotes W.I. Thomas: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." Research on social work is not unique in beginning to amass much evidence to support this statement.

Filling the Theory Gap

Review of the evidence on black children in public care therefore reveals several areas of consensus in the descriptive statistics, but the absence of a framework which might offer a coherent explanation for the statistics. The gap is one which has hardly been noticed in social work because it has been all too easy to fill with assumptions, and stereotypes (some actively contradicted by the findings themselves). Most of these have operated within the longstanding tradition of social work discourse which concentrates primarily on individual and family pathology, derived from the influence of Freudian psychology and subsequent psychodynamic approaches (Mayer and Timms 1970, Rees 1975, 1978, Rees and Wallace 1982).
Maureen Cain (1983), in considering how solicitors transform their client's 'real life' problems into legal problems, refers to the process of 'creative translation' into legal concepts and symbols, which is essential if the solicitor is to be able to solve the client's problem. Similarly social workers must translate 'real life' problems into 'problems amenable (or not amenable) to a social work solution'.

It is part of the thesis explored here that where alternative, sociological explanations for social 'malfunctioning' have been put forward, or become available through independent work, they cannot be accepted by social workers as explanations in their own right, but must be translated in terms of the effects of sociological phenomena on individual circumstances and problems. Translation has primarily occurred in terms of effects on psychological development, and, due to the predominance of psychodynamic theory, become supportive to existing preconceptions rather than counteracting them. The process of translation into individualistic terms is inevitable, since a sociological proposition gives little guidance to a social work practitioner on how to respond to Mr and Mrs Smith in the waiting room asking for help with Johnnie's stealing or Valerie's running away. The translation, equally inevitably, will be made into a previously familiar language. The limited development of social psychology as a discipline in its own right provides little help to the social worker in matching the sociological and the psychological in particular circumstances, and the pragmatic solutions to gaps in theory are thus a reflection of the state of the art in reconciling disciplines within the social sciences.
Many of the areas which are least problematic to the social worker and most problematic to the sociologist surround social workers' assessment of families in general and families from ethnic minorities in particular. These are unproblematic to the social worker because of the centrality of ideas of the family to social work thought - and problematic to the sociologist for precisely the same reason.

Summary

Chapter Two has summarised the evidence from previous research on black children in care. It describes the concentration on the issue of numbers, a conviction that there were too many black children coming into care and that this caused problems for the care services. The issue has throughout been subject to value-based interpretations, rather than to serious and rigorous attempts to examine whether black children really were over-represented or at greater risk of admission to care than white children in similar circumstances. Early interpretations criticised families for failing to care for their children; later interpretations criticised social workers for the inappropriate removal and placement of black children.

In spite of the varied methods, quality and value bases of the research, however, there are some common issues which are reiterated throughout the research. These are the high proportions of black children in care who are of mixed parentage; the greater likelihood of black children coming into care by voluntary agreement rather than court order, but with black juvenile offenders being removed from home earlier than white offenders; differences in admission patterns and care careers between ethnic groups and between
children of mixed-parentage and other black children, and differences in placement patterns between black and white children once in care. These differences have been explained in commonsense or value-based terms and research has lacked theoretical underpinning.
CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL WORKERS, FAMILIES AND BLACK FAMILIES -

THE SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH
Families and Social Services

There is evidence that consistent themes occur in the judgements which social workers make (Giller and Morris 1981) and that common ideologies affect social workers' willingness to undertake particular activities on behalf of clients (Grace and Wilkinson 1978). Judgements and ideologies about families and family life are particularly central to social workers' thinking in decisions on child care issues, and this is connected with the origins of public care for children, its place in the social order, and the processes by which it became framed in the present social services departments.

In Hall's (1977) study of the development of social services she discusses in some detail the issue of the name of the new departments, which is regarded as a significant indicator of attitudes to social work clients and to families. The departments were formed by an amalgam of the former 'Childrens' Departments' and former 'Health and Welfare Departments', and Hall reports considerable pressure from the civil service, particularly the Home Office, to name the new composite service the 'Family Welfare Department' or 'Family Service Department'. This was strongly resisted by an active pressure group in which the most eminent individuals and institutions of social work were the chief campaigners. Their argument at that time was that the problems dealt with by social workers were often not family problems; and that a family department would simple recreate the Children's Departments under a new name, ignoring the needs of people such as offenders, the mentally
traditionally not been seen in a family context. Hence we have the spectacle of the social work establishment stressing the 'family' nature of children's issues and the non-family nature of other issues.

Paradoxically, the 1970s was also the period in which there was major development of sociologically based models of social work using the ideas of community and systems theory. Nevertheless the period since the setting up of social services departments in 1971, has in general been one in which more and more social work issues have come to be defined as family issues, and social work efforts - and battles - have centred more firmly on the family as the focus for action. Hence the emergence of 'Family Therapy', a term virtually unknown in British social work literature before 1971, and now a major specialism with an established place on training courses for social workers, and a substantial literature on theory and practice. Although still primarily centred on situations in which there are difficulties with children, a family focus is also developing in work with other client groups such as mental illness, marital problems, or alcoholism. Furthermore there is greater emphasis on family life as an appropriate model for the care of people who cannot remain in their original families. Again, this idea is most developed in the child care services where the terminology of family life has been freely adapted in substitute care. In the 1960's there were 'family group homes', 'housemothers' and 'housefathers'. In the 1970s and 80s there is much emphasis on 'family placements' not just for children in care, but for the elderly and mentally handicapped.
On the other hand, issues of family violence, and sexual abuse within the family have also become more prominent in social work thinking (Jordan 1982). Parker (1982) discusses the way in which images of the family can influence social policy, even in services which are superficially the antithesis of the family, such as day nurseries, where young children are cared for in small groups often called 'family groups'. "What is important in cases like these seems to be the prescriptive message about styles of relationship which the language of 'the family' conveys" (Parker 1982).

Models of the Family

Social workers appear to work from a hypothetical model of family life as it should be both when removing or receiving clients from a family deemed as unsatisfactory, and when planning substitute care for them. Indeed it can be postulated that there is a series of models, ranging from the 'ideal' family, through the 'good' family, the 'normal' or 'typical' family, to the 'acceptable' or 'good enough' family (CCETSW 1978). Smelser (1982) points out the extent to which present day British judgements of the family derive from 'the ghostly model' of the Victorian family:

"It is both a positive and a negative model. On the one hand, there lingers a....profound sense that what has happened to the family in the past century is unfortunate; it has disintegrated, fallen from grace. And the yardstick by which that fall is measured are Victorian stability, solidity and serenity. On the other hand, those reformers who press to liberate us further from the constraints of the family often find the agenda dictated by a preoccupation with the outstanding features of the Victorian family, its formality, its repression of sexuality, its sharply drawn (we would now say sexist) discrimination between the roles of men and women."
Smelser, however, points out the great differences which existed in the Victorian period between middle and working class families, most particularly in the role of women; who, in middle class families were confined to the home yet with limited domestic tasks in that sphere; whereas working class women had a much broader range of responsibilities, essential to both the domestic and the economic survival of the family.

Donzelot (1977) in his analysis of developing relationships between the family and the modern state from the 18th to the 20th centuries, similarly points out that initiatives to control the working class family identified the mother as the key person, whose role must be shaped to provide stability and control for errant husbands and children. He describes different policy approaches taken towards middle and working class families, aimed at turning working class families in on themselves "in a circular relation of vigilance against the temptations from outside, the cabaret and the street". In contrast the bourgeois family was encouraged to move outwards to free children from excessive parental control and instead set up a "sanitary cordon around the child which delimited his sphere of development; inside this perimeter the growth of his body and mind would be encouraged by enlisting all the contributions of psychopedagogy (sic) in its service".

Donzelot refers to the middle class educative model as being one of "protected liberation" while the working class model was of "supervised freedom". He demonstrates the way in which these objectives influenced the development of French educational, psychiatric, legal and social work services impinging on the family and child rearing. Work in Britain, though more fragmentary, has illustrated identical forces
The State and the Families

The interest which the state has in regulating families is threefold: regulation is aimed at controlling an alternative source of power and influence; at harnessing the strength of the family to approved ends, (including the economic independence of citizens from the state) and at 'connecting' to society individuals who would otherwise be a threat to its stability and order. Donzelot points out that the initial moves to regulate the family were made in response to a growing practice of the abandonment of children, so that large numbers of infants were left to be supported by the then minimal child rescue services, while homeless, vagrant older children and adolescents, eventually becoming homeless, vagrant adults, were a major source of potential social disorder.

The formation of models for family life is by no means a simple business of state coercion or convenience however. The influences which have gone to form present day models have been many. The importance of moral and religious influences depicting the family as the saviour of its children's souls or the protector of their innocence has already been mentioned (Teitelbaum and Harris 1977); and indeed, the Rapaports point out that analysis of the family in present day society still involves a choice which can be seen as primarily value based.
A great deal of the current discussion on the predicament of families in Britain can be seen to be based on two clusters of thought: one that considers the emergent diversity of family patterns an expression of diverse needs and wishes; the other that considers the emergent diversity as deviations from some outside norm - of economic standards, of moral or religious standards, of biological imperatives." (Rapaport and Rapaport 1982)

Also important are the numerous vested interests which then develop around the maintenance or overturning of particular models of the family, not the least of which are those of the families themselves. Families faced with changing external conditions make transitions to meet them; "in doing so, they do not merely adapt passively to what is being asked of them" (Rapaport and Rapaport 1982). Donzelot, considering the changing role of the family in the new social order of the post-industrial society, describes it as "both queen and prisoner" of that order, achieved as the result of a "tactical collusion" between the family and the state, both seeking different objectives but each finding the support of the other useful in its own struggle.

Aspects of this "tactical collusion" are evident in the legislation common in most Western European countries and in the United States, which permits parents to use the law to control their own recalcitrant children, in some instances even giving them power to incarcerate their children in locked institutions. Until 1971, British parents could (and frequently did) bring their own children before the court as being 'beyond control' or 'in moral danger', while prior to 1959, parents could have children who stole, or indulged in under-age sexual activity, committed to hospital as 'moral imbeciles." Legislative changes to prevent parents taking such direct action can be seen as an assertion of state power vis a vis the family. Parents must now convince social workers, teachers or doctors, representing the state, of their children's need for control, and rely on those professional's judgement as to the form this control should
take. On the other hand, social workers, teachers and doctors, being interposed between the family and the court, also restrict the powers of judges and magistrates, who in their turn become dependent on the case made to them, before they can intervene to assert the claims of public order or morality. The assertion of greater state control over the family has carried a concomitant change in the means for exercising that power through the development of new sources of expert power.

Many are the conflicts and confusions which result. Parker, Casburn and Turnbull (1981) record the bewilderment of parents who appealed for social work help in persuading a troublesome teenager to obey his or her parents, only to find that the social worker then removed the child completely from the parents' control. In contrast, Fisher et al (1986) describe the equal bewilderment of parents whose children had entered care because they were badly behaved, and who subsequently found social workers apparently permitting the very behaviour which parents had been trying to restrict.

In this context, therefore, the issue of family rights, family control and family competence have always been prominent in dealing with the social results of troublesome behaviour in children and the families' willingness or ability to prevent its members threatening the social order. The personnel who have been given powers to exercise the state functions have always been required to make judgements about the relationships within and competence of the family, in terms which measure the degree to which the family conforms to state requirements for childrearing. Yet we have the paradox that legislation which curtailed the family's power and increased the state's responsibility for judging families happened in a context of broad social reform; occurring in parallel with a range of other reforms.
designed to improve health and housing and prevent destitution and culminating in the 'Welfare State'. The focus on the family was juxtaposed in a drawing of attention to other 'social evils' which were considered harmful to the family, to individuals, and to the community.

Although attention was thereby drawn to broader social factors which threatened the family the curious feature of modern social services provision, is that it is has become more necessary to define the grounds for intervention in the family in terms of family competence, to give a creative translation of social problems such as homelessness or poverty into family problems such as stress, illness, poor relationships. Under the earlier poor law, unemployment, destitution, poverty and homelessness were themselves grounds for admitting children to public care. After 1948 these categories ceased to have any legislative basis because the other measures introduced were expected to solve all these problems. Admitting that they have failed to do so would risk the creation of pressure for further expensive and constraining social reform.

The Dominance of Psychoanalytic Theory

This in itself explains the paradox of Hall's analysis and of subsequent developments in social work. It provides substantial grounds for the value of psychoanalytic theory to social workers. A fundamental premiss of psychoanalytic theory is that individuals can solve their practical problems if they have sufficient emotional stability and insight. Social workers who wholeheartedly adopt this approach do not have to look further into the client's social environment, or spend their energy fighting apparently hopeless battles with adverse economic
conditions. Grace and Wilkinson (1978) refer to this as the "traditional casework" approach, clearly distinguishable from the "radical" approach of more socially oriented workers, but also representing the established position in social work thinking.

"Problems are a symptom. One can have two views of the causes: such catastrophes as unemployment, sickness....the other is the personality, you know, genes plus environment equals whatever you are. I would therefore look at them not as electric light problems, not as practical problems at all because people with practical problems manage to solve them. If a person is unable to solve problems, unless they're particularly acute or hideous, then it reflects to my mind that there's something missing in them; they are at some points inadequate...." (Social Worker, quoted in Grace and Wilkinson 1978).

Psychoanalytic-based social work gains strength from the fact that it was the earliest theory of personality and behaviour to be fed into social work training. Although other psychological models of individual functioning have challenged it since the 1960s, and although input from social policy and from sociology have always challenged the idea that individual pathology is an explanation for social problems, psychoanalytic theory has an established, longstanding base in social work through being the background in which the older, more experienced and more senior practitioners were trained and within which most of the classic textbook literature was produced. Through the apprenticeship model of practical training and the establishment of occupational or group culture this can be expected to transmit to new generations particularly when many social workers have no training to counteract the culture learned "on the job" and most others undertake training after several years in social work rather than at the outset of their careers. Studies of client satisfaction and social worker activities have consistently shown that clients' relationships, especially family relationships, are seen as more important than their material problems, or at
least as more appropriate for the social worker to engage (Mayer and Timms 1970, Rees 1978, Grace and Wilkinson 1978). In the two studies of black children in care which compared parents' and social workers' opinions of why the children were in care, this difference was most notable. Parents were far more likely to see their children's placement in care as caused by material problems or the child's behaviour whereas social workers saw the overwhelmingly most important reason as parental inadequacy (Pinder and Shaw 1974, Lambeth SSD 1982). Other studies of children in care produce the same findings (Packman et al 1986, Fisher et al 1986).

Yet the retention of psychoanalytic perspectives is not merely a temporal phenomenon which will disappear as the older generation of social workers die out. It offers, by the elastic, and all embracing nature of its tenets (Eysenck and Rachman 1965), a valuable means for the creative translation of real life problems into problems amenable to a social work solution, and into terms which do not challenge the existing sources of state and 'expert professional' power.

Psychoanalytic Theory and Black Families

Two features of psychoanalytic theory are particularly relevant to the way in which social workers handle the translation of problems concerning black families and black children. The first is that it is a pathology based theory, built up initially from the experiences of therapists with patients in clinics and consulting rooms, and subsequently sustained and developed in similar settings. This harmonises with the earlier discussed tendency of white social workers and of social scientists to develop their studies of ethnic minorities in pathological terms and using pathological populations.
Secondly, psychoanalytic theory places its major stress on infant experiences and the infant's relationships with its parents as the formulator of personality and the seedbed of later problems. This perspective was interpreted through the work of psychotherapists such as Bowlby (1965) who regarded separation of the infant from its mother as the most damaging experience, from which later behaviour problems were bound to spring, and from which it was difficult, if not impossible, to recover. Bowlby's theories drew their evidence from studies of children in large, barren institutional settings where individual care was minimal, and from studies of wartime evacuees whose billets were not chosen on the grounds of the host's child care skills. The findings from these studies were then generalised to all care outside the traditional western nuclear family. Although later research cast serious doubts on aspects of Bowlby's thesis (Rutter 1972) its influence on child care practice was by then entrenched and was of particular value to social workers trying to translate unfamiliar family patterns into familiar concepts, and to cope with the new phenomenon of children separated from parents and other relatives through immigration. While theories of child development have subsequently placed much less emphasis on early experience, again this is in a context where the older established views are represented in the traditional hierarchy and culture of social work.

Although Freudian and later psychoanalytic theories have been extensively criticised because of the degree to which they were rooted in the cultural assumptions of the 19th Century European Jewish middle class, they still form a central and powerful part of social work training (CCETSW 1982). The limitations which psychoanalytic approaches placed on social workers' flexibility were first noted in relation to British working class culture (Mayer and Timms 1970) but can be expected to make it particularly hard for
social workers to accommodate "the emergent diversity of family patterns" (both through social change in Britain and through immigration) as a legitimate "expression of diverse needs and wishes" rather than as "deviations from some outside norm" (Rapaport op cit).

The Discovery of Cultural Difference

The earliest challenges to the psychoanalytic model came from discussions of social class variations in family structure and behaviour, following from the work of family sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s. Social work literature began to comment on the problems in communication and understanding which arose when middle class social workers met working class clients (Mayer and Timms 1970). Jordan (1972) for example, criticised the introduction of family therapy models based on middle class American family patterns and assuming a common, normal, family system of communications: how could the communication patterns in a middle class family in a large suburban house, be the same as those of a gipsy family living in a caravan. Each family would inevitably have a pattern which was normally adapted to very different living conditions. The implications of sociological research on family structure were only beginning to make an impact on social work theory when social workers were required to cope with an entirely new range of family patterns introduced by migrant groups from the Commonwealth. The migrants forced consideration of two questions: firstly, whether the new family patterns did or did not conform to the existing models used for everyday reference; secondly, whether they were 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' forms.
An important feature of the situation was that the new forms were only known at first hand through immigration, and were therefore affected by the distortions of migration patterns in which the migrants are a self selected group rather than a representative cross section from the original culture, and in which migrants make some adjustments to the unusual conditions of their lives in the new host culture (Jones 1976). The separation of parents and dependent children which was an accompaniment of migration, particularly in Afro-Caribbean families, made it easier for social workers to fit family life into the familiar post-Bowlby mould and initially comprehend any child care problems brought to them as 'family circumstances' problems; the earliest admissions to care could be seen as problems of pathology in a familiar and essentially healthy family form.

The introduction of greater information on the cultures of origin of immigrant families began during the mid 1960s and escalated with the production of professional 'handbooks' aimed at social workers, doctors and teachers. The first to appear was Oakley's account, "New Backgrounds: the immigrant child at home and at school" (1968), directed primarily at teachers. This was soon followed by Morrish (1971) "The Background of Immigrant Children", aimed at doctors and Trisetiotis (1972) "Social Work with Coloured Immigrants and their Families". Several other titles of this nature appeared during the 1970s (Cheetham 1972, De H Lobo 1978, Ellis 1978). A common format described by Husband (1986) as 'the anthropological travelogue' was of a chapter describing a 'typical' or 'normal' family of West Indian, Indian, Pakistani, Turkish Cypriot, and other origin, together with some discussion of the difficulties faced by these families on immigration to Britain, and the misunderstandings which could arise when they used public services or came into contact with public service professionals. The first volume, by Oakley, was drawn on heavily by later writers. With very few exceptions the contributors to the early
handbooks were British observers of immigrant culture rather than members of these cultures, but the issues of 'insider' or 'outsider' perception also arose when members of one immigrant culture attempted to comment on different immigrant cultures (e.g. De H Lobo 1978). Handbooks are still in production, though the recent volumes have been produced to a greater extent by writers describing their own ethnic group (Saifullah Khan 1979, Coombe and Little 1986).

The 'handbook' period can best be understood in terms of Condrey's thesis of a 'new arena' (1986). Condrey argues that apparently arbitrary patterns of state provision for pre-school children can best be understood in terms of competing power stages in which different bodies sought to define and to control a new arena which emerged on the boundary between the family and the state. The possibility of a new arena was a consequence of the re-drawing of other spheres of control such as the education and health services, and gave scope for a new structuring of services in terms of 'dividing practices' (Foucault 1982) in which "the subject is either divided from himself or divided from others" as with the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy. Condrey outlines the competing power stages as biologistic, psychoanalytic, developmental, and materialistic, each representing a shift in power to different groups within medicine, psychology, education and the family.

This analysis has many parallels in the development of relationships between ethnic minority families and the public services. In this instance the 'new arena' emerged because the immigration patterns of the late 1950s and early 1960s brought services into contact with a variety of new family situations, both the cultural features which the immigrants brought with them and the features arising from their marginalised immigrant status and limited acceptance in British society. Hence the various groups charged with
assisting, teaching, treating or controlling immigrant children and their families each sought to explain and interpret those families in a way which enhanced their own expert power and channelled provision and solutions into forms acceptable to their own territory and traditions.

As with material on black children in care discussed earlier, most of the literature on child rearing and family patterns has been based on experience and practitioner research, and very often on clinical experience with pathological populations. The earlier research studies largely emanated from doctors; and accounts and research by independent researchers and by members of the relevant ethnic communities have arisen only very recently. The cultural background given in the earlier handbooks and in some of the research studies is very general, and again does not always appear to be borne out by such empirical evidence as was available at the time the handbooks were produced. The effect of much of the literature was to set up a series of stereotypes of family forms, primarily concerning the numerically largest ethnic minorities, the Afro Caribbeans, Indians and Pakistanis, rather less material about West Africans and very little about other groups. An outline of the most common stereotypes serves to illustrate the way in which they emphasised the marginal, alien status of immigrant families, and their effective stigmatisation of unfamiliar family forms as unnatural, pathological and damaging to members.

Early Professional Handbooks and the Stereotypical Family

1. The Afro Caribbean Family
   Most of the attention in material on child rearing and family life has focussed on the Afro Caribbean family. This appears to be because Afro Caribbeans more often become involved with welfare services and other agencies
when problems and family breakdowns arise, and because their family patterns and child rearing practices are regarded by white professionals as more deviant from British norms than those of other groups.

The picture is presented in the early handbooks of a weak, loosely knit extended family based largely on matrilineal ties. Most sources stressed the influence of slavery, suggesting that because slaves could not make binding marriages and families were arbitrarily broken up, the western tradition of marriage and the nuclear family never became established, except among the socially aspiring groups who copied the ways of the white elite. Patterson's (1963) account, on which much later material is based, used the work of Caribbean sociologists to explore class differences and family patterns. She maintained that because marriage was associated with the wealthy elite, and required a home and an ostentatious wedding, it was seen as beyond the reach of poor working class West Indians, who for the most part settled for concubinage with varying degrees of stability depending on the social circumstances of the parties. The influences of slavery traditions on parent-child relationships was also expounded, and the strong ties are described as being between mother and child, with fathers paying a much more casual role. This was held to stem from the period when the child belonged to the slave owner, who fulfilled most of the normal paternal responsibilities of providing for the child and giving it his name. The West Indian child was described as 'typically' living in a matrilineal household with mother, grandmother and maternal aunts, with the menfolk as 'visitors'.
All sources stressed that this was a very generalised account and that there were variations between islands and between social classes. Patterson (1963), Cheetham (1972) and Fitzherbert (1968) also stressed that West Indians in Britain have adapted to British norms to a remarkable extent, with marriage and stable nuclear families being a very common pattern. There was, however, no suggestion in these handbooks that childrearing patterns have modified to the same extent as marital behaviour. Parents were considered very strict with their children, making frequent use of corporal punishment and "scolding and punishment are not always meted out on a very logical basis to drill into children definite habits and principles" (Fitzherbert 1967). The children were described as being expected to help in the house from a very early age. A great deal was said about the discontinuity of care experienced by West Indian immigrant children before and following their parents arrival in Britain: in the West Indies children were described as frequently cared for by maternal grandmother and aunts, rather than by mother. They were often left behind, on parents' emigration, coming to Britain later when parents have found a home, a job and a more settled way of life.

Commentators on the Afro Caribbean family who were not themselves Afro Caribbeans, were in general critical of the child rearing patterns, regarding them as leading to poor development and later problems in adjustment. Fitzherbert's comment, quoted earlier, was echoed by several other writers and none asked whether 'typical' British parents are by contrast, logical and consistent in their methods of disciplining or training children. De H Lobo (1978) commented on the cold and unloving approach which mothers took towards their children, and says that children are not cuddled and fussed over as in most societies. Prince (1967) made similar comments and
noted a syndrome of apathy and poor communication similar to autism in children he treated. Patterson described the mother/child bond as one-way, with devoted children but mother quite willing to surrender children to the state or better-off relatives, and this view was echoed by many handbooks of the 1960s and 70s.

While similar factual information about family structure and behaviour was given in most sources, interpretations are contradictory even within the same account. The family is described as weak, unstable, vulnerable to breakdown and offering limited support to members; yet at the same time the willingness of members to receive, support and care for relatives' children, and the practice of sending money home to relatives are described. The lack of interest which fathers may show in their own children is remarked at the same time as the interest which putative fathers take in their illegitimate children and the tradition of responsible stepfatherhood, in which a man will assume paternal (including financial) responsibility for the children which his wife or cohabitee had by earlier partners. The practice of leaving children to the care of non-relatives in the same multi-occupied house is criticised in some instances as lack of concern for continuity of care, while Patterson's evidence that multi-occupied houses were communities, offering much mutual family-type support to residents, is ignored in its implications for child care.

2. The Asian Family
The material on Asian families refers almost exclusively to immigrants from the Indian sub continent: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. There are few references to African or West Indian Asians and some of the material
reflects a tacit assumption that these groups are the same as other Asians. Chinese and Indo-Chinese are not apparently regarded as Asians and when mentioned at all are referred to as "Oriental".

There was, however, considerable agreement among the early commentators as to the salient features of the "typical" Hindu, Sikh or Moslem families. All three traditions are described as focussing on a very strong "joint" or extended family network in which sons were valued and educated by their fathers for independence and mastery, while daughters were regarded as something of a burden, taught by their mothers to be submissive to their menfolk, and once infancy is over, sheltered from all contact with the male sex outside the family. Marriage of sons and daughters was regarded as an alliance between families rather than a union of individuals. Within this network the child was loved and secure but regarded as part of the family rather than as an individual.

Variations in this generalised pattern were described in these groups. Pakistani and Bangladeshi Moslem families were seen as more enclosed and retiring than the Indian Sikh or Hindu groups, with consequently more pressure and problems of isolation among the mothers and daughters. The Moslem father was described as taking greater interest in his son from an early age, while girls were expected to prepare themselves for marriage. Sikh families in particular were described as more outgoing and willing to be involved in the affairs of the indigenous community, with men active in politics and Trade Unions. Social contact with the indigenous
British population was considered not to be sought by Asians, however, because it was feared that children (particularly girls) would be contaminated by the loose western ways of their companions, and even be lost to the family by marriage to a Briton.

The dangers of this kind of cultural pen picture become clear when inconsistencies between the accounts are seen: for example, Cheetham said that it is acceptable for Sikh women to work and retain some independence while De H Lobo said the opposite. Most accounts commented that Asian girls were expected to give considerable help in the house, while Goodall (1968) and Cheetham argued the contrary, that household responsibilities were usually taken by the older women in the family and the young woman would have little experience of them. De H Lobo described the close attention, physical cuddling, and overprotectiveness which Asian mothers "typically" gave to their young children, while Morrish (1971) said that young children were usually left to amuse themselves unless they disturbed their elders in some way.

There was considerable discussion in the handbook literature of the stresses which Asian family life created for children living in Britain, particularly for girls. Cheetham gave case histories of clashes between parents, teachers and social workers over the education and behaviour of Asian children. Two Asian commentators disagreed: De H Lobo considered that many children suffered stress and psychosomatic illness due to conflicting pressures on them; Hiro (1971) however, rejected the argument that child rearing traditions caused widespread resentment among Asian children in
Britain and said that most accepted their parents standards, including the importance of arranged marriages. He maintained that Asian parents have modified their traditional standards considerably in Britain.

3. The West African Family

Although the handbooks commonly pointed out the considerable differences in custom between areas and tribes in West Africa, most then went on to treat 'West Africans' as a group with a single identity. There is very much less material on the situation of West African children, and interest focussed largely on the use of private foster homes. Again, the usual pattern was to outline the typical West African background, and an early article (Ellis 1971) was used as source material for most later references to West Africans. The practice of placing very young children in foster homes, and of frequently moving them, was linked by Ellis and later writings to the traditional practice of fostering children for part of their childhood followed by many West African tribes. The explanation given for fostering was because parents were thought too partial and "soft" with their own children. It was therefore considered good for the child to spend part of its time with other relatives who would be harder and inculcate necessary discipline. Ellis suggested that because West African parents had themselves experienced being moved between relatives in the extended family and placed in hard foster homes, they did not value the stability of care regarded as essential for western children, and did not feel that hard or unaffectionate foster parents would harm their children. They were considered to seek foster parents who would be strict, and to expect a colder and harsher approach to discipline than is acceptable in Britain. This view is echoed in Cheetham
and De H Lobo, in spite of its strong contradiction in research by Holman (1973) and Goody and Muir (1973) who point out the differences between fostering within and outside the family, and that parents themselves expect to provide the affection through a high degree of involvement in extended family fostering.

Ellis also discussed the attitudes which West Africans held to education, considering them to value it above everything else, including their children's short term interests.

**Ethnic Minorities and the New Arena in Social Work**

Much of the information presented in the early handbooks has been seriously questioned, contradicted, or modified by the available research on ethnic sub groups in Britain, particularly by the accounts later emerging from researchers and practitioners who are themselves members of an ethnic minority. It is not proposed here to summarise that material, although it will be referenced at specific points when relevant. The important issue is the development of a particular set of cultural stereotypes among social workers and other groups impinging on the child care services at the point of the opening through immigration of the new arena in social work. Although the stereotypes were founded in the 1960s and 70s and have been extensively challenged since, recent discussions suggest that they are tenacious in their hold on social workers minds (e.g. Ahmed et al 1986, Coombe and Little 1986). The stereotypes generated two further theoretical stances to add to the 'family circumstances' models used hitherto: the model described as the 'immigrant extended family care' model, in which parents were seen as trying to recreate features of the support they had lost in their families of origin by inappropriate use of public
services (or private fostering); and the 'family structure' model in which the family structures imported from other cultures were seen as having innate defects, hindering adaptations to British culture, and giving rise to personal and family problems.

The Immigrant Extended Family Model

In the 'immigrant extended family' model, the concentration on migrant histories and their impact on mother/child relationships and support is most notable. Fitzherbert (1967), for example, was the strongest advocate of this approach, in spite of the fact that her own data showed that very few of the mothers she studied were completey isolated. For example only 3 out of a sample of 17 mentally ill mothers were without kin groups in Britain.

'Immigrant extended family' models were largely introduced into social work thinking by Fitzherbert (1967, 1968) for West Indian families and Ellis (1971, 1978) for West Africans. No analogous explanation was needed for Asian children as their numbers in care were so few. Instead, explanations were sought for why Asian children did not come into care and were found in the different migration patterns whereby Asian immigrants brought their extended families with them; and in the later family structure models. West African children did not enter the public care system in large numbers, but did enter the private fostering and day care system, which was regulated and inspected by social workers; hence the concern to explain their situation.

The model also had implications for the power relationship between social workers and parents. Social work literature shows a strong emphasis on the avoidance of 'manipulation' by clients (Rees 1978), a further inheritance from the psychoanalytic tradition, and perhaps also from the poor law
concern not to allow inappropriate use of services by immigrants can be seen in this context, as well as in the context of rationing or gatekeeping against pressures for scarce resources.

Immigrant extended family arguments also implied that parents were too stupid to appreciate the differences between their original family and community structure and British social services, while at least conceding parents the desire to do the best for their children.

Family Structure Models

The introduction of 'family structure' models was linked to, but distinct from, the 'immigrant extended family' model, in its greater emphasis on pathology. The family structures emanating from some cultures, most particularly the Afro Caribbean, were seen as intrinsically more likely to produce emotional disturbance, mental illness, or personality defects. This assumption was not necessarily made by researchers or other commentators describing the original culture, but resulted from a synthesis of cultural (i.e. sociologically based) input and existing psychoanalytic theories about family functioning and personality development.

At their most extreme family structure models stated or implied that particular cultures led to a less loving relationship between parents and children, to limited parental understanding of their children's needs, and a consequent inability to judge their children's best interests. While such judgements were an intrinsic part of
In this way, psychoanalytic theory of family relationships and personality formation acted as a catalyst which enabled the new phenomena being encountered by social workers to be assimilated and classified in familiar terms. The new arena came to be dominated by the ideas and power seeking strategies of the old. The stereotypes thus formed had the added advantage of allowing the rationalisation of awkward, insoluble or imperfectly understood problems as being caused by culture conflict affecting family dynamics. In this way problems were again subject to creative translation into individual and family terms, thereby becoming amenable to routine social work techniques; the impact of economic hardship, housing difficulties, and racism, which were not so amenable, could be minimised. Although all the early handbook material refers to economic issues and most mention racism, these are not treated as central issues. In contrast, most of the research of the period, including that carried out by social work and medical practitioners, does stress the impact of external circumstances, (e.g. Fitzherbert 1967, Pinder and Shaw 1974, Prince 1967, Pollack 1972). Yet the early handbook literature largely ignores findings such as Taylor's (1976), that where Asian youths expressed uncertainty about their place in Britain this was not in any sense caused by culture conflict but by fear of racism, and of it being translated into political action through the National Front or the work of politicians such as Enoch Powell. Only later in the 1980s when black social work writers made and emphasised the same point did it make any impact on social work thinking.
The Discovery of Racism

Towards the end of the 1970s the picture began to change, with the emergence of racism models to counteract the family models. By this time, however, new models were fighting for a place in an already crowded arena.

Atkinson (1978) studying verdicts of suicide in coroners courts, shows the way in which the various participants work through a process of informal hypothesis testing in trying to explain an unnatural death, with the order of selection being determined by the cultural acceptability of explanations. Only when all the familiar and more acceptable explanations have been ruled out by circumstances will the hypothesis of suicide be considered as a last resort.

In studying social worker decisions on delinquents Giller and Morris (1981) use a similar argument to contend that family explanations for delinquency were always the first choice; only when these proved manifestly inadequate were subcultural or other sociological explanations turned to.

In working with black adolescents and their families the process may be more complex, since there is a wider range of sociological options available to the social worker, but the essential process - family first, society second, is likely to be the same. This reflects Kuhn's (1962) explanation for the way in which knowledge becomes established within an accepted scientific value base and then resists advances in knowledge or alternative explanations which challenge the established base.

Resistance to explanations couched in terms of racism, class (or of subcultural alienation resulting from either race or class) is aided by the sketchy and ill developed nature of such explanations, which once again have often been founded in selected evidence from pathological populations and are
often better supplied with rhetoric than with evidence of any kind. It is comparatively easy to find groups of disenchanted, rebellious, youths on which to form an alienation model (e.g. Pryce 1979) but such findings still have to be reconciled with the broader picture in which most ethnic sub groups, while still very aware and fearful of racism, clearly do not became significantly alienated from the values of the society as a whole (Taylor 1976, Anwar 1976), in which girls and boys may have very different responses (Weinreich 1979, Fuller 1982) and in which black children in general do not display widespread problems of delinquency or school refusal, and indeed may be more committed than white working class children to social institutions such as the education system (Dove 1975, Driver 1980a, 1980b, Department of Education and Science 1983). This point will be taken further in the next chapter which considers racism and social class models.

**Sociological Functions of Family Stereotypes**

So far I have discussed the value of family stereotypes for social workers in translating real life problems into social work problems. There is, however, a broader sociological context in which they must be considered, that of maintaining the status quo between majority and minority groups by perpetuating institutionalised racism.

Ryan (1972) describes this process effectively in relation to stereotypes of the black American family, supposedly a victim of permanent damage by the history of slavery.

"To proclaim that "the Negro family" was destroyed by the villainous slavemaster and that subsequent generations of Negroes have learned (from their fat, doughty mammies and a succession of shifty, irresponsible pappies) precisely how to have a disorganised family can be satisfying, particularly for the concerned white citizen. First, it at least allows
the partial incorporation and perpetuation of the racial stereotypes that we have all had drilled into us since infancy, while at the same time it substitutes liberal, quasi-sociological rationales for unacceptable and crude racist explanations. Second, it loads the greater part of the blame and guilt on to the shoulders of that long-dead ancestor of ours, the villainous slavemaster."

Ryan pinpoints the way in which such stereotypes are based on selective evidence and misrepresentation of statistical data, and the contribution which present day economic and social discrimination makes to the problems experienced by a minority of black families. Staples (1976) and Bryant Solomon (1976), also in relation to the black American family, demonstrate that once again the stereotypes are based on pathological individuals or populations, and are unsupported or actively contradicted by historical evidence and by reputable present day research. Staples, for example, illustrates the spurious nature of many assumptions concerning the effect of slavery on the black American family, by using historical sources to show that most slave families were not separated. Indeed, it was in the interests of owners to keep families together, both to stabilise their workforce and to gain ownership of children produced from slave marriages*.

* Both authors cite the damaging effect in the United States of the Moynihan Report (1965), a government sponsored research report. Moynihan used evidence of higher rates of family breakdown and single parenthood in the black population to found a model of black family pathology which took no account of the greater hardship and pressures on black families due to their disadvantageous social and economic status. There are many parallels in the British child care literature.
Cross (1977) commenting on the Caribbean family, describes the denial by many western sociologists of the existence of a Caribbean family form:

"Everything is seen in terms of concepts derived from studying North American or European Society...If the nuclear family has major functions which cannot be performed by alternative institutional arrangements, then it must be a "functional pre-requisite" or a necessary social institution."

Cross describes the profound influence on Caribbean family sociology of the 'search for survivals' of African culture, which might have transcended deportation and slavery. In the British context the search for survivals has appeared at times to take a different form, the identification of fossilised (usually Victorian) western elements seen in discussions of patterns of discipline and childrearing, differential gender roles, extended family links and arranged marriages. These discussions seem to draw directly on the tradition of Social Darwinism rather than on modern anthropology. Regarding a whole culture as a fossilised dinosaur has stigmatising potential even greater than that which is innate to pathological structure models. It may (with reliable data) be possible to explain the origin of phenomena, including 'problems', in the past. It is only possible to explain the continuation of phenomena in terms of present influences maintaining them. Whether family stereotypes continue to be used by social workers dealing with adolescents, is a crucial question for the study of black children coming into care.

Stereotypes and Marginality

There is in the British context, an additional aspect to the production and use of stereotypes: the possibility, pointed out by Pinder and Shaw (1974) of using geography rather than history as an excuse to evade the challenges presented by
racism and economic disadvantage in Britain. The stereotypes used, and the extent of linkage with cultures of origin, convey the quality of 'foreignness', and have the effect of distancing and marginalising ethnic minorities, which is a familiar approach to acceptance or rejection as British. Until very recently all handbooks, and many research studies, consistently referred to 'immigrants' and 'children of immigrants' even when discussing populations born in Britain, or children who were predominantly the result of mixed unions and in the care of their British parent.

Stone (1985) describes the extent which this process is intrinsic to British thought. He quotes a Dutch writer on British and Dutch colonial policy; "whereas the British always considered themselves so weak that the slightest drop of foreign blood could declassify their offspring, the Dutch...considered themselves so important that any trace of (legitimate) Dutch ancestry...was sufficient to classify a child as Dutch" (Van Amerfoort 1982, quoted in Stone 1985). The social workers' and other public service attitudes to immigrant clients can be seen as directly linked to broader perspectives on British status and colonial history. Once again, there are no 'hyphenated subcultures' - children and families are either true British or foreign.

The Choice Between Family Based and Society Based Models

It has become evident that in the description of minority group families, values have been more important than evidence, just as they were with the literature on black children in care. This has served to ensure that social work with black families did not challenge existing power bases, either within social work or within the state as a whole. Explanations of observed problems were kept in a context in which they could be attributed primarily to
features of family functioning or histories. The implicit comparisons between the minority group family and the 'normal' British family were rarely articulated in the social work literature, or even in the research, but were left in the realm of 'taken for granted' knowledge, or subsumed within the debate about class differences between families and social workers.

Similarities between British and ethnic minority families shown by comparative research such as Rutter et al (1974) or by studies of British childrearing (Newson and Newson 1976) were ignored. Also ignored were inconsistencies within accounts which described particular cultures in one set of terms while depicting them in different terms. Afro Caribbean families, for example, were described as weak (frequent changes of partner and care figures, family quarrels) but depicted as strong (support from and to the extended family with money, shelter and child care), while the Asian family was described as strong (supportive joint families which retain and deal with any difficulties experienced by members) yet depicted as too weak to cope with possible challenges from the world outside the family and living in constant fear of breakup through corruption of its young by Western ways; West African families were critically described in marginalising terms as seeking care for children outside the nuclear family to reduce the possibility of the child being spoiled by partial, over indulgent parents, an identical explanation to that described by Lambert et al (1974) for the socially acceptable British upper and middle class use of boarding school education.
Consistency is emerging from the above account as to the directions which social workers are most likely to take in seeking explanations for troublesome behaviour in adolescents. Family explanations are easily the most comfortable options. Yet they are not the only options, and the most comfortable path is not always chosen. 'Social Class' and 'Racism' models both offer major challenges to the established position in social work culture, and to the power of social workers. The 'Social Class' model developed challenges to the power bases within social work both from within the ranks of social workers and from outside it, with the radical social work movement of the 1970s. 'Racism' models, on the other hand, originated from outside social work, through the work of the Community Relations Commission (later CRE) and developments such as the Race Relations Act 1976, which made illegal many former child care practices such as quota systems and dispersal. Yet racism models too were eventually adopted by social workers, initially by black social workers (Manning 1978, John 1972) but eventually becoming standard in texts on social work with ethnic minorities (Cheetham 1981, Cheetham et al 1981, Ohri et al 1982, Coombe and Little 1986). It is to these models which we must now turn.

Summary

The location of child care work within a family context reveals the extent to which problems with children have traditionally been seen as 'caused by' aspects of family life. The interest which the state has in controlling family life has led to the formation and use of models of the 'ideal' 'normal' or 'good enough' family, which social workers and other state agencies are then required to use as
criteria for judgement. Models have been heavily influenced by psychoanalytic theory on family relationships and personality formation and these were extensively used by social workers when first faced with family life in other cultures, particularly immigrant cultures.

Increasing knowledge about the diversity of family patterns between cultures led to the production of professional handbooks to advise social workers and others, which contributed to the development of stereotypes about minority group families. Three models have been elicited; the 'family circumstances', 'immigrant extended family' and 'family structure' models, which were used to explain the admission to care of black children. All models were shown to be flawed and to be contradicted by evidence available at the time. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the family based models, particularly those influenced by psychoanalytic theory, are usually the social workers' first choice when seeking to understand child care problems, because they enable real life problems to be translated into a form which is amenable to a social work solution.
CHAPTER FOUR

ALTERNATIVES: THE SOCIAL WORKER'S USE OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
Social Work, Politics and the State

Although the influence of psychology, and even more of psychopathology, was entrenched in social work, it did not, however, have a completely undisputed reign over the territory of British social work theory.

Although the origins of social work in Britain, as in many other countries, stem from private philanthropy, from its earliest days it was rooted in a strong concern about social conditions, exemplified in the objectives of the first social work organisation in Britain, the Charity Organisation Society. Jones (1983) illustrates the COS concern in the 19th Century to eliminate the 'Lady Bountiful' and replace her with trained and competent 'professionals' who had 'understanding of labour questions' and avoided 'a patronising attitude towards the manual working class'. This pinpoints from the outset an expectation that social work was in some way connected with social class and the conditions of the poor, rather than with the dynamics of personality or complexity of family relationships, as in psychoanalytic therapy - which was indeed originally developed for the rich, fee paying patient. The further development of British social work through the means of the probation service and the local authority poor law, culminating in the 'Welfare State' of the 1940s, all served to enhance the strand of social consciousness in social work as the backdrop to the development of 'casework' or 'psychosocial' practice.
It is this tradition which can be seen in its contribution to 'Family Circumstances' models of work with black families, in which families are seen as suffering from social disadvantage (either direct, as in low incomes or poor housing, or indirect, as in the absence of an economic cushion against disasters such as illness) which are common to poor working class families rather than being associated with race. These ideas can be seen as direct antecedents of some of the 'race and class' disputes which emerged in sociology and social policy in the 1970s.

The emphasis on social conditions also led eventually to the development of several new streams of thought in social work theory: the emergence of 'radical social work' and the shift in emphasis from individual or family 'casework' to 'community work'. All of these streams offered potential alternative theoretical models to social workers in dealing with working class clients and with ethnic minority clients, and all have in common the criticism of psychodynamic social work as psychological reductionism. The emergence of evidence on racism in public institutions, and the highlighting of this as an issue in social work agencies added further to the social worker's choice of emphasis when working with black children and families.

The development of social work thought at this period reflected a sociological approach to what is essentially a political process. In the British context of an almost total state control over the employment and duties of social workers, Bailey (1980) considering the sociological underpinning of state professionals and their intervention in society, argues that for social workers theory is:

"puny as a determinant compared with the confident control over permissible practice exercised by the state. The choice of a theory becomes a cosmetic which may well provide rationales for training courses but which can never be more than nostalgic for practitioners faced with statutory mandates."

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He considers that
"the choice of psychiatry or politics or any other university based discipline like sociology, for that matter, is not a theoretical commitment, it is an attempt to adopt a prestigious knowledge base."

Bailey describes the development of a politics based social work in the 1970s, and the demonstrable shift in the social work paradigm from psychiatry to politics as representing a primarily ideological shift, which is then rationalised in theoretical terms. In considering the use of sociological models to discuss the situation of black social work clients, the ideological nature of the arguments is indeed very clear; just as it was with the family based models. In the sociological models, too, the rhetoric is usually more important than the evidence.

The sociological models which were developed during the 1970s can be crudely grouped into 'social class models' and 'racism' models, although some elements of each are overlapping or parallel each other.

Social Class and Models of Social Work

The familiarity with the social context in which social work was practiced first crystallised into formal 'social class' models of working in the late 1960s. Although never completely absent the social awareness (as distinct from activism) which had characterised the early social workers had receded in prominence during the 1940s and 50s, partly as a result of the strong influence then coming from psychoanalytic based social work in the USA (Yelloly 1979) and partly because the post-war social reform embodied in the 'welfare state' was expected to greatly ameliorate, if not eradicate, the social problems faced by the poor.
By the 1960s, however, social conditions were changing and it had become obvious that even in a generally prosperous Britain, there were still substantial numbers of poor, 'under-privileged' people. Sociologists, particularly those interested in deviance, turned their attention to the institutions of the welfare state, including social work, as mechanisms for the control and regulation of the working classes. Goffman (1952) in an early paper had discussed the way in which psychoanalytic theory helped psychiatrists in 'cooling the mark out' i.e. persuading poor, inarticulate patients that psychiatric treatment could not help them and their troubles must be endured, a process which reserved treatment for the middle classes. Sociologists began to look at whether similar phenomena arose in British services which were influenced by psychoanalytic theory. Rees and Wallace (1982) review the evidence that poor clients were very effectively 'cooled out' from an expectation of material help by being offered 'casework' and from casework by the unfamiliarity of the language in which social workers discussed their problems. They illustrate the processes by which social workers persuaded clients to accept the shortage of resources, and thereby performed a political function.

A series of research projects, (some by sociologists and some by social workers) focussed for the first time on the process of social work from the clients' perspective, illustrating the gaps in understanding between predominately middle class social workers and working class clients (Mayer and Timms 1970, Sainsbury 1975, Rees 1978). These analyses demonstrated the strong social class element to the discordant views of clients and social workers.
This questioning of social work threw doubt on whether social work was a useful activity as far as many working class clients were concerned, and challenged values and self-images which were seen as fundamental: the prime importance of the 'casework relationship' and the extent to which social workers were 'non judgemental' and accepting. Satyamurti (1979) suggests that this contributed to a serious crisis of confidence in social work.

The seeds of anxiety over whether social work was allowing itself to be used as a tool of the middle classes in controlling the poor fell into fertile soil, given the historical context of social work. The results were the development of two new 'schools'. Radical social work aimed to combat the psychological reductionism of traditional casework, helping clients to fight an unjust social system, and adopting a Marxist base (Bailey and Brake 1975, Corrigan and Leonard 1978). Community work aimed at turning attention away from the pathological individual or family by mobilising working class communities, and campaigning actively for provision and control of resources to meet members' social and personal needs (Jones and Mayo 1974).

Although most studies of social work, at this period and since, have shown a proportion of social workers influenced by the ideas of radical social work and/or community work, (e.g. Grace and Wilkinson 1978) there is general agreement from research that it remained a minority, with most social workers staying loyal to conventional psychodynamic perspectives. There is also doubt, even with the minority who expressed the ideologies, over whether radical social work ever moved from ideology into practice, while community work always remained peripheral to the activities of social services departments (Davies and Crousaz 1982) and hence fell first victim to financial cutbacks when these were imposed. Robinson (1978) points out that in any event the Marxist base of these schools of social work entailed no
necessary shift of the social worker or community worker from the position of 'expert' with 'insight'. The aim of encouraging political activism and reducing false consciousness meant that radical social workers "simply differ about the content of the insight", while "the client's existing views get scant respect if they do not coincide with the worker's, except as the starting point for the process of raising his consciousness (to that of the worker)".

Clarke (1979) reviewing the failure of sociology (as expressed in radical social work) to make much impact on social work practice, describes the alliance between sociologist and social worker as an "unstable and tense liaison, full of doubts, mistrust and arguments". He considers that this is because sociology never progressed beyond criticism of social work, and failed to generate prescriptions for social work practice. The sociology of social work is seen not merely

"as theoretical, but as theoreticist, preoccupied with the production of theoretical sophistication rather than the production of 'really useful knowledge' - knowledge that applies, or more importantly, can be applied to particular situations."

He suggests that no movement can be made from this position unless sociologists and social workers accept the need to politicise social work theory and practice. Yet as Robinson points out, this is not necessarily going to make much difference to the position of the client as subservient to the social worker's control.
Social Class Models and Black Clients

The application of social class models in explaining the situation of black clients is dependent on an assumption that race is equivalent to class. According to this ideology, racism is not an independent phenomenon but can be understood as a strategy by which the bourgeoisie divides the working class against itself (Miles 1982).

The development of 'race and class' theory is summarised by Stone (1985). He explores the extent to which Marxist analyses of race and class have focussed on a narrow range of ethnic groups and societies, looking primarily at selected groups of immigrants as an underclass or sub-strata of the working class. Stone suggests that the analysis fails to account for the entrepreneurial (i.e. bourgeois) character and ambitions of many immigrant groups; for racism in societies where its victims are not immigrant, such as South Africa and the Soviet block; or for the nature of working class racism.

Nevertheless, even if not an adequate general theory, it could be argued that race and class analogies do fit the situation of many black people in Britain who become social work clients. Black clients, like white clients, are predominately from working class backgrounds, and many of the older clients are indeed from the generation of immigrants who were initially forced into the jobs and housing unwanted by the indigenous working class. Comparative studies of black and white children in care have not consistently found that black clients are in an economically worse position than white clients, and some results suggest the opposite, but this is in a context in which few of the families from either group were "well off", and differences are relative and minor ones of degree (Lambeth SSD 1981/1982).
Several studies of adolescents coming into care have adopted or been influenced by social class models, suggesting that class perspectives are important determinants of the interaction between clients and social workers, and of the decisions which social workers will make (Hapgood 1979, Giller and Morris 1981, Parker et al 1981, Fisher et al 1986). Although most of these were carried out in large cities with substantial black or Asian populations ethnicity does not feature as a major issues in any of them. Indeed, it is not usually even mentioned, and even where, as in Giller and Morris's (1981) Inner London study, large numbers of the sample are reported to be black - including all but one of the girls - this is not treated as an important feature of the interactive process. It can be assumed that the researchers, whether sociologists or social workers, are adopting 'race equals class' assumptions.

Moral Judgements and Sociological Concepts

What the studies do suggest is that social workers (and other groups involved in the decision that children should come into care) make judgements and adopt strategies influenced by the middle class perspective of social workers and the perceived working class position and culture of the clients. Giller and Morris (1981) like most researchers who consider the class issue, find that social workers who aspire to a 'pure casework' approach with a psychodynamic orientation have to make compromises when dealing with working class clients. The nature and extent of the compromise, however, is adjusted, in accordance with a judgement of the moral character of the case, and whether the parents and child are cooperative. When the case is definable as a 'care' case, in which the child's delinquency is merely a symptom of family troubles, psychological accounts of the delinquency are constructed in terms of the family problems, and the preferred model of work is that of
psychodynamic style casework with the family. When, on the other hand, the case is one of 'real delinquency' defined by a general pattern of criminal offending in other family members, by parental collusion with the child's offending, by refusal to cooperate with the social workers' plan for family-based social work, or by the absence of any family factors from which a psychological account can be constructed, the social worker uses sociological models with a heavy social class emphasis, to explain the child's delinquent subculture. The only strategy of choice then is the removal of the child from the contaminating influence of the family, usually to a community home with education (CHE), seen as an institution for 'real delinquents'.

Giller and Morris stress, however, that the psychological models are always those of first choice; sociological models are adopted only when psychological explanations cannot be constructed, or are 'disproved' by the client's lack of cooperation. Since the social workers only have positive intervention strategies for the 'psychological' model, the choice of a sociological explanation equates with the definition of the case as 'hopeless', an interesting reflection on social workers' attitudes to the value of sociology. The fundamental moral judgement which underlies the critical choice of models, however, Giller and Morris see as one of whether the family are 'deserving' or 'undeserving', in the classic social class judgement of 19th century social work.

The sociological concepts which Giller and Morris detected among their social workers' accounts appeared to be largely those of 'subculture': either the 'criminal subculture' to which the family was alleged to belong; the 'neighbourhood subculture' in which communities are seen to support anti-authority or anti middle class institutional standards, rather than those of 'wider society'; or the rebellious 'youth subculture' which in one instance quoted is given an
ethnic identity, but which more usually seems to be seen in social class terms. These concepts are not explored in detail. Indeed, since Giller and Morris contend that theory was not used to explain behaviour but only to justify a moral decision, they would presumably argue that social workers would be unlikely to have a deep theoretical understanding of these concepts.

Other studies make use of a rather different sociological idea, that of 'alienation'. This too is not given detailed discussion, but is used by Parker (1979), also Parker et al (1981), to consider the response which working class juveniles and their families had to the authority structures of the police, the juvenile court, and the social workers who worked in the court settings. It is suggested that although both juveniles and families generally acknowledged the juveniles' misbehaviour, the behaviour of 'the authorities' and the nature of official processes induced a feeling of powerlessness and injustice which distanced the offenders and their families from the juvenile justice system. Hapgood (1979) while not using the term alienation, similarly shows that while most juvenile offenders admitted their offence, substantial minorities of juveniles and their parents questioned the fairness of the juvenile justice system and doubted its legitimacy. Doubts of legitimacy were often linked to a perceived social class bias in the court structure, compared to the predominately working class origin of defendants, and respondents made comments such as: 'They all seemed a bit snobbish', 'All them judges have got money' to illustrate their feeling that the court officials did not understand the working class way of life, and could not therefore judge them appropriately.
Fisher et al (1986) also use the term 'alienation' to describe a response of passivity and powerlessness among the parents of children coming into care. In this study it is suggested that the alienation results because social workers and parents are working on quite different expectations of what constitutes 'good' childrearing practice, and that social workers use their powers to pursue their own (by definition, middle class) models without listening to or taking seriously the families' own (predominately working class) models. Rees (1978) depicts a similar situation in which

"client's accounts of encounters with officials (in social services) have the appearance of a clash between lifestyles. They mirrored some consequences of class divisions...class consciousness had shaped people's beliefs about the operation of welfare".

Parker, Fisher and Rees all suggest that many 'alienated' clients adopt a passive response as a means of keeping their self control and dignity, or because they have learned that any other is futile and makes their situation worse.

The studies of children in care also agree that the client's passivity is widely misinterpreted by social workers as a sign of lack of interest in their children or in what is happening to them, or lack of real need for help. This raises the question of whether social workers ever recognise alienation in their own clients, or whether it can only be recognised as a response to third parties. It clearly is a potentially useful concept to social workers in explaining non-cooperation by their own clients, but there seems little evidence that such explanations are sought. There is general agreement that social workers, like other professionals, work with clear definitions of the 'good' client; indeed Rees (1978) describes a process by which new referrals to social work agencies were 'auditioned' for the role of 'good' client. Yet Robinson (1978) suggests that professionals maintain their view of the 'good' client by
negatively evaluating those who disagree with them or drop out of the service, using labels such as 'defaulter', 'disobedient', 'uncooperative', 'unreliable', rather than attempting to analyse the reasons for the non-compliance. In this way, a response which can be seen to be socially structured, is once again reduced to individual personality traits. It is, nevertheless possible that social workers do use alienation to explain their clients' response to third parties: a recalcitrant youngster's resistance to school, or the police, for example.

All these discussions assumed that black clients, as part of the poor working class, experienced and were seen by social workers in much the same way as white clients for much the same reasons. The concepts of subculture and alienation are, of course, used extensively in both sociological and social work writing about black adolescents and their families, but invariably within the context of ethnic culture and the experience of racism, rather than of working class culture (even black working class culture) and class or state domination.

The preoccupation of social workers, and social work research with ideas such as subculture and alienation, which lend themselves to romantic interpretation and are notoriously hard to demonstrate in rigorous empirical terms, mirrors social work's concern with what Pearson (1975a) has called 'misfit sociology'. He summarises the work of a group of influential sociological theorists, including Becker, Goffman, Lemert, Kitsuse and Matza, as characterised by "a ready sympathy for the under-dog". (He also, interestingly, includes the anti-psychiatry movement of Laing and Scheff as part of the same phenomenon.)
Pearson notes that misfit theorists have been extensively taken up by social workers and others involved in therapeutic programmes with deviants, and that the misfit theories can in some senses be seen as prescription for deviance. Misfit theories have a superficial resemblance to Marxist sociology, in leaning heavily on social class analysis and representing deviance as resistance to oppression. Pearson, however, points out that they differ from Marxist theories quite fundamentally because they include a central acceptance of the social structure and are pleading for more tolerance of deviant behaviour, or more opportunities for underprivileged groups, rather than for a radical change of power relationships within society. Pearson suggests that misfit theories

"enabled some social scientists to put together politics, social science and compassion to effect some partial solution to the problems of the relationship between their lives as social scientists and their lives as men and women."

This illustrates why the theories are also potentially useful to social workers, in legitimising social work aspirations, if not their achievements.

In view of the above discussion, the suggestion that social work accounts might contain concepts directly applied from individual sociological theorists seems optimistic. It is, however, possible that secondary use is made of concepts from sociology which have been digested into social work thought and become taken for granted knowledge. It is also possible that the similarities of the underlying compassion, the "sympathy for the under-dog" might lend a spurious similarity to arguments used by social workers and misfit sociologists. This becomes a matter of understanding the mechanisms by which theory is translated into knowledge and hence into action, a point which will be explored later.
Racism Models

Although racism was mentioned in some early discussions as a source of extra pressures on black families and children, or as a reason for the rejection of children with mixed parentage (Barnardo's 1966), fully developed models which used racism to explain admission to care or the behaviour of troublesome adolescents did not appear until black people themselves began to contribute substantially to the debate, in the mid-to-late 1970s.

Racism models have been primarily developed by practitioners in social and community work or in race relations services. They appear to be underpinned more by personal experience than by reliance on the research or theory on racism, which many of the writers might, in any case, see as contaminated by white assumptions.

Racism models are concerned to show that when problematic behaviour arises among black or Asian adolescents, it will often be linked to the experience of racism rather than to aspects of family relationships, family structure, or of ethnic culture. Social workers' interpretations of that behaviour are usually then seen as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. At best social workers contribute to a process of amplifying the deviance by inappropriate responses; at worst they are actively responsible for applying racist assumptions and stereotypes. Even when racism models are linked to a broader social class perspective, this is still with a clear sense of differences arising in the ethnic context. Thus, Ahmed (1978b) writes:
"In social inquiry reports, the Asian parents' high aspirations for their children are often discredited as unrealistic. This is seen as an unhelpful cultural value rather than as an adverse commentary on British social structure. The problem is surely that black parents have not yet fully realised what poor whites accept fatalistically - that it is unwise for working class children to have professional ambitions."

**Cultural Racism**

Ahmed coins the term 'cultural racism' to describe the way in which white social workers use stereotypes and racist assumptions as foundations for their work with black families. In a series of papers on work with Asian women and girls she highlights the contradictions which arise from the too ready assumption that all conflicts between Asian children and their parents are caused by 'culture conflict', specifically the conflict between the girl's desire for the freedom enjoyed by her white schoolfellows and the parent's desire to bring their daughter up in the restricted tradition of Asian womanhood. Ahmed cites an example in which the social worker, satisfied with a superficial cultural explanation, did not notice obvious signs of serious problems in the family which, in reality, arose because the girl was being subject to sexual abuse (1978a).

In other instances, injuries to children which were accepted as accidental when boys were involved, were assumed to be child abuse when occurring to girls, because sons were thought to be valued in Asian culture whereas daughters were not. In this way proper investigation of injuries to Asian children could be precluded on the one hand, while parents could be unjustly accused on the other.

Ahmed does not deny the reality of cultural differences or of culture conflict, but she maintains that white social workers invariably assume that the westernised part of the conflict is the right one, which should be supported and upheld by the social worker. As a result social workers
often collude with behaviour in Asian girls which would be considered highly undesirable in white girls of the same age. Situations which would be seen as problematic with two white young people - such as a 16 year old girl becoming pregnant and wanting to marry a 19 year old boy - were seen as acceptable if the girl was Asian and wanting to marry an English boy, or a boy of a different religion, and reacting against parental disapproval.

An alternative way of looking at culture conflict would be to set it in the context of the "young people's class and race position in society" in order to challenge the values of the dominant culture. In the class context the social worker can ask:

"What is the model of freedom working class Asian girls carry in their heads? If it is the model of freedom internalised by working class white girls then the social characteristics of this group need to be explored.

Broadly speaking, in an inner city comprehensive school, white schoolgirls are a group of low achievers whose lives are more or less entirely given over to the pursuit of boys, catching boys, going to discos to meet boys, following pop music to fantasise about boys, invariably with hopes of marrying early. Few girls in this social group have interests outside these narrow fields and white feminist workers have to strive hard to broaden their horizons. Can such dependence be called genuine freedom or liberation?" (Ahmed 1986)

This is also a stereotype but is used to shake social workers out of complacency about the dominant culture. Focussing more directly on the effects of racism on young people's behaviour, Ahmed points out that black adolescents are under pressure to accept the values of the dominant culture and as a result may go through a period of contempt for their parents, race and culture and of being uncertain about their own identity. In this situation social workers must help them recover their identity, not further undermine it by automatically supporting the identification with Western culture against the parents.

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She also points out that young people from ethnic minorities often mistakenly criticise their parents for having in the past failed to fight against racism, and underestimate their parents' struggles and hard work after immigration. As a result some rebel against parental values, not in order to assume the values of the dominant white culture but "from a desire to forge a new black consciousness".

**Ethnicity, Alienation and Subculture**

This argument is also advanced by other writers discussing the formation of youth cultures and the effects of alienation on black youth. John (1981) regards it as yet another way in which young blacks have absorbed the attitudes of the dominant culture, which "presents black parents, the migrant generation, as totally passive in their relations to Britain between 1945 and 1970". This represents a denial of "the many struggles of significant sections of the black working class" and "gave the impetus...to much of what is described as the stance of alienated black youth today".

Yet John also sees the basic social class analysis of alienation among black youth as being quite distinct from the general situation of the British working class. He uses the analysis of subculture put forward by Clarke et al (1976) in which working class youth subcultures are, by their nature, derived from and attached to the parent culture and both are in essentially the same relationship to the dominant culture. In this way:
"The historical dimension of the black youth experience is not circumscribed by the operation of class structures in British society. It encompasses the class struggles of the Caribbean and Asia, and incidence of race as a dynamic factor in the international struggles of black people. It is inevitably bound up with the experience of black people as a whole in British Society."

Although alienation is a commonly used concept in the racism models also, and one used with equal lack of precision, it appears to assume a quite different character from the passivity discussed above. Alienation ascribed to black youth bears a closer resemblance to Seeman's (1959) categories of 'normlessness' (the feeling that illegitimate means are needed to achieve legitimate ends) and 'isolation' (estrangement from the cultural goals of society) than to 'powerlessness'. Most recent commentators are united in agreement that the portrait of black passivity in the face of racism is inaccurate (Allen 1982, Cashmore and Troyna 1982a) and particularly inaccurate in relation to black young people. Far from being passive victims, thrown together into a group by virtue of their exclusion by white youth, the black group is a strategy of choice, often "arrogant, rumbustious and contemptuous" and showing "a response filled with vim" (Cashmore and Troyna 1982a). The response is seen as articulated through a variety of youth subcultures (Hebdige 1976, Pryce 1979, Cashmore and Troyna 1982a, Fuller 1982) in which three patterns can be discerned.

a. The development of an alternative positive value structure accompanied by withdrawal from the value of the dominant culture. This is seen as the primary reason for the growth of Rastafarianism during the 1970's (Hebdige 1976, Pryce 1979, Cashmore and Troyna 1982b).
b. Resistance, through the development of aggressive black pride, black power and political consciousness (Hiro 1973, John 1978, Cashmore and Troyna 1982a) or through alternative delinquent 'rude boy', 'teeny-bopper' or 'hustler' cultures (Hebdige 1976, Pryce 1979). Black studies in schools are also seen as symbolic in the resistance to white cultural domination (Cashmore and Troyna 1982a).

c. Skill in the use of strategies to overcome racism by pursuing educational and occupational success and persisting until successful in attempts to break into the chosen employment market. This response is found in those young people who do succeed in the education system (Driver 1980a, 1980b) and among Afro-Caribbean youth is suggested to be more common in girls than in boys (Weinreich 1979, Fuller 1982). Saturday schools are an important part of this strategy (Stone 1981).

There are a number of difficulties in the way theory on alienation and youth subcultures has developed. Cashmore and Troyna (1982, Introduction) discuss the problematic nature of the concept of 'black youth' and the way in which studies of black youth "can therefore be accused of reproducing the gaps and distortions which are characteristic of youth studies in general."

These include a perspective in which 'black youth' is treated as synonymous with the Afro-Caribbean male; girls and women are ignored because they 'don't fit' and their different behaviour challenges the analysis offered by researchers and risks destroying the theory on which subcultural research is based (Fuller 1982); cultural pluralism is seen as an important feature only in relation to Asian culture, while the possibility of a 'common' culture is largely ignored or left vague (Allen 1982);
whereas in Afro-Caribbean culture, pluralism usually receives an initial acknowledgement by reference to different island cultures and then is ignored in the preoccupation with the emergence of a common 'black youth culture'.

There are disagreements between youth culture theorists over whether withdrawal/alternative values are ultimately useful or not useful to black people, or are simply a retreat from combat with the racism of British society. There is dispute also on the nature of black youth cultures. Some commentators see them as true black working class subcultures (John 1978) but the picture of resistance presented, for example, by Pryce (1979) seems to have more in common with the rebel, drop out 'counter cultures' which Clarke et al (1976) describe as characteristic of the middle class. Working class subcultures are characterised by their part time 'Saturday night and Sunday morning' nature, operating around the normal world of work and school, whereas counter cultures are alternatives to work and school. Theory on neither kind of culture appears yet to have quite caught up with unemployment.

A further major difficulty lies in the basis of age-related grouping which is intrinsic to the whole concept of a youth subculture, although not necessarily indicating wholesale rejection of parental values. The picture of major generational differences, let alone conflict, is of doubtful validity even with the indigenous working class (Fogelman 1976, Riley and Shaw 1985). Empirical findings are contradictory over the extent and seriousness of intergenerational conflict in ethnic minorities (Allen 1982) and some groups, such as Jamaicans, are notable in many aspects of their lives by their lack of a 'generation gap' (Foner 1979). Howe (1980), for example, describes a black youth centre in which the desire of members to have both teenage and adult membership was a source of friction with
the white management body; while even Pryce (1979) although generally seeing Afro-Caribbean older people (and almost all women!) as 'respectables', 'saints' and 'mainliners' in opposition to youth cultures, depicts many older people as 'in betweeners'. Most other recent discussions of Afro-Caribbean youth stress the way in which common experience of racism brings generations together rather than separating them (Foner 1979, Fisher and Joshua 1982).

Clarke et al (1976) point out that most young people never belong to a youth subculture and others drift in and out for short periods, while Allen (1982) notes the significance of the evidence that the most common activity for young people is 'watching television'. For this reason, Cashmore and Troyna (1982a) suggest that if youth cultures are basically ephemeral they may hardly be worth serious study, a point of view which perhaps misjudges the social significance of ephemera, but which does suggest that at any rate individual youth cultures are unlikely to generate or represent a consistent and planned response to the authority and power of the dominant culture.

Black Youth and the Social Worker

Relatively little of this uncertainty, however, has entered into discussions of alienated black youth and their response to social workers. Only Ahmed (1986) points out that the young people who are in conflict with their parents are precisely the ones most likely to come to the notice of social workers, and hence the social worker's perspective on the youth group and inter-generational conflict will be a pathology-based one. For others, it is 'taken for granted' knowledge that the black young people with whom they deal are likely to be in some way alienated. John (1972), one of the earliest to discuss the issue, notes that
"many black youths take probation officers and social workers for a ride, and are consequently called con men or smooth operators".

John describes how the youths reject the definition of delinquency applied to them. He regards their position as legitimate, and describes the dilemma of social workers who must decide whether to accept a social situation in which

"the black community is becoming increasingly aware of its needs and is prepared to put up a struggle to have them met, or whether he will be 'indicted with the system'"

Pryce (1979) regards the social worker as having a similar dilemma but considers that most of them, including black social workers, have already 'sold out' to the dominant white perspective and therefore lost any chance of influencing the rebellious young. His work has possibly had a major influence on social work training as a contribution to 'misfit sociology'.

Manning (1978) comments that many white social workers will be working with black young people

"who will doubt the ability of white workers and white institutions to respond to their needs."

and that the black social worker's task is to train white colleagues in appropriate responses. Coombe (1986) from a similar perspective, discusses the way in which black young people use a dialect which is unique to young blacks in Britain as a means of excluding white social workers and keeping them at bay, and Coughlin (1981) describes this tactic in youth work. On the other hand Liverpool (1982) notes that

"At present there is tremendous hostility amongst black people toward social workers in general and some of this negative attitude has spilled over to the black social worker. He may therefore be regarded with suspicion and even seen as an agent of white authority".
The process of overcoming this distrust then sets up other dilemmas for the black social worker, over the possibility of collusion and over-identification with clients, and opposition to colleagues followed by loss of credibility in the organisation. Raschid (1982) found that while his Asian origins gave immediate rapport with Asian families, this was only a temporary advantage, and "still had to be translated into trust".

With alienation and youth culture in racism models, the same research question exists as in social class models: will social workers be able to identify it in their own clients, or only in other people's? To this, however, is added a third possibility: that knowledge of the existence of these phenomena will then, like knowledge of family patterns, be used as 'cultural racism', to explain away the problems of the troublesome young from ethnic minorities; to dismiss the possibility of being able to do anything for them; or to cover lack of effort in examining their real situation. Cheetham (1981) clearly regarded these responses as characteristic of social worker's dealings with young Afro-Caribbeans, and caused by the lack of appropriate resources or policies to help them.

"The consequence of these dilemmas is substantial (but uncounted) numbers of 'half clients', black young people known to the social services departments, sometimes on unallocated supervision orders, but, if there is any action, largely referred to other voluntary agencies or to the housing department, or occasionally to the youth services....It leaves black young people in an uncoordinated nether world of squats, temporary hostels and crash pads, sometimes suspended or truanting from school, often unemployed and commonly with little or no regular income."

This 'half-client' status is described by Cheetham as collusive, because

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"young blacks were said to be suspicious of white
dominated welfare organisations and their suspicions
were confirmed by the actual or alleged failure to help
them."

Although Cheetham does not use the word she is clearly
describing Pryce's 'teeny-boppers'.

Racism and Marginalisation

There is one further element of the racism model to be
considered: the ascription of marginal status to clients
from ethnic minorities. It has already been pointed out
that one way of doing this was to equate race with handicap,
and group black children with disabled or psychologically
disturbed children as 'hard to place', thereby in practice
closing placement options to them. This strategy has
limited relevance to the present study, which takes children
only up to the point of committal to care. A further
marginalising strategy which is noted in a number of
settings, however, is the continued use of 'immigrant'
labels even with children born in Britain, some of whom will
have black parents also born in Britain, or be children of
mixed parentage living with their white relatives.

Continuing to refer to members of ethnic minorities as
'immigrants' however, is a clear way of retaining a
stigmatised group in a marginal position in relation to the
majority population, identifying them as 'not really
British' and therefore not deserving of full recognition or
an equal share of services. National labels may also at
times be used in the same way, although identification of
this is more difficult given the absence, discussed earlier,
of non-national, non-geographic terminology by which British
minorities can be identified. It seems likely, however,
that (at least with Afro-Caribbean and Asian families) the
continued use of national rather than collective labels for
children born in Britain represents marginalisation.
In the material on black children in Britain the retention of immigrant status can still be seen in the consistent stress on immigration rather than racism, as a contributor to problems and culture clashes between parents and children. Literature on working with black and Asian families throughout the 1960s and 1970s continued to refer to 'immigrant' children or 'children of immigrants' and only in the 1980s (again spearheaded by writers from ethnic minorities) has terminology changed. Cross (1982) discusses the way that immigrant status is similarly used to define 'problems' in education, housing and employment services, and the Commission for Racial Equality note its effect on attitudes in the Youth Service (CRE 1980). That social workers may be using immigrant labels because they are out of date, unaware of, or even simply confused by, current approved terminology, does not necessarily obviate the meaning or the effect of marginalising words.

Social Workers' Use of Theory

The question of how social workers use theory - or indeed if they use it at all - has emerged as problematic at a number of points. Empirical studies have established that social workers are generally uncomfortable when discussing theory, often seeming to indicate a consciousness of a poor fit between what they have been taught is an appropriate way to work, and what in practice they find is most effective, or most viable in their position of constrained resources. Browne (1978) as the result of a large scale interviewing programme with 347 social workers in several local authority and hospital social work departments concluded:

"On the whole our respondent's descriptions of work with clients did not suggest that practice was drawn from specific theoretical perspectives. It may be that they had so internalised theory that they put it into practice without being able to talk about it."
One social worker commented that her "thinking and approach had been formed by" theory, although she could not consciously articulate it. Nevertheless Browne concluded that social workers did use

"Concepts from sociology, social and individual psychology to understand clients and their difficulties. But there was less evidence that these concepts had been assimilated into an integral system to guide practice."

Part of the reason for failure to follow up concepts in any rigorous way, she suggests, is because to do so inevitably led to anxieties and fundamental questioning of the purpose of social work, which made the job harder to do.

Browne's data and observations have contributed to subsequent analyses of social worker's use of theory. Giller and Morris (1981) agree that concepts, rather than whole theoretical frameworks are used, but do suggest that an integral structure exists to guide practice. They regard this structure as value based - the deserving and undeserving - and mediated through the development of categories and practical solutions to problems, which are peer approved: the 'routine remedies' by which social workers are able to make sense of and structure their daily work.

Giller and Morris's work can be considered in the light of Philp's (1979) analysis of the social work discourse. Philp considers the contradiction between the fundamental value structure of social work - belief in the goodness and worth of humanity - and its dependence on social science disciplines which seek to reduce humanity to a series of objective characteristics. There is consequently a degree of dissonance between the subjective definition of man(sic) in terms of 'wants', 'needs', 'pain', 'suffering' and the use of deterministic theory to explain why these problems exist. Knowledge which cannot allow the social worker to
transcend determinist pressures by the use of compassion therefore has no place within the discourse. Philp also points out that the elements of a discourse are not necessarily connected in a logical way, as they would be in a theory.

In the light of Giller and Morris's findings however, Philp's analysis must be questioned. Philp considered that only very extreme cases of anti-social behaviour (such as the Kray brother's gangland killings and the 'Yorkshire Ripper') would be surrendered to the objective, whereas Giller and Morris's work implies that social workers also surrender 'real delinquents' in the same way whenever they are unable to perceive a useful role for themselves. A further implication might be that the use of psychological explanations is seen as within the discourse, compatible with the fundamental value of humanity, whereas the use of sociological explanations puts the matter outside the discourse, as being beyond the reach of individual compassion.

Deacon and Bartley (1975) considering the way in which knowledge is absorbed and used by social work students, suggest that they come to understand what social work is by the learning and repetition of maxims: "snatches of ideas which, together, seemed to make up much of social work knowledge". The maxims were deployed around the routine, officially defined duties of the job, "to create the impression that they are 'professional' activity". Deacon and Bartley see this process as a specific disavowal of intellectuality and theoretical thinking, a preference for 'feelings' rather than 'ideas', leading to psychological reductionism. In Philp's terms this could also be seen as a solution to the subjective/objective division, but it denies a fundamental rationality to social workers' activity. Deacon and Bartley note that the maxims are not of much real help to social workers faced with difficult tasks.
Bailey (1980) adopts the not uncommon view that theory is only of value to social workers as a weapon in the struggle for professional status and power, an attempt to adopt a prestigious knowledge base. He argues that in fact social work is 'theoryless' practice and that most social work writers do not even pretend that practice is theory based. Those who do, he maintains, usually misunderstand the nature of theory or confuse 'theory' and 'knowledge'. Social work theorists are divided between those who fundamentally distrust the social science base on which social work is parasitic, and those who think that theory should be constructed from practice (practice-led is the usual phrase) rather than vice versa. Bailey and Philp ground their arguments exclusively in discussions of social work theoretical writing, with no use of material from research on social workers. The others construct and illustrate their arguments with material drawn from interviews and observation of social workers in action.

This leaves us with five stated positions about the use of theory in social work:

1. A series of unrelated concepts borrowed from psychology and sociology, and which may be only half understood, are used at will but without underlying integration.

2. A series of concepts from psychology and sociology are used to support an underlying moral framework and to construct and justify the use of 'routine remedies'.

3. Social work knowledge attempts to bridge the gap between the determinist theories of social science and the moral basis of compassion in helping those in trouble.

4. Social work maxims (statements of professional morality loosely influenced by social science theory), are used to 'professionalise' humdrum daily tasks which have to be done.
5. Social science theory is used in an instrumental manner to support a claim to professional status, and has no real connection with the day to day actions of social workers.

To argue, however, that there is, could be, or ought to be, a single approach to the use of theory in social work, is to oversimplify the job of social work, and to misunderstand the way in which theory can ever be used in a practical enterprise. Social work duties (even the state-prescribed ones) encompass a range of activities from people-changing to environment-changing, and the social control of undesirable people and environment. To expect a unitary theoretical underpinning to such activities is unrealistic, particularly when there is at present far from being any unitary framework for the parent disciplines of sociology, psychology and social policy. Practical enterprise of any kind must by its nature be eclectic in its use of theory: no one would, after all, expect an engineer to design a nuclear submarine solely according to the principles of nuclear physics, with no reference to chemistry, hydraulics, metallurgy or marine biology. It is, furthermore, by no means clear that a review of sociological texts and research reports from a range of schools would indicate just how sociologists use theory to inform their work. Hence Silverman's (1985) criticism of some aspects of qualitative methodology and the doubts expressed above about the way general theories of working class subcultures have been constructed from patchy and biased ethnographic studies!

In Browne's account of social work activities she makes reference to a range of specific intervention models and techniques - behaviour modification, group work, crisis intervention, task-centred casework - all of which have relatively precise theoretical bases in psychology or social psychology. She shows that only very small numbers of social workers used these methods regularly or occasionally
for specific situations in which they were thought appropriate. She also shows that most social workers did not use specific models of this kind and that those who claimed to do so were not always rigorous in their understanding or use of the methods they chose. The interesting question is whether the failure to use such overtly theory based methods reflects on the competence of the social workers, of the methods and their underlying theory, or both.

Robinson (1978) considering the way in which professionals are socialised into their specific cultures and into the general business of 'being a professional' points out that the textbook knowledge is only part of the process. In addition professionals are taught the 'folk wisdom' concerned with the day to day practicalities of doing the job, and with those elements of the 'image' which set the professional apart from the layman as an expert in a special position. There is little evidence on how social workers deal with this aspect of their position, though several studies of how clients or other professionals view social workers suggest that if they aim to be seen as 'experts' controlling a 'prestigious knowledge base' they are not very successful at it, at least in Britain.

There is, however, a further dimension to the relationship between theory and practice in forming knowledge, in that knowledge which starts out as theory based will eventually become practice based. The newly qualified doctor faced for the first time with a spotty feverish infant perhaps mentally refers to teaching on the theory of infection; after twenty such cases he recognises measles when he sees it and no doubt can even distinguish it on sight from chicken pox. The fact that memory and experience, rather than theory, are being from then on used to identify and treat a disease does not invalidate the use or usefulness of theory in the doctor's training or practice or in the
effectiveness of the medication used. Yet the mechanisms of the way in which theoretical and experiential knowledge blend have barely been studied in social work and it is indeed difficult to disentangle such blending from the straight-forward ignorance of theory accompanied by reliance on practice wisdom, experience, or intuition, which are so often assumed to characterise social workers.

Summary

Social work from the outset incorporated an understanding that it was primarily concerned with the problems of the poor, many of which were intrinsic to the class system. This eventually was formalised in theoretical terms through the development of radical social work and community work, both of which were heavily influenced by sociology, especially Marxist sociology. The influence, however, appeared to go little further than the theoretical level, and direct influence on practice is shown by recent research to be very limited. Two broad theoretical strands are identified, which are of relevance to the admission to care of black children. These are described as 'social class models' and 'racism models'. As with family based models, sociological models also owe more to ideology than evidence.

Social class models, when applied to black children and families, generally assume a 'race equals class' standpoint. Some research suggests that within social class models, the primary judgement which social workers make is a moral one, a division into the deserving and undeserving. The concept of alienation, in the sense of powerlessness leading to a reaction of passivity, is used to understand the reaction of many working class clients in contact with middle class social workers and institutions of social control. The
school of thought described as 'misfit sociology', those theorists who give particular sympathetic emphasis to the problems of failures and deviants, has been considered particularly attractive to social workers as a basis for their work.

Racism models have stressed the importance of cultural racism, which causes social workers always to interpret situations from the assumption that the white majority cultural pattern is the best, or correct one. Alienation is also used in this context, more often to describe black resistance or deviance rather than passivity. Alienation arguments are linked to the concept of subculture, particularly as an explanation for the behaviour of adolescents. Ascription of foreign or immigrant status emerges as a means by which black clients can be marginalised, and there are suggestions that social workers opt out of working with black clients, particularly adolescents.

With the sociological models, there is some doubt as to how far social workers use them to understand their own behaviour, or the reactions of their own clients, or whether they are only applied to third parties. There are also markedly different viewpoints on how, if at all, social workers use theory. These range from, at one extreme, the suggestion that social workers are totally instrumental in using it as a top dressing on moral decisions, or to enhance their prestige; to the suggestion that they use theory creatively, to bridge the gap between determinist social science and human compassion. None of the analyses of social workers' use of theory allow for the complexity of situations with which social workers deal, the impossibility of a single theoretical base being sufficient underpinning for any practical enterprise, or the inevitable blending of theory and experience when carrying out a specific task.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND SELECTION OF A SAMPLE
Objectives

From the review of the literature, five objectives were defined for which an appropriate design and methodology had to be developed.

1. To explore the process by which social workers construct a definition of adolescent behaviour as 'unacceptable' or a 'behaviour problem'.

2. To examine the explanations of behaviour problems offered by social workers, their use of theoretical models of causality, and their perceptions of causality as based in the family, the individual, or the external social environment.

3. To compare the choice of theoretical models applied to children from different ethnic groups, and explore the possibility that psychological and sociological models are differentially applied between them.

4. To examine the way in which the recommendation for committal of a child to public care is justified as a potential solution to 'problem' behaviour, and whether the same justification is offered for black and white children.

5. To produce data which forms a good basis for the development of grounded theory advancing the understanding of community (state) interaction with members of the community; specifically the state's interaction with parents and children from different ethnic groups.
Data Collection Methods

It was considered essential that the research should use both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative element is the only one which makes replication possible, and enables other researchers to check the reliability and validity of the data. Sociological research cannot be advanced unless researchers are able to have confidence in data produced by their predecessors, rather than having to continually reinvent the wheel. It is only by the use of quantitative methods that the researcher can genuinely submit ideas and hypotheses to the possibility of disproof.

At the same time the complex and dynamic nature of social events and social structure is inevitably oversimplified by quantitative methods. Almost every quantitative variable in this study represented a wide range of circumstances reduced to an essential common element for the purpose of statistical presentation and analysis. Even a variable as simple as 'age', for example, if categorised in chronological years, obscures the fact that a child of 13 years 11 months is closer to the child of 14 years 1 month, than to the child of 13 years 1 month, in spite of the arbitrary division into '13 year olds' and '14 year olds'. Where issues such as behaviour, family problems and characteristics are concerned the quantitative process is even more arbitrary. The process of selecting the categories represents a sequence of decisions about what is important to study, which may be based on hypotheses drawn from theory, evidence from previous research, hunches, prejudices, or merely ignorance of what is likely to matter. At the same time pragmatic decisions on the viability of particular approaches to classification, given the expected sample size and quality of the available data, further contribute to oversimplification. Only by the inclusion of qualitative data which stresses the complexity and differences of the human condition are such deficiencies corrected.
These dilemmas, while at their most acute in social research are by no means peculiar to social research but affect any complex research endeavour (See for example Watson 1968). The geologist working on rare samples of lunar rock is not in a position to trot back to the moon for further samples from different craters to verify hypotheses or enable hunches to be followed up in a classic scientific manner. The only realistic guidelines are that the researcher should do the most honest job possible with the best data available and should not claim more for the results than the data can legitimately carry.

The initial decision was to obtain three sources of data:

1. A factual record sheet on the families' circumstances and the circumstances surrounding the child's committal to care. This was to be completed from the case records of all children eligible for the study. The record sheet was mainly pre-coded but included a free description of the sequence of events leading to committal to care.

2. Content analysis of the reports presented to the juvenile court at the hearing. This used both a qualitative dimension exploring the selection of material for inclusion and the use of language, and a quantitative dimension analysing the structure of the reports and the use of particularly significant concepts or keywords. The primary focus of this analysis was on the field (families) social worker's report to the court, but where court reports were available from assessment services these also were examined. The obtaining and use of specialist reports from psychiatrists, psychologists or elsewhere was considered an important feature of the social work activity.
3. Interviews with field social workers were carried out in the early stages of the project. These were focused, depth interviews exploring the social worker's own accounts of events, and were tape recorded. It subsequently proved impractical to include all social workers in the interview programme, so the early interviews have been used only to develop ideas for analysis and exploration, and as illustrative material.

The record sheet, content analysis guides and interview schedule are included in Appendix One.

The Use of Case Records as Data

It is common experience in using case records as data that they are somewhat unsystematic and may lack essential information. Some commentators regard this as primarily a question of efficiency in record keeping, but probably more important are factors concerning the purposes for which case records are kept. Studies of social work recording suggest that records are kept primarily for administrative purposes of agency accountability and the transfer of information to new staff, or to other staff whose responsibilities require this. Social workers rarely perceive files as working records for their own use, and consequently often regard them as a burden to be maintained only when pressurised by statutory requirements, or when a desired result (e.g. payment of a grant) is dependent on completion of the appropriate forms (Payne 1978). Fortunately for the present study, the preparation of a court case includes both a legal requirement to provide information and a desired objective in making it useful. Information is likely to be noted on files insofar as it is immediately relevant to the social worker's purpose in compiling the record, the requirements of the agency for whom the record is produced, the action
which is necessitated by the report, or the desired outcome. Some of this selection process is routine. A record will, for example, state that a child steals, or stays out late at night, but will not conversely state that a different child does not steal, or goes to bed at a regular hour, because 'not stealing' and 'going to bed in good time' are not activities requiring social work intervention. Where the report is for a third party whom the social worker is seeking to influence, the selection is more deliberate. Parker et al (1981) refer to the 'fine tuning' of reports to the juvenile court in which the social worker is required to give relevant information, but will vary the amount of emphasis according to the desired outcome of the case and his or her perceptions of the court's expected outlook.

As Donzelot (1977) points out, the court hearing is one point at which the welfare professionals are demonstrating their power vis a vis the formal judicial system of state control. The court reports represent one of the central means by which this power is exercised, and hence are in one sense a 'trial of strength' between the two institutions, the court and the social services.

Garfinkel (1967), examining records in a health clinic, considers the difference between the researcher's use of records as 'actuarial' documents (providing factual information with varying degrees of completeness and accuracy) and the clinic staff's use of them as "potential therapeutic contracts", which "much less than revealing an order of interaction, presuppose an understanding of the order for correct reading". Records prepared by a social worker for the court, or by an assessment centre to advise the court or the social worker, are also potential therapeutic contracts, saying in effect, 'if you place this
child in my care I will take action to solve the problems which have brought the child here'. Use of these records in an actuarial mode must be subject to careful limitations, while interpretive readings must seek to establish a disciplined basis for the interpretation.

In the present study, the actuarial use of records incorporated two strategies.

1. Information on the children's behaviour, family backgrounds and the events preceding committal was kept to the minimum necessary and governed by rigorous definitions of what was to be included or excluded.

2. A presumption was included that any feature which was not mentioned was not present, at least to an important degree. Allegations, for example, of behaviour on the part of parents or children were only treated as 'true' if the person concerned admitted them or there was confirmation from more than one source. Otherwise they were treated as 'allegations'. This presumption builds in the risk of underestimation throughout the data. If a child has committed a major offence such as arson or aggravated burglary, for example, the social worker may simply have forgotten to mention that he or she was also prone to staying out late at night. The risk of underestimation however was preferable to the risk of overestimating or exaggerating features of the child's background or behaviour.

The interpretive nature of records, however, is a positive advantage in the present research because it is precisely this background of assumptions which constitute the subject matter for analysis, and enable us to examine how explanations are constructed by social workers. For this purpose there is a strong advantage in using records which

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were produced at the time when the events were taking place, and which reveal the way in which they were seen at that time. Reliance on interviews or questionnaires administered later, although more direct, also runs the risk that events and actions are subject to post hoc reinterpretation in the light of subsequent knowledge.

The Identification of Black Children

Only one London Borough had introduced systematic ethnic monitoring at the time of the data collection. Identification of children's race and ethnic status therefore depended in general on this being mentioned in case records. Identification was aided by several reporting traditions in social work, some of which are of dubious value or ethical standing from a social work perspective but which were useful in this research!

1. Social histories give considerable emphasis to birth and infant experience due to the psychodynamic influence in social work. This means that the birth place of the child and significant family members (siblings, parents, even grandparents) is almost always mentioned.

2. Assessment centre records frequently include a systematic physical description of the child, in order to be able to give a description to the police, should the child abscond.

3. Both social work and psychiatric reports to court frequently comment on the physical appearance of clients or patients, particularly if they are female. The 'pen picture' tradition focusses on appearance both as a measure of conformity (is he/she appropriately dressed
for age, gender and status?) and of self-esteem (is he/she attractive to look at, taking trouble to look nice etc). Comments on individuals' ethnic status are sometimes made in this context though rarely if they are white!

Identifying ethnic status was therefore a matter of piecing together information from sources such as these, occasionally aided by photographs on the file or by personal contacts with the children during visits to residential homes in which they were placed. There was, however, one child in the sample whose ethnic status was uncertain, and who was disqualified from part of the analysis as a result.

**Sampling**

It was decided to concentrate on a sample of children meeting the following criteria.

1. Over 10 years of age (the age of criminal responsibility). Very few children below this age are committed to care for status offences, as such behaviour is usually associated with adolescence, or is not seen as seriously damaging until a child reaches adolescence.

2. Committed to care under the provisions of the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act due to behaviour deemed unacceptable (Care Proceedings S.(1), or Criminal Proceedings S.(7)(7)(a)). While committal following behaviour problems can also occur under other legislation, notably matrimonial orders and wardship proceedings, the process occurs within a different legal context which it was felt would confuse the issue.
3. Children committed at their first court appearance (trial or hearing: most had experienced previous remand or interim hearings), including those whose care orders were variations of supervision orders made without further offending.*

4. Children committed within 18 months of their first contact with the social services departments.

The research was initially planned in two stages. Stage One was to identify and collect basic data on all children over ten years old and committed on their first court appearance under the relevant legislation. From this group would be selected those who were new cases, meeting specified ethnicity criteria, for a more detailed (Stage Two) analysis of their case records.

The basic record sheet (Stage One) was to be completed on all children meeting criteria 1-3, to give a descriptive picture of the total population. More detailed analysis of family background and behaviour and the analysis of social workers' models and explanations as revealed in the court reports, (Stage Two) was to be carried out only on children who also met criterion 4 and who were not disqualified on other grounds. In the event, the sample available for Stage Two proved to contain many more white than black children, and it was decided to obtain a smaller matched group of

* In Care Proceedings under S1 of the 1969 Act, the grounds for proof that the child is in need of care and control may result in either a Care or Supervision Order. S.7 gives the same power to the court in Criminal Proceedings. A Supervision Order may be varied to a Care Order on the application of the Supervisor based on the grounds of the original order.
black and white children for detailed analysis of court reports (Stage Three). The stages of sample selection are detailed in Figure One and more detail on the various stages of the methodology will be given later at appropriate points.

Children committed at their first court appearance for a criminal offence are known to be untypical of juvenile offenders as a whole, although there is evidence that they now form a large minority of all offenders committed to care (Gilier and Morris 1981, Cawson 1981). There is too little evidence on children committed as status offenders to clarify the point in a juvenile career at which such action is likely to be taken. There are three features of this population chosen which made it appropriate for the objectives of the research.

1. As discussed earlier, the fundamental processes which bring children into care are not thought to be substantially different for children in care by court action or by voluntary agreement, although there may be a different expectation on the part of social workers as to the degree of cooperation likely to be given by parents. Nevertheless the process of presenting a case in court requires the social worker to concentrate and distill what he or she sees as the essential features of the situation in a form which is acceptable to the court as evidence or legitimate professional judgement. The way in which this is done offers a valuable opportunity to examine the components of the judgements made, and the use of expert power in confronting the mechanisms of judicial control.
2. The choice of those committed at their first appearance was made primarily because other research has suggested that black children are more likely than white children to experience this (Lambert 1970, Pearce 1974, Cawson 1977, Giller and Morris 1981). It therefore seemed that possible differentials in decision making were likely to be particularly acute and easily observed at this point.

3. The decision to focus most closely on new cases was made in order to give a population in which the social worker would be making relatively greater use of previous learning and experience, and relatively less use of specific knowledge of or personal feelings about the child and family. The relative rather than absolute nature of this feature of the design cannot be over-stressed. The uncontaminated laboratory model is of limited value in the study of social work processes. The interactive nature of events in the lives of families, children and social workers will become apparent through the data to be described, but it was desired to minimise rather than maximise the effect of a longstanding relationship between a social worker or a social services department and a client. Although a proportion of the final sample were committed to care within three months of their first contact with the social services department, piloting suggested that a period of 12-15 months acted as a watershed between 'new' cases and families which had been on the department's active list for many years. This appeared to consist of: 2-3 months investigating a referral and formulating a strategy; 4-8 months attempting to solve the defined problems through community based resources; 2-3 months acknowledging failure; and 2-3 months to take legal proceedings. Where the process was substantially shorter, this usually represented a circumventing of the established procedures through precipitating action by
the child, the parent(s) or a third agency (e.g. the police, or the Education Department) rather than prompter action by the social worker. A time limit of 18 months contact with the social services department was set to mark off new from longstanding cases.

Three Inner London Boroughs which were known to have large populations in care, including substantial numbers of black children, were asked to take part in the research. Two of them agreed to the request, but it proved impossible to obtain a decision from the third Borough.

In previous research on children in care the issue of locating children eligible for the study has proved a consistent problem. Social Services Departments do not normally keep records on children in care in a centralised system categorised by variables convenient to the researchers (Giller and Morris 1981, Cawson 1981, Millham et al 1985, Packman et al 1986). The most reliable source was considered to be through the Department's centralised court sections, which had the responsibility for processing court proceedings, preparing and presenting the Department's case in court, supporting and briefing other social workers whose clients were appearing in court. In theory, these sections should have known of all children committed to the authorities' care. In practice this system was not infallible, since committals could be made unexpectedly by courts in another district. This is not uncommon in criminal proceedings, and may happen occasionally in civil proceedings. It is also not unknown for social workers in local area offices to become involved in taking court proceedings without notifying their headquarters. The court sections, however, were the most useful central point. The administrative staff agreed to keep note of all care orders made to the authority, and telephone contact at 2-4 weekly intervals ascertained whether a child eligible for the research had been committed to care.
Problems in Sampling

Stage One data was to be collected on all children who were committed on their first appearance, to examine whether the Stage Two sample were grossly different from other such committals. The original plan was for the Stage Two sample to consist of 50 black children who had one or both parents of Afro Caribbean origin, and a comparison group of 50 white children with parents of U.K. origin. The research was to focus on Afro Caribbean families as an example of a minority group because the literature review indicated that social workers held a distinctive set of models of their families and culture, and because they are numerically the largest of the minority groups found in studies of children in care.

Sample estimates were taken from DHSS Child Care. Statistics for England and Wales for 1978-1980, and were confirmed by records in one borough, which include ethnic monitoring of children in care.

Piloting was carried out in 1980 and early 1981 to test out questionnaire design, and data collection began in mid 1981 with the expectation that it would be complete within approximately 12 months. By early 1982 it became clear that the proposed sample could not be obtained within the time envisaged, because the rate of committal to care had slowed up considerably from the previous year. Various factors contributed to this, primarily the increased use of police cautioning for first offenders, the rise in the number of juvenile offenders being sent to detention centres rather than placed in care, and a decrease in the adolescent population from which the in care population was selected.
Two further Inner London Boroughs (including the one approached unsuccessfully on a previous occasion) were approached in the hope of increasing the sample. Discussions with the latter again proved abortive, but the other was included in the project and the data collection period extended into 1983.

However the situation worsened, being affected by the 1982 Criminal Justice Act, which led to increasing numbers of juvenile offenders reaching the penal system rather than coming into care, and a long lasting residential social workers strike in 1983, which made courts reluctant to make care orders. It eventually became clear that substantial revision to the research design would be necessary if the research were to be viable.

Amendments to the Research Design

A number of difficulties affected any possible amendments to the research design. All had disadvantages. Options were:

a. To further extend the data collection period
   This was not seen as practical because the research was already running late on its timetable. Additionally there would be a risk that external changes could further affect sample selection and destroy comparability: for example the impending rate capping legislation might affect the willingness of local authorities to recommend care orders.
b. To approach more local authorities
This too would have meant delays while negotiations were underway and data was collected, and a data collection period which would not run concurrently with the rest of the data. Furthermore, there were no other suitable Inner London Boroughs with large numbers of admissions to care, and most Outer London Boroughs had much smaller Afro Caribbean communities.

c. To collect data through other centralised sources which receive or process referrals of adolescents committed to care for troublesome behaviour
This would make it easier to obtain a sample, but would mean that children came from the whole of London, making it difficult to keep up an interview programme involving so much travelling.

d. Broadening the criteria for inclusion in the sample
One possibility was the inclusion of children from other ethnic minorities. This presented no major theoretical or practical difficulties, since the theoretical structure was relevant to all ethnic sub-groups, and the Afro Caribbean focus had simply been an attempt to make the study group more manageable, rather than essential in principle. Extension to other minorities, however, contributed only a few more subjects to the shortfall in the numbers of black children, and the lack of white children for the comparison group was just as serious. Other extensions to the criteria, however, would have meant either including children known to the agency for longer or who had experienced previous court appearances as offenders, or including children coming into care by voluntary agreement. Both of these options were fundamentally damaging to the central purpose of the research. Where families were known for long periods prior to committal, or children seen as 'recidivists' the history of interaction between social worker and
family could have substantially affected the theoretical models applied to the situation; where voluntary admission is arranged there seemed the possibility of a different expectation of co-operation between parents and social worker, and there would be no formal presentation of social workers' case for admission to care comparable to the court reports.

The only realistic option was to seek an alternative source of data through a centralised agency, which could offer additions to the sample who met the original sampling criteria and were committed to care over the same time period 1981-83.

Two alternative sources of data were considered.

1. The network of residential assessment centres which serve London as a whole, and which receive children considered to need resources extra to those which their own local authorities can provide. This usually means that the children's behaviour is considered too difficult for local children's homes or foster parents to cope with.

2. The London Boroughs Children's Regional Planning Committee (LBCRPC). Regional Planning Committees are joint committees of local authorities, established originally by the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act as a statutory requirement to ensure the provision of specialist resources for children in care, and the cooperation of local authorities in maintaining and using them. The statutory requirement to maintain a committee ceased in 1984, being replaced by a voluntary mandate, but during the period of sample selection, the London RPC was responsible for a centralised referral system to specialised community homes with education. It also maintained an inspection service for private
specialised homes and an advice service for London Boroughs placing children with special needs outside their own boundaries. Hence it had a collection of records of children referred for placement in specialised homes and boarding schools for delinquent and behaviour disordered children, or passing through the homes included in regionally-funded schemes.

It was eventually decided to use only the RPC data system to supplement the sample, to reduce the potential difficulties in analysis caused by having samples from different sources. The sample collection period was extended backwards by six months until October 1980 to give viable numbers. All children meeting sample criteria 1-4 were included.

The addition of these children caused no problem for the design of the record-based part of the study, since the reports made at the time of committal to care remain on the file. The interviews with social workers, however, had been running into difficulties in any case, as the researcher's personal circumstances had made it difficult to find the time necessary for travel to numerous interview locations and for transcribing tapes. Broadening the sample to include children from the whole of London, the retrospective gathering of the earlier data and the delays in the interviewing for the original sample made the interviewing of all social workers completely impractical. This part of the design was therefore abandoned.

**Sample Numbers and Overlap between Samples**

Final sample numbers consisted of 93 children: 26 were the 'Original' sample obtained from the three Boroughs and 67 were the 'Extended' RPC sample. Of the latter group, 13 were also from the three original Boroughs having been
missed in the direct sample gathering, an indication of the problems in this process. In addition to these children, a further four from the original sample were also known to the LBCRPC, having been referred later for placement or advice.

Details of the two samples are as follows:

**TABLE 2: TOTAL SAMPLE OF CHILDREN COMMITTED TO CARE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample (Total 26 children)</th>
<th>Extended Sample (Total 67 Children)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Children</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Children</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Status Unclear</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Cases Eligible For Subject Group</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Cases Eligible For Comparison Group</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disqualified From Stage 2 Analyses</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The RPC sample gave a considerably larger white group eligible for comparison than it did for the black subject group. A further process of selection and matching from within the comparison group was therefore undertaken for the Stage Three analysis of court reports, whereby each subject child was matched with the comparison child of the same sex who was nearest in date of committal to care. The stages of sample selection are represented in Figure One.
Stage One
Initial pool -
Children of 10+ years
Committed to Case under
1969 Act Sl(2)(c-f)
or S.7(7)

Original Sample
3 boroughs
26 children

Extended Sample
All London
67 children

Total Sample
93 children
(Basic data on referral, family and behaviour)

Stage Two
Total Sample
93 children

Disqualified (D Group)
(Previous active contact with SED, same ethnicity)
26 children

Original Sample
11 children
(2 Black, 8 White, 1 unclear)

Extended Sample
15 children
(8 Black, 7 White)

Accepted
(New Cases - all Black children, White children of British Isles parentage)
67 children

Original Sample
15 children

Subject Group
8 Black
7 White

Comparison Group
18 Black
34 White

Main quantitative analysis - comparisons of family, behaviour and referral - on Subject and Comparison Groups

Stage Three
Matched Pairs
22 Subject children (on whom court reports available)

Comparison Group
22 Matched Comparison children

Main qualitative analysis - Content of Court Reports
Disqualification proved a more difficult issue to assess than had been expected. Active contact with the social services department might have been recent, but this did not necessarily mean that the family was completely unknown to social workers or other welfare services. In a number of instances there had been previous referrals of the family by police, or as the result of rent arrears, homelessness or fuel debts, which had not been followed up by social workers, or had been dealt with in one interview by duty social workers. In other instances, parents themselves had come to the Department asking for help, and had either had one interview or had been referred immediately to other agencies. Goldberg and Warburton (1979) in their study of the work of a social services department area team, showed that 25% of all referrals are closed within one day, but that referrals for housing or financial problems were particularly likely to be treated in this manner with less than half being open for longer than a week. Two thirds of referrals for delinquency were closed within one week, and more than half of referrals for child behaviour within one month. The proportions of child and family referrals kept open after one year was very low, only 12%, and of delinquency referrals was only 1%. In this context the experiences of the families in this study were probably fairly typical.

There was also a small number of families who had moved from different local authority areas, sometimes a considerable distance away. Only after the social services department had become closely involved with the family, or the child was already in care, was it discovered that the family were well known elsewhere. It became clear during piloting that in many of the ostensibly 'new' cases, there had been previous points at which the family could have assumed client status. In some instances the families had seemed to
be 'disasters that were waiting to happen'. However these histories were still fundamentally different from many of those in which the SSD workers had been actively involved over a long period in trying to assist (or control) the family. In the latter instances, other children in the family had often been in care or under supervision, and indeed in several instances the parents themselves had been in care during their own childhood.

Four criteria were eventually decided upon as disqualifying children from Stage 2 analysis.

1. Where the child had been in the care of the relevant Social Services Department on a previous occasion.

2. Where siblings had been in care to the relevant Social Services Department.

3. Where the family had been in active contact with the Social Services Department for more than 18 months prior to the child's committal to care.

4. Where one or both parents of a white child was not indigenous to the British Isles.

5. Where ethnic status was unclear.

Of the 93 children in the study, 26 were excluded on one or more criteria from Stage Two analysis.

Apart from the two white children with European parentage and the one whose ethnic status was unclear, the disqualified children were indeed longstanding cases: 19 of the 23 had been known for more than five years, and 12 for more than ten years; one family had been known for 25 years!
TABLE 3: CHILDREN DISQUALIFIED FROM STAGE 2 ANALYSIS. REASON FOR DISQUALIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Children in Care to SSD on previous occasion</td>
<td>1 (White)</td>
<td>7 (6 Black, 1 White)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Siblings in care to SSD previously</td>
<td>4 (1 Black, 3 White)</td>
<td>3 (3 White)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Family in active contact with the SSD for more than 18 months before the child's committal to care</td>
<td>4 (1 Black, 3 White)</td>
<td>4 (2 Black, 2 White)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. White child - parents not from British Isles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ethnic status unclear</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Samples from Two Sources: Potential Issues

Although the two samples were drawn from the same basic population of London children committed to care on a first court appearance, there was a potential difference between them because the original sample was gathered direct from the care authorities whereas the extended sample was gathered by means of a second agency. Although there was marked overlap between the samples, there was the possibility of selection effects which operated differently within each. In the original sample, the sample loss was likely to build in a bias as to legal status, with the
children committed unexpectedly through criminal courts being missed. This could be a substantial number: a study in Westminster suggested that between 35% - 40% of juveniles charged with criminal offences were tried elsewhere than in the local court (Bateman and Parker 1987).

Sources of potential bias in the RPC sample were more varied. How much use London Boroughs made of regionally funded residential homes, or of the placement advice service, was a matter partly of local policies, and partly of the range of local resources which individual Boroughs provided for children with special needs. There was a built in assumption that regional resources or the private homes system were for use only where local resources were inadequate, but the point at which this position would be reached varied enormously between Boroughs which, for example had no residential assessment resources of their own, or nowhere to hold older teenagers on remand, and Boroughs which had substantial networks of their own residential homes.

Most of the local biases would be expected, across 33 boroughs, to have the effect of cancelling each other out and randomising the population. It was possible, however, that the RPC sample had a built in bias towards the children whose behaviour was seen as exceptionally difficult at the time of committal, who had continued to be troublesome or worrying in some manner after admission to care, or were unacceptable in local schools and therefore required residential education.

None of these potential biases were a problem for the part of the study which aimed to explore the construction of explanations and use of theory by social workers. The possible differences between the samples, however, did constitute a problem if comparisons were to be made between black and white children or between Stage One and Stage Two
Statistical presentation and testing require that the subjects are drawn from the same population, otherwise they are invalid. Separate statistical analysis of the two samples would give the problem of very low numbers particularly in the original sample, and it was desirable, if possible, to treat the two groups as a single sample for testing purposes. A number of statistical comparisons were therefore made between the original and extended samples, in order to establish whether they were fundamentally similar, or appeared to represent different populations. The samples were compared on two sets of variables.

1. Basic demographic variables: race; age; sex; family composition.

2. Features of the children's circumstances which might reflect biases in sample selection: the nature, extent and severity of behaviour problems, and how long the family had been known prior to committal.

Basic Demographic Variables

Comparison on ethnicity was unrealistic, as apart from the Afro-Caribbean children there were insufficient numbers to form anything identifiable as a group: even the two children categorised as 'Asian' had parents who came from different continents.

Two measures of family composition were available: the child's parental situation before coming into care and the number of siblings living at home (many children had siblings who were grown up and away from home, were in care, or had been adopted).
There was no obvious reason why the process of referral to the LBCRPC should reflect bias in race or family composition, but it was possible that age and sex might affect the availability of local resources for a child.

Comparisons on the demographic variables are given in Table 4(a) - (e). None gave differences which were statistically significant at or near the 5% probability level, and there was no reason on the basis of these comparisons to treat the two groups as different samples.

**Possible Bias in Intervention Between the Samples**

The possibility existed that children in the Extended Sample might represent a secondary selection process from the basic population in terms of behaviour, circumstances, and a consequent need for special resources not available locally. A number of measures were available to examine this.

a. **Contact with Services**

The Extended Sample might have represented selection in terms of the length of contact with services (having been through and exhausted local resources) or of pressure from other agencies to remove children or take action to solve problems.

Examination of the length of time for which families had been in active contact with services prior to the making of the care order showed no significant differences between the samples (Table 5a), and the proportion in contact for over 18 months was slightly smaller in the Extended Sample. Table 5b shows that a higher proportion of the Extended Sample had originally been referred to the SSD by the police, whereas the Original Sample were more often referred by the education services. Other patterns of referral were almost
identical for the two samples. Although the difference was not large enough to be statistically significant, the higher proportion of police referrals in the Extended Sample supported some of the possible sources of bias: the loss of delinquents from the Original Sample and the traditional pattern of referral of delinquents to community homes with education (former approved schools) within the regional system. The lower proportion of referrals from the education services in the Extended Sample, however, ran counter to the expectation that children with problems at school would be more likely to reach regional networks, which gave access to resources with special educational units.

b. Children's Behaviour Prior to Committal
Further analysis of the children's behavioural records confirmed the tendency for greater police involvement with the Extended Sample. Measures examined were: committal to care through criminal or civil proceedings; a record of criminal behaviour; and the spread of behaviour problems through the three areas of the children's lives, at home, at school, and in the community. These variables were all basic to the proposed comparisons between black and white children and to identifying features which might characterise children committed to care early in their contact with social services. It was therefore particularly necessary to understand the limitations of the data with respect to them.

Table 6a shows that children in the Extended Sample were significantly more likely to have been committed to care in criminal proceedings than were those in the Original Sample. This result did appear to be caused at least in part by loss of delinquents from the Original Sample rather than by differential selection in the Extended Sample, since of the 13 children from the original
Boroughs who were located in the Extended Sample, 6 were S.7(7) (criminal) committals, i.e. proportionately more than in the Extended Sample as a whole. The Original Sample were concommitantly more likely to have been committed to care for truancy. (31%, compared to the Extended Sample's 10%).

Committal to care through criminal proceedings did not necessarily represent the whole of the children's criminal behaviour or involvement with the police.* A number of children had been cautioned, or committed offences for which no official action was taken, or were awaiting trial for an offence when the care order was made.

It is also known that there are variations in conviction and prosecution rates which do not necessarily reflect the child's level of delinquent activity (West 1982). In particular, girls are less likely than boys to be prosecuted for offences (Gelsthorpe 1985) and black children are more likely to be prosecuted than white children (Tipler 1985). There was a strong possibility of interaction between these various factors which would be difficult to disentangle in such a small sample.

The information on criminal offending was therefore combined into a single variable. Criminal behaviour which resulted in no official action usually occurred within the family, at school, or once the child was in care, and assessing whether it should be included meant making some arbitrary decisions. Many of the children became involved in fights, vandalism or in stealing from

* Nor was involvement with the police always synonymous with delinquency. Several of the children initiated action by going into the police station and asking for help.

- 136 -
home or school, some of which was at the level which is 'normal' i.e. most teenagers do it at some time (Riley and Shaw 1985). Some of this 'unofficial delinquency' was more serious (as with the girl who broke into her own home while her parents were at work, stole her mother's jewellery and sold it) or more unusual, (such as the boy who went back to his former primary school and exposed himself to female staff). Much of the unofficial delinquency could have been the subject of criminal prosecution or caution if those concerned had chosen to take action, or if it had been reported to the police. Rutherford (1986) points out that most offending by youngsters is absorbed by the developmental systems of home and school in precisely this way. It was only categorised as criminal behaviour in the present study if the victims or those responsible for the care of the child had so categorised it, and had reported it to the police, i.e. it is as much a measure of the adults definition as of the child's behaviour. In this it mirrors the official criminal records.

Table 6b confirms the earlier material in that overall levels of prosecution for criminal behaviour were again significantly higher in the Extended Sample than in the Original Sample. Levels of cautioning and of offences which were reported to the police, but on which no further action was taken, were however similar in the two samples, suggesting that this was not simply a matter of one group being prosecuted and the other handled informally, but did represent a difference in the total amount of police involvement. Once again, the 13 children from the original Boroughs who were in the Extended Sample were more delinquent than the Extended Sample as a whole: of the 13, only two had no record of police involvement for criminal behaviour.
A further analysis of behaviour records was undertaken to consider whether the Extended Sample differed from the Original Sample in respects other than having been prosecuted. Detailed information on the children's recorded behaviour before admission to care was combined to examine whether children were in unusually serious difficulties at home, at school and in the community (i.e. 'normal' misbehaviour such as refusal to do the washing up, or complete homework was not counted). Difficulties at home were usually over matters such as running away, staying out very late or all night, physically violent conflicts with parents or siblings, or stealing from home; difficulties at school were most often serious truancy, disruptive behaviour in class, damage to school property, violence towards teachers or fellow pupils (many of the children had been excluded from school, some even from schools for the behaviourally disordered!); difficulties in the community were usually stealing, vandalism or other criminal offending, rowdiness, drunkenness and fighting in the streets, being found in 'unacceptable' places (West End nightspots, all night amusement arcades) in 'unacceptable' company (drug pushers, pimps, prostitutes).

Details of the recording and analysis of behaviour are given later in Chapter Eight. This broader view of the children's behaviour produced a picture which was different in several respects from that of the specific area of criminal behaviour. The frequency of difficulty at home was almost identical for both samples (Table 6c). Setting the criminal behaviour in the context of more general problems of conformity in public behaviour reduced the differences between the two samples, although a significantly higher proportion of the Extended Sample had problems in the community (Table 6d). Most marked was a new difference which emerged in
that the Extended Sample proved significantly more likely to have had serious problems at school (Table 6e) in spite of the fact that they were less likely to have been committed to care on educational grounds than were the Original Sample. This supported the expected bias towards a need for special residential education in the referrals to the regional system. Children in the Extended Sample were also significantly more likely to have had problems in all three areas of their lives (Table 6f).

Finally, it was expected that subsequent referral to the regional system represented a continuation of the child's difficult behaviour, causing the breakdown of placement in local resources. This was not directly relevant to the present research unless it was also an indicator that the Extended Sample presented more problems to their immediate carers at the outset of their care careers. No data was available on the children's history after committal to care, but almost all (78 of the 93) had been in care immediately before committal, at least for a short period.

The exceptions were a few children committed in criminal proceedings who had not previously been remanded in care, or children committed for truancy in proceedings started by the Education Authority. Difficult behaviour in care in the early stages is known to be a likely predictor of further trouble in later placements (Mühlham et al 1976). This does not prove an issue between the present samples, however; 64% of the Extended Sample had been uncooperative or continued to exhibit previous difficult behaviour while in care awaiting their court appearance, compared to 58% of the Original Sample. This is an indication of the generally extreme characteristics of the children, but not pointing to selection differences between the two groups.
Conclusions on Sample Comparisons

Comparison on 14 variables showed statistically significant different differences between the samples on only four. None of these were basic demographic characteristics. One, the greater level of criminal prosecutions in the Extended Sample, can be assumed primarily to represent loss of delinquents from the Original Sample, rather than bias in referral to the Extended Sample, and is compensated by the overlap between samples and the inclusion of delinquents from the original Boroughs in the Extended Sample. The other differences, a higher level of problems at school and in the community and a broader spread of behaviour problems throughout the child's environment, appear to be genuine differences representing bias in the referral to LBCRPC of children with special educational needs or whose behaviour is seen as exceptionally difficult, requiring a specialised resource.

As a result of this analysis it was concluded that the two groups could be legitimately treated as one sample for the purposes of demographic comparisons, or examination of their home circumstances and family situation. Any analysis of criminal behaviour, school problems, or multiple problems should either be carried out separately for the two samples, or use a two-way form of analysis to ascertain whether there were interaction effects due to sample differences. Which of these is appropriate for particular analysis will depend on the nature of the data and the question being asked.
TABLE 4: ORIGINAL AND EXTENDED SAMPLE COMPARISONS - DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

(a) Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>15 (58%)</td>
<td>41 (61%)</td>
<td>56 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-Caribbean/African</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>18 (27%)</td>
<td>24 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Parentage</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>7 (10%)</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (101%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>67 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>93 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole numbers. Figures over or under 100% are due to rounding error.)

\[ x^2 = 0.67, \; 3df, \; \text{not significant (omitting 'unclear' category).} \]

(b) Age at Committal to Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>4 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>7 (10%)</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>22 (33%)</td>
<td>27 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>21 (31%)</td>
<td>29 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>9 (35%)</td>
<td>11 (16%)</td>
<td>20 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (101%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>67 (98%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>93 (99%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 5.53, \; 6df, \; \text{not significant.} \]
(c) **Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>13 (50%)</td>
<td>26 (39%)</td>
<td>39 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>13 (50%)</td>
<td>41 (61%)</td>
<td>54 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26 (100%)</td>
<td>67 (100%)</td>
<td>93 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\chi^2 = 0.96, \text{ ldf, not significant}\)

(d) **Parental Situation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before admission to care, child lived with:</th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both natural parents</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>20 (30%)</td>
<td>25 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own parent and stepparent</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>15 (22%)</td>
<td>25 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>28 (42%)</td>
<td>38 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>5 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26 (99%)</td>
<td>67 (100%)</td>
<td>93 (99%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\chi^2 = 2.79, \text{ 3df, not significant}\)

(e) **Siblings at Home**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>15 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>16 (24%)</td>
<td>24 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>22 (33%)</td>
<td>28 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or More</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>18 (27%)</td>
<td>24 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26 (100%)</td>
<td>67 (100%)</td>
<td>93 (101%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\chi^2 = 1.25, \text{ 3df, not significant}\) (omitting NI)
### (a) Length of time between referral and committal to care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 3 months</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>16 (24%)</td>
<td>22 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 6 months</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>12 (18%)</td>
<td>17 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 9 months</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td>14 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 12 months</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>9 (13%)</td>
<td>13 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 18 months</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>4 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 18 months</td>
<td>9 (35%)</td>
<td>14 (21%)</td>
<td>23 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>26 (100%)</td>
<td>67 (99%)</td>
<td>93 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 4.53, 5 df, \text{not significant} \]

### (b) Referral Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>15 (22%)</td>
<td>17 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Services</td>
<td>11 (42%)</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td>24 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>7 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>14 (21%)</td>
<td>18 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>6 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>6 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>12 (18%)</td>
<td>15 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>26 (101%)</td>
<td>67 (99%)</td>
<td>93 (99%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 7.11, 6 df, \text{not significant} \]
(a) Legal Status - Care or Criminal Proceedings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committal to Care Under:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S(7)(7)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>30 (45%)</td>
<td>33 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Proceedings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sl(2)</td>
<td>23 (88%)</td>
<td>36 (54%)</td>
<td>59 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Proceedings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and Criminal</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proceedings*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26 (100%)</td>
<td>67 (100%)</td>
<td>93 (99%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One child was made subject to two care orders on the same day in different proceedings (omitted from the significance test).

\[ x^2 = 9.33, df1, p < 0.01 \]

(b) Criminal Offending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Found guilty or prosecuted for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offence</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>37 (55%)</td>
<td>41 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautioned</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offences committed but no</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>action taken</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>11 (16%)</td>
<td>16 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No evidence of offending</td>
<td>14 (54%)</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td>27 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26 (100%)</td>
<td>67 (99%)</td>
<td>93 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 14.66, df3, p < 0.01 \]
### (c) Serious Behavioural Difficulties at Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20 (77%)</td>
<td>55 (82%)</td>
<td>75 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>11 (16%)</td>
<td>16 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>67 (99%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>93 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 4.03$, $\text{ldf (NI and NA excluded)}$ $p > 0.05$

### (d) Serious Behavioural Difficulties in the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14 (54%)</td>
<td>51 (76%)</td>
<td>65 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (42%)</td>
<td>15 (22%)</td>
<td>26 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>67 (99%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>93 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 4.03$, $\text{ldf (NI and NA excluded)}$ $p > 0.05$

### (e) Serious Behavioural Difficulties at School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19 (73%)</td>
<td>62 (93%)</td>
<td>81 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>67 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>93 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 5.97$, $\text{ldf (NI and NA excluded)}$ $p > 0.01$
(f) Serious behavioural difficulties at home, at school and in the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Extended Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Area</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>7 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Areas</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>25 (37%)</td>
<td>37 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Areas</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>39 (58%)</td>
<td>47 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>67 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>93 (101%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 9.84, 2df \text{ (omitting NA and NI)} \quad p > 0.01 \]

Summary

This chapter identified the objectives which the research design had to meet in order to examine the processes by which social workers made a case for the removal of a troublesome adolescent from home. It was concluded that the objectives required a design using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The original design was for a prospective study using social work records and interviews with social workers in three London Boroughs. It proved impossible to obtain a viable sample due to external changes in the patterns of committal to care, and the design was amended to include children from the whole of London, based on the analysis of records and court reports.

The sample was restricted to children over ten years old, committed to care on their first court appearance, following behaviour problems, including criminal offending. Some basic data was collected on all children meeting these criteria, but within this group, detailed analysis of the social work process was undertaken only on children whose families had been in active contact with the social services department for less than eighteen months prior to their
committal, when no children from the family had previously been in care to the social services department, and when certain ethnicity criteria were met. All black children who were newly in contact with the social services department were assigned to a Subject Group of 26 children; all white children whose parents were indigenous to the British Isles, and who were newly in contact with the social services department were assigned to a Comparison Group of 41 white children. Both black and white children disqualified from these two groups were assigned to a Disqualified Group of 26 children.

It was necessary to establish whether children from the 'Original Sample' in the three boroughs and children from the 'Extended Sample' of 'All London' children could legitimately be treated as a single sample. Statistical comparisons of the two samples showed no difference on demographic variables or on aspects of intervention by official bodies, but the Extended Sample in some respects appeared more likely to have records of serious and widespread behaviour problems. This was expected in that the Extended Sample had been obtained from a central data base of children considered to have special placement needs. It was concluded that for most purposes the sample could be treated as a single sample, but there were some analyses in which the differences between the two groups would have to be taken into account.
CHAPTER SIX

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND REFERRAL TO SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS
CHAPTER SIX

Introduction

A statistical profile of the children and their families was obtained from case records using the data collection schedule (Appendix One). This did not aim to give a complete descriptive picture of every aspect of the child or the home background, but focussed on issues specific to the questions raised in the literature review. Questions on the parents and home background concentrated on matters relevant to:

a. Family stereotypes, as identified in the literature review.

b. Other family issues most relevant to social workers' judgements of 'competence' or 'incompetence' in parenting and therefore 'stigmatising'.

c. Events and behaviour which are most likely to bring the child or the family into conflict with the control mechanisms of society, whether in a judicial or welfare framework.

d. An attempt to examine the dynamics of this process.

Data was collected by the use of three types of question in the case record sheet:

1. Precoded questions were used when the information was elementary and factual (e.g. who referred the family to the SSD, with whom the child lived before referral).
2. Checklists were used to identify systematically whether certain features were noted as being present (e.g. whether the child had truanted from school, or the parents had received treatment for psychiatric illness). This approach gave only a crude and limited measure of prevalence, as discussed in the previous chapter. Truancy, for example, ranged from children who sometimes missed one or two days of school to children who had not attended school at all for two years before committal to care. Supplementary notes were made on the nature and degree of the characteristics checked, using where possible the wording of the original report.

3. Unstructured questions were used to collect information on the circumstances surrounding referral and the sequence of events between referral and committal to care.

Some basic statistical information on the children was presented in the previous chapter. This chapter is concerned with the characteristics of the whole sample and the differences between the new cases in the Subject (S) and Comparison (C) groups and the primarily longstanding cases in the Disqualified (D) group. All analyses were also double-checked to ascertain whether there were any general differences linked to age and gender, or between black and white children, and between the Original and Extended Samples. Differences are described when found. The lack of difference is noted when this is interesting in itself.

Basic Demographic Characteristics

a. **Gender**

   Table 7 shows that in both Subject and Comparison Groups (particularly the former) girls considerably outnumber boys, whereas in the Disqualified Group the reverse is true. Previous research has shown that troublesome
girls are more likely than boys to be subject to early intervention by judicial and welfare services and that the action taken is likely to be more severe (Campbell 1981, Gelsthorpe 1985b, Petrie 1986). The difference between official reactions to girls and boys has probably been exacerbated in Britain in the recent past by the 1982 Criminal Justice Act, which resulted in a higher proportion of boys entering the penal system (Burney 1985) and by the development of more community based services for delinquent and troublesome boys, thereby removing many of the former potential care populations. The particular imbalance in the Subject group is likely to represent the known higher rate of custodial sentencing among black youths, which has been demonstrated in several studies of London's juvenile offenders (Bradden 1980, Tipler 1985, Bateman and Parker 1987). The present data suggests that different processes are at work for 'new' cases, where the troublesome youngsters have first come to the attention of the authorities in adolescence, than in those cases where the welfare services have 'owned' the family as clients for some years. This supports Donzelot's contention that welfare professionals' power vis a vis the juvenile court is effective in retaining control over children and families when they wish to do so.

**Table 7: Subject, Comparison and Disqualified Groups - Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>19 (73%)</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>54 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>16 (62%)</td>
<td>39 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>93 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 8: AGE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOYS AND GIRLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>16 (30%)</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
<td>27 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>20 (37%)</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
<td>33 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>12 (22%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>16 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\bar{x}$ 13.85 13.28

**TOTAL** 54 (100%) 39 (99%) 93 (99%)

$D = 0.259$, Kolmogorov-Smirnov 2-tailed test, $p = < 0.1$

(Mean age calculations include months as well as years, though months are not given in the table.)

b. **Age**

Age differences between the groups were small, with the D group being on average the youngest (mean age 13.5 months, SD 1.55). The C Group were slightly older (mean age 13.7 months, SD 1.06) and the S Group the oldest (mean age 13.9 months, SD 1.2). Even this small difference appeared largely caused by the effect of gender differences, since girls were slightly older than boys. Although all the 10/11 year olds were boys, and all the 16 year olds were girls, the overall difference was significant only at the 10% level (Table 8). There were no discernible differences in age between black and white children in the total sample.

c. **Home Area: Inner and Outer London**

Greater London consists of 33 separate London Boroughs, (13 Inner London and 20 Outer London). Of the 93 children 39 were in the care of the three Inner London Boroughs originally taking part in the research (including the 13 located through the LBCRCP); a further 16 were in the care of other Inner London Boroughs, and
38 were in the care of Outer London Boroughs. The only administrative difference between Inner and Outer Boroughs is that the former share a common education authority (ILEA) whereas each Outer Borough is an education authority in its own right. Although ILEA is organised into Divisions, each covering one or two Boroughs, there is still a possibility of basic similarities in policy on truancy or other school disruption in Inner London which might not be found among the Outer Boroughs.

Greater London forms a single Police Authority, again with a series of Divisions, each covering one or two Boroughs. It is, however, covered by separate Juvenile Court Divisions for Inner London, and 18 Outer London Areas, again giving the potential for greater uniformity in policy and practice for Inner than for Outer London. The Borough and Court boundaries, however, do not necessarily represent real boundaries of local communities, or the population's normal travel in the city as a whole. Initially criminal offenders come to court in the area where the offence has been committed, rather than the home area. Although juveniles can be remitted to their local court for trial, for a high proportion of criminal offenders this does not happen. Care Proceedings would normally be heard in the court serving the child's home area.

Numbers of children from each Borough did not permit the examination of likely differences in policy or practice between Boroughs.

d. **Ethnicity**

Brief details on the race of children were given in the original sample. The area of ethnicity became much more complex, since the children's families were of extremely varied origin. The children themselves were almost all British born (85 of the 93). Of the other eight, one
had been born in the West Indies; three in Africa; one in Malaysia; one in Madeira and the birthplace of two children of African parentage was unknown. Most of these children had been in Britain for some years, but two were comparatively recent arrivals.

The 41 children in the Comparison group were all British born children of white parents also born in the British Isles. For the children in the Subject and Disqualified Groups, parent's country of birth is given in Table 9 and the children's parentage in Table 10. These tables show the varied heritage of the children, with one third of the black children being of mixed parentage. Records on the parents of West Indian origin did not always make it clear from which Caribbean country they came. As in previous studies of children in care, almost all of the children of mixed parentage had white mothers and black fathers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeira</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**

|         | 39   | 39   |

* Includes one British woman of British/West Indian parentage and one British man of British/Sri-Lankan parentage.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects Disqualified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both parents of W. Indian origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents of Indian origin*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents from Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents from Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents from Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents from Madeira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents from Madeira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents from Madeira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed parentage British/West Indian**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed parentage European/African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed parentage British/Asian***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed parentage British/European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed parentage British/African</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 26 26

* Included one family who came to Britain from the West Indies, although the parents originated from India and one family of Kenyan Asians where the parents originated from India.

** Includes one child with a Black British parent and a West Indian parent.

*** One Asian parent came from Pakistan and one from Malaysia. The third child had a parent who was himself of mixed parentage (British/Sri Lankan).

Family Composition

When considering the theoretical models of family functioning discussed in Chapter Four, it was clarified that relationships were likely to be seen by social workers as more significant to judgements of family competence than were practical issues such as income or housing. In this context there was no value in trying to present a complete demographic picture of the family; indeed, several recent studies show that social workers make little or no attempt to look beyond the nuclear family when considering plans for a child at risk or in care (Rowe et al 1984, Millham et al 1985, Packman et al 1986).
Two measures of family composition were used: parental status prior to the child's entry into care, and the number of siblings at home. Both are issues which make it possible to locate the sample in the constellation of family membership by comparison to other population data; both have implications for the patterns of relationship within a family, and both are relevant to some aspects of the family stereotypes discussed earlier.

Overall the proportions of black and white children in two parent, stepparent and single parent families were very close. Table 11 shows that there were, however, differences between the Subject and Comparison Groups which are statistically significant. Although proportionately more of the Subject Groups lived with both natural parents and more of the Comparison Group were in single parent families, proportions with stepparents or with non-parental carers were similar in both groups. The higher proportion of the Subject Group still with both natural parents is particularly interesting in view of the stereotypes of family structure discussed earlier. The Disqualified Group also produced a high proportion with both natural parents, but very few stepparent families, and the highest proportion of single parent families. The differences which are indicated were not a result of gender differences, since proportions of boys and girls in the various family settings were very similar.

This study found a much higher proportion of black children with both natural parents than found by Cawson (1977) in a study of approved school children, and a higher proportion with two-parent households. Cawson also found that boys from ethnic minorities were more likely to have a stepparent than were a comparison group of white boys. At the time of Cawson's study, however, many of the approved school sample's parents were still recent immigrants and many of the children had been born outside the UK. Present results clearly reflect a more settled population.
TABLE 11: WITH WHOM THE CHILD LIVED BEFORE ADMISSION TO CARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Comparison</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Natural Parents</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>25 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother/Stepfather</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>20 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father/Stepmother</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother only</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>25 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father only</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>13 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Tested for differences in natural parent/stepparent/single parent/other carers \( \chi^2 = 9.06, \text{df} 3, p < 0.05 \))

Statistical records of household composition still suggest that, nationally, 12% of Afro-Caribbean households consist of a single adult with dependent children, compared to only 2% of white households, 1% of Asian (Indian Sub Continent) and 5% of other ethnic minority households (Central Statistical Office 1983). National figures also show that teenagers are slightly more likely than younger children to be in single parent households: in 1980, 12% of all 10-15 years olds were in one-parent families (Central Statistical Office 1982).

Studies of children in care, however, uniformly show much higher proportions from single parent families. One of the most recent (Packman et al 1986) gives 40% from a general sample of children in care in two large cities, but her figure for adolescents who came into care following behaviour problems (designated 'villains') is much lower: 28%; and she comments that these children more often have natural fathers in evidence. In the present study, the
the total figure for single parent families is 41%, close to Packman's total sample rather than her 'villains' but there is considerable variation within the present sample, with only 24% of the Subject Group in single parent families, compared to 44% of the Comparison Group and 54% of the Disqualified Group.

While the Subject Group were still twice as likely as teenagers nationally to be in one parent families, they stand out as markedly different from the other groups and from general child care populations. Numbers in most ethnic groups were too small to allow separate analysis of parental status, other than for Afro-Caribbean children. Of those with one or both parents from the Caribbean, 54% were in single parent families, but most of these were in the Disqualified Group rather than the Subject Group, or were children of mixed parentage in the care of white mothers.

**TABLE 12: PARENTAL SITUATION - COMPARISON OF THE STUDY CHILDREN WITH OTHER POPULATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Living With</th>
<th>NIDS (16 years old 1976)</th>
<th>Riley and Shaw (14/15 year olds 1986)</th>
<th>Packman (All Ages)</th>
<th>Total Snb.</th>
<th>Comp.</th>
<th>Dis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both natural parents</td>
<td>No figures available</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Mother</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Father</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepfather</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepfather</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither natural parent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12 shows the detailed comparisons between parental carers in the present study, Packman's total sample, the National Child Development Study national cohort at age 16 (Fogelman 1976), and Riley and Shaw's (1986) general population sample of 14/15 year olds.

Both Packman and the present study illustrate the much greater levels of breakdown in parental relationships than that found in the general population. The child care samples echo the national trends (loss of fathers and replacement with stepfathers being much more common than loss and replacement of mothers) but in a greatly magnified form. In general, however, it is the Disqualified Group in the present study who are closest to Packman's total child care sample, whereas the newly referred children in the Subject and Comparison Groups show some important differences. Both groups have lower proportions of children with natural mothers and higher with natural fathers than would have been expected in a general child care sample.

Separation or divorce of parents did not necessarily mean that one parent was completely out of the picture however. In this study, (as also in Packman's sample) the absent parent was often still in close contact with the family and/or the child. Disputes over custody of the child were occurring in some instances (including one case where neither parent wanted custody of their troublesome son in pending divorce proceedings!) and the child running away from one parent to another, or living with each in turn, was a common practice in this sample.
The D Group children had somewhat larger numbers of siblings still at home, compared to other groups, with a quarter having four or more, and three quarters having two or more siblings at home, compared to two thirds of the Subject and less than half of the Comparison Group. While age may have been a factor (D children had a younger mean age than others) it was not the sole factor as the S Group were slightly older than the C Group.

**TABLE 13: NUMBERS OF SIBLINGS LIVING AT HOME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>15 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>15 (37%)</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
<td>24 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>11 (42%)</td>
<td>28 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>14 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This sample as a whole were twice as likely to be living in households with three or more other children as were 10-15 year olds nationally (Central Statistical Office 1982) but the Subject and Disqualified Groups were almost three times as likely to be from such a family. At the other end of the scale, proportions of 'only children' were much lower in all three groups than the national figure of 28%, but particularly low for Disqualified children. As in other studies of children in care, 'siblings' often included half or step siblings, representing a pattern of fragmented and shifting parental relationships over the years, and several families also included nephews or nieces of the study child, born to older siblings and passing into their grandmother's care along with her own children.
In legal terms the sample represent two quite distinct routes into care. The criminal route is usually preceded by a period of remand for reports (on bail, in care, or in custody) and leads to a criminal trial and a finding of guilt. The civil route of care proceedings may be preceded by the child's removal from home or elsewhere to a 'place of safety', on the orders of a magistrate, or by a temporary order of the juvenile court for an 'interim care order' while reports are prepared for the full hearing. In terms of the child's experience these routes may not be so different: the same children's home or assessment centre is likely to receive children on remand, in a 'place of safety' or in interim care; how different the final court hearing is to the child is likely to depend more on the attitudes of the magistrates and the court officials and on their concern for 'due process' of law, than on the civil or criminal nature of the hearings (Parker et al 1981). There is, however, the major difference that the criminal hearing leaves the child with a criminal record which may have substantial after effects, for example on later employment options.

In the total sample of 93 children, 33 were committed to care through criminal proceedings, 59 through care proceedings and one through both. Proportions of black and white children committed through the various proceedings were almost identical (36% of both through criminal proceedings). The boys had a slightly higher level of criminal committal (44% of boys and 30% of girls) and the girls a higher level of committal as 'beyond the control of their parent or guardian' (37% girls, 21% boys), but these were not large enough differences to be statistically significant at the 5% level.
Table 14 shows that the three sub samples were broadly similar in terms of criminal committal, but that the Disqualified Group was somewhat different from the others in having proportionately more committals for truancy and fewer as beyond control. Where more than one ground for care proceedings was cited, the most usual combinations were that the child was both beyond control and in moral danger, or was beyond control and being neglected or abused. Although truancy has been shown to characterise almost all of the children, it was cited as a reason for committal to care in relatively few cases. Being in moral danger was even more unusual as a sole cause for care proceedings, in spite of the mention of concern about sexual activities for almost a third of the sample.

As well as the different legal routes, the children may have followed a variety of different courses though the network of educational, child welfare and law enforcement agencies. At one extreme were children previously unknown to any of these organisations and for whom a sudden traumatic event precipitated their referral to social services or abrupt
entry into care. These events were many and varied, and included: the child's arrest on a criminal charge; the child's abandonment or eviction by parents; a hospital admission following an overdose; the child arriving at school with injuries inflicted by parents or siblings; and the child walking into a police station, hospital or social services department and refusing to go home.

At the other extreme were most of the children in the Disqualified Group, whose families had been known to their social services department for many years; where older children, and sometimes parents, had been in care; the study child may have been in and out of care in the past or already be in care by voluntary agreement; various other forms of assistance or supervision may have been attempted; but eventually through an accumulation of small events (as with truancy), or the sudden intervention of a larger one (frequently the child's arrest) precipitates the legal action leading to the care order.

In between were three groups of children: those for whom there were a few months, perhaps a year of attempts to solve the perceived problems of the child or family without admission to care, usually culminating in a dire event leading to a remand on a criminal charge or a place of safety order; those with whom parents and other agencies had been trying to get action from the social services department without success until a specific event prompted the social services department into action; and a few where the authorities were concerned about the child's welfare but had been kept at bay by the family until a breach of the law enabled compulsory intervention to take place.
Arguments about social workers' intervention in families have tended to focus on the latter group of reluctant clients. Giller and Morris (1981) concluded that "many social workers talked of the child's offence as being 'an excuse' for intervention which would not have been possible had the incident not taken place". They quote a social worker's statement:

"I don't see him really as that much of a delinquent. The whole thing was taken as a fairly fortuitous thing on my part to bring him into care."

Giller and Morris see the process as the positive selection of clients from a pool of potential clients, either according to a peer-approved definition of a suitable 'care' case, as in the above example, or as the result of pressure from law enforcement agencies which could no longer be resisted.

Parker et al (1981) make a similar analysis of juvenile court proceedings for offenders and for truants, although they see the court as having the major role in selection. They show that both parents and juveniles saw the court proceedings and preliminary admissions to care as 'punishment' even when the proceedings were civil ones. They illustrate that social workers trying to balance care and control functions were walking a tightrope between their own perceptions of the child's needs and the extent of the parent and child's cooperation in their choice of legal routes to intervention. Farida's mother states unequivocally "I don't like social workers".

"After careful assessment, Farida's social worker decided that the supervision order would offer some structured support to both Farida and her mother. She was reluctant to recommend a 7(7) Care Order, since this disposal is a controversial one in criminal proceedings and for a girl of thirteen could stretch out several years. She knew also that voluntary care would prove quite unacceptable to Farida's mother. Also she dislikes work in care proceedings and feels she has insufficient evidence to bring a watertight case...." (from Parker et al 1981)
This perspective in studies of offenders and court proceedings differs somewhat from that described in several recent studies of the decision to admit children to care, which encompass broader populations. Here, several studies are in agreement in suggesting a lack of consistent criteria which are brought to bear on the situation, except in terms of a feeling that admitting children to care is bad and should be avoided for as long as possible. This philosophy is described by Packman et al (1986) as the "goalkeeping" method of child care. Rowe (DHSS 1985), summarising the results of research on decisions in child care, comments on the lack of a "comprehensive research, practice or value base which would help practitioners decide when admission to care would be appropriate and for which groups of children". In this context the main responsibility for decisions is left to those "on the lowest rung of the hierarchy who usually lack the seniority and power to gain access to key resources", and "There is an overwhelming impression of social worker's passivity and their feelings of helplessness and being at the mercy of events and actions of other people and agencies". This echoes the analysis of clients' feelings of alienation and resulting passivity.

The Pre Committal Period

In several of these studies it is not surprising therefore to find examples of families who have been pressing social services to help them and whose pleas have, in their view, been ignored, while high proportions of families report that they were given little or no help before the decision to remove their child from home. Fisher et al (1986), for example, report that fewer than half of the families they studied recalled having help from other agencies prior to their contact with the social services department, and there
was disagreement between social workers' and parents' accounts of help received in two thirds of their cases. Similar disagreement was found over who referred the family to social services, with the families often feeling that they had referred themselves, while the social worker reported referral by other agencies.

In Fisher's study, far from feeling that their rights had been usurped by social workers, families reported feelings of relief that something was being done at last, often after they had had to exert considerable pressure on the social worker. Fisher links this to the fact that "social workers took as a fundamental tenet that the genesis of child care problems lies in family relationships.....and sought solutions in 'talking things through' with children and parents rather than imposing discipline, as parents requested". Although Fisher, and several other studies (Millham et al 1985, Packman et al 1986) do also report a feeling of resentment at the form of social workers' intervention with rebellious teenagers, this usually came later, when admission to care was not seen by parents to have produced the expected improvement in their children's behaviour, rather than at the point of initial admission to care.

From Fisher's results, it would be expected that social workers' reports in the present study would cite a high level of involvement with other child welfare or social work agencies; yet this did not appear to have happened except for the Comparison Group.

In the sample as a whole, 55 children (60%) had previous contact with another child welfare or social work agency but for the Subjects this was reported for only 12 children (46%) whereas for the Comparisons there were 29 (71%) of children with such reports. The difference between Subject and Comparison Groups was significant at the 5% level ($x^2 = 4.05$, df1). Furthermore the Subjects seem least likely of
all to have reported contact with more than one other agency. Of the 26 children in the D group 23 had siblings (usually older) who were also regarded as troublesome, whereas this was less common in the C group (54%) and even less in the S Group (34%). This may explain the higher rate of involvement with other agencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 15: FAMILIES' PREVIOUS INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHER AGENCIES (SOCIAL WORKERS REPORTS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Other Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although all children in Subject and Comparison Groups had been in active contact with the social services department for less than eighteen months before the child's committal to care, half of the 67 (32 children) had reports of previous referrals or notifications on which no action had been taken. These were equally divided between referral by parents and referral by other agencies, but the distribution of previous referrals again was markedly different between Subject and Comparison Groups: 62% of the Subjects and 39% of the Comparisons had previous referrals which had not been pursued. Subjects had more often been referred by parents and Comparisons by other agencies. The difference in frequency of previous reported referrals is only significant at the 10% level on this small sample, but can still reasonably be regarded as an indicator of how far the Subject Group had been apparently unnoticed or ignored by child welfare and social work agencies until the problems which led to the final referral and committal to care.
Referrals can fail to be followed up by a social services department for a number of reasons, and data is not available in the present study to explore this issue. In some instances the referral may simply have been a routine formal notification of rent arrears from the Housing Department, or of an arrest or caution by the police; in others the family themselves may have chosen not to pursue offers of help from social workers; while the industrial action which was experienced in all social services departments during the research period no doubt made some impact. There is, however, also the possibilities that the Subject children's families were more likely to be 'cooled out', as has been suggested by some other research on black families approaching social services departments (Cheetham 1981).

The Final Referral and Acceptance as a Client

For the final referral which was pursued, there were few differences between Subject and Comparison Groups. Most of the Disqualified Group had been known for so many years that the original source of the referral was long forgotten.

<p>| TABLE 16: WHO REFERRED THE FAMILY TO THE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT (RESEARCH REFERRAL) |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Services</td>
<td>9 (35%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>13 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/I</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A point of interest here, however, is the high proportion of referrals of Subjects which came from the education services (education welfare, child guidance clinic or school) in spite of the lower levels of truancy in the Subject Group. Although family self-referrals were at a similar level in both groups, in the Comparison Group they were almost all from parents rather than children. Although children themselves frequently initiated referral or admission to care this was not necessarily by means of a direct approach to the social services department. They more often seemed to make their initial request for help to the police or to a hospital. An account of the specific incidents which precipitated the research referral, where these were recorded, emphasises this point. For the Disqualified Group, the incident precipitating the committal proceedings is given as a comparison point (Table 17).

Where no specific incident was identifiable as the precipitating event, the usual story was that the adolescent was 'doing as he/she pleases' i.e. keeping hours or company unacceptable to the parents or others, being generally uncooperative, or abusive. Table 17 shows that precipitating incidents were many and varied with 'running away' (defined as being missing from home for more than one night consecutively) being the only one common to many referrals. Also shown is the relative unimportance of criminal behaviour for the new cases compared to the Disqualified Group.

The suggestion that the Subjects and their families had received less input from social services and other agencies before the child was committed to care was examined further by analysis of the length of time which elapsed in the Subject and Comparison Groups between the research referral and the child's committal. This analysis suggested little difference however. In both groups three out of ten children were committed to care within three months of
referral. Gender produced a much more marked difference with more than half of the boys being committed within three months, compared to fewer than one fifth of the girls ($x^2 = 6.981, \text{df}=2, p < 0.03$, Kolmogorov Smirnov 2 sample test). Although numbers were too small for detailed analysis by ethnic group, it was notable among the Subject Group that the children of West African parentage were particularly likely to be committed to care very soon. Of the six children with one or both parents from West Africa, four were committed in less than three months of referral, and one in the fourth month after referral. The sixth child was the only one who had been in the care of British relatives for some years before referral. The possibility that cultural factors or social worker's perception of them played some part in this process seems a strong one.

The involvement of other agencies and the original admission to care of the child on a Place of Safety order were possible influences on the speed of committal, but appeared to make no difference with the present sample. It did appear that children first referred to social services by the police were most likely to be committed to care quickly, and those referred by parents least likely: Of the 16 police referrals, 9 were made the subject of a Care Order in less than three months and 12 in less than six months, whereas for the 16 referrals by parents, only one was committed by three months and only three by six months.

This is not necessarily only reflecting speedier committal for offenders, though that certainly happened in some cases, but also the fact that police involvement usually occurred when things had already reached crisis point. Several police referrals, for example, occurred when children were picked up after absconding or after trouble of some kind and parents either refused to have the child home or the child refused to go home. Several youngsters referred themselves via the police by going to a police station and complaining
about their parents, or refusing to go home again. In other instances, police investigating a criminal incident became concerned about the welfare of the child and referred the family to social services. In these cases action on the offence was usually taken, but the circumstances seem very similar to those described by Hapgood (1979) and Gelsthorpe (1985a) who show that police, like social workers, also categorise juvenile offenders as 'real delinquents' or 'care cases' and use criminal proceedings to activate or speed up social work help for the latter.

TABLE 17: PRECIPITATING INCIDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident Precipitating Referral</th>
<th>Incident Precipitating Care or Criminal Proceedings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incident Precipitating Disqualified Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident Precipitating Referral</th>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Incident Precipitating Care or Criminal Proceedings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Incident Precipitating Disqualified Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrest for Criminal Offence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Running Away</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overdose/Self Injury</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence by Child</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence towards Child</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'General Behaviour' (no specific incident)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incident involving other family member</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material Crisis</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child abandoned/excluded from home</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL                           | 26            | 41              | 26                                                |
In the review of literature it was noted that, while traditionally, research treated children and their families as passive recipients (or even victims) of services, recent studies had paid more attention to the active part which they played in making choices and shaping events. An attempt was made to develop a quantitative analysis of the sequence of events from referral to the time of committal to care, to illuminate the interactive processes. This proved to be too complex an enterprise for the time available, given the range of circumstances, varying time periods covered, and the confused state of some of the case records. Some idea of the complexity, however, can be gained from examples of sequences taking different lengths of time.

1. Children committed to care within three months of referral
First, two children from the Subject Group who were committed to care within less than three months of their first referral to the social services department (Figure Two). Velma,* a 15 year old girl of mixed (British/Asian) parentage, lived with her mother and stepfather following her parents divorce. Oliver, a 14 year old boy of mixed (European/African) parentage lived with his father and stepmother following his parents' divorce.

* All names used are pseudonyms. Surnames are represented by initials: 'S' for children in the Subject Group and their parents, 'C' for the Comparison Group and 'D' for the Disqualified Group. At times when case material is used, small details have been changed to aid the disguising of identity, but never in a way which affects the sense or significance of the data. When children are of mixed parentage, ethnicity is described in mother/father order.
divorce. Both were committed to care as being beyond the control of their parents, and in neither case had there been any contact with the social services department prior to the referral described in Figure Two, although it later emerged that Oliver's family had been known to another local authority's social services department when Oliver was an infant.

The sequences of events illustrated in Figure Two are extremely typical of the children who were committed to care swiftly following referral. In these instances all action was initiated from outside the social services department, either by the child, the parents, or by a legal deadline forcing a decision. The social worker's task more closely resembled that of a United Nations peacekeeping force in a civil war than of the iron fisted hand of a controlling state, and it is clear that both children would have remained in care for a period, whatever legal action was or was not taken. The area of discretion which remained to the social worker, however, was firstly over whether to pursue compulsory powers, or to retain the child in care by voluntary agreement with parents, and secondly the grounds on which the order was sought. At least in Velma's case, with parents refusing to have Velma home, it might have been possible to base action on the parent's behaviour rather than Velma's behaviour, but the case concerning Velma was probably easier to prove. There is no indication in either record that the parents were offered the opportunity for a voluntary agreement admitting their child to care, although there were three points at which this could have happened: on first admission to care, on the expiry of the place of safety order, and the expiry of the interim care order. Nevertheless in these instances, the social worker was left with no effective choice over whether or not to be involved with the family, or whether or not the child should be in care.
FIGURE TWO: CHILDREN COMMITTED TO CARE WITHIN THREE MONTHS - SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

**Velma (April-June)**

**April**
- Admitted to hospital following overdose.

**Four Days Later**
- V. ready for discharge.
- Parents refused to have her home. FOSD taken.
- V. placed in children's home.

**May**
- Investigation of family background. Parents say 'at end of tether' with V.
- Still refuse to have her home.

**End of May**
- FOSD expired. Parents still refuse to have V. home. ICO made.

**June**
- V. exhibiting frequent, minor acts of disobedience in children's home. Runs away to be with boyfriend.
- Mother still refusing to have V. home.

**End of June**
- ICO expired. Mother still refusing to have V. home. Care Order made on grounds that V. beyond control of parents.

**Oliver (October - December)**

**October**
- Ran away from home four times, went to youth counselling centre.

**End of October**
- O. self-referred to SSD, entered SSD office and refused to go home. FOSD taken. O. placed in childrens home.

**November**
- Investigation of family background. O. and father refusing to see each other. Eventually parents agree to have O. home and take part in family therapy.

**Mid November**
- FOSD expired. O. still refuses to go home or attend family therapy. ICO made. O. and parents have a 'cold, enforced meeting in court'.

**End of November**
- O.'s behaviour in the childrens home, is violent to children and staff. He is suspended from school for violence. Parents fail to attend case conference.

**Mid December**
- ICO expired. Still no contact between O. and parents. Care Order made on grounds that O. beyond control of parents.
In contrast are two children whose contact with the social services department lasted a little longer (Figure Three). Ravinder, a 14 year old of Asian parentage, living with both parents, was committed to care as being in moral danger, one year after her initial referral. Tara, a 14 year old girl of Afro Caribbean parentage, living with her mother and stepfather, was committed to care as a criminal offender eight months after referral. These two cases illustrate the characteristics of the medium term committals, in that families attempted to resolve the problems, either in their own way or with the help of child welfare agencies.

In Ravinder's case, as in the earlier ones, it was open to the social services department to offer voluntary agreement on admission to care at several crisis points, but this did not happen.

Tara's case is a classic example of a relatively minor first offence being used as a short cut to admit Tara to care when the real concerns were child welfare issues. In normal circumstances a first offence of deception and handling stolen goods by a 14 year old girl would not have led to a prosecution; at the very worst a fine might have been imposed. The discovery that Tara had left home and was staying with a friend in circumstances deemed unsuitable made remand in care on criminal charges an easy way to remove Tara to a children's home. The poor relationships between Tara and her mother, Tara's unwillingness to return home, and her mother's illness made continuing care likely. At this point, to
avert a care order in criminal proceedings would have required a positive strategy in which the social worker negotiated separately with Tara's parents for voluntary admission to care, and with the police and Tara to avoid prosecution. Simply letting the snowball roll on to a care order was a very much easier option for the social worker.

Whereas with Velma and Oliver, the controlling action had been primarily between parents and children, with social workers in a reactive position, these medium term cases are rather more comparable to a fugue in which two separate strands of action intertwine and occasionally meet in harmony. Parents and social workers pursued their own strategies sometimes in conjunction with each other, sometimes in opposition to each other. There is a difference, however, between these two children. Ravinder's parents were more cooperative with social workers and their strategies, (keeping Ravinder at home where possible, attending case conferences and contacting the social services and police when agreed), were supported by social workers. Tara's parents rejected social work help and dealt with Tara by allowing her to leave home at 14, in circumstances where she appeared to have little or no supervision. Once this strategy was rejected by social workers, there was little likelihood of cooperation to influence Tara's behaviour.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage One</th>
<th>Stage Two</th>
<th>Stage Three</th>
<th>Stage Four</th>
<th>Stage Five</th>
<th>Stage Six</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Precipitating Event</td>
<td>Referral to SSD</td>
<td>Negotiations with parents/child</td>
<td>Childs/parents activities</td>
<td>Child/parents activities</td>
<td>Official activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Known - General difficulties</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>March - October</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Police arrest T. and discover she has left home. She is charged and remanded in care.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reinder (February - February)**

July - February
R. referred to child guidance for stealing at school. Ran away from home several times, missing for days at a time.

February
Child Guidance Clinic held a case conference involving SSD.

February/March
Child Guidance continued to support R. and family. Plan agreed between social workers and parents.

March - August
R. ran away twice. First time found in the north of England, second time missing for five months.

August
R. returned home. Father contacted police as previously arranged with SSD.

SSD take POSO. R. admitted to childrens home.

**Tara (February - November)**

February
Mother referred T. to social services because of her difficulties in controlling T.

February
Mother referred to social services because of her difficulties in controlling T.

February
SSD offered advice and help to manage T. Mother did not return and refused help.

March - October
T. left home to live with friends. Mother made no attempt to recover her.

October
T. commits offences of deception and handling stolen goods.

Police arrest T. and discover she has left home. She is charged and remanded in care.
September - January
R. runs away. Missing four months.

January
R. returns home. She is pregnant. New FOED made and R. returns to childrens home. ICO made within a week.

February
ICO expired. R. did not want to go home, father did not want her at home. Care Order made on grounds that R.'s in moral danger.

Stage Seven
Child's activities

Stage Seven
Negotiations with parents

November

Stage Eight
Child's activities

November/December
T. exhibits minor acts of disobedience in childrens home. Still stealing and thought to be shoplifting (found in possession of suspicious goods).

Stage Nine
Legal deadline

December
Remand in care expired. Final hearing of criminal charges. Care Order made.
Finally, two children from the Disqualified Group, known to the social services departments and other agencies since infancy (Figure Four). Roland, a 13 year old boy of Afro-Caribbean parentage living with both parents, was committed to care for failing to attend school, and Dennis, a 13 year old white boy of British parentage living with his mother was committed to care in criminal proceedings for theft. Both illustrate the longstanding concerns about the standards of care in their families, with which the ultimate grounds for committal to care had little connection.

These cases could not be compressed into a neat time sequence; there were long periods, sometimes years, when there was little indication of what had happened, while the events which are recorded show that it is unlikely that the 'silent' periods were times of harmony in the family or at school. Many of the Disqualified Group had spent periods in care by voluntary agreement, but without this being an effective means of helping them. Committal in these instances was unlikely to represent a feeling that the child would particularly benefit from a care order; in Roland's case the order was clearly sought as a means of counteracting the parents' (especially father's) lack of cooperation, whereas with Dennis it was rather an action which could simply be put off for no longer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Roland</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Dennis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brother made subject to supervision, then care order after physical abuse.</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Dennis's mother in care to local authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td></td>
<td>Roland referred to Child Guidance Clinic for aggression and odd behaviour at primary school.</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family refused to attend clinic. After further problems and referrals, some appointments kept, but family then 'dropped out' of treatment.</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Elder siblings in care to local authority after being abandoned. Later returned to parents under supervision. Parents divorced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dennis truanting from primary school, and behaviour problems at school.</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Dennis transferred to special school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
<td>R. ran away from home. Missing for three days.</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1981</td>
<td></td>
<td>R. assessed by a psychiatrist who recommended admission to care.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roland (cont)</td>
<td>Dennis (cont)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Six</strong></td>
<td>D. developed further problems at school. Ran away from home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Child's action</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Seven</strong></td>
<td>March</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>&quot;Referral&quot; of study child to SSD</em></td>
<td>D. went to SSD and asked to be taken into care.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Eight</strong></td>
<td>May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Child's action</em></td>
<td>D. self referred a second time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Nine</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Official action</em></td>
<td>D. admitted to care by voluntary agreement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Ten</strong></td>
<td>June</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Child's action</em></td>
<td>D.'s behaviour in children's home continued as before: stealing, truancy, running away and bullying. D. asked to go home again.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Eleven</strong></td>
<td>July</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Official action</em></td>
<td>Return home refused. D. in court on theft and burglary charges. Care Order made in criminal proceedings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Twelve</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Child's action</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roland (cont)

June
R. referred to Child Guidance, charged with assaults. Hearing adjourned.

Parents refused Child Guidance Clinic treatment.

September
Care proceedings on grounds of truancy. Criminal charges further adjourned pending care proceedings.

End of September
Care Order on grounds of non attendance at school.

Stage Thirteen
Official action

Stage Fourteen
Parent’s action

Stage Fifteen
Official action
In both cases it is notable that formal action was not taken until the boys were regularly committing criminal offences in the community. Nevertheless, in Roland's case there was a deliberate attempt to avoid a criminal committal, his family history of child abuse and his display of behaviour defined in psychiatric terms making him clearly identifiable as a 'welfare' case rather than a 'real delinquent'. The final grounds for his care order (non-attendance at school) represented the aspect of his behaviour which was least worrying to adults, but which (after the criminal offences) was easiest to prove. Dennis' behaviour was much more familiar as adolescent misdemeanour of a kind which can be attributed to faulty training or lack of adequate supervision. He was already in long term voluntary care at the time of his court appearance on criminal charges and the care order was a formal recognition of both his de facto position and his offending.

In neither history is there much sense of parents playing an active part, though Roland's parents' resistance to social work involvement clearly affected the social worker's strategy. The primary action, once the boys began to cause problems at school and elsewhere by their behaviour was, however, between the child and the official agencies.

Summary

Further demographic characteristics of the children and their families were described. It was shown that there were several differences between the new cases of the Subject and Comparison Groups and the longstanding cases of the Disqualified Group. The new cases had a much higher proportion of girls to boys, and children were more likely to be in two parent families, and in smaller families.
Nevertheless, national comparisons including those which monitored ethnicity, showed the untypical nature of the total sample, with a very much higher proportion of broken and reconstituted families than in the population as a whole.

There were no differences between Subject, Comparison and Disqualified Groups in the prevalence of civil or criminal proceedings, but Subject children were less likely to have experienced contact with other child welfare agencies before committal to care, and more likely to have a previous referral to the social services department which had not been followed up. It was not known whether this represented 'cooling out' or families' drop-out from the service.

In the total sample there was an equal proportion of referrals from the police (not all on criminal grounds), the education services and the parents, with small differences between the sub-samples. Referrals via the police resulted in the speediest committal to care, and those from parents the longest delayed committal. There were a small group for whom initial referral followed ill-treatment or abandonment of the children, and many children referred themselves, either directly or through another agency.

A comparison of the sequence of events in some cases showed the different patterns affecting the length of time between referral and committal to care. In the speediest committals, events appeared largely dictated outside the social services department, by children, parents or legal deadlines. Medium term committals involved active strategies by parents, social workers and other agencies to influence the child's behaviour, or each other's behaviour. Committals of children known for many years happened when the children became serious problems in the community.

The next chapter looks in more detail at characteristics of the family backgrounds and relationships.
CHAPTER SEVEN

FAMILY PROBLEMS AND RELATIONSHIPS
CHAPTER SEVEN

Introduction

Many previous studies of children in care have shown that their families are disadvantaged in social, economic and health matters, compared to the general population. Packman et al (1986) however, suggested that children entering care as adolescents following behaviour problems had better material circumstances than others, though inter-personal problems could be as serious as those of other children in care. Packman also suggested that the families of the adolescent 'villains' had achieved material stability fairly recently, and often had troubled histories when the children were younger.

The questionnaire on children's family background is limited in examining family problems, since it records only what social workers knew or considered worth mentioning. Studies of client views, as pointed out in the literature review, invariably show that clients place more emphasis on material problems, the importance of which are under-rated by social workers.

Parental Circumstances and the Family Home

As with family composition, there was no attempt to gain a complete picture of the family circumstances and history: other studies suggest that this can rarely be obtained from social workers in any event, because of the degree to which they focus on the nuclear family (Millham et al 1985, Packman et al 1986). Instead a checklist was used to ascertain whether the social workers had noted the existence of specific circumstances which were likely to be seen as affecting the parents' suitability, competence or capacity to provide care for their child.

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Only events which occurred at the time of or shortly before admission to care, or which had become longstanding, continuous features of the family, are reported here; events which were part of the long past history are excluded, partly because these were of doubtful relevance and partly because it was unlikely that this data would be consistently available. How social workers use or do not use knowledge of any past events in constructing a court report, however, will become very relevant at a later stage of the analysis.

There is a considerably subjective aspect to the judgement of a family problem, most notably in consideration of issues such as whether standards of housekeeping and hygiene are acceptable to the social workers, or other professionals; whether the children have been neglected or ill-treated; what are the boundaries between drinking, drunkenness and alcoholism. In rating for the checklist therefore, stringent definitions were adopted as far as possible to ascertain that ratings selected extreme characteristics and had at least a minimum level of comparability between families. It is known that there is in general a high level of agreement between social workers and parents of children in care as to the practical details of the family circumstances and the details of past events. It is over the meaning and importance of events that judgements differ between the two (Hapgood 1979, Parker et al 1981, Packman et al 1986).

Eight categories of family problem were included which met the criteria that they could seriously affect parental functioning.
1. Mental illness of parents
2. Serious physical illness or disability of parents
3. Mental handicap of parents
4. Drug misuse by parents
5. Alcohol misuse by parents
6. Poverty/serious debts and their consequences
7. Poor home conditions
8. Criminality of parents

Some of these problems (e.g. illness/disability) could be seen as external misfortunes affecting the family; others (drug/alcohol misuse, criminality) could be seen as problems to some extent self-imposed, in which parents had some choice or control over their situation and whether it affected their children; problems such as poverty, debts and poor home conditions could fall into either of these categories, reflecting low income or poor housing on the one hand, unwise spending or poor standards of housekeeping on the other, or being a secondary problem associated with one of the others (such as illness leading to poor housekeeping, or money spent on drink instead of rent). The way in which features of such problems could be used to construct profiles of the 'deserving' or 'undeserving' is clear. The solution to the subjectivity of judgements was to adopt as far as possible a rigid legal/medical criterion. Such an approach is not meant to suggest that official judgements represent an ultimate truth about the parents' problems, but it does give a measure of whether the problem was recognised (by the parent or others) as serious enough to justify official intervention or the release of resources to assist or control the parent.

For some problems in this list however neither legalistic or medical criteria could be defined or could be defined only in part. There are, as far as I am aware, no normative studies of what is considered a 'clean' or 'dirty' home either generally or in particular subcultures, while the
boundaries of social acceptability surrounding alcohol use and income management are subjects for arguments and debate. In these instances the definitions adopted were as stringent as possible in terms of their reported effects on others. The definitions are outlined below and illustrative case examples are given either in this Chapter or in Appendix Four.

**Mental Illness:** whether parents had received medical treatment from a psychiatrist on an inpatient or outpatient basis. General reports of 'anxiety' or 'nervous trouble' were not counted.

**Physical Illness/Disability:** severe, chronic or terminal conditions affecting parents' ability to work or live an independent life.

**Mental Handicap:** disability to a level where parents were unable to live independently or had received special services designated for the mentally handicapped.

**Drug Misuse:** parents had received medical treatment for drug problems, or had been subject to criminal proceedings for the use of illegal drugs. Since this item was concerned with drug use affecting parental functioning, the possession of drugs or trading in drugs were not included here, though they could be in the 'criminality' measure.

**Alcohol Misuse:** parents had received medical treatment for alcohol problems, criminal convictions for drunkenness, or were drinking to a level which was seen as affecting the family's viability.
Poverty/Debts: the family having suffered or been formally threatened with eviction due to rent arrears; fuel disconnection or repossession of essential household furnishings due to debt; legal proceedings or other actions to recover debts, and similar levels of money problems. This is a measure of a family's ability to live within it's income rather than of 'poverty' in the sense of lacking an adequate income. Many parents in the sample were living on state benefits, and of those in employment, some were in unskilled, low paid jobs*. Furthermore the data given earlier on family size shows that the sample had more than the nationally average number of children. It seems probable that many of the families were 'poor' in terms of per-capita income and national income levels.

Poor Home Conditions: whether the family is or has recently been homeless; living in squats or serious overcrowding; housing considered substandard due to problems such as damp, leaking roofs etc; standards of cleanliness so low as to suggest a health hazard. This was one of the most difficult items to assess, since one person's squalor may be another's homeliness. Housing standards were rarely commented on, though the large family size described earlier indicates that many households may have been rather cramped. Comments on the tidiness or cleanliness of homes were rather more common and very revealing of the social workers'
stereotypes. This will be discussed in the analysis of the court reports. In the absence of general normative measures of home cleanliness, the checklist included homes described by words such as 'filthy' or 'squalid' as distinct from 'messy' or 'untidy', and homes where the detail given made it likely that housekeeping standards were indeed unusual.

**Criminal Record:** parents having been subject to criminal convictions in adult life. Offences could be directly related to the social worker's reasons for concern about the children (including offences against the children) or could be material to the families' broader wellbeing by creating extra economic or social pressures.

**TABLE 18: PROBLEMS IN THE PARENTAL/FAMILY BACKGROUND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BASE</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>93 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Illness of Parent(s)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>12 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Illness/Disability of parent(s)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>8 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Handicap of Parent(s)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Misuse by Parent(s)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Misuse by Parent(s)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>13 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty/Debts</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Home Conditions</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>15 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality of Parent(s)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>6 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18 shows the prevalence of problems in the total sample. No individual problem characterised large sections of the sample, supporting Packman et al (1986) in suggesting that major environmental problems do not typify families of adolescents coming into care following behaviour problems. The new cases of the Subject and Comparison Groups are very similar, whereas the longstanding cases of the Disqualified Group seemed more likely to have experienced problems of mental illness and poor home conditions.

Serious Problems and 'Typical' Families

Although the definitions given above are of families with serious problems, they are evidently not of typical families. Indeed each individual category affected only very small numbers of the sample as a whole. Some families had a number of these problems, while others were rated as having none. An illustration of the most common problems, and of the way in which definitions were used, can best be obtained by describing the circumstances of some children whose families scored positively on the checklist.

Pauline, aged 13, a white child from the D Group; Category - Mental Illness of Parent

Pauline's parents were described as 'chronically mentally ill' having spent long periods in psychiatric hospital; indeed they first met as patients in the same psychiatric ward, and were married soon after discharge from hospital. Their care of Pauline had been considered acceptable until adolescence but both parents were regarded as unstable, and 'living in a fantasy world', particularly Mrs. D, who fantasises "that she is blind (untrue), that Pauline has fits (untrue), that Mr. D beats her (most unlikely), that Pauline is one of twins, the other having died at birth (unfounded)" (Social Worker's Report). Mrs D's fantasies led her to purchase a white stick for herself and to several hospital referrals for EEG examinations for Pauline. Mr. D is regarded as "more rational, but extremely dependent on his wife."
It is not a coincidence that Pauline is a child from the Disqualified Group. Very few parents of Subject or Comparison Group children had such serious psychiatric histories. It is also notable that Mrs. D's stories are described as 'fantasies' rather than 'lies', an indication of their medicalized status.

Geraldine, aged 13, a child of mixed (British/Afro-Caribbean) parentage from the Subject Group; Category - Alcohol Misuse by Parent

Geraldine organised her own admission to care by repeatedly referring herself to the Social Services Department asking to be taken into care, and, when this did not succeed, by running away from home. This was seen by the social worker as rejection of her parents' drunkenness. Mrs. S was considered to be an alcoholic, and Mr. S, while not having such a serious drink problem, still drank heavily. Mrs. S had turned up drunk at Geraldine's school on several occasions and there were reported to be violent scenes between the parents (and violence to Geraldine) when both were drunk. Although the Care Order was made on the dual grounds that Geraldine was both neglected and beyond control, the social worker stated in interview that the mother's drunkenness was the real reason. The S's opposed the Care Proceedings, but on the day of the hearing, Mrs. S arrived at the court extremely drunk, and the Order was granted.

The dual nature of the grounds for care proceedings in Geraldine's case were an insurance against failing to prove one ground or the other. In the event, Mrs. S provided the court with first hand evidence of her inability to control her drinking in Geraldine's interests.

Heather, aged 14, a white child from the Comparison Group; Category - Poor Home Conditions

The family were first referred to the Social Services Department when Heather's younger brother, Michael, was admitted to hospital after being found wandering with memory loss, following a bump on his head for which he could give no explanation. When the social worker visited the family she became concerned about the poor conditions and the care of Heather and Michael. Heather showed the social worker Michael's bedroom
"which contained jars of faeces and bottles of stale urine". Heather's school reported that she had often "appeared to be dirty and neglected....Heather never looked well cared for (since admission to the school)....her clothes were dirty."

It was rare for descriptions of home conditions to be this specific, and it is therefore possible that hygiene problems are underestimated in the sample.

Sheila, aged 15, a child of mixed (British/Afro-Caribbean) parentage from the Disqualified Group; Categories - Poverty, Debts or their Consequences and Poor Home Conditions

Sheila was the youngest of nine children, brought up alone by their mother, of whom only three (including Sheila) remained at home. Most of the children had different fathers by casual or transient relationships and Mrs. D received little or no financial support from the fathers. Sheila had been in and out of care throughout her life, due to a series of domestic crises including homelessness and desertion by her mother. Mrs. D is described as an 'ineffectual woman of low intelligence who has been unable to care adequately for any of her children' all of whom had been in care at some stage. Due to the financial problems faced by the family, they had experienced several periods of homelessness and lived in a variety of poor accommodation, often in one room. They were homeless at the time of Sheila's committal to care.

Families such as Sheila's were almost all in the Disqualified Group. Debt problems in the Subject and Comparison Groups appeared more likely to be linked with other problems such as illness or drinking. Sheila's mother's limitations are evidently stigmatised in moral terms, perhaps as a result of her variety of transient sexual partnerships. Her perceived low intelligence is linked with her being 'ineffectual' rather than being medicalised as a disability, or being interpreted sympathetically as making her vulnerable to sexual exploitation.
Katy, aged 15, a white child from the Comparison Group;  
Category - Criminality of Parent  

Although Katy had been for some years considered a  
difficult child at home and at school, and was well  
known to the Child Guidance Clinic, the situation  
worsened drastically after she suffered severe head  
injuries and brain damage following a road accident.  
She was assessed as needing special education, but the  
local education authority were unable to find an  
appropriate school place and Katy remained at home with  
no education for almost three years. Mr. C became  
involved in a business deal by which he hoped to make  
enough money to send Katy to a private boarding school,  ut he was arrested for importing drugs and sentenced  
to a long term of imprisonment. Some months afterwards  
the Probation Officer who was responsible for contact  
with Mr. C in prison referred the family to the Social  
Services Department because Mrs. C was finding Katy's  
behaviour too difficult to manage on her own.

Mr. C's criminality was of a kind which did not necessarily  
make him a risk to Katy; indeed he claimed that his criminal  
activities were on her behalf. Nevertheless his  
imprisonment seriously damaged Katy's prospects of remaining  
at home.

Neglect and Abuse of Children

One further issue in the family history was examined:  
whether the parent(s) were considered to have physically  
ill-treated or neglected the study child, or other children  
in the family, or had been alleged to do so. Neglect and  
ill-treatment differ from the other problems discussed  
because they bear more directly on judgements of whether  
parents are suitable to care for their children and because  
as with Geraldine) they provide alternative grounds for  
seeking a Care Order. Both neglect and ill-treatment are to  
some extent subjective judgements. The Newson's research on  
childrearing (1976) shows wide variations between social  
classes in the levels and nature of physical punishment of  
children, and on issues such as allowing young children to  
go out alone, or leaving them unsupervised. Studies of
adolescents show similar variations in the degree of supervision exercised by parents, and also show markedly different expectations with teenage girls and boys, the girls being more closely supervised in all social groups (Fogelman 1976, DES 1983, Riley and Shaw 1985).

Furthermore, punishment which might be disapproved in 1987 would perhaps have been considered perfectly normal in 1957 or 1927, while physical punishment norms have differed for girls and boys in many settings (e.g. in the Approved School Rules, Home Office 1963, and in public schools, Lambert 1974).

Recent research on parental behaviour with adolescents, however, focusses largely on issues of supervision and guidance, and usually appears to incorporate an assumption that adolescents are not now subjected to physical punishment by parents. This leads to an absence of normative measures with which parental violence towards teenaged children can be compared. One exception is Riley and Shaw's (1985) study of a general population sample of 14 and 15 year old children, which found that 10% of boys and 7% of girls had been punished by hitting them at some time during the past six months. In Riley and Shaw's study hitting teenagers was almost as common as 'keeping them in' and more common than 'stopping pocket money' or 'setting curfew'. The study did not, however, incorporate any assessment of the frequency or severity of physical punishment.

In the present study the definitions of established ill-treatment or neglect were again of extremes:

**Ill-treatment** required the child to have suffered injuries serious enough to have been referred for medical treatment; for the police to have considered or brought charges of physical assault or of illegal sexual assault.
Neglect required the child to have been abandoned by the parent or to have been given insufficient food or other necessities. Neglect or ill-treatment were accepted as having taken place if the parent admitted it, or there was evidence from more than one source.

Neglect and ill-treatment are particularly important issues in this research because of the allegations that social workers make inappropriate judgements about childrearing practices which are culturally normal for some minority groups (Lambeth 1981, Stone 1983), or the counter allegation that social workers use cultural stereotypes as a justification for ignoring risks to black children (Ahmed 1978, 1986). The way in which evidence of ill-treatment is used, or not used, in constructing an explanation for the court may have considerable implications for this debate.

Established Instances of Ill-treatment or Neglect

These take a variety of forms and the following examples illustrate the range. Usually the incidents concerned the study child but occasionally study children were considered at risk because of ill-treatment of siblings.

Moira, aged 13, a white child from the Comparison Group

Moira initially referred herself to the Social Services Department, by telephoning the Night Duty Social Worker to say that she was afraid to go home in case her stepfather hit her. On investigation, the social worker was told that although Mr. C did sometimes hit Moira, this occurred only when she had 'asked for it' by difficult behaviour and was not severe punishment. The social worker accepted that Moira had not been severely beaten, but was much more concerned when Moira later made allegations of sexual abuse against her stepfather and Mrs. C agreed that this also had happened. Mrs. C said that it had stopped now and there was nothing to worry about. No mention is made of Mr. C having been interviewed but the mother's agreement is treated for the present research as verification that a sexual offence was committed against Moira.
Julia, aged 13, a child of mixed (Afro-Caribbean/British) parentage from the Subject Group

Julia was referred to the Social Services Department by her Headmistress after she had come to school badly bruised and unable to sit down because of a severe beating by her mother. The school also said that Julia was a difficult child who told lies, vandalised books and was withdrawn in behaviour. On investigation, Mrs. S admitted that she had beaten Julia with a piece of electric cable. Julia's behaviour had been provocative, and after warning Mrs. S that such severe punishment was unacceptable, the social worker withdrew. However, three weeks later Julia again went to school badly bruised, this time from a beating with a metal bar inflicted by her older brother. A 'place of safety' order was taken and Julia was admitted to care. The injuries to Julia were reported to the police and Julia's brother charged with assaulting her.

'Neglect' as distinct from ill-treatment, implies a withdrawal of interaction from the child rather than excess of it. With this age group it usually meant abandonment.

Marti, aged 14, and Simon, aged 13, white children from the Disqualified Group

The family had been known to the Social Services Department for nine years. The parents were separated and the children lived with their mother who was an alcoholic. Matters came to a head when Marti was admitted to hospital following an overdose after a quarrel with her boyfriend. Neither parent visited the hospital and when Marti was interviewed by the psychiatrist she said that her mother was away. Investigation by the social worker revealed that Mrs. D had gone away on one of her periodic 'benders'. She had been away for three weeks, leaving no money or food for the children, and they were surviving by begging food from the neighbours. Mr. D's whereabouts were unknown.

Phillip, aged 14, an African child from the Subject Group

Phillip's parents were West African business people who had lived and worked in Britain for some years, and had no contact with social services or other welfare agencies. When they decided to return to their country of origin, Phillip did not wish to go. Having failed to persuade them, he took his own measures to prevent their departure by running away from home on the day of their flight. Returning on the evening of the
following day, he found that his family had gone without him. The house was locked up and Phillip's belongings were in a suitcase in the front porch. He was referred to the Social Services Department by a neighbour who found him sitting disconsolately on the front doorstep.

Allegations and Suspicions of Abuse

Although the above definitions concern examples where neglect or ill-treatment were admitted or established, there is also a level at which allegations or suspicions may arise, but without conclusive evidence. This is an even more sensitive issue in terms of cultural stereotypes. Allegations and suspicions are a minefield for the social worker, who may be in the position where any course of action is wrong. If no action is taken, and children are subsequently proved to have been victims, or if action is taken and the case cannot be proved, the social worker will be blamed for the results. In general, social workers are thought to 'play safe' to minimise risk, both to the child and to the social worker, hence the steady rise in place of safety orders and greater tendency to use compulsory powers of all kinds (DHSS 1985). With adolescents, however, the risks to the child are less obvious and may be underestimated.

It was decided to record evidence of alleged or suspected abuse separately bearing in mind the likelihood that such suspicions might be very warily expressed or pursued. This could not be an exercise of rigid definitions, and the case examples below illustrate the breadth of problem encountered and the way in which it was dealt with by the social worker.
It was very common for the families to have been subject to allegations or suspicions that children were neglected or illtreated, sometimes never apparently investigated, or previously not known about, and sometimes where the medical evidence was uncertain. Very often these allegations came from the child, as in the example given earlier of Moira. Reactions by social workers seem on the whole to have been rather cool in terms of active intervention, but such allegations provided valuable material which could be used in the 'fine tuning' of the court report.

Five examples illustrate the particular complexity of this issue. The range of circumstances covered show the potential flexibility of material which may be available to social workers when reaching conclusions about parental competence.

Cathy, aged 12, a black child of British/Afro-Caribbean parentage from the Subject Group

Cathy was referred to the Social Services Department by the Education Department in the course of proceedings for non attendance at school. Investigation by the social worker suggested a very difficult family situation marked by family rows. There were frequent threats of serious violence towards Cathy from her mother, who stated that she would one day injure Cathy so badly that she would "end up in Holloway (prison) because of her". There was originally no suggestion of actual physical violence, and Cathy was admitted to care following an episode of running away. At her admission medical, however, she was discovered to have an old burn mark on her body which she could not explain, and the assessment reports considered the possibility that this might have been inflicted by her mother. No mention is made of the burn being discussed with Mrs. S or other family members.

Trudy, aged 14, a white child from the Comparison Group

Trudy was originally referred to Social Services by the Education Department, but she was soon in serious trouble with the police also, after two shoplifting offences. She came into care after being missing from home for two weeks and refusing to go home when found by the police. Trudy told the social worker that she wanted to be in care, and if sent home would continue
running away and stealing until she was put into care. Her reason was that her father frequently beat her when he was drunk, and she was afraid to stay at home. There is no report of investigation of these allegations.

Dean, aged 10, a child of mixed (British/Afro-Caribbean) parentage from the Subject Group

Dean lived with his natural mother, who was white, and his white stepfather and half siblings. When he was 7 years old a neighbour had reported to the Social Services Department that the S children were neglected. Telephone enquiries to other agencies who knew the family produced no support for the allegation, and it was not formally followed up. When Dean was later referred to social services by the Education Department, the Child Guidance Clinic staff, who had known him for some years, expressed the opinion that Dean was beaten by his stepfather. Mr. S was also thought to have National Front sympathies. He would openly express to the social worker his hatred of black people and speak of wanting to kill them. When Dean came into care, the children's home staff found that he had frequent nightmares, and he said that he dreamed his stepfather would kill him because he was black.

Kay, aged 15, a child of mixed (British/Malaysian) parentage from the Subject Group

Kay lived with her father and stepmother. Her father was reported to be violent towards her stepmother but not towards Kay. After being beaten by her father, she contacted the local police station to complain about maltreatment, but the police concluded that it had been reasonable chastisement and took no action. However Kay was later referred to the Social Services Department after a series of stormy incidents, including running away from home and being locked out of the house. She had taken refuge with Mrs. A, a previous cohabitee of Mr. S, and when the social worker investigated the referral, both Mrs. A and Mrs. S said that they feared for Kay's safety if she returned home, because Mr. S's temper was so violent.

Roland, aged 13, a child of Afro-Caribbean parentage from the Disqualified Group

Roland's family first came to the notice of the Social Services Department when his eldest brother was admitted to hospital after being badly injured by Mr. D. The brother was later admitted to care and never returned home. Roland himself was a serious cause for concern to his school, to the Child Guidance Clinic, the health services and social services due to a number
of very unusual behavioural difficulties. One feature of his behaviour which worried his primary school teachers was that whenever an adult went near him he would put up his arms to shield his head. Later, when Roland was admitted to a child psychiatric hospital, the nurses noted that Mr. D would often beat him about the head for no apparent reason during hospital visits.

The variety in these examples by no means exhausts the variety of circumstances in which suspicions of ill-treatment or neglect could arise within the sample. It is notable that in few of them do the parents seem to have been directly confronted with the allegations although it is possible that parental denial is the reason for the wary expression often found.

**Differences in Patterns of Reported Neglect or Ill-treatment**

There was a marked difference between black and white children in the sample as a whole with more than half of the black children from families where there had been established or alleged ill-treatment or neglect of the children, compared to only a quarter of the white children ($\chi^2 = 10.46$, 2df, $p < 0.01$). The biggest difference in established neglect or ill-treatment however, was between the Disqualified Group and the others - whereas proportionately more of the Subject Group were from families where there was alleged, but not proven, neglect or ill-treatment. Levels of both established and alleged ill-treatment were low in the Comparison Group.

Table 19 makes it clear that in the sample as a whole, evidence or allegations of maltreatment or neglect of the children were more often noted in the case files than any single other problem, occurring altogether in almost 4 out of 10 cases, with the proportion rising to almost 6 out of 10 for the black children.
TABLE 19: NEGLECT AND ILL-TREATMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Established Illtreatment or Neglect</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleged Illtreatment or Neglect</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No suggestion of Illtreatment or Neglect</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>33 (80%)</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26 (100%)</td>
<td>41 (99%)</td>
<td>26 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = 20.81, 4 \text{df}, p < 0.001 \) (omitting N.I. category)

These findings could be interpreted in several ways. In connection with earlier material on the black children's lower involvement with other agencies and the previous unpursued referrals to social services, they indicate the possibility that physical risks to black children may be less likely to lead to official intervention than would be so if the children were white. This might support arguments that cultural racism inhibits official action. It could equally mean that the children's families were more resistant to investigation, in a context in which social workers were uncertain of their legal powers, or that the difficulty of proving neglect or ill-treatment in court were thought to be greatest with children from minority groups.
An alternative explanation might be that, when faced with suspicions or evidence of neglect or ill-treatment in minority families, social workers preferred not to challenge parents directly but found it easier to ground their legal proceedings in the child's behaviour. This too might indicate uncertainty or retreat in the face of unfamiliar cultures. It would run counter to the suggestion that the forces of state power are more likely to issue overt challenges, or exercise overt control of minority cultures, but might support the argument that minority cultures are stigmatised, since stigma can lead to avoidance as well as to persecution.

The findings do not imply that black children as a whole are more at risk of neglect or ill-treatment, or are more often suspected of being at risk, than white children, since the sample is not a random selection of children referred to social services, still less of the general population. Furthermore in many instances the children were of mixed parentage and at risk (as with Geraldine and Dean) from a white parent or stepparent.

It was clear, however, that in this total sample of adolescents committed to care following behaviour problems, the black children were regarded by social workers as more at risk from their own families than were the white children. This could also be linked with perceptions of relationships in the families, a point which will be taken up later in this chapter.

Multiple Problems

There were several possible problem constellations in the families: either the problems listed could have been spread throughout the sample, each family having one or two; or some families could have been noted to have multiple problems, while others had none; or families could have just
one area of difficulty which was particularly serious in relation to the child's admission to care. To examine this further, families were given a score representing the number of the problems discussed above which were noted in the case files: the Multiple Problem Index (MPI). The score in no way represents the seriousness of the problems, but only the spread of problems throughout the sample. For this analysis, evidence or allegations of neglect or ill-treatment were combined into a single variable.

Table 20 shows that, like Packman's 'villains', most of the sample were not considered by their social workers to have extensive environmental problems. Four out of ten were not noted as having any of the problems listed, and only a third had more than two sources of environmental problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPI*</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>22 (54%)</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>36 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>26 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>18 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 26 (100%) 41 (100%) 26 (100%) 93 (100%)

* Maximum possible score = 9

The score of two or more, encompassing approximately one third of the total sample, was taken as an indicator that a family was among the most disadvantaged sector. By this criterion, there was a marked difference between the new cases of the Subject (32%) and Comparison (22%) Groups and the longstanding cases of the Disqualified Group (54%) with...
the latter being twice as likely to have scores of two or more than were the new cases. The Subject Group have lower rates of nil scores, and higher rates of two plus scores than the Comparison Group, but this was accounted for by the higher rate of scoring of Subjects in the 'neglect/ill-treatment' variable. Of the ten Subjects with scores of only one, seven were in the neglect/ill-treatment category whereas of ten Comparisons with a score of one, only four were for neglect/ill-treatment. Apart from this one issue, therefore, there seems close similarity between the multiple problem ratings of Subject and Comparison Groups.

This checklist does, of course, contain a relatively limited range of problems, and for 25 children other problems were noted which did not fit the categories for the Multiple Problem Index but still seemed likely to contribute to social workers' estimation of whether the child had a viable home. These circumstances were many and varied. Examples were:

**Sandy, aged 13, a white girl from the Disqualified Group**

Sandy's mother had worked as a prostitute taking the infant Sandy with her on the beat, and later inflicting a succession of 'stepfathers' - at least five - on her daughter, moving from place to place every few months in the course of her varied career. Sandy had experienced a life in which stability of any kind was conspicuously absent.

**Jacob, aged 13, an African boy from the Subject Group**

Jacob had been smuggled into Britain on a false passport by a West African couple who claimed he was their son, but who in fact appeared to have brought him with them as an unpaid servant. He had never been sent to school, but stayed at home cleaning. After Jacob came to the notice of the police following a couple of minor disturbances, it was discovered that his 'Guardians' had left the country, leaving no address, and leaving Jacob and another African teenager with no means of support, in a luxury flat on which several months arrears of rent were owing.
Vicky, aged 14, a white girl from the Comparison Group

Vicky's parents were divorced and she was in her mother's care. Her father was an alcoholic and had become a vagrant frequenting the neighbourhood where the family lived. Vicky started to run away from home to be with her father, and was found with him living rough in 'squats' or derelict buildings. At other times when she was missing it was suspected that she was 'on the road' with him.

These miscellaneous problems were evenly distributed throughout the sample.

Problems in Family Relationships

A further issue affecting social workers' judgements of family life, and of likely importance in the committal of adolescents to care is that of family relationships. Packman et al (1986) pointed to the fragility of relationships in the families of 'villains', particularly as so many were reconstituted families including a mixture of step and half parents or siblings, as well as original nuclear family members. Packman, like most social work commentators, takes for granted that reconstituted families will experience greater conflicts in living together than will full blood relatives. The importance of this viewpoint in views of ethnic minority family life, particularly in the Afro-Caribbean family, was discussed in Chapter Three.

Packman et al (1986), comparing social workers' and parents' accounts of family circumstances and relationships found a close similarity on children's history and behaviour but comments that social workers' views of family relationships were gloomier than those of parents. This occurred not because social workers directly exaggerated problems, but because they discounted the positive aspects of family relationships, the good times in between the fights.
A checklist approach was also adopted towards analysing this issue from the social work records. Evidence of 'discord between family members' was noted when it included parents, children or other significant members of the family or household. Evidence of the existence of discord was taken to be: physical violence between family members (other than that of physical punishment of children which was not serious enough to be considered illtreatment); family members deserting the household or being barred from the household; legal proceedings or disputes by one family member against another; one family member having made formal complaints to an 'authority' (police, social services, health services etc.) about another (excepting the initial self-referral by parents of troublesome children); or family rows which were serious enough for the police to have been called in.

Discord between parents usually involved the parents (including stepparents and cohabitees) who were living in the child's household, but there were a number of families where active dispute was still taking place between separated or divorced parents, sometimes over the adequacy of care for the study child. When parents or stepparents were living together the quarrels were sometimes noted as being about the study child's behaviour.

**Janine, aged 12, a white child from the Comparison Group**

Janine's parents were divorced and her mother had custody of her. Mr. C lived nearby with his second wife and Janine visited them regularly. The first referral to social services came when Mr. C and his wife contacted the Department to complain that Mr. C's ex-wife was not caring properly for Janine. They reported that Janine had come to their house drunk after a Christmas party, and that her mother was often working in the evenings, leaving Janine unsupervised to babysit her younger half-sister. The duty social worker visited and concluded that there was little substance in the allegations. The case was closed until Janine's mother herself returned to the Department six months later asking for help.
Table 21 shows that in almost a quarter of the total sample there was serious discord between the parents, levels being similar for Subject, Comparison and Disqualified Groups. Serious problems of discord with siblings were not a major feature of the sample, featuring in only 15% of the families, but where they occurred, as with Julia (above) they could be seen as major obstacles to a child's return home.

**TABLE 21: PROBLEMS OF SERIOUS DISCORD IN THE FAMILY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active discord between parents (including stepparents)</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>26 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No evidence of discord</td>
<td>19 (73%)</td>
<td>33 (80%)</td>
<td>19 (73%)</td>
<td>67 (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discord between the study child and siblings</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>14 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No evidence of discord (or no siblings)</td>
<td>22 (85%)</td>
<td>34 (83%)</td>
<td>23 (88%)</td>
<td>79 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base Numbers</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problems noted between the study child and his or her parents, however, were far more likely to be with natural parents, or to be with natural and stepparent combinations than with stepparents alone.
TABLE 22: DISCORD BETWEEN THE CHILD AND PARENTS/STEPPARENTS* BEFORE ADMISSION TO CARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discord with both parents (including natural parents and stepparents)*</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>23 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discord with mother only</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>9 (35%)</td>
<td>27 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discord with father only</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>14 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discord with stepfather only**</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discord with other carers***</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No evidence of discord</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>9 (35%)</td>
<td>19 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One child lived with adoptive parents.
** There were no recorded instances of discord only with stepmothers, wicked or otherwise.
*** Others Carers included two children living with other relatives and one with an unrelated guardian.

$\chi^2$ (tested for yes/no on discord with parents) = 7.64, 2df, $p = <0.025$

Table 22 shows that relationships between the study child and parents were generally seen as poor but that they were regarded as exceptionally bad in the Subject Group, in which only one child is recorded as having no serious difficulties in relationships with parents or other carers. Although the Disqualified Group has the largest proportion without serious discord, this conceals a difference between the black and white children in the Disqualified Group, with the black children having a pattern very similar to the Subject Group. Differences between black and white children in the
The total sample are statistically significant ($x^2 = 5.89, 1 df, p < 0.025$) as are differences between the three sub-samples. The biggest difference of all, however, was between boys and girls: 60% of the boys were recorded as having serious discord with parents, compared to 91% of the girls ($x^2 = 10.85, 1 df, p < 0.01$). Overall, in a situation of very poor general relationships with parents, the greatest likelihood of serious discord having been noted arose with black adolescent girls who were new referrals to the social services department, but girls in general were more often seen as having discord with parents than were boys, black children more often than white, and children newly referred more often than longstanding cases.

Comparison of these results with studies from general population samples shows how extreme the present sample appears to be. In the National Child Development Study of 16 year olds, 86% of the teenagers reported good relationships with their mothers, and 80% with their fathers (Fogelman 1976). Riley and Shaw (1985) found agreement between parents and 14-15 year olds that two thirds were 'very close' to their mothers and almost half 'very close' to their fathers. A survey of 14-19 year olds carried out by the Department of Education and Science (DES 1983) found that nine out of ten respondents made positive comments about their parents, and give figures by ethnic group: 89% of white teenagers; 87% of Afro-Caribbean teenagers; and 85% of Asian teenagers with positive views on parents. The same study also showed that two thirds of teenagers regularly shared activities with parents and regarded their mothers as their main source of advice. Although three quarters also made some complaint about parents, only 5% considered that their parents did not understand them.

The children in the present sample were a very stark contrast.
Selina, aged 16, an Afro-Caribbean child from the Subject Group

Selina was referred to the Social Services Department by her mother's psychiatrist, who was concerned about the behaviour and well-being of Mrs. S's children, particularly Selina. Initial referral discussions and case conferences were proceeding, and Selina was being assessed at a day unit. While this was in progress, the situation 'blew' one evening when Mrs. S called the police to their home. Selina was threatening her mother with a knife, and had smashed a mirror, using the broken glass to threaten her mother. She was in a hysterical and angry state, and as the police were unable to calm her she was removed to the police station on a Place of Safety Order. When the Social Services Night Duty Team was unable to find a children's home place, the police persuaded Mrs. S by telephone to take Selina back for the night; however when they arrived on the doorstep Mrs. S refused to have Selina back in the house as she and the younger children were too frightened by Selina's behaviour. Eventually a camp bed was made up for Selina in a local children's home.

Instances of parents barring the door to their children, and of children refusing to go home (as in some earlier examples) are numerous. Sometimes the separation served to calm relationships down, and at other times it appeared to harden the rift.

Shelley, aged 14, a white child from the Comparison Group

Shelley's parents referred her to the Social Services Department because of their concerns about her staying out late, lying, and hanging about with groups of skinheads. Shelley was described as having a good relationship with her father, but poor relationships with her mother and younger siblings. A few weeks after referral, she got up early one morning, packed her belongings and moved them to the garden. She returned to the house, stuffed an armchair with newspaper and set it alight, then departed leaving the ground floor ablaze and her family asleep upstairs. Her mother and younger brother were injured in the fire and the house was destroyed. After Shelley was remanded to care, charged with arson, her father initially visited her but then stopped. Her mother and brothers refused to see her or have any contact with her. Shelley told the psychiatrist who prepared her court report: "I hate my mother and my mother hates me".
Selina and Shelley were among the most extreme examples of family discord in the sample, but refusal to have contact once the child was in care, and refusal to allow the child home for visits was common, as was the child's refusal to go home.

Table 23 highlights further the poor relationships between children and parents at the point of entry to care. It also shows something of the interactionist nature of events, in which social workers felt that their decisions were very often reactions to clients' decisions which had forced the social worker's hands. In 57% of the admissions matters had reached the point where one or both parties to the parental relationship were considered by social workers to be opting out of it, at least for the time being. Although the
incidence of two-way breakdown was highest in the Comparison Group, proportionately more of the Subject Group were described as being unilaterally ejected by their parents. Altogether, breakdown which prevented the child's return home was noted for 81% of the Subject Group, 54% of the Comparison Group and 39% of the Disqualified Group. Once again, however this result was contributed to by significant differences between all black and white children and between boys and girls. Three quarters of black children were recorded as unable or unwilling to live at home compared to 45% of white children ($\chi^2 = 7.33, \text{ldf}, p < 0.01$); and 74% of girls compared to 33% of boys ($\chi^2 = 15.34, \text{ldf}, p < 0.001$). The difference between girls and boys again stands out as the most important in this context.

It has already been pointed out that tempers often cooled quickly once the child was in care and the immediate cause of friction over. At this point, the additional dynamics of the situation - what legal powers were in force, how the child behaved in care, and whether other agencies were pressing for the child's removal from home would be powerful in deciding whether children went home again, or proceedings for care orders were completed.

**Differences in Events and Judgements**

From the review of previous research a number of expectations were deduced about the likely characteristics of the families as presented in social workers' reports. It was expected that reports would place more emphasis on relationships and family conflict than on material issues; in the context of a psychodynamic analysis of the family. Earlier material also suggested that there would be differences in family composition, with more children from
ethnic minorities coming from single parent or step parent families. The differences would be found as the result of a blend of factual circumstances likely to be agreed by both social workers and parents, and social workers' judgements of the significance of the phenomena which they chose to report.

These predictions were borne out to some degree by the data. Practical and material problems were seen as extreme in only a few families, in spite of other factors such as single parenthood and large family size which are known to be associated with poverty, poor housing and other material problems. In four out of ten families there were no serious environmental problems mentioned in reports. On the other hand problems in family relationships presented a more mixed picture. While problems between the parents were reported in only a quarter of the families, friction between parents and children was reported in eight out of ten families, and almost six out of ten were so severe as to lead to refusal to live together by one or both parties.

There were no indications of a generally inverse relationship between environmental problems and family relationship problems, which might have been expected if social workers chose to concentrate on either material problems or relationships, as some research suggests (Grace and Wilkinson 1978). There was, it is true, a tendency for longstanding cases in the Disqualified Group to be seen as having poorer environments but not such bad relationships compared to the new cases of the Subject and Comparison Groups. But within the new cases, the Subjects were seen as having similar levels of material and environmental problems to the Comparison Group, while having poorer relationships...
and a greater risk of neglect or ill-treatment of children. Furthermore the apparently greater harmony in the D Group families occurred in a situation when several of the children had been in care by voluntary agreement for long periods prior to the care order, hence removing many of the opportunities for friction.

The findings lend no support to 'family circumstances' models explaining the high rate of admission of black children to care. There was no evidence of greater material disadvantage, and some adverse circumstances (such as being in a single parent family) were lower in the Subject families. The greater reporting of established or alleged child abuse, and problems in family relationships, do indicate that analysis of court reports should pay particular attention to social worker's use of family pathology models, with their implications of cultural racism, and to the stigmatising properties of ethnic minority membership.

There is a second set of questions underlying the findings, and these concern the reality and significance of the phenomena described. This is a deeper order of problem than that of agreement on 'facts'. Studies which compare accounts by social workers and clients commonly show agreement about events and circumstances, but varying emphasis on their importance or disagreement about their meaning. Yet Packman's (1986) research raises an even more complex issue. She showed that two cities with similar social conditions and populations produced very different rates of admission to care of troublesome adolescents. Yet in each city she found broad agreement between parents and social workers about the unacceptability of the adolescent's behaviour and what should be done about it. The behaviour in each city was similar but the way it was judged by both parents and social workers, differed considerably between the two locations. This raises the possibility that social
worker judgements might usually or frequently represent a
degree of concensus or collusion between the participants,
at least when the participants are operating within a common
social framework of values and expectations. In such a
concensus the areas of agreement would be expected to be
greater than those of disagreement.

It is at least clear from the statistical data and examples
in these last two chapters that parents and children were
neither passive victims nor sleeping partners in the process
of entering care. The initiative seemed to be taken by
parent or child far more often than by the social worker,
and very often the 'decision' to take the child into care
seemed only a de facto recognition of the child's refusal to
go home or the parent's refusal to have the child in the
house. Yet these events have to be presented to the court
as components in a social work decision that care is in the
best interests of the child, not as the social worker being
led by the nose! This process also requires a creative
translation, in Cain's terms. Where previous studies found
dissatisfaction by parents or children this was often
because the social worker was seen as inactive, or on the
wrong side in a situation where he or she should have been
supporting the parents' authority, or the child's rights,
depending on the identity of the complainant (Hapgood 1979,
Lambeth SSD 1981, Parker et al 1981, Millham et al 1985,
Fisher et al 1986). The interactive nature of events, so
apparent in the case examples, is not fully amenable to
quantitative analysis in a sample which is too small for
multivariate statistical techniques, but can be explored
further in the qualitative material.

The pursuit of court proceedings on the grounds of the
child's behaviour can be seen as part of the interactive
process. In many instances it has been shown that the
'real' concern, according to the social worker, was for the
child's safety at the hands of his or her parents, yet by
basing the grounds for the court order in the child's
recalcitrancy, the social worker avoids to some degree having to challenge the parents' competence, or stigmatise them publicly in a judicial context. This has similarities to the process described at coroners' inquests by Atkinson (1978) in attempts to avoid stigmatising verdicts of suicide. It is complicated in child care proceedings by the equal need to explain the child's problem behaviour in a determinist manner without resorting to a belief in original sin, and the need to retain a degree of post-committal cooperation from the child as well as from the parents. Having dual grounds of parental neglect and child recalcitrance (as found in several cases) ensures that all escape routes are covered, a similar process to that described by Gelsthorpe (1985a).

Yet the material on family background shows that indices were available to the social worker by which at least six out of ten families could be judged and stigmatised, whether by reference to their drinking habits, intelligence, housekeeping standards, bad management of finances, morality, general fecklessness or treatment of their children. In the court reports the balance that is struck between the focus on the child's behaviour and the parent's culpability seems likely to be the most sensitive indicator of the social worker's priorities.

**Summary**

Checklists were developed to collect information from case records on the children's family background. Rigorous definitions of material and environmental problems were used to ensure that only those serious enough to endanger family functioning were included. Particular attention was paid to whether there was evidence or suspicion that children in the family were neglected or ill-treated. Most of the problems
studied were found in only a few families, but evidence or suspicion of neglect and ill-treatment were found in four out of ten families. The data supported other studies in suggesting that material problems did not generally characterise the families of adolescents coming into care for behaviour problems.

Differences were apparent between the recently referred children of the Subject and Comparison Groups and the longstanding cases of the Disqualified Group. Levels of some environmental problems were higher in the Disqualified Group and they were also more likely to have records of several problems in their backgrounds. Evidence of neglect or ill-treatment was also highest in the Disqualified Group but there was a generally higher level of evidence or suspicion of neglect and ill-treatment among black children in the sample than among white children.

Evidence of discord in families, again defined in such a way as to restrict it to the most serious levels, was also obtained. Serious discord between parents was recorded in a quarter of the families, evenly spread throughout the sample. Serious discord between the study children and their parents was found in 80% of the sample, and in 50% was at a level where parents refused to have their children at home, or children refused to go home. Disqualified children again differed from the new cases of the Subject and Comparison Groups, in that they were less likely to have such serious discord with parents. Discord was generally more prevalent between girls and their parents than with boys, and levels of discord were generally higher with black children than with white.

Differing interpretations of the findings were possible. They might imply that serious problems of relationships or care of the children in the black children's families had been ignored, or been hidden, when this would not have happened with white children. Alternatively, since the data
was gained from social work records, it was possible that
different emphasis reflected cultural racism or other bias
in some aspects of reporting, or greater reluctance to
ground legal proceedings on parents' behaviour rather than
children's behaviour, in black families. These remain to be
followed up in the analysis of court reports.

It was clear that parents and children were in no sense
passive or silent victims, indeed they seemed often to be
making the major decisions, leaving social workers with
little room for discretion or manoeuvre.

Results did suggest that many of the children could have
been committed to care under child protection clauses rather
than on the grounds of their behaviour, or by voluntary
agreement with parents who felt unable to cope with their
children any longer. While the children's being in care
seemed unavoidable in most instances, committal by care
order on behavioural grounds was an important strategic
choice.
CHAPTER EIGHT

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR
Definitions of Unacceptable Behaviour

The starting point for this study was the selection of a group of adolescents who were committed to public care by a juvenile court because their behaviour was unacceptable to adults who aspired to be in authority over them. Their common feature was that, in the words of the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act, they were judged 'in need of care and control which (they were) unlikely to receive unless the court makes an order under this section in respect of (them).'

It has been shown that of the 93 in the total sample, 33 (35%) were committed through criminal proceedings, 59 (63%) through care proceedings for status offences (truancy, being beyond control, or being in moral danger, sometimes allied to other grounds such as being neglected) and one girl had two care orders made in separate care and criminal proceedings on the same day. It was also shown in Chapter Five that eight out of ten were described by social workers as having serious behaviour difficulties at home, the same proportion with serious difficulties at school, and seven out of ten with problems in the community. Half of the sample were considered to have behaviour difficulties in all three areas of their lives. The adults who were worried about the behaviour were not only their social workers, teachers or the police, but also included the majority of their parents, and many had been evicted from their homes by parents unwilling to tolerate their behaviour any longer.

Further consideration of this raises three questions:

1. What were they doing - or suspected of doing? (There was often no firm proof, particularly when illegal or sexual activities were concerned.)
2. Was their behaviour considered to differ from the behaviour of others of their age, gender or culture?

3. Why was the behaviour defined as sufficient to justify a court order on the first court appearance, and what were the processes by which this definition was achieved?

In considering the sociological context in which the children's behaviour was deemed by adults to be unacceptable, the nature and definition of deviance presents considerable problems. In general, sociological explorations use a concept of deviance as being 'crime and rule breaking' (e.g. Downes and Rock 1982) although Aggleton (1987) and others point out that this takes insufficient account of deviance as associated with conditions such as disability, or with behaviour which may be permitted or tolerated but socially disapproved in the dominant culture, such as homosexuality. Of the two dominant methodological perspectives, positivism has produced most of the empirical data on which any research must rely for comparisons and the provision of a research context; yet interactionist theory is more helpful in making sense of the complex processes by which ratings of deviance are reached and accepted by the participants in the action, rather than by the researcher. In the present research the interactionist perspective is an essential one, since we are concerned with the possibility that apparently similar behaviour may be construed differently when being processed through the juvenile justice and welfare systems for controlling children and families.

The empirical research which has been carried out, both within the positivist and interactionist traditions, has suggested that there are considerable areas of agreement over what events have taken place, what the 'deviant' has actually done, between parents, social workers, police and the deviants themselves. Areas of disagreement tend to be
in the interpretation of the importance, seriousness or meaning of the events, more than about their occurrence. Within the positivist tradition, for example, studies comparing official and self reported delinquency commonly show a high degree of overlap between the two measures (Belson 1975, West and Farringdon 1977, Riley and Shaw 1985, Morris and Giller 1987). The differences found are in the amount of criminal behaviour which is admitted by the young people but which has gone undetected or not acted upon by the police. In studies which use or lean towards an interactionist perspective, again there is common agreement that particular acts were committed by the young people, although very often parents and young people considered that the interpretation or reaction of the authorities had been unreasonable (Hapgood 1979, Parker et al 1981). In neither tradition are there results suggesting that substantial numbers of delinquents totally deny the commission of misdemeanours of which adults have accused them. This applies equally to status offenders, where these are considered, although they have generally received far less attention than criminal offenders. There is, however, both within positivist and interactionist traditions, agreement that social factors, such as moral judgements or the social position of the family, affect what official action is taken about the misdemeanours.

When considering reports of 'misbehaviour' in the present study, it is therefore reasonable to start from the assumption that they represent some degree of accuracy but that they will also reflect a selection process in two respects: neither social workers nor other adults, including parents, will know everything that the adolescents have been up to; and there will be a selective emphasis depending on their rating of the seriousness or significance of the behaviour in the young people's social contexts. Since in this study the behaviour is often described in
support of a claim by the social workers that parental rights over the child should be transferred to the local authority, it seems likely that selective emphasis will highlight the behaviour and consequent risks, than underplay them, and will be used to 'shape up' a case to convince the court, with every possible option covered in doubtful or fragile cases.

There are several major limitations of previous research on juvenile deviance for the purposes of the present study. Firstly, much of the previous work has tended to portray the deviant as a passive victim, whether of heredity, family life, faulty learning or capitalist oppression; although some recent work has begun to stress the evidence that delinquents both have and make choices and deliberately manage their own worlds (Downes and Rock 1982). Secondly the previous studies have focussed predominately, if not exclusively, on boys and male deviance. Female deviance is either ignored or assumed to be a secondary phenomenon to male deviance, with girls controlled and directed by their boyfriends or the male groups to which they are linked (McRobbie and Garber 1976, Campbell 1981). Finally, deviance theory has largely ignored race and ethnicity, although empirical studies of criminal behaviour often include this dimension.

The extent to which juvenile behaviour is seen as 'a problem' by adults is clearly not a constant. Behaviour which may be seen as normal in a sixteen year old will often be seen as 'risky' for a ten year old, and vice versa. In the present sample, several of the ten to twelve year olds had been picked up by the police after being found in West End amusement arcades late at night, whereas this had happened to none of the older teenagers. Stealing, on the other hand, particularly from parents, seemed to be taken more seriously when carried out by older children than by younger. Although several younger children in the study had
stolen from parents or other relatives, none had been charged with such thefts, whereas two older teenagers had been charged. One ten year old had been caught shoplifting and "pulled a knife" on the shop assistant who caught him. Although the police were called, no action was taken, whereas a 16 year old exhibiting this behaviour would almost certainly have been prosecuted.

Similarly, there is considerable evidence that behaviour which is tolerated in boys causes concern when committed by girls, particularly if it involves actual or potential sexual activity (Parker et al 1981, Gelsthorpe 1985a). The ethnic and other cultural dimensions of adolescent behaviour have not been explored to the same extent in quantitative studies, and qualitative studies exploring 'youth culture' have focussed almost exclusively on the rebellious rather than the conforming young, potentially giving rise to partial and misleading comparisons (e.g. Pryce 1979).

**Behaviour Before Admission to Care**

The initial material for considering the adolescents behaviour was a checklist completed from case records and covering a range of possible criminal and status offences. Results of this are given in Table 24. Only behaviour reported before admission to care is included here, although in some instances the behaviour continued, or new forms of misbehaviour were noted, after initial admission to care, which appeared to influence the decision to obtain a Care Order.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE</th>
<th>Subject 26</th>
<th>Comparison 41</th>
<th>Disqualified 26</th>
<th>Total 93</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stealing:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Home</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>15 (37%)</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>25 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>25 (61%)</td>
<td>17 (65%)</td>
<td>54 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing Anywhere</td>
<td>13 (50%)</td>
<td>29 (71%)</td>
<td>18 (69%)</td>
<td>60 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence to People:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Home</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>14 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At School</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>22 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence Anywhere</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>16 (39%)</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>38 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage to Property:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Home</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>7 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At School</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>6 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>6 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage Anywhere</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>19 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Illegal Drugs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solvent Abuse</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>16 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Activities</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>19 (46%)</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>30 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Harm</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>13 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy*</td>
<td>13 (50%)</td>
<td>34 (83%)</td>
<td>21 (81%)</td>
<td>68 (73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrupting Classes</td>
<td>15 (58%)</td>
<td>19 (46%)</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>44 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying Out Late/ All Night**</td>
<td>11 (42%)</td>
<td>22 (54%)</td>
<td>9 (35%)</td>
<td>42 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Away***</td>
<td>16 (62%)</td>
<td>22 (54%)</td>
<td>11 (42%)</td>
<td>49 (53%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Truancy was defined as missing school without parent's knowledge or approval on more than one occasion.

** Staying out 'late' as distinct from 'all night' was defined flexibly in terms of the child's age and whereabouts, but in almost all instances meant children were staying out until the 'early hours' of the morning; usually in disreputable night clubs or amusement arcades, wandering the streets, or with whereabouts unknown.

*** Running away was defined as being missing from home for more than one night consecutively with whereabouts unknown to parents.
Whereas in previous material on family circumstances, the data has been considered within the three separate groups of Subjects, Comparisons and Disqualified adolescents, in material on behaviour and the process of being committed to care the focus will be primarily on the Subject and Comparison Groups. Since the defining characteristics for disqualification were in terms of family background or previous history of contact with Social Services, the similarities or differences between Disqualified children and others were of importance. In the present chapter, it is the similarities or differences within the 'new cases', and how they are treated in the process of committal to care which is most relevant. Some detail on the whole sample is, however, necessary to examine whether statistical differences between Subject and Comparison Groups stand on their own, or reflect broader differences linked with race, gender or age. This is particularly so as the Disqualified Group contains a different gender balance from the Subject and Comparison Groups. Furthermore, as there were known to be some differences between the Original and Extended Samples, all behavioural data was checked to ensure that this in itself was not an explanation for results.

Table 24 shows some interesting contrasts between the three groups, but primarily between Subject and Comparison Groups. The hierarchy of problems is similar for all three groups in that the same behaviour clusters at the top, centre and bottom in terms of frequency. Within the top six most common behaviours for the total sample, however, the order within the groups is of particular interest.

It can be seen that there are marked differences in the rank ordering of particular types of behaviour reported for the Subject and Comparison Groups.
TABLE 25: MOST FREQUENT BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Sample Ranks</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Comparison Ranks for Behaviour</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Truancy</td>
<td>68 (73%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (81%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stealing</td>
<td>54 (58%)</td>
<td>4 (46%)</td>
<td>2 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Home</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (65%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Running Away</td>
<td>49 (53%)</td>
<td>1 (62%)</td>
<td>3.5 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (42%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Disrupting</td>
<td>44 (47%)</td>
<td>2 (58%)</td>
<td>5.5 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (38%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Staying Out</td>
<td>42 (45%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>3.5 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late/All Night</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (35%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sexual</td>
<td>30 (32%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>5.5 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (19%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the individual variables differences between Subject and Comparison Groups are statistically significant at or above 5% levels only for truancy and sexual activities, in which the Comparison Group have higher rates. Nevertheless the Comparison Group have a higher rate of prevalence of twelve out of seventeen of the behaviour problems included. Of the other five, however, two are measures of violence outside the home, and one is running away, all behaviour likely to be seen as particularly serious or risky.

Within the total sample there were also few significant differences on individual behavioural reports according to race and gender, and none linked with age. Black children were significantly less likely than white to have reports of stealing at home ($x^2 = 4.56$, df1, $p < 0.025$) and more likely to have reports of disruptive behaviour at school ($x^2 = 5.21$, df1, $p < 0.25$). The second finding may be linked to lower levels of truancy reported for the black children, although in the sample as a whole this was significant only
at the 10% level (66% black and 82% white, $x^2 = 3.16$, df1, $p < 0.1$). White children were apparently more likely to avoid conflict with their teachers by staying away from them.* As would be expected, girls were more likely than boys to have reports of disapproved sexual activities, ($x^2 = 4.09$, df1, $p < 0.05$) in accordance with the usual finding that heterosexual activities are seen as a 'problem' for girls but not for boys (Campbell 1981). (All of the reports on boys' sexual activities either concerned homosexuality, or the 'problem' was one of sexual offending and other behaviour seen as sexually aberrant.) More unexpected in view of the higher proportion of girls among the black children was the finding that black children were significantly less likely than white to have reports of disapproved sexual activities, ($x^2 = 4.42$, df1, $p < 0.05$).

A number of dimensions emerge for further exploration.

1. The nature of the behaviour, whether criminal offending, or behaviour which could be defined as criminal (the kinds of behaviour defined by West and Farringdon (1977) as leading to "police contact"); or whether status offending, (consisting of behaviour which is thought wrongful only for children). In the 'criminal' category are stealing, violence to the person, damage to property and use of illegal drugs, all acts which would equally be defined as criminal if carried out by adults. Within all categories there are considerable variations in scale of the behaviour. Stealing for instance ranged from children who had carried out several shoplifting

* Lower rates of truancy among black adolescents in care were also found by Cawson (1977) in matched samples of black and white boys.
expeditions or burglaries to those who stole only from relatives or classmates. Damage is one of the most complex to assess, since it varies from a girl who smashed her mother's mirror (subsequently threatening her with the broken glass) to another who burned down the family home!

In the 'status offending' category are truancy, disruptive behaviour at school, running away, staying out all night, drinking, solvent abuse and under-age sexual activities. Of these, only sexual activities and truancy are formally grounds in their own right for legal proceedings, and other behaviour would be seen as relevant to 'beyond control' proceedings. Again, there is considerable variation of seriousness, from children who were missing for three or four nights, for example, (when it was usually thought they had stayed with a friend), to children who disappeared for months and were found in other parts of the country.

Following from this, arise the questions about 'who is affronted' by the behaviour, whether parents, teachers, police, social workers or members of the public, and what official action has been taken with regard to it.

2. The second important question is that of the location of the unacceptable behaviour, whether at home, at school, or in the community, also with consequential questions as to who is affronted or what action has been taken.

3. The third is how the behaviour is interpreted in the child's social context of gender, age, and race/ethnic culture.
Since few of the behaviours in isolation showed a significant link with groups of children, it was necessary to consider whether the combination, range, or category of behaviours might be more important. Several approaches were taken to this analysis.

Criminal Offending

Although just over one third of the sample were committed to care in criminal proceedings, it was shown earlier that 66 children (71%) had, prior to their care order, been involved in criminal offending, or in behaviour which could have resulted in criminal proceedings, a category referred to by West and Farringdon (1977) as 'police contact', in which police had dealt with the incidents informally.

Criminal behaviour included everything which had led to criminal charges or a police caution. The potentially criminal behaviour was counted as stealing or damage to property outside the child's own home; violence to people other than the child's family, (with the exception of peer-group fights which were not seen as serious enough for criminal charges, or police involvement). Stealing from home was not counted unless it had led to formal criminal proceedings, and in two instances where it was exceptionally serious; damage to property in the child's own home was not counted unless it had led to criminal charges. There were no examples of study children inflicting serious injuries on family members by violent behaviour.
A total of 41 children (44%) had been prosecuted for criminal offences, many of whom were awaiting trial for these at the point of their committal to care for status offences. A further nine had received a police caution, and sixteen were in the 'police contact' category, when no official action had been taken for potentially criminal behaviour. These totals include offending after admission to care but before the care order.

As this was a sample of children in court for the first time, they were not usually seen as experienced criminals, although some were charged with several offences at once. Most were charged with the common juvenile offence of theft, of which shoplifting occurred most frequently, but a few were charged with other offences, and a few had committed what would generally be rated as exceptionally serious offences for juveniles. A few were thought to have (or boasted of having) a long history of previous offending which had not been detected, or for which they were too young to be held criminally responsible.

**TABLE 26: CRIMINAL OFFENCES COMMITTED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most frequent offences</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft (including receiving/handling stolen goods)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraud/obtaining money by deception</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault/Causing Actual Bodily Harm</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking and Driving Away/Passenger in Stolen Vehicle</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying an Offensive Weapon/Posessing Airgun</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Damage</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Illegal Drugs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
'Other' offences, each committed by one child, were: demanding money with threats; being drunk and disorderly; trespass with intent to steal; abusive behaviour and going equipped to steal.

This represents a similar pattern to that found in most studies of juvenile delinquency (Rutter and Giller 1981) though the numbers charged with arson and violent offences are comparatively high. This however is not surprising as such serious offences would be more likely to lead to a high tariff sentence such as a care order, when committed by a first offender, than would more usual juvenile offences.

A distinction is often made in deviance theory between acquisitive (property) deviance such as theft and expressive deviance such as vandalism or use of illegal drugs (e.g. Young 1971). In the present sample, although theft and related offences were the norm, they were not necessarily seen by social workers as acquisitive. Some children, for example, were thought to steal in order to be able to buy friendship or impress their friends; others to annoy their parents and some to provoke the authorities into action. This will be explored further in the analysis of court reports. For many of the children, the offence occurred in a context in which they were already in trouble for status offences.

Margaret, aged 13, a child of British/African parentage from the Subject Group

Margaret had lived with relatives of her mother's since the ending of her parent's marriage. When friction developed, her family approached the social services department for help with Margaret's behaviour at home: she was said to be staying out late, lying as to her whereabouts, and spending time with a gang of local boys whom her family considered unsuitable friends. She was also defiant and abusive at school. Margaret was said to 'demand' admission to care, and when this was initially refused, she ran away from home. When found, she was received into care by voluntary agreement. In a children's home, she refused to conform to the rules, played truant from school, was
threatening and abusive to staff, and continually stayed out late with her gang. In their company, she was first arrested for drunk and disorderly behaviour in the street, and soon afterwards for stealing. She was cautioned for these offences. She ran away a second time and committed further thefts of food from shops with which she was charged. When she appeared in court a care order was made.

In other instances, the impression was that the offence had given police and social workers a reason to intervene in a family situation with which they were unhappy. Most of these were young children from the Disqualified Group, but a few were new cases where the family had formerly refused intervention. Typical was:

**Leonard, aged 10, a white child from the Disqualified Group**

The D family had first come to the notice of the social services department when Leonard's elder sister accused her stepfather of indecent assault and was admitted to care. Over the next ten years the family were in frequent contact with the social services department, and with local voluntary agencies. The relationship between the parents was described as 'turbulent' and the younger children were on the register of children 'at risk' of neglect or injury. When Leonard was ten he began to exhibit behaviour which was regarded as 'nuisance' behaviour but putting himself and others in danger: lighting fires, climbing along high balconies, leaping through windows and throwing milk bottles. He was also described as 'impossible to contain in school'. The social worker was discussing with the parents the possibility of care proceedings on the grounds that he was beyond control when Leonard lit a fire which burned down a neighbour's shed. He was charged with arson and committed to care in criminal proceedings.

Analysis of results by Subject, Comparison and Disqualified Groups showed no statistically significant differences in total offending rates (Table 27), although the Subjects were slightly less likely to have been prosecuted than other groups, and more likely to have had no action taken. Because there were few of the 'no action' cases it is hard
to generalise about them in quantitative terms. Several were young, others from particularly 'deprived' or particularly 'respectable' families. Most of the offences in this category were indeed trivial, but then so were many of the offences for which other children were prosecuted.

**TABLE 27: OFFICIAL ACTION ON CRIMINAL OFFENCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prosecuted</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>20 (49%)</td>
<td>13 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautioned</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Contact/No Action</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Offending</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>11 (27%)</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 26 (100%) 41 (100%) 26 (100%) 93

The measure for criminal offending was linked with gender. In common with other research, boys were more likely to be offenders (79%) than were girls (65%) and more likely to have been prosecuted (54% of boys, 37% of girls). The differences, however, were statistically significant only at the 10% level probably because of the small sample size. There were no general differences in levels of criminal offending between black and white children, either in the sample as a whole, or when considered separately for boys and girls, although several previous studies, including some in London, have found that black children are more likely to be arrested and prosecuted than white children (Stevens and Willis 1979, Tipler 1985). These studies, however, have been carried out on general populations of delinquents, of whom the present sample would not be expected to be typical. More interesting is the difference between the present
sample and earlier studies of approved school children (Lambert 1970, Pearce 1974, Cawson 1977) in all of which black boys were less delinquent than white boys, though this was not studied with girls. The special selection of a sample of first court appearances may explain the difference.

Because the Original Sample were known to have lower rates of criminal offending than the Extended Sample, analyses were repeated separately within each sample. This made little difference to results except that within the Original Sample the Subject Group were less delinquent than the Comparison Group while the Extended Sample did not show a difference between the groups. Original Sample numbers, however, were very small, and again differences were not statistically significant at 5% level. There appeared to be no consistent link with age, although the youngest (10-12 year olds) had almost all committed criminal offences (87%) compared to only two thirds of the older children.

**Status Offending**

A general measure of Status Offending was obtained by giving each child a score of one for each of the behaviours noted in the child's record. This gave a potential score between 0-7, representing the range of status offences committed (Table 28). As in previous measures, the score represented the range rather than the seriousness of behaviour. The value of a measure of range, however is that it distinguishes between children who may be seen as having one particular type of difficulty, and those seen as generally difficult. These situations are potentially very different in their capacity for interpretation by social workers, and linkage with perceived causal explanations for the behaviour. Status offending scores also included all behaviour prior to the care order.
Scores on the Status Offending Index within the total sample approximated to a normal distribution and therefore differences between the means of the groups were tested using a t test. Although there was no general difference between the status offending scores of black and white children in the total sample, the Subject Group had a significantly lower mean score than the Comparison Group. This confirms that among the children committed to care soon after referral, black children appeared to have fewer (though not necessarily less serious) behaviour problems than white.

**TABLE 28: STATUS OFFENDING INDEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>25*</th>
<th>41</th>
<th>26</th>
<th>92</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x}$</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No information on one child.

(Test of means between Subject and Comparison Groups - $t = 2.222$, $df = 64$, $p = < 0.05$)

High scores were significantly associated with gender, with the girls' scores being higher than the boys' (Boys $\bar{x} = 2.552$, Girls $\bar{x} = 3.26$, $t = 2.349$, df90, $p = < 0.05$). This represented a greater frequency of running away, staying out late and under-age sexual activities noted for the girls. The findings do not necessarily imply that the girls were behaving differently on all items from the boys, and may simply indicate that some behaviour in girls was more often
noted or seen as a problem by social workers and other authorities. Gelsthorpe, (1985a), for example, showed that parents reported sons to the police as well as daughters, when they were out late or overnight, but that police took action to search only for missing girls, not boys. Different attitudes towards sexual activities of teenage girls and boys are well documented (Campbell 1981).

The Extended Sample also had significantly higher Status Offending scores than the Original Sample (Original $\bar{x} = 1.96$, Extended $x = 3.343$, $t = 3.48$, df$90$, $p = <0.001$). This was largely because all the nil scores were in the Original Sample.

Some illustrations of the difference between high scoring and low scoring children emphasise the point made about range and seriousness of behaviour, and the interconnection with criminal offending in some instances.

**Adam, aged 13, a boy of African parentage, from the Subject Group. SOI Score = 1 (disruptive behaviour at school)**

Adam was referred to the social services department by his school, after he came to school with injuries from a severe beating by his father. A Place of Safety Order was taken and he was moved immediately to a foster home. Investigations, however, showed that Adam had been seen by his school as a particularly difficult boy for some years. At the age of nine he had been referred to Child Guidance Clinic by his primary school for violent temper tantrums and was described as "uncooperative, disobedient and aggressive". At secondary school he was described as seriously violent (no further detail given) and was suspended from school soon after his referral to the social services department. He also proved violent and uncooperative in his foster home, and subsequently in a second foster home and three children's homes. His parents did not visit him in care and would have nothing to do with the social worker. Because of his behaviour in care and at school he was committed to care as having been ill-treated and being beyond control. He had no criminal record and had never been known to the police. His status offending score was only 1 (disruptive behaviour at school), but he was clearly regarded as an exceptionally difficult boy by everyone who dealt with him.
John, aged 11, a white boy from the Comparison Group. SOI Score = 1 (truancy)

John lived with his mother, elder brother and sister. Shortly after transfer to secondary school, he began to truant, which was thought to be because he was unable to go to the same school as a friend. He was transferred to another school at which his mother worked, and then stopped attending school altogether. When the Education Welfare Officer visited, John refused to speak to her, and all attempts to get him back to school failed. The EWO began proceedings for non-attendance, and also referred the family (at Mrs. C's request) to the social services department. One of John's elder sisters suffered from anorexia nervosa, and his elder brother refused to leave the house at all, staying in one room with the curtains drawn; Mrs. C, the EWO and the social worker were all concerned that John would follow the same pattern of behaviour as his siblings. John refused to speak to the social worker, and when admitted to an assessment centre, refused to speak to either the psychologist or psychiatrist who attempted to interview him. He also refused to talk to any women, at times even to his mother. However he was not actively troublesome and once in care, started attending school. When he returned to court he was made subject of a care order on the grounds of his previous failure to attend school.

Claire, aged 14, a white girl from the Disqualified Group. SOI Score = 0

Claire's family had been known to the social services department for fifteen years and four of her elder siblings had been in care in the past. Little was recorded about Claire, however, until her referral when she was arrested on a shoplifting charge. Soon after arrest she was received into care by voluntary agreement because of poor conditions at home (no details given but the D's were described as a 'multi-problem' family). Although the records suggest that she was a difficult girl "devious, manipulative, lacking in socialisation and aggressive", both before and after admission to care, no specific status offences are mentioned. Her parents did not keep in contact once Claire was in care, and when she appeared in court on the shoplifting charge, a care order was made on the grounds of her offence.

These three low scores contrast markedly with the high scores, in the degree of personal risk they were seen to be running, though not necessarily in terms of their nuisance value to adults.
Leonie, aged 14, a white girl from the Comparison Group. SOI Score = 6 (truancy, staying out all night, running away, solvent abuse, drinking, disruptive behaviour at school)

Leonie lived with her adoptive parents with whom she had been placed since infancy. When she was 14, her parents asked the social services department for help, as Leonie had 'out of the blue' begun to behave very badly at home and at school about three months previously. She was mixing with a group of friends older than herself, and in their company was drinking, smoking cannabis, taking LSD, abusing solvents and truanting. She was staying out late at nights and had twice stayed out all night. She had also smashed windows at home and ripped wallpaper and clothing when in a temper. The social worker planned a programme of family meetings, but the C's subsequently cancelled all further planned contact. Leonie's behaviour worsened, however, and she began going missing from home for longer periods. About three months later matters came to a head when she broke into the house while her parents were out, and stole jewellery, which she sold. The C's agreed to care proceedings on the grounds that Leonie was beyond control, but while waiting for the court appearance she was arrested on several shoplifting charges, and was eventually committed to care in criminal proceedings.

Marilyn, aged 13, a girl of Afro-Caribbean parentage from the Subject Group. SOI Score = 4 (truancy, staying out late, running away and sexual activities)

Marilyn had been the subject of several referrals to the social services department from the age of eleven years onwards: by her mother and the police after episodes of running away, and by her mother when Marilyn had to have a pregnancy terminated at the age of twelve. None of these referrals had been followed up however, until the present referral when Mrs. S requested Marilyn's admission to care after she had stolen a large sum of money from her mother. It emerged that Marilyn was frequently going missing for periods of a week to two weeks, she often contacted the police in the small hours of the morning asking for help, and been found in West End clubs late at night on a number of occasions. The social services department started care proceedings and Marilyn was admitted to an assessment centre. Once in care, Marilyn continued to run away, was violent to staff, and was described as "foul-mouthed, stubborn and full of backchat". She also made attempts to injure herself with needles and scissors. She told the children's home staff that her mother believed she was possessed and had sent her to have the demons exorcised. Marilyn was committed to care on the grounds that she was beyond control.
Miles, aged 14, a white child from the Disqualified Group. SOI Score = 5 (truancy, staying out late, running away, disruptive behaviour at school and sexual activities)

The D family had been known to the social services department for sixteen years and Miles' elder sisters had been in care and under supervision for truancy. Miles began truanting when he was twelve, and his behaviour at school also deteriorated with frequent reports of bullying and fighting. Aged thirteen he began staying out all night and his parents learned that he was visiting amusement arcades in central London and befriending strangers. He was transferred to a new school, but attendance and behaviour problems soon started again. Aged fourteen he was arrested and cautioned for criminal damage and burglary. The overnight expeditions continued, and Miles admitted to the social worker that he had been involved in male prostitution for three years, using the money he earned to play fruit machines. He was transferred to a school for maladjusted children, but refused to attend. Eventually, when he went missing for three days, a Place of Safety Order was taken and when found, Miles was placed in a children's home. A care order was made on the grounds that he was in moral danger.

A number of issues are raised in the above case examples, firstly about the relationship (or lack of it) between the behaviour or circumstances which were causing concern to the social services and the legal grounds on which the care order was made, and secondly about the variations in tolerance or reaction to the same behaviour when carried out by different children.

Extreme Behaviour

An attempt was made to develop an index of behaviour which combined both criminal and status offending to give a measure of range of problems with emphasis on the more serious behaviour. The Index of Extreme Behaviour included four status offences (running away, staying out, drinking, and solvent abuse), three "criminal offences" (stealing, violence to others, use of illegal drugs) and extra weighting for any other behaviour likely to place the safety
of the child or others at risk (e.g. arson, taking motor vehicles, prostitution). The index was similar to a measure found useful in a previous study of black children in care (Cawson 1977). Excluded from this measure were 'victimless' offences which were unlikely to place the child at risk (e.g. truancy, disruptive behaviour at school) and damage which did not endanger anyone. While this measure proved to distinguish between the Original and Extended Samples, it revealed no direct links with race, age, or gender, and little difference between Subject, Comparison and Disqualified Groups.

TABLE 29: INDEX OF EXTREME BEHAVIOUR - MEAN SCORES (MAXIMUM POSSIBLE SCORE = 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Group</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Sample</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Sample</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Group</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison Group</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disqualified Group</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Children</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Children</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that apart from the Original/Extended Sample difference, the only noticeable difference is in the lower mean score of the Disqualified Group when compared to the Subject and Comparison Groups. When separate analysis was carried out within the Original and Extended Samples the D Group again came out with low scores, particularly for boys, but differences were nowhere large enough to be statistically significant.
The combined measure therefore proved less useful than the separate assessments of criminal and status offending in exploring differences within the sample. This suggests that seriousness of immediate risk to the child or others is possibly less useful in deciding on a care order within specific contexts than the issue of 'who is most affronted by the behaviour', whether the police, (as with criminal offending) or the parents, teachers and/or social workers (as with status offending).

Location of Problems

The question of 'who is affronted by the behaviour' is closely linked with its location. This contains an important element of choice in whether and in what terms the behaviour was reported to the social services department. The home is essentially a private world and Donzelot (1977) points out the progressive moves to enhancing its privacy and encouraging the family to contain its problems and dissidence within its own walls, rather than allow them to spill into the streets and outside community. The school is in an intermediate position: while not totally private, it still contains substantial elements of institutional separation within which its own rules and conventions apply. A decision to refer discipline problems from the home and the school to the public authorities responsible for communal order is only likely to be taken if the participants fear damage to the internal order of home or school caused by an offender challenging that order.

Furthermore the language in which the challenge is reported may represent far more than a straightforward account of the challenge. The description of thirteen year old Marilyn as "foulmouthed, stubborn and full of backchat" does not simply describe Marilyn's swearing, refusal to obey instructions, or arguments with staff, but also the reporter's sense of
moral indignation that Marilyn steps beyond acceptable boundaries and challenges the order of, in this instance, a children's home. Parker et al (1987) show how the choice of language in school reports on delinquents reflected the moral assumptions made by teachers as much as the pupils' behaviour, and that this had substantial influence on sentencing practice in the juvenile court. They point out that

"Being 'devious' or 'plausible'....once transferred into a general personality trait, ensures that the juvenile's performance in court, whatever tack he or she takes, is doomed. Tearful remorse will be no more than a devious plausible piece of playacting."

Hence, Claire's report of 'devious, manipulative' behaviour from her children's home would colour any future decisions on her, even though no statement is made as to what she is supposed to have done to merit this description. Since only teachers and social workers are routinely asked to commit their views to paper, their sense of affront attains a different order of permanence and influence than that of parents, although the parents do have the considerable advantage of being able (de facto if not de jure) to close their doors against the offender's return.

Since eight out of ten children were reported as misbehaving at home, and the same proportion at school, it was not to be expected that these measures would be very useful discriminators within the sample, and so it proved. Problems at home were reported for similar proportions of Subject (81%) and Comparison Groups (85%) and the slightly lower level (76%) for the Disqualified Group was not statistically significant. White children were more often reported as exhibiting the problem behaviour at home (88%) than black (72%) and girls (89%) than boys (72%) but neither result was statistically significant given the small sample numbers. Boys in the Subject Group seemed least likely of all to have this problem reported, but numbers here are tiny.
The chief interest in these figures, therefore, stems from their link with earlier material on relationships with families. It was reported earlier that girls were markedly more likely than boys to have reports of serious discord with parents, in which context a higher proportion of reported behaviour problems at home is consistent. The higher proportion of white children with reported behaviour problems at home, however, is unexpected in contradicting the earlier finding that black children more often were reported in discord with parents, and were least likely to be able to live at home.

Problems at school were also evenly spread, reported for 85% of the Subject and Disqualified Groups and 92% of the Comparison Group. They were reported for 86% of all black children and 91% white children, for 92% of boys and 89% of girls. The only notable difference was in the earlier reported prevalence of problems in the Extended Sample compared to the Original Sample, but so few children had no problems reported at school that separate analysis within the two samples was pointless in view of the sample numbers.

More than a quarter of the total sample had been excluded from school, temporarily or permanently, before the care order was made, in some instances even from special schools designated for children with emotional and behavioural disorders under the terms of the 1981 Education Act. This had happened to 32% of the Comparison Group, 23% of the Subject Group and 27% of the Disqualified Group. Although white children had slightly higher rates of reported problems at school, there were similar rates of exclusion from school for black and white children in the total sample, (33% black children and 27% white). Black children
were, however, more likely than white to be reported as violent at school, the behaviour most likely to lead to exclusion (36% of black children compared to 16% of white children, $x^2 = 4.61$, df=1, $p = 0.05$). In view of the Subject children's lower rate of exclusion, this result must largely have reflected problems in the Disqualified Group.

Problems in the community included theft, damage and other criminal offences committed on premises other than at home or school, and status offences which got the adolescent into public difficulties outside home or school. For example, getting drunk at a relative's house was not counted, whereas getting drunk at a club or being picked up drunk in the streets was counted. The rationale was that public flouting of either the laws or conventions concerning appropriate childhood behaviour, was more likely to bring the adolescent to the notice of the police and create pressure for official intervention. This measure, however, also failed to discriminate strongly within the sample. Levels of community based misbehaviour were similar for Subjects (65%), Comparisons (71%) and highest for the Disqualified (77%); for black children (69%) and white children (70%); for boys (74%) and girls (69%). Again, the only marked difference was between the Original and Extended samples. Two way analysis added no new information, and in the main merely replicated the total sample proportions within the Original and Extended samples.

A Sea of Troubles?

The final statistical analysis considered whether the spread of reported problems through all areas of the children's lives varied according to group (Table 30). It was shown earlier that the Extended Sample were more likely to have reported problems in all three areas of their lives.
Analysis of results between Subject, Comparison and Disqualified Groups suggested that Subjects were hardly less likely than Comparisons to be surrounded in all directions by a sea of troubles and there were no apparent differences between children according to race, age or gender on this measure.

**TABLE 30: PROBLEMS IN SEVERAL AREAS OF LIFE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Disqualified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Area</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>7 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Areas</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>19 (46%)</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
<td>37 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Three Areas</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>21 (51%)</td>
<td>14 (54%)</td>
<td>47 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>91*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Insufficient information on two children.

The Limitations of Quantified Data

An attempt to use quantitative methods to compare the reports of criminal and status offending among the adolescents in the total sample has therefore produced few indicators of major differences between children in the Subject and Comparison Groups, and relatively few between black and white children as a whole, or between boys and girls, or linked with age. Differences which were found were predominately in status offending not criminal offending. Gender differences in particular reflected differences which are already well established from previous studies of juvenile misbehaviour. There was however a general pattern of a slightly lower frequency of reported problems for the Subject Group than for the Comparison Group, although on individual items or indices this rarely reached the 5% level of statistical significance.
Explaining non-significant results is somewhat more difficult than explaining significant results, yet may be equally important. Several possible explanations must be considered.

First is the null hypothesis, that there really are few differences between these groups of children in terms of their behaviour.

Second is the possibility that the consistent but small trend for the Comparison Group to be seen as worse behaved is an artefact of small sample numbers, and would reach statistical significance if the sample were enlarged. If this were so, however, there would still be a substantial area of overlap between the groups, greater than that of the difference.

Third must be questions about the value of the combined indices of criminal offending, status offending and extreme behaviour. How useful was it to put together very varied types and degrees of behaviour into a single measure? The Status Offending Index however did prove a sensitive discriminator between the Original and Extended Samples, between Subject and Comparison Groups and according to gender, in the present research. Composite measures of criminal offending (official and unofficial) are commonly used in research on delinquency (Morris and Giller 1987) and found to be useful both as discriminators and predictors. In this study the measure discriminated between the Original and Extended Samples. The Extreme Behaviour Index, although in the present study also discriminating only between the Original and Extended Samples, is similar to a measure used by the present researcher in previous research comparing black and white adolescent boys in care and found to discriminate between them (Cawson 1977). It therefore seems unlikely that the measures themselves are innately insensitive.
Finally, there is the possibility that the ratings of individual behaviour were insufficiently sensitive because they were dependent on a reporting process acknowledged to be selective on two levels: the first due to parents', social workers', teachers' and police ignorance of the extent of adolescents' misbehaviour, and the second due to variations in emphasis in reports for reasons of the reporters' own choosing. There is no prima facie reason, however, why this selection process should work to reduce the distinction between groups. Indeed, the opposite bias seems more likely. The structure imposed by the research, though the systematic eliciting of references to behaviour attempts to maximise the comparability of reports and clarify sources of bias. When no differences are found, therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that this represents a genuine similarity between the various groupings in terms of behaviour as perceived by social workers and other adults.

How Extreme was the Sample?

It was demonstrated in the last chapter that the accounts of sample's relationships with their parents' appeared to be in marked contrast with accounts given by young people in the general population, and even with other social workers' accounts of adolescents in care. On some of the behaviour material it was possible to make equivalent comparisons (Table 31).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Petrie List D Pupils (S.W. Reports)</th>
<th>Packman In Care (S.W.'s and parents)</th>
<th>Smith Supervision Order (Self Report)</th>
<th>Subject (Social Workers)</th>
<th>Present Comparison (Social Workers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N =</td>
<td>409 boys (14/15 years)</td>
<td>378 boys (14/15 years)</td>
<td>66 girls (15/16 years)</td>
<td>781 boys (15/16 years)</td>
<td>30 girls (teenage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any criminal/potentially criminal</td>
<td>15 (boys)</td>
<td>43 (boys)</td>
<td>28 (Sustained)</td>
<td>73 (Sustained)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running away</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21 (girls)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under age sexual activities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>58 (girls)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under age drinking/in pubs/without adults consent</td>
<td>26 (boys)</td>
<td>33 (Sustained)</td>
<td>33 (Sustained)</td>
<td>66 girls (15/16 years)</td>
<td>30 girls (teenage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N =</td>
<td>100 boys (12-17 years)</td>
<td>361 boys and girls (10-16 years)</td>
<td>52 boys and girls (10-16 years)</td>
<td>30 girls (teenage)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Original % figures are rounded to the nearest whole number. A dash (-) means no comparable item included in the number is an approximate one.
General population comparisons were made with data from five studies: an age cohort of 14/15 year old boys studied by West and Farrington (1977) which included self report data; a sampled population of 14/15 year old boys and girls studied by Riley and Shaw (1985) which included parent's reports and self report data, and two groups of working class adolescent girls studied by Smith (1978) which included self report data from girls who had never been referred to agencies dealing with misconduct, and girls who belonged to local gangs. Finally, two studies of secondary school children (Campbell's (1981) study of girls and Jamison's (1977) study of boys and girls) include self report measures of delinquency.

Social work population comparisons were made with Packman's study of 361 children being considered for care (Packman et al 1986) which included 52 who were committed to care under the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act for misbehaviour; with girls studied by Smith (1978) who had received Supervision Orders for misbehaviour (self report data); and with Scottish List D* school children studied by Petrie (1980, 1986). The results of these comparisons are given in Table 31. Items of behaviour are included only when the wording of the original question suggests the comparison is reasonably valid. The differences in detail on the way data was collected, and the gender and age variations among the samples mean that detailed comparisons on individual items would not be acceptable. As a general picture which locates the present sample of adolescents in the 'universe' of

* 'List D' schools at the time of Petrie's studies provided an equivalent Scottish service to the former 'Approved Schools' of England and Wales.
British adolescent behaviour, however, the table does present an interesting comparison, which is quite unlike that gained from the earlier comparison of family data. In Table 31 the sample by no means appears to be an extreme group across the whole range of adolescent misbehaviour, and this is particularly true of the Subject Group.

On running away, truancy (for Comparison and Disqualified Groups) and a composite measure of any potentially criminal behaviour the present sample come towards the top scales of frequency, when they compare with the other social work samples. In other respects they appear to differ little from their peers in general population self report studies, and to be rather better behaved than Smith's small 'gang' sample.

This conclusion is reached with caution, given the sparse nature of the data which is directly comparable. Nevertheless it does give a context within which the degree of aberrance or otherwise of the present sample's behaviour can be viewed. I am also conscious that there appears in some ways a poor fit between the conclusion that the children were not, in quantitative terms, so much worse than the general run of adolescents and the qualitative data in the case examples which suggests that many were extremely difficult to live with.

It is possible, even probable, that the sample in the present study may have committed more frequent or more serious acts than those of the general population studies, or that their behaviour may have persisted for longer, in spite of detection and attempts by adults to control and punish them. The latter would be a particularly coherent explanation for the concern in official agencies, given the descriptions of poor relationships between adolescents and parents and the relative lack of parental influence which would be expected to follow from this. Riley and Shaw
(1986) for example, trace links between the closeness of teenagers' relationship with parents and the likelihood of delinquency, and report that most teenagers readily accepted parental control as a measure of how much they cared about their children. This compares quite markedly with attitudes expressed by 'troublesome' teenagers in care studied by Fisher et al (1986) who were frequently relieved to be away from home and from constant arguments with parents about their behaviour, and with the small proportion of adolescents in Parker et al's (1981) study who had asked to go into care.

A further possibility, given that the official reports in the present study are likely to be only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the sample's misbehaviour (parents in Riley and Shaw's study underestimated their offspring's truancy by almost 50% and their criminal behaviour by almost two thirds!) is that the main difference between the present sample and their age peers lies in having been caught, whereupon many trivial misdemeanours which might otherwise go unnoticed or be dealt with through normal childhood disciplinary structures, become treasured as part of the evidence which must be gathered in the pursuit of the social worker's objectives. Giller and Morris (1981) and Fisher et al (1986) suggest that social workers often appeared less worried about adolescent's misbehaviour than were their parents, but this does not necessarily preclude use of such evidence in an instrumental manner for the 'fine tuning' of a court report (Parker et al 1981).
By such methods, the people with an interest in controlling the adolescent may make flexible use of material which is assumed, rather than demonstrated, to denote a particularly unusual or difficult adolescent control problem. Equally, behaviour which is in fact fairly common among adolescents may be medicalised into an emotional (i.e. mental health) problem.*

In spite of the limits and crudeness of the quantitative process when compared to the complexity of the case examples, the use of this data has shown some patterns which could not be detected by qualitative study alone. It has suggested that, although there are few major measurable differences between the black and white children in the Subject and Comparison Groups, there is a general tendency for the Subject Group to be reported as having fewer (though not necessarily less serious) behaviour problems than the Comparison Group. The range of behaviour problems, however, particularly for the Subject Group, was not broader or markedly more serious than that given in studies of general populations of adolescents of similar age and gender. Most of the problems reported were minority characteristics in this sample as much as they are in general population samples.

* The fact that a particular behaviour is common, or 'normal' does not, of course, make it safe or 'healthy'. (Smoking and alcohol use are the obvious examples here.)
The main implications of these findings in terms of deviance theory are, as with the general population studies, in the low level of overtly 'expressive' deviance of the kind studied in research on youth cultures - vandalism, peer group fighting, drinking and drug use. While the adolescents in the study may have been doing all of these things, such behaviour did not form part of the public domain on which the case for their committal to care was founded.

It is also notable that it was not possible to attempt detailed comparison by ethnicity or race. The lack of ethnic homogeneity in the present sample would have allowed comparisons only for Afro-Caribbean children, but self report and other general population studies do not include quantitative data by race or ethnicity probably because numbers in a general population would usually be too small.*

Criminological studies which have included race or ethnicity have focussed on the nature of offending and action taken by police or courts, rather than on a broader exploration of behaviour problems, and studies of black young people in school or at home focus on their day to day behaviour, relationships and educational achievement rather than on extreme behaviour problems. Only Rutter's early (1975) study gives detailed quantitative information on conduct disorders at school. This study suggested generally higher rates of fighting, disruptive behaviour and stealing at school for children of West Indian origin, but the study was

* In West and Farringdon's age cohort of boys from a poor Inner London area, only 12 out of 409 were black, a surprisingly low number even in 1961 when the sample was chosen. Riley and Shaw, the most recent study, does not mention this issue.
restricted to ten year old children at primary school, almost half of whom were first generation immigrants, and is not a valid comparison with studies of older teenagers predominately born in Britain. Consideration of the ethnic context of children's behaviour is therefore restricted to the analysis of qualitative material in the court reports.

When moving to a consideration of the process of referral and committal to care, the data given so far emphasises the need to explore the intertwining of knowledge about the children's home backgrounds and family relationships and about their behaviour, on a quantitative level, and its interpretation and presentation in court on a qualitative level.

Summary

This chapter described the behaviour which was reported as unacceptable to parents, teachers, social workers and others in authority. It was noted that definitions of unacceptable behaviour are not a constant, varying according to gender, and in the present sample, according to age. Several different measures were adopted to quantify and compare criminal and status offending, focussing on the range of reported misbehaviour. Quantification of the seriousness of reported misbehaviour had to be restricted to the exclusion of the most trivial misdemeanours, since the variation in seriousness for all individual items was considerable.

There was a general tendency for the white children in the Comparison Group to have more reported behaviour problems than the black children in the Subject Group, though the greater frequency of problems in the Comparison Group was significant at the 5% level only for truancy and disapproved sexual activities. The misbehaviour most frequently reported for the Subject Group was running away from home
and disruptive behaviour at school, whereas for the Comparison Group it was truancy and stealing outside the home. Subject and Comparison Groups were similar in terms of criminal behaviour and the action taken to deal with it, although (contrary to expectation) fewer Subject children had been prosecuted.

The generally higher level of reported behaviour problems for Comparison Group children was reflected in their higher scores on a Status Offending Index, which included all potential status offences. An attempt was made to measure frequency of the most serious behaviour problems, whether criminal or status offences, through an Index of Extreme Behaviour which included only items which placed the child or members of the community at risk. This measure did not discriminate between Subject and Comparison Groups, although children in the Disqualified Group had a lower incidence of such behaviour than did the new referrals of the other groups. There was also no difference between Subject and Comparison Groups in the location of the unacceptable behaviour, whether at home, at school, or in the community, although in line with their generally higher level of problems, the Comparison Group were slightly more likely to be reported as having problems in all three areas of their lives.

Results were also checked to see how far they could be explained in terms of gender or age, differences between all black and white children in the sample, and between the Original and Extended Samples. As expected there were some gender differences, with higher rates of reported offending and prosecution for boys, higher rates of disapproved sexual activities and problems at home for girls, but these differences were small and rarely significant above the 10%
level. Black children in the total sample were more likely to be reported as disruptive and violent at school, but white children more often had reports of truancy, disapproved sexual activities, stealing from home and general problems at home.

Differences in truancy, sexual behaviour and stealing from home being found both in the Subject and Comparison Groups and between black and white children in the total sample, probably reflect a broader difference associated with cultural factors. The difference on sexual activities is particularly notable since it is contrary to the gender bias of the groups. As differences on violent behaviour are contradictory between Subject and Comparison Groups and black and white children as a whole, the latter result is probably accounted for by the behaviour of children in the Disqualified Group. Differences on levels of problems at home are contrary to what would have been expected given the findings reported in the last chapter on the reported poorer relationships between black children and their parents.

Age proved unimportant as a discriminator on any of the behavioural variables or indices. There were further differences between the Original and Extended Samples, with the latter having higher status offending scores and a higher frequency of extreme behaviour to add to their higher rates of offending and misbehaviour in the community. This confirms the earlier conclusions on the more difficult behaviour shown by the children referred for access to resources outside their care authority. Two way analysis, however, showed no evidence of inter-relationships between this and other characteristics of sample membership.
Finally, comparison with the results of other studies of adolescent behaviour suggested that the children were comparable to other samples of teenagers who come into care following behaviour problems but were also similar in many respects to general population studies using self-report data. The present sample did, nevertheless, appear to have higher levels of truancy and criminal behaviour than in general population samples.

Although the above description focusses on differences between the groups within the sample, it should be stressed that differences, even where they were statistically significant, were always smaller than the large area of overlap between the groups, and that evidence of trends similarly reflected differences on the margins of judgement. There was no reason to believe that the Subject and Comparison Groups, or black and white children in the total sample, were fundamentally different in character, nor that there were major differences associated with gender, age or between the Original and Extended Samples.
CHAPTER NINE

COURT REPORTS AND THE USE OF COMPULSORY POWERS
Introduction

The remainder of this thesis deals with the committal process and the way in which the social worker used the information gathered on the child and family to construct the case for a care order. The last three chapters have shown that the social workers had a considerable variety of information at their disposal, some concerned events so serious that they were unlikely to need much enhancement when used to convince a juvenile court that 'something must be done' to control or protect the child. Other information on more trivial or more common circumstances was available to be used if desired to 'shape up' a case for court (Parker et al 1981).

It has also been shown that children reached care by varied routes, with different patterns of input from parents, children, social workers and other agencies, which were interactive processes, and in which the exact nature of the child's misbehaviour often seemed rather unimportant. Two particular features which emerged are relevant at this point.

Firstly, it has become clear that whether the route of criminal or civil proceedings was taken, usually bore little relationship to what the child had done, as did the specific grounds for civil care proceedings. Almost all of the children, particularly the white children, could have been made subject to proceedings for truancy; the large majority of both groups were stealing or committing other criminal or potentially criminal acts; many more of them could have been considered in moral danger than were in fact committed under this clause, and all appeared to be de facto beyond the
control of their parents. Furthermore, for many of the children, grounds existed for proceedings under the child protection clauses of the 1969 Act: some children were physically injured, neglected, abandoned and sexually abused by parents, and proceedings on these grounds were sometimes linked with those concerning the child's behaviour.

Secondly, and following from this, the choice of which course to pursue was not solely a matter of professional judgement of the validity of the grounds, nor of moral judgements, but was heavily influenced by practicalities and events which at times seemed fortuitous. A child happened, just at the right moment in the course of events, to do something serious enough to justify criminal charges and save everyone the trouble of proving a much less clear-cut 'neglect' or 'beyond control' case; a parent's change from cooperation to withdrawal, or vice versa, at a strategic point in relation to the legal proceedings; a child being suspended from school; a girl becoming pregnant, or having a row with her boyfriend and consequently taking an overdose; a parent becoming ill; all these events were not part of the planning, but nevertheless influenced the choice of strategy, sometimes at very short notice.

There was clearly also an element of playing safe in many instances by bringing proceedings on more than one ground: if the 'neglect' case did not hold up in court, the 'beyond control' case might, with the same end result - the care order 'in the child's interests'. Gelsthorpe (1985b) illustrates the way in which 'moral danger' is used as a means of giving extra weight to a case which might not otherwise be thought sufficiently conclusive, even when the girl was thought not to be sexually promiscuous, and Parker et al (1981) suggest that truancy was used in a similar way. With a number of children who were committed in civil proceedings while awaiting trial on criminal charges, it seems likely that, had the civil case failed, a request for a 7(7) order would have been made at the criminal trial.
Faced with the task of making a case in court in a complex and volatile situation, the social worker has to make decisions, not only on which legal proceedings to pursue and the recommendation to the court, but on which information to give the court and which to hold back, what to emphasise and what to downplay, and how to present 'the facts of the case'. The vehicle through which the case is 'shaped up' and presented to the magistrates for judgement is the court report. In criminal proceedings this is formally known as the 'Social Inquiry Report'; in care proceedings the term 'Welfare Report' is the officially recommended one (DHSS 1987) but it is common with troublesome adolescents, for the name 'SIR' (and indeed for other terminology from the criminal system, such as 'remand in care') to be used by social workers even in civil proceedings, an indication of the realities of understanding of behaviour which may underly the legal forms.

The legal authority for the provision of social work reports is contained in the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act, Section 9(1). This requires that when a local authority (or local education authority) brings care proceedings, or is notified by the police that criminal proceedings are to be brought against a juvenile:

"It shall be the duty of the authority, unless they are of the opinion that it is unnecessary to do so, to make such investigations and provide the court before which the proceedings are heard with such information relating to the home surroundings, school record, health and character of the person in respect of whom proceedings are brought as appear to the authority likely to assist the court".
It is notable here that all the requirements are for background information, i.e. not (in criminal proceedings) information on the circumstances of or motives for the offence, nor (in civil proceedings) for information on the behaviour which has led directly to the care proceedings. The Magistrates Court Rules 1970 amplify the requirement by adding 'information as to the general conduct' of the child to the above list. In other words, the purpose of the report is not to assist the task of proving the case, but to establish the moral character of the child and other relevant people, and clarify the social context which might help establish risk factors, likely outcomes, and therefore suitable disposals.

**Reports in Criminal Proceedings**

There has been considerable research in recent years on the social inquiry report in criminal proceedings, and it is an area of social work practice which is under close scrutiny and subject to questioning from both academics and social work practitioners (Morris and Giller 1987). This has occurred primarily because findings from several studies suggest that social work reports are more likely to push offenders 'up tariff' towards sentences favouring social work intervention, and hence to propel them more speedily into the penal system, because non custodial 'low tariff' options such as fines are by-passed. The implications are that social workers fail to operate within (and perhaps to understand) the organisational context and rule structure of 'normal' sentencing practice. Whether a social work report is taken much notice of, however, may vary according to the style of the juvenile court, whether it is 'legalistic' or 'punitive' in its orientation, or whether it is strongly 'welfare oriented' (Anderson 1978, Parker et al 1981).
Other studies note that very little of the context of a social inquiry report deals with the offence, and this is interpreted as being an indication of the extent to which offences are seen by social workers as only a 'symptom' of underlying personal or family problems (Giller and Morris 1981, Parker et al 1981). An alternative explanation, however, is that social workers are simply fulfilling their legal brief, and that they neither have a remit, nor are expected to deal with the offence. This does not necessarily negate the suggestion that offences are viewed as a 'symptom'. Sutton (1981) discussing the ways in which social workers use (and abuse) ideas from psychology and psychiatry in their court reports suggests that it is inevitable that these disciplines should be those primarily drawn upon in preference to those of group behaviour or social phenomena.

"The court needs to consider what happens in the interaction between individuals and their environment to bring about such and such an attitude or behaviour and determine the individual response to this intervention or the other. This is the stuff of psychology, not sociology."

Nevertheless Sutton goes on to say:

"It cannot be emphasised too strongly that there does not as yet exist a world science of developmental psychology."

He illustrates the ways in which social workers' ignorance of the pre-paradigmatic state of psychology, combined with simple faith in it's scientific status, leads to the retention and use in court reports of outdated or spurious theories of children's behaviour and personality. He instances in particular the reification of behaviour 'problems' divorced from their situational context, and the disproportionate emphasis on historical factors, heredity and the 'problem family'.

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Yet the misuse of psychological or psychiatric material does not necessarily represent a phenomenon due to accident, ignorance or innocence. Just as 'misfit sociology' (Pearson 1975a) may be actively convenient to the social worker's formulation of a social work problem and solution, so may particular theoretical approaches to the individual survive because they support the existing conception of the social work role and task. The theories Sutton feels to be misused are precisely those which lend themselves to the judgement of 'character' as defined in the legal brief, and suggested by Giller and Morris (1981) and Rees (1978) to be linked to the longstanding tradition of discrimination between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving', the 'deprived' and the 'depraved'. Such judgements cannot be made unless the judge perceives 'behaviour' as an aspect of 'character', and understands the antecedents (historical and organic) thought to create 'character'. Recent psychological evidence or theories which suggest that concepts such as 'character' or 'personality' may be meaningless, are no manner of use to the social worker in trying to carry out the court's instructions, or to use the court in pursuing social work remedies. Some social workers themselves perceive this. One of Giller and Morris's respondents, for example, told the researchers:

"And that is the other reason why social workers do tend to concentrate on the relationship things. If there is anything in the relationship that they can naturally grab a hold of because its the only bit that you can actually feel that you might be able to do something about." (Giller and Morris 1981)

Reports in Civil Proceedings

Many of the above points are equally relevant to reports in civil proceedings, particularly those in which status offences are being considered. There is no substantial body either of research or of practice literature on social work reports in civil proceedings. Most commentators suggest
that social work practice in writing and presenting reports is essentially similar, regardless of the type of proceeding (Parker et al 1981, Sutton 1983) and not until 1987 did central government issue guidelines distinguishing between the objectives and style of criminal and civil reports (DHSS 1987). Sutton (1983) discussing reports on children in civil proceedings was compelled to draw many of his illustrations from criminal work. He produces examples of practice guidelines issued over a twenty year period which show clearly the similarities between those issued to the probation service and local authorities for use in criminal proceedings, and those issued to local authority social workers on child care assessment and social history presentation. Both types of report were expected to include material on the family history and marital relationships; employment, character, and child rearing methods of parents; character and behaviour of siblings; the child's early history with particular emphasis on separations from parents; behaviour and health in infancy; present accommodation; material and financial problems; educational history; the child's behaviour; personality and character.

Not until the 1980s was it suggested in official guidelines that neighbourhood, poverty, housing and employment patterns should be described to set the family in its social and community context or that social workers should refuse to collude with the personalising of social problems.

While the guidelines have a heavy emphasis on data, with little or no explicit reference to theory, Sutton points out that they reflect an implicit theory that juvenile crime is "a blend of immediate family and interpersonal factors" to be selected and analysed at the psychosocial level. Absent is any requirement to consider the external context of the offending behaviour, the likely effectiveness of any specified intervention, or the child's understanding of the ethical and moral questions. Although the writers ethical and moral assumptions may be apparent, the child's behaviour is treated in a totally deterministic way.
There is also evidence that social workers who work regularly with a particular court adjust their reporting to their perceptions of the individual judges or magistrates (Anderson 1978, Carlen 1979, Parker et al 1981) though there is less certainty as to whether this affects the outcome of cases. Probation officers, however, are the most likely to do this. Few local authority social workers have a continuous link with particular courts.

Race and Court Reports

The issue of race and court reports has also been largely ignored. Allen (1986) points out that the criminal justice system, including the probation service, has been much slower than other public services to develop positive strategies to counteract racism, in spite of the considerable evidence of both explicit and institutionalised racism within the system. Such little material as does exist on the probation service focusses on post-sentence programmes and even a report by the Commission for Racial Equality (Taylor 1981) gives no discussion of the crucial role of the Social Inquiry Report.

Whitehead (1986), one of the few writers to discuss race and SIRs, considers that by their nature they are inevitably racist. Because black defendants are more likely to suffer from the kinds of structural inequality which are personalised in the reports - more likely to be unemployed, in poor housing and underachieving at school for example - they are more likely to be presented as socially inadequate, or having a poor prognosis for low tariff sentencing. In the emphasis on family structure and background, unfamiliar family forms, particularly those of Afro-Caribbean culture, will appear disadvantageous, or even irresponsible.
Whitehead describes an instance when a well meaning probation officer tried to explain in its cultural context an Afro Caribbean defendant's long standing relationship with and economic support for, two women and their children, only to have an indignant magistrate describe the defendant as 'keeping a harem' and punish him more severely than his co-defendants.

Husband (1986) comments on the way in which "psychologically reductionist argument, seeking to reduce social phenomena to psychological (individual) explanation" is the foundation of many modern forms of racism in an era when explicit racist statements are unfashionable. Yet in Whitehead's argument, any attempt to counteract this by 'sociologising' court reports is likely to rebound on the defendant, (and probably also discredit the social worker) rather than broaden the magistrates' understanding of the defendant's position.

**Hidden and Open Agenda**

The conclusion from previous research on court reports is therefore that they represent a highly selective account of a child or family, in which information is often included, not necessarily because the social workers, education welfare officers, or even the police, think that it is important in itself, but because it is expected to carry weight with magistrates in persuading them to accept the report's recommendations. Other information may be excluded or abbreviated because it will hinder the case. Hence, the reports in the present research represent a structuring of information which will attempt to:

a) meet the statutory brief for a court report;

b) be 'truthful' in the sense that neither the family nor the legal advisers could openly contradict or disprove the 'facts' of the case in court; and yet

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c) In Parker's (1981) terminology, 'shape up' the case for a care order and 'fine tune' it to the expected requirements of magistrates, taking into account the known characteristics of a particular court, and the social attitudes which magistrates in general are thought to hold about troublesome adolescents of the 'type' (age, gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) being brought before the court.

How effective the social worker is at this complex task has been shown to vary according to the role and experience of the social worker, and the orientation of the court (Anderson 1978, Parker et al 1981, Morris and Giller 1987), but for the purposes of the present study, effectiveness must be largely assumed: the social workers wanted a care order in almost all of the cases studied and they obtained a care order*.

The selectivity of the report works in two directions. What is included reveals the way in which the case for intervention is constructed. What is left out constitutes 'negative evidence' (Lewis and Lewis 1980) which may be important in its own right as a measure of 'taken for granted' professional assumptions (Garfinkel 1967) or by comparison with other material on the case may reveal the 'hidden agenda' (Parker et al 1981). This may be material which is being underplayed or even concealed from the court, or may be the 'real' reason for the proceedings being brought, as distinct from the formal grounds for proceedings.

* The few exceptions, all members of the Comparison Group, were a handful of children committed to care unexpectedly in criminal proceedings for whom, during the hearing of a trivial charge, information emerged which suggested grave difficulties at home.
The Analysis of Court Reports

Some of the material in the remainder of this chapter comes from the statistical analysis of the total sample, but the case material is taken from the Stage Three analysis of court reports. For this stage of the research the focus was narrowed to the new cases of the Subject and Comparison Groups. The official court report was not available for every member of these groups, and it was also desirable, given the nature of the analysis undertaken, to introduce as much control and rigour into the analysis as possible. Earlier material has shown that gender differences were marked in the sample, and that the Subject Group contained a slightly higher proportion of girls than the Comparison Group. As the Comparison Group was also larger than the Subject Group it was decided to take each member of the Subject Group for whom court reports were available and match them with the child of the same gender from the Comparison Group who was nearest in date of committal to care. Only for the matched pairs were court reports analysed. This gave a control for the effect of gender in the analysis. Ideally it would have been preferable to obtain a true match also for age and whether the committal was made in care or criminal proceedings, particularly the former. Numbers did not permit true matching on these variables but some adjustments were made to age pairs where this could be done without losing the closeness of committal date, with the objective of trying to ensure that pairs were within 12 months of each other in age. These variables were also checked to ensure no consistent bias was built in.

The matching process gave 22 pairs of children for comparison (full reports were not available on four Subject children for this analysis). Seventeen were girl pairs and five were boy pairs. Eighteen pairs were committed to care within less than 3 months of each other and the remaining four within 6 months of each other. Within the relatively
narrow age range of most of the sample age differences proved less of a difficulty than expected: all except six pairs were within 12 months of each other's ages, usually considerably less than this. Of the pairs outside the 12 month limit, one had 13 months age difference, two had 15 months, two 18 months, and one had a difference of 2 years. Of the latter three pairs, one contained the only 10 year old in the Subject Group, the second the only 16 year old in the Subject Group, and the third contained a 12 year old from the Comparison Group. Hence it was children at the extreme age limits in the sample who were hardest to match in age terms, but the differences in age cancelled each other out. Of the six pairs outside the desired 12 month limit, the Subject Group child was older in three pairs, (18 months, 15 months and 2 year differences) and the Comparison Group child in three pairs (18 months, 13 months and 15 months).

In twelve pairs, both children were committed to care in civil care proceedings and in five pairs both were committed in criminal proceedings. Of the five pairs which were of different legal status, in two the Subject child was the one with criminal status, in two the Comparison child had the criminal status, and in the fifth the Subject child had been committed in both care and criminal proceedings, but the Comparison child only in care proceedings.

It was concluded that the degree of similarity between the pairs was sufficient to justify using a matched pair design for some of the quantitative analysis. A list of the pairs is included in Figure 32. More detail on the methodology for analysis of the court reports is given in Chapter Ten, and the schedule for analysis is included in Appendix One.
TABLE 32: MATCHED PAIRS OF CHILDREN FOR THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF COURT REPORTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Time Between Comittal</th>
<th>Age Difference</th>
<th>Proceedings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child (aged)</td>
<td>Child (aged)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIRLS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Janet (13)</td>
<td>Adele (12)</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Care (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lauretta (12)</td>
<td>Lucy (13)</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Care (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Marilyn (13)</td>
<td>Moira (14)</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Julia (13)</td>
<td>Trudy (14)</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Selina (16)</td>
<td>Leila (15)</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Velma (15)</td>
<td>Tessa (15)</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Less than 1 month</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Patsy (14)</td>
<td>Molly (13)</td>
<td>Same Day</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Care (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tara (14)</td>
<td>Mona (14)</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Crim (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Cathy (12)</td>
<td>Janine (13)</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Fenella (14)</td>
<td>Alice (13)</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>Crim (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Margaret (13)</td>
<td>Shelley (14)</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>13 months</td>
<td>Crim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Riya (15)</td>
<td>Petra (15)</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>Crim (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Geraldine (13)</td>
<td>Heather (14)</td>
<td>6 days</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Ravinder (15)</td>
<td>Vicky (14)</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Lynne (15)</td>
<td>Leonie (15)</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>Crim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Kay (14)</td>
<td>Andrea (14)</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Less than 1 month</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Anna (14)</td>
<td>Teresa (12)</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOYS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Adam (13)</td>
<td>Don (13)</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Perry (15)</td>
<td>Sam (14)</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Crim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Arthur (13)</td>
<td>Charles (14)</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>Crim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Oliver (14)</td>
<td>Alec (14)</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Dean (10)</td>
<td>John (12)</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interim Periods in Care

Some of the illustrations given earlier have indicated the potential importance of the short period in care prior to the court hearing. This can provide evidence which helps to shape the case, and in some instances fundamentally changes the grounds for proceedings, by placing the child in a new context, with new opportunities and temptations.
The majority of the sample were in care immediately prior to the making of their care order: all 26 children in the Subject Group, 32 (78%) of the Comparison Group and 20 (73%) of the Disqualified Group. Of those in care, only three were placed in foster homes, and the remainder in residential childrens homes, frequently homes formally designated as 'Observation and Assessment Centres', able to produce a full range of social work, psychiatric, psychological and educational reports. All except nine of those in care were made subject to a compulsory order for short periods before their final committal.

### TABLE 33: LEGAL STATUS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO COMMITTAL TO CARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal Status in Care</th>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Disqualified Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remanded in Care</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>15 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim Care Order</td>
<td>18 (69%)</td>
<td>22 (54%)</td>
<td>11 (42%)</td>
<td>51 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Safety Order</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.2 1980 Act (Voluntary agreement)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in Care</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>15 (16%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 26 41 26 93

Many of those subject to Interim Care Orders had previously also been in care on Place of Safety Orders or by voluntary agreement. There was a general tendency for the Subject Group to have a higher rate of compulsory intervention prior to the care orders than did the others: Table 33 shows that 92% were in care under compulsory powers compared to 69% of the Comparison Group and 65% of the Disqualified Group. Similarly, 58% of the Subject Group had originally come into care via a Place of Safety Order, compared to 43% of the Comparison Group and 23% of the Disqualified Group, although here the contrast between Subject and Comparison Groups is much less marked than between the two groups of new cases and the Disqualified Group.
Once in care, the children in the sample demonstrated amply the ineffectiveness of a mere court order as a means of control. Of the 78 children in care prior to committal 65% were described as exhibiting difficult behaviour in care. Usually this was the same behaviour as had been exhibited before admission but in some instances new problems arose, or were discovered.* Fisher et al (1986) describe this as the main reason for parent's subsequent disillusion with care as a solution to their children's problems; having asked for their sons and daughters' admission in order to get them away from bad company they then often found that the company being kept in the children's home was every bit as suspect, in their eyes. Often in the company of other children from the same home, adolescents from the present sample ran away, stayed out all night, went shoplifting, and started fights on the premises or in the neighbourhood. There were comparatively few whose behaviour problems ceased on admission.

* Being in care, particularly in a residential home, offered fewer opportunities for privacy, and hence for concealment than children had in their own homes. Several children who were caught hiding stolen goods, for example, were suspected of having been shoplifting and getting away with it for some time. Occasional truancy, also, was more likely to be noted once the child was in care, since the child had no home to use as a hide out. Other 'behaviour problems' could be created by the care setting, for example if there were rigid, early curfew or bed times in a children's home this might itself lead to a child's previously acceptable behaviour becoming 'misbehaviour'. Nevertheless it is likely that some naive children learned how to shoplift, or how to survive on the run, after admission to care, rather than before.
However inconvenient the continued bad behaviour might be for the residential workers or foster parents trying to cope with it, the news was not necessarily bad for the field social workers preparing the reports for the court. Parker et al (1981) have described the way in which additional evidence dredged from children's background can be used to 'shape up' a case in court, even when the behaviour was not directly linked to the formal reason for the intervention. However the child behaves in care in the crucial few weeks before the court hearing this will provide useful assistance to the fieldworker. If the child immediately reforms, this is proof that the child's problems were related to the unsatisfactory environment, and that removal from home is needed to solve them. If the problems continue, this too, is proof that the problems are very severe and the child really needs professional intervention. Criminal offending after admission may be particularly useful in helping the social worker to bypass the more complex civil procedures for obtaining a care order, and in evading the unwelcome direct confrontation with parents as neglectful or incompetent which is involved in care proceedings (Parker et al 1981). There were also several adolescents for whom the care order became inevitable when they failed to cooperate with alternative courses of action proposed by the court or the social worker.

**Petra, aged 15, Comparison Group**

Petra appeared in court on five criminal charges for offences committed while out with her boyfriend. The social worker was, however, principally concerned about Petra's failure to attend school and considered that she was beyond her parent's control, and on this basis a care order was recommended. As this was Petra's first offence, the magistrates were reluctant to take such a serious course, and instead remanded Petra in care for a month, to give her the chance to prove that
she could behave sensibly.* When she returned to court, her social worker and the children's home staff reported that she had not cooperated at all; she had frequently absented herself without permission from the children's home and the classroom, and been defiant. Her social worker commented in a supplementary report: "Petra does not wish the court to make a Care Order, so the incentive to cooperate over these past weeks has been high, yet she has not been able to do so". This time, the Care Order was agreed.

**Fenella, aged 14, Subject Group**

Fenella was admitted to care by voluntary agreement in an attempt to resolve the considerable frictions in her relationship with her father. While in care she went shoplifting with another child from the residential home where she was placed. As she had no history of offending, the police planned to caution her, but on the day the caution was due, Fenella went off with friends from the nearby estate and failed to attend at the police station for her caution. The police were then left with little option but to prosecute and this led to a Care Order.

**Cathy, aged 12, Subject Group**

Cathy appeared before the court for non attendance at school. As she had a particularly troubled family situation the social worker recommended a Supervision Order, and this was granted with a requirement that Cathy would attend the Education Unit at the local Intermediate Treatment Centre. Cathy agreed to this plan but went to the Unit for only two days after the Order was granted. Her social worker, after several attempts to persuade her to cooperate, brought her back to court for breach of the Supervision Order, but before the case could be heard, Cathy ran away and was missing for several weeks. When found she was admitted to care on a 'Place of Safety' Order, and on returning to court her Supervision Order on the original grounds was varied to a Care Order.

* This is an illegal use of remand in care, which is intended solely to ensure that the defendant will attend the trial and will not reoffend in the meantime or try to interfere with witnesses. Nevertheless it is probably a common strategy.
The inevitability of the care order in such circumstances as these, however, does not reflect the lack of available legal options, but the fact that the adolescent's behaviour has challenged the reality of the adults' authority, triggering the next stage in the strategy to reassert that authority. The adults' offer of a compromise solution is in the nature of a bargaining tactic which will save the adults' faces without changing the adolescents' real position: 'behave well for four weeks and you can go home'; 'go to the IT Project at least occasionally, and we won't insist on you going back to your old school'. When this compromise is rejected, the adults risk being made to look silly, and what is more, being made to look silly in open court. The agenda ceases to be concerned solely (or perhaps even primarily) with the adolescent's needs and includes the defence of the social worker's, teacher's or police credibility. The proceedings become a test of strength between child and social worker, or between family and social worker. In this combat the power of the state to control the child or the family, is only one half of the issue. The other is the social worker's perception of his or her professional power and desire to maintain and enhance that power.

The Use of Compulsory Powers

It is in this context that the use of compulsory powers is a pointer to a number of potentially important issues. The use of Place of Safety Orders is linked above all with running away and ill treatment, this being the mechanism by which the adolescents were removed, in theory, from a situation of immediate danger. Yet it was shown earlier that most of the admissions to care were welcomed, if not actively sought, by the adolescents and their parents, and case illustrations show that place of safety orders were taken for young people who had walked into a police station,
hospital or social services department (where they were presumably safe) and refused to leave. Hence it would in most of these instances have been sufficient to use the more limited powers of S2 of the 1980 Child Care Act, under which children could be received into care by voluntary agreement with their parents.

Several recent studies have highlighted the increasing use of compulsory powers with troublesome adolescents. There is also a consensus that the use of such powers is largely unnecessary, is ineffective in exerting real control over the troublesome behaviour and frequently damages the relationships between parents and the social services departments (DHSS 1985).

Why then, did the social workers in the present study pursue care orders which frequently seemed unnecessary when they already had de facto care of the child? The examples of Petra, Fenella and Cathy, given above, suggest that the care order represented the next stage in an inexorable process by which social workers pursued the illusion of control. When hopes are dashed that merely being in care will solve the problems, something else must be tried, and the next step is the acquisition of parental power and authority to add to the de facto parental responsibilites. The fact that possessing parental power and authority had not of itself enabled the real parents to control the child was not discussed in any of the reports.

Thus, Patsy's social worker wrote:

"If we are able to help Patsy, it is necessary that this Department has statutory control over her activities and I feel that this can only be achieved by making her the subject of a Care Order." (Court Report on Patsy, aged 14, Subject Group)

Similarly, Petra's social worker, rejecting the magistrate's suggestion of a supervision order instead of a care order, advised the court:
"A Supervision Order would not be of any use as it would be little different from the help I have tried to give on a voluntary basis." (Court Report on Petra, aged 15, Comparison Group)

This represents a circular argument. If the authority of a court-imposed supervision order gives the social worker no more real power and influence than would voluntary supervision, then why would a care order give more power and influence than voluntary admission to care? This question, too, did not seem to be asked.

The care order could also be used in an attempt to increase the social worker's power over the parents. Petra's parents, although worried about their daughter, did not want her to come into care. Nor did Geraldine's parents, but they were seen as neglectful, particularly her mother. The use of the care order was clearly intended to control the mother rather than the child.

"I do not feel it would be in Geraldine's best interests to return until her mother has demonstrated and maintained a genuine change in behaviour." (Court Report on Geraldine, aged 13, Subject Group)

Geraldine's social worker, in interview, illustrated the way in which the value of a court order was taken for granted to the point at which it did not need to be explained, and also the element of competition for possession of the child which could develop. Although Mr. and Mrs. S had contested the care order they were willing for their daughter to be in care by voluntary agreement.

Social Worker: "Well, they would have agreed to voluntary admission, but then part of the reason we wanted full care was because we wanted - it would be better for us to have full control, quite obviously, and I also wanted - either you care about this kid enough to fight for her or you don't!"

Interviewer: "So it was you who made the decision to take care proceedings?"

Social Worker: "Oh, well, most of the time we would ask for a full care order, its too difficult later (without one)."
This also introduces another aspect of the situation: the social worker saw herself as acting within the policy and accepted practice of her department. The decision to seek a care order was not a major event in itself but something which emerged naturally from what 'we' would do 'most of the time'.

The way in which a care order was seen as very much less bother than supervision order was made clear in interviews. Vicky's social worker described how her own lack of experience was compensated for in discussions with her senior social worker.

**Social Worker:** "It was a toss up between should she be on a supervision order or should a care order be made. Now my senior seemed to think that if we took out a supervision order the next thing we would have to be doing, we would have to go back to court to make the care order and it would just be prolonging things, whereas if we made the care order we could work with Vicky and her mother and at the same time keep some control over Vicky....I felt I had to take advice about it, it was true this was her first court appearance and you know, I did not know what the best idea would be. I thought my senior has more experience of this age group....and she said if we get a supervision order, knowing what we know about this girl, that will then escalate and eventually we will have to get a care order." (Vicky, aged 14, Comparison Group)

A similar argument was put forward by John's social worker, who also illustrated the effect that lack of alternative resources could have. Although John was committed to care for non-attendance at school, the real agenda concerned his beginning to follow the reclusive pattern of behaviour of an elder brother and sister who hardly ever left the house, and rarely spoke to other members of the family.

**Social Worker:** "The bafflement as to what was screwing up certain members of the family was quite decisive in going for a care order rather than a supervision order. Because my original plan when I saw the case on paper was that we would get him home on a supervision order, but concern about the family, about John's interaction with his mum....made me decide to go for a care order rather than a supervision order...."
I had a supervision session with my senior and we agreed we could probably get away with a supervision order with John going to some small unit, not an ordinary school...At a pre-court meeting (with staff from the Education Welfare Office and the children's home) the decision was altered because of the uncertainty of John successfully going home and of the non-availability of a special unit....The way I put it to (Mrs. C) was that if we sent him home on a supervision order and he did not go to school again, then we would be back in court again, so I suppose it was like going for a full care order there and then rather than risking having to come back again." (John, aged 12, Comparison Group)

Court orders could also be seen in a departmental policy context of a different kind, as an essential strategy to obtain resources. Dean's social worker described in interview how this had influenced the decisions about Dean's future. Care proceedings on the grounds that Dean was beyond control were begun as a result of pressure from the local education services and the police, after the failure of attempts to obtain a suitable boarding school place through the local education authority. Dean's parents, although generally cooperative with the social worker and other agencies, had opposed the care proceedings.

Social Worker: "There was some quite strong legal representation in court and the local authority came in for some quite heavy criticism from (the representative) that they had not acted when (Dean's mother) had been screaming at the door and asking for help....though in fact that's not true."

Interviewer: "So they opposed the care proceedings?"

Social Worker: "Oh yes, they wanted to know why we couldn't take this boy and place him - as it was my plan to place him - in the private sector, a maladjusted boarding school with a high staff ratio to give the kid some stability, but with quite a lot of contact with his family...they wanted to know why we couldn't provide that on a voluntary basis and they could not understand that we had to have the backing of a care order to provide the financial wherewithal to place kids like that, and if that is not so it falls back on the education authority."
Interviewer: "Is that (this borough's) policy generally? You couldn't take him into care under the 1980 Act and then place him?"

Social Worker: "Oh yes, but bearing in mind that to place in the private sector is a conference decision which must be taken, and then at Director level to provide the cash for it...we certainly were not willing to do a (voluntary) reception into care of Dean. We want the backing of a full care order." (Dean, aged 10, Subject Group)

Such accounts may be a false understanding of official policy, caused by interpretation and rationing procedures down the line. It is unlikely that a formal policy statement would adopt this position, and it would certainly be unusual for Directors of Social Services Departments to be required to approve the individual placements (though Area or Divisional Directors might). Nevertheless Dean's social worker was not the only one to make this point, and a number of social workers gave the need for access to resources as a justification for the care order. Tessa's social worker (from a different local authority) advised the court in this way:

"A therapeutic environment which was able to impose structure and control may be able to lower her anxiety, in which case a care order would be necessary to obtain such a placement." (Tessa, aged 15, Comparison Group)

An attempt was made to classify the reasons given for recommending the care order in the 44 court reports of the matched pairs sample. Table 34 gives the results. It shows that the majority of arguments concerned the child's need to be in care, away from home, or for specialised placement or treatment, none of which would necessarily require a care order. Only in the small group of cases where parents were seen as unlikely to cooperate, or as having voluntarily withdrawn from the parental role, was there a prima facie case for the use of compulsory powers. The table shows that
the most common reason was the belief that the order would provide control and structure for the child. Resources were mentioned in a quarter of the children's reports, parental inability to cope with the child and parental withdrawal in the same proportion, and parental opposition only once.

### TABLE 34: REASONS GIVEN FOR RECOMMENDING A CARE ORDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental incompetence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental withdrawal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental lack of cooperation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's need for control/structure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for removal from unsatisfactory</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for protection of child</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for good parenting/stability/love</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for good planning for child's</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of needs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to placement resources</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get skilled professional help with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal problems</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's problem behaviour/deteriorating</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reason given</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No recommendation for Care Order</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BASE: 44 CHILDREN IN MATCHED PAIRS ANALYSIS**

(22 Subject, 22 Comparison)

Parental opposition to the care order, and refusal to cooperate with the social worker were by no means the same thing. Parents who opposed the care order wanted to retain their rights over their child, and their action represented concern for the child. In these circumstances they were usually (once the court battle was lost) willing to cooperate with the social worker in the child's interests. Parents who were refusing contact with their children had effectively 'disowned' them. They did not oppose the care
order, and appeared to refuse cooperation with social workers because they wished no further involvement in their children's lives. These parents were coded as having withdrawn from the parental role, (although not all coded as withdrawals were so extreme).

The resources question is only one of a number of arguments connected with organisational features of the social services rather than with the child or the family. Seeking a care order in order to obtain assessment, or to enable proper planning for the child are features noted in other studies of admission to care and have been held to reflect avoidance of decisions and a belief that assessment and child care planning are specialised jobs, not appropriate for a field social worker to undertake (Giller and Morris 1981, DHSS 1985).

The frequency of use of any single argument shows very little difference between the Subject and Comparison Groups, with the one exception that rather more of the Subject Group were seen as in need of skilled professional help to resolve emotional and psychological problems. These were usually connected with family conflicts. The result may be accounted for by the greater degree of hostility in relationships reported for the Subject Group, but there were also a good many Comparison Group children for whom family relationships were a serious problem.

In this context, Dean, the only black member of an otherwise white family was said to need skilled help in developing his self-esteem and identity:

"(Dean) has distinct feelings of uncertainty about his identity....If he can gain confidence in his identity he may well be better able to cope with the family ambivalence". (Dean, aged 10, Subject Group)

Similarly Ravinder, described as a victim of culture conflict, was thought to be
"In need of much help and support in order to work through her conflict." (Ravinder, aged 15, Subject Group)

For Fenella, and most of the other children in this group, the need was unconnected with ethnicity, but was directly linked to conflict with, or rejection by, parents.

"Fenella desperately wants a secure female figure....It is of paramount importance for Fenella to work through her mother's rejection." (Fenella, aged 14, Subject Group)

"Shelley needs a stable, secure environment with psychiatric and psychological oversight which will allow her the opportunity to come to terms with her deeprooted emotional problems." (Shelley, aged 14, Comparison Group)

All reasons connected with the child's need for protection, stability, planning or love imply that parents are incompetent in providing these things. When parental incompetence was given as an explicit justification this was usually in terms of a direct statement that the parents were unable to control the child, but occasionally referred to more specific parental failings as with Geraldine's mothers inability to control her drinking in Geraldine's interests. The need for good parenting was usually linked either with the absence of or rejection by a crucial figure, as with Fenella's mother, or parents seen as unable to meet their children's emotional needs, as with Tessa.

Underlying most of these reasons is the implication that social workers did not see parents as reliable or trustworthy partners in caring for the child. They wanted the care order because "it's too difficult later" if the parent does not accept or cooperate with the social worker's plans. Parents who were seen to have failed their children by incompetence, withdrawal, lack of love or stability (or even as endangering their child) could not be expected to provide firm backing for the social workers attempts to control the child, or consistency in forming and pursuing
sensible plans. Parents were collectively seen as having little to offer, a point made in other studies of social worker attitudes to the parents of children in care (Boss and Homeshaw 1974, DHSS 1985). Here the issue is not only one of power and control, but becomes one of stigma, a collectively low expectation of a person designated as a 'client' and who by definition (because the child is out of control) must be an incompetent or inadequate parent.

The next chapters, in looking at the way court reports are constructed, will explore the way definitions of family and parental competence are reached, and the manner of their presentation to the court.

Summary

Examination of the statutory brief which social workers are given for preparing court reports in criminal proceedings shows that it is not primarily concerned with the offence itself, but with an estimation of the character and circumstances of the defendant. Clear national guidelines for court reports in civil child welfare proceedings were not available to social workers at the time the reports on the present sample were prepared, and social workers were generally encouraged to adopt a similar approach to that taken in criminal proceedings.

Court reports are known to be a selective process, in which the social worker 'shapes up' the information in a way designed to influence the court, taking into account knowledge and belief about the likely attitudes of magistrates in general and particular courts. Reports may, in consequence, highlight some information and underplay other features, with a 'hidden agenda' unknown to the court.
but forming a central part of the reason for the proceedings or the recommendations. They are likely to focus more on features of the individual's personality and character, than of the social environment, and thus personalise features of a client's situation which are socially structured, and present these as individual defects.

A small sample of 44 children (22 Subjects and 22 Comparisons) was selected for detailed study of court reports. Children were matched for gender and date of committal to care, and as far as possible for age and legal status.

Exploration of the circumstances of committal showed that most children were in care immediately prior to committal, usually under compulsory powers. Compulsory powers had been used more often with the Subject Group than with the other groups. Two thirds of them were considered to misbehave while in care. Behaviour in care was an important contribution to the shaping up of court reports and could substantially influence the court's decision.

Although many parents appeared willing to cooperate with their child's admission to care by voluntary agreement, social workers invariably argued for compulsion. Most arguments were in terms of the need for the child's protection and treatment, or because compulsion would give the social worker greater control over the child or the parents. There were, however, a number of instances in which the argument was made in organisational terms, of access to resources and the need for planning and assessment. This linked with understanding of rationing procedures, and local authority division of labour between fieldworkers and assessment services.
There was little difference between the arguments used to justify compulsion for Subject and Comparison children, except that the former were more often described as needing a care order to ensure specialised treatment, counselling or other professional guidance. In a few instances this was linked to ethnicity, but was more often linked to family relationships.

The dominant theme in the discussion of social worker's pursuit of court proceedings and care orders is one of the desire for power, control and authority. These arguments were made less in terms of state power, or the children being a public threat, than of the safeguarding of professional power, with the children's interests being the justification given. There is, however, a secondary theme in which social workers appeared to how low expectations of parents, who were frequently depicted or implied to be incompetent in exercising parental responsibilities, and were therefore stigmatised as failures.
CHAPTER TEN

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COURT REPORTS
CHAPTER TEN

Introduction - Hypotheses and Predictions

This chapter presents the first stage in analysis of the way in which court reports were constructed. The deconstruction of the text of reports was undertaken using both quantitative and qualitative frameworks, with the following objectives.

1. To clarify the theoretical models which social workers use to explain the child's troublesome behaviour and to explore whether different models are used for black and white children.

2. To examine the presentation of the family's part in the status quo of the child's situation, and whether this differs for the families of black and white children.

A recent series of exhortations to 'good practice' in writing court reports have a number of features in common. They castigate social workers for relying on outdated, unvalidated or ill-understood psychological (usually psychodynamic) explanations; for including detail on family history and infant experience which is irrelevant (or at least not related in the text) to the matter which has brought the child to court; for paying insufficient attention to the reason why the child is in court and to plans for solving the problems described; and for including sexist, racist, and social class stereotypes; (Sutton 1981, Collins and Behan 1981, Sutton 1983, Raynor 1985, Hartley and Wilson 1986, DHSS 1987). It is a hypothesis of the present research that these features of report writing do not simply represent ignorance or out of date practice but the positive choice of a strategy which has become a
'routine remedy', precisely because it supports the social workers' peer-approved analysis of and solutions for the social work problems embodied in the case; and because it is perceived (whether rightly or wrongly is immaterial to the sociological issue) as a successful strategy, which is appropriate for the court setting.

The literature gave rise to some predictions about the likely structure and content of court reports.

a. In conjunction with what is known about social workers' longstanding stereotypes of ethnic minority clients and their families, it is predictable that explanations rooted in the family structure will differ for black and white children. This difference will be based on assumptions that ethnic minority families have fundamentally pathological structures whereas white families will be seen as having defective management of a 'normal, healthy' structure.

b. Explanations rooted in family circumstances are expected to be 'colour-blind' in seeing troubles as caused by external events common to poor, sick, broken or reconstituted families, with no ethnic dimension.

c. Reports on black children will use marginalisation: the depiction of parents as immigrants and aliens who do not fully understand or comply with expectations about good childrearing which are taken for granted in British culture.

Some differences can also be expected in the way in which social workers use theoretical models to explain the child's behaviour and/or family failure.
d. It is expected that explanations will be founded primarily in psychological models of individual and family behaviour and relationships. Sociological models, whether of family structure, ethnicity or more broadly linked with aspects of community structure, racism or the class system, will be used to a much lesser extent.

e. It is also expected that models will not be set out in a specific, attributed manner, but will have to be elicited from a text in which they will be integral to the presentation and interpretation of the 'facts of the case'.

f. There may be differences between the models used for black and white children, but the general direction of these differences cannot be predicted.

Within these broad areas of prediction, some specific predictions were made about individual analyses. These are explained at relevant points in the text.

**Analysis from 'Inside and Outside' the Report**

Silverman (1985) in a comparison of different approaches to textual analysis, distinguishes between analysis which takes the researcher 'inside' the text and that in which the researcher remains 'outside' the text. In the former, the researcher attempts to establish the structure of the text and "deconstruct the realities the text calls into play". In the latter the researcher starts with a preconceived framework and uses isolated extracts to illustrate critiques or deconstructions.
The present analysis attempted both to analyse the structure of the report, to deconstruct the report writer's reality in explaining or presenting the child's behaviour, and to stand outside the report to search for material illustrating the social worker's choice of models and use of theory. In neither approach was Silverman's model followed exactly. Because the analysis was being used to compare a number of texts rather than explore a single text, as in his example, it was necessary to impose some external rules for the clarification of structure used by many different social workers.

The analysis used a quantified approach to consider the structure of reports in a systematic, comparable, and replicable manner. This was carried out in conjunction with a qualitative framework devised by Dorothy Smith for the analysis of factual accounts (Smith 1978). Both analyses were carried out on reports from the Stage Three sample of 22 matched pairs.

**Internal Analysis**

The internal structural analysis used a quantification approach in which the amount and proportions of the texts devoted to specific issues were counted on a sentence-by-sentence basis. There was considerable variation in sentence length, according to the writing style of the author, but the consistency of style within a report permitted realistic comparisons of the proportionate emphasis. The total length of the report was considered in relation to its emphasis on: the child's difficult behaviour; the family; the neighbourhood and other cultural issues. Emphasis on the family was further subdivided into:
1. Emphasis on family composition and structure. This included information on

a. Family Membership: all mentions of the existence of relatives including the extended family, whether living with the family or away.

b. Household Composition: descriptions of which members of the family (or non relatives) lived together under one roof, or had done so in the past; changes in household composition and location.

c. Family Roles: clear references to role division and assumptions of responsibility specifically linked to role: gender roles, age or status appropriate or inappropriate roles, e.g.

"It is clear that Mr. C was the definite head of the household and respected by all its members".  
(Andrea, aged 14, Comparison Group)

2. Emphasis on family relationships. This was taken to include members related by role as well as by birth or marriage, e.g. 'common law' step-parents, step-siblings, a parent's new cohabitee or intended partner. Comments on family relationships included those about feelings and those in which behaviour was taken as representative of feelings. A direct 'feeling' statement is:

"Mr. S clearly cares for Riya and sincerely wishes for her to live at home."  
(Riya, aged 15, Subject Group)

Statements which show relationships as represented in behaviour are:

"Fenella, then aged 10, particularly asked if she could still see her mother if she moved away from the estate."  
(Fenella, aged 14, Subject Group)

and
"Her father then stated that Fenella often cried for her mother".

3. Emphasis on the material circumstances of the family: any mention of accommodation, finances, health and housekeeping standards.

4. Family discipline and control. This included specific mentions of sanctions applied to control behaviour, or statements of the parent's general approach to discipline, or ability to control. Sanctions were included whether they were seen by the social worker as normal or extreme.

Examples of specific sanctions are:-

"(Ravinder) stole some money from her family, was chastised and hit by her father". (Ravinder, aged 15, Subject Group)

"Petra receives £1.00 per week plus money for specific activities. She could get a rise if she was prepared to do a little more in keeping her room tidy". (Petra, aged 15, Subject Group)

An example of general attitudes to discipline is:

"If (Sam) took something from (his younger sister) and Mrs. C intervened to return the article to Jenny, (his grandmother) would promptly give the article back to Sam. Whilst at his Grandmother's, Sam had things very much his own way". (Sam, aged 14, Comparison Group)

An example of a general statement of ability to control is:-

"(Mrs. C's) problems with Sam have worsened to the point where she could no longer cope (with his behaviour)".

An attempt was also made to count statements of 'parenting qualities' which is a concept frequently used in social work literature but which proved too elusive to translate into sociological terms in a simple counting mechanism, and this attempt was abandoned.
Emphasis on the neighbourhood and culture was subdivided into:-

a. Direct statements about the character of the neighbourhood in which the family lived:

"Mr. and Mrs. S. occupy a three bedroomed house in ....a pre war estate owned by the local authority." (Geraldine, aged 13, Subject Group)

b. Statements about the parents' social and community network:

"Mrs C. was left very lonely but she had to return to her home area where her friends were." (Leila, aged 15, Comparison Group)

c. Statements about the family's culture, both social class or ethnicity:

"The loss of his daughter is both emotionally and culturally very distressing for (Mr. S) especially in view of his recent bereavement." (Riya, aged 15, Subject Group)

d. Statements about the influence of youth or peer group culture:

"(Leonie) started to mix with a group of young people who were older than herself, who spent much of their time outside a public house in (the neighbourhood)." (Leonie, aged 15, Comparison Group)

Three other structural features of the court reports were recorded systematically. These were: social workers' primary explanation for the behaviour; whether the social worker reported the child's explanation for the behaviour and if so what it was; and the reason given for the recommendation of a care order. (The latter finding was reported in Chapter Nine). The examples above show the complexity of sentence construction and the range of information and concepts which could be included in one
sentence. Many sentences had to be double counted, and to do otherwise would have falsified the results. The juxtaposition of clauses and sentences was an important contribution to the interpretation of their meaning and there were many ad hoc problems of ambiguity which had to be solved.

External Analysis

In this part of the analysis, a series of models were listed which were potentially usable by social workers, singly or in combination to explain the child's difficult behaviour, and the parent's lack of control. The texts of the court report were examined systematically, and compared with each possible model, to overcome the risk described by Silverman (1985) that partial selection of isolated sentences might distort the content of the report, or select only those parts which support a particular model or argument. It was also important that the analysis allowed for the possibility of an eclectic approach to the use of theory, since previous studies of social workers' action suggested that they would rarely have a rigorous understanding and use of any one particular theory (Browne 1978) or might selectively use elements of various theories to support an underlying moral position (Rees 1978, Giller and Morris 1981).

A final external approach was taken in an attempt to give access to racial or ethnic stereotypes used in the reports on black children. A list of keywords concerning race and ethnicity was checked against all available reports on black children (including file reports and reports from residential services, schools and specialist consultants) in the search for cultural racism (Ahmed 1986) and the
adjectives used to describe the children and parents were listed.* The latter technique proved to be of relatively limited use due to semantic features of the reports which will be discussed later. The content analysis schedules are included in Appendix One.

The Deconstruction of Factual Accounts

In providing a qualitative context for the deconstruction of the accounts in the court reports, the most helpful model for the construction of an account of deviance is provided by Dorothy Smith (1978). Analysing a student's account of how a friend (K) came to be defined as mentally ill, Smith points out a number of characteristics of the text which are equally relevant to the present research problem. She gives a list of characters in the account, including the reader/hearer or recipient of the account, and the 'teller of the tale', and she shows the way in which the reader/hearer is guided by the teller into a correct understanding of the account. In Smith's outline the person (K) about whom the tale is being told is depicted as merely a 'personage', one of a number of characters who are active in moving the account along, rather than as being a central 'heroine'. In applying this model to the present study the person about whom the tale is being told is referred to as 'X'.

* Checking of other reports was in the main restricted to those available as part of a package of assessment reports. Access to the files held in the social services department area office was practicable only for a few of the Original Sample.
The process of guiding into a correct understanding occurs in three stages: preliminary instructions to the reader; establishing the authority of the teller, and the construction of an authorised factual account. The authorised account reflects the integrity of the teller, tells the reader which of the possible explanations to accept, establishes the relative importance of elements in the account and discredits rival versions of events.

Preliminary Instructions

These begin by a statement of the 'fact' of X's deviance - in Smith's account, K's 'mental illness', in the present account 'delinquency' in Wilkin's sense of behaviour by a juvenile to which adults object. In the court report this 'fact' is usually stated at the head of the report, e.g.

Social Inquiry Report to the London Juvenile Court on 5.8.82, concerning Petra C, aged 15.

Reason for present appearance: Referred for sentencing from London Magistrates Court after pleading guilty to three charges of theft.

or, more succinctly:-

Court: South East London Juvenile Court
Date of Hearing: 5th May 1982
Name: Anna S Date of Birth: 19.12.68
Address: 25 Stables Road, London NE27
Offences: Care Proceedings/Beyond Control
Previous Offences: N/A

In this second example, the report writer has used a standard proforma designed for criminal proceedings and adapted it for civil proceedings, by crossing out the references to offences. In this manner the report is clearly established as being about a 'delinquent', in spite of the civil proceedings.
Smith points out that the initial statement of deviance acts as an instruction to the reader/hearer to interpret everything that follows in the light of this known fact, and therefore to read it, in this instance, as an account of the behaviour and family background of a delinquent child (X).

Establishing the Authority of the Teller

Smith uses Durkheim's definition of a deviant act as serving to legitimise the social order, and points out that it authorises representatives of that order to make the judgement of deviance. In a court hearing, the social worker presenting a report does not even have to establish her credentials as a person authorised to make the judgement, although most did so by starting with information on how long they, or their agency, had known the X family, and explaining the nature of the contact. In some instances the explanation was one which disguised the nature of the contact. Lynne, a Subject Group child, was committed to care in 1983, and her court report stated:

"The Department was first consulted by Mrs. S in 1971 about marital problems. The couple have now been separated for eight years....Mr. S has had intermittent contact with the children during this period."

Although a quick reading of this (the kind for which magistrates usually have time) suggests twelve years knowledge of the family, other records showed no contact from 1971 until Lynne was referred for behaviour problems ten years later, and the report does not claim that any help was given or attempted even in 1971! This type of fudging occurred in a number of reports, always in the direction of enhancing the report writer's authorised status.
A second aspect of authorisation is that the tale-teller's account may be treated, not just as establishing deviance, but as a source of normative definition against which deviance can be measured; whereas X's account, as the account of an established deviant, may not be so treated, and indeed is disqualified from consideration as a normative referent. This point has a slightly different meaning in relation to delinquency than its original use by Smith in the context of mental illness, since the latter as illness is assumed to be involuntary, whereas delinquency in some circumstances may be seen as an activity of choice. An additional complexity in the present research is that the report writer may present the child as deviant; the child as reacting 'normally' i.e. understandably, to deviant parents or other pressures; or the child and parents as being jointly or collusively deviant.

The authorised person is treated as being fully knowledgeable of all facts. Unknown features which might explain X's behaviour as other than deviant are not allowed for. Smith notes that

"It is not a problem, or ought not to be a problem for the reader/hearer... that no explanation or information from K is introduced."

The lack of interest in the child's explanation (or lack of belief when the child offered one), was most notable in the present study. This point will be returned to later.

**Construction of a Factual Account**

In the account analysed by Smith, an important feature is that the teller of the tale is established at the outset as K's friend, who is then assumed to wish her well and whose motives in defining her as deviant cannot be suspect.
Similarly in the present study the social worker will be assumed by the court (the reader/hearer) to be at least independent and benevolent, if not positively sympathetic to delinquents and their families.

Smith notes that the account uses a simple additive formula in introducing witnesses to K's deviance, which produces a cumulative effect. (She likens this in impact to the common children's story format such as Henny-Penny going to tell the King that the sky is falling.) The power of the cumulative effect lies in the way in which each additional witness can be treated as independent and also well meaning, avoiding any suggestion of collusion, influence or plotting. Anything to suggest the opposite is not mentioned or relegated to the background.

In the present study, the range of witnesses commonly accumulated included the school, education welfare services, police, the health services, other voluntary social work agencies, other local authority departments, and occasionally (when they could themselves be unambiguously defined as non-delinquent) the parents. Thus, Kay's (Subject Group) social worker, supporting her claim that Kay was beyond her father's control, successively referred to or quoted evidence from her school, the education welfare officer, the police, a friend of the family who had known Kay for many years, her stepmother and the residential home in which she spent her period in interim care. Riya's (Subject Group) social worker, supporting the same argument, referred to evidence from Riya's aunt, her school, a foster mother and a children's home. In many reports, evidence from the extended family network was used to enhance the opinions of professionals and broaden the base for the authorisation of the account.
In 'K is mentally ill' Smith demonstrates that the reader/hearer is apparently being given the opportunity to judge K for herself by being given samples of K's behaviour to be tested against a concept of 'mental illness' which is already part of common understanding. The account given is, in reality however, a guided account of the hypothesis testing and rejection which has already been undertaken by the teller of the tale. Items of K's behaviour are judged one by one in contrast to a rule of 'normal' behaviour, in a process which attempts to classify them as normal behaviour by looking for normative structures within which they fit. When this process fails to solve the puzzle of K's behaviour her friends are reluctantly constrained to 'face the fact' that she is mentally ill. A similar process of pragmatic hypothesis testing has been described by Atkinson (1978) in his study of coroners' judgements of suicide. Because it is an unpleasant, socially embarrassing explanation for sudden death, coroners work through a range of acceptable alternative hypothesis based on 'theories' of behaviour and only when these are eliminated will suicide be accepted as a verdict.

In considering the use of models to explain adolescents' troublesome behaviour, social workers appeared to be going through a very similar process. Direct application of Smith's model is problematic since it was developed for the detailed analysis of a single text and only its broadest outlines can be adapted to the comparative analysis of 44 texts.
Although Smith presents her model sequentially, she makes it clear that the elements are not necessarily sequential; on the contrary, an account requires constant restatement of some essentials to remind the reader/hearer of the correct interpretation. In the Social Inquiry Reports, the text may simultaneously establish it as an authorised account and construct a factual explanation of the child's or family's deviance.

Developing an Authorised Account of Families and Adolescents

As indicated above, the social worker's status, and the fact that she has been asked to prepare a report for the court is the first step towards establishing her as a person authorised to define the deviant, and to set the normative standards by which the deviant will be judged. The social worker then commonly supplies additional information on the nature and quantity of his or her agency's contact with the family, to demonstrate further that she is in full possession of the facts of the case. In rare instances where families or individuals had refused to cooperate fully or at all, the social worker might state ignorance on this basis, but then the refusal to cooperate in itself became a 'fact' which was equally or more important in judging the situation.

The next stage in authorisation is to establish the relative importance of the different groups of facts about the child and family. One way in which this is done is by the amount of space allocated to each area in the totality of the account.
Establishing Priorities in the Account

Reports varied considerably in length, the shortest being 31 sentences and the longest 127 sentences. There appeared no systematic connection between length and any of the other variables relevant: gender, care or criminal status, or whether the child was in the Subject or Comparison Groups. Table 35 gives the statistical details on length of reports showing that the range and variation within Subject and Comparison Groups were very similar. In a matched pairs analysis, the Subject children had the longer report in eleven pairs, and the Comparison children in the other eleven.

### TABLE 35: LENGTH OF COURT REPORTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Sentences</th>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>22</th>
<th>22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Range from:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>31-101</th>
<th>37-127</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \bar{x} )</td>
<td>56.59</td>
<td>62.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>23.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the total length, the report writers clearly established for the reader that the family background was of greater importance than the child's troublesome behaviour in the definition and understanding of deviance, and that neighbourhood factors were of little importance. Forty of
the 44 reports contained more sentences about the family than about the child's behaviour. Of the four exceptions, three Comparison children had more on behaviour than on the family, and one Subject child had an equal emphasis on both.

Table 36 gives the details of the respective emphasis on family, behaviour difficulties and neighbourhood.* Because of the variation in report length this was analysed by proportion of the whole report as well as by numbers of sentences. Results show enormous variation in relation to family background, from reports in which a quarter of their content was on the family, to those in which almost the whole of it was family material. There was also considerable, though lesser, variation in the emphasis on behaviour problems, though in only one report was behaviour more than half of the content. Nevertheless the average number of sentences on the family is twice that of the average number on the child's behaviour, and both are far ahead of the average on neighbourhood/community characteristics. Neighbourhood was not mentioned at all for almost half of the children, and was more than 5% in only two cases.

None of this variation, however, appeared linked to any of the sample characteristics, and it was concluded that it must represent a synthesis of features of the child and family with features of the social worker.

* The remainder of the reports were taken up with matters related to school (other than behaviour problems), with descriptions of the child's health, appearance, intelligence and interests, or delineations of their positive qualities. These were not included in the counting process.
### TABLE 36: EMPHASIS IN THE COURT REPORT ON FAMILY, BEHAVIOUR AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a. Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences range from:</td>
<td>9-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{X}$</td>
<td>31.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>10.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total report - range from</td>
<td>24%-88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The Comparison Group contained one 'freak' score of 116, without which the 'normal' range of sentences is 14-60, with $\bar{X}$ 32.52, SD 11.96, i.e. almost identical for Subject and Comparison Groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>b. Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences range from:</td>
<td>2-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{X}$</td>
<td>15.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>7.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total report - range from</td>
<td>4%-42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modal percentages between 25%-33% for both groups

** The Comparison Group contained one disproportionately high figure of 60% on behaviour: the next highest was 49%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>c. Neighbourhood</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences range from:</td>
<td>0-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{X}$</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total report - range from</td>
<td>0%-14%***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Apart from one disproportionately high figure of 14%, the highest proportion in the Subject Group was 6%.
On the basis of the material about social workers attitudes to, and stereotypes of, ethnic minority families, it was predicted that court reports on Subjects would show more emphasis on the family than those of the Comparison Group. Table 37 gives the detailed results on the two groups. It shows that Subjects were more likely than Comparisons to have 60% or more of their reports dealing with their family background, but this difference did not reach the 5% level of probability. A more precise analysis was undertaken on the differences between pairs using the Wilcoxon signed rank test, which permits comparison of matched pairs when both the direction and magnitude of differences between them is known. In paired analysis the Subject child's report had
more emphasis on the family in 13 pairs, and the Comparison child in 9 pairs. This difference was again not significant at the 5% level. It was concluded that messages in the court report as to the respective importance of the family background were not dependent in a direct or simple manner on whether the child was black or white.

The Components of Family Life

Within the account of the family further instructions are given to the reader/hearer by the emphasis placed on different aspects of family life: material conditions; family relationships; family roles and structure; and approaches to discipline and childrearing. Once again there was evidence of a general hierarchy of importance. Family structure and family relationships assumed equal importance, with material circumstances trailing some way behind and the parent's ability or methods for disciplining and controlling their children's behaviour taking the lowest place. Table 38 shows that while there was a considerable range of difference in the emphasis on structure, relationships and material conditions, it was nowhere as broad as the range of difference between the total emphasis on family and behaviour.

On family discipline there was a high level of agreement that it generally deserved only three or four sentences, very little more than the space allocated to 'neighbourhood'. This latter finding is of particular importance: when the proceedings are being brought because the child is beyond the control of the parent - and in strictly legal terms the social services department is required to prove this before a care order can be made, even in criminal proceedings - why should the report writers be giving such a clear statement that parental discipline is of minor importance compared to other aspects of family life?
TABLE 38: THE COMPONENTS OF REPORTS ON THE FAMILY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences range from</td>
<td>4-23</td>
<td>4-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \bar{x} )</td>
<td>10.41</td>
<td>10.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>6.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences range from</td>
<td>3-16</td>
<td>0-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \bar{x} )</td>
<td>10.09</td>
<td>10.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>4.297</td>
<td>7.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material Circumstances</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences range from</td>
<td>1-30*</td>
<td>2-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \bar{x} )</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>7.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>4.797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences range from</td>
<td>0-8</td>
<td>0-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \bar{x} )</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The score of 30 is a freak score and without it the range for Subjects is from 1-9, with \( \bar{x} = 4.57 \), standard deviation 2.36.

**NOTE**

Results here are given only in numbers, not in proportions. Comparisons of numbers and percentages showed close similarity in the ordering of data, and absolute numbers were therefore chosen as the more reliable measure.

Furthermore there were other surprising features of this statistical analysis. It was predicted as a result of previous research on black children in care and on social worker's attitudes to ethnic minority families that Subjects' reports would have more emphasis on family structure than those of Comparisons, and a greater emphasis on the parental approach to discipline. It was also expected, given the results reported in Chapter Seven that
Subject children were particularly likely to come from families where relationships were seen as discordant, that the court reports would contain more emphasis on relationships. None of these predictions was supported, either by comparison of the results in groups, nor in matched pair analysis.

On family structure, a matched pairs analysis showed more emphasis in the Subjects' reports for ten pairs, more in Comparison reports for nine pairs, and equal emphasis for three pairs. The amount of space devoted to family structure seemed to be directly related to the complexity of the structure itself although time was not available to check this systematically. Although almost all of the children were living either in single parent or two-parent nuclear families, many were in reconstituted families, or in families where marital problems had led to several parental separations and reunions. Detailing the various changes in family composition during the child's life was usually included as evidence of the stability or otherwise of the child's upbringing, and could take up considerable space in the report.

For family relationships, too, the pairs analysis established no differences in the amount of emphasis between Subject and Comparison children: Subjects' reports had more in ten pairs, Comparisons' in nine pairs, and the emphasis was equal in three pairs. The range of differences was, however, greater in the Comparison Group than in the Subject Group.

The pairs analysis on family discipline, however, showed a significant difference between Subject and Comparison Groups, but in the opposite direction to that expected. The Comparison child's report had more on discipline in twelve pairs, the Subject's in four pairs and emphasis was equal in six pairs (Wilcoxon signed rank test, $T = 33.5$, $N_{16}$, $Z = 1.784$, $p \leq 0.05$).
The model of the 'poor working class subcultural delinquent' was developed for white rather than black children. It was therefore predicted that there would be more emphasis on material circumstances in reports on the Comparison Group. This hypothesis was supported. The matched pairs analysis showed higher emphasis in Comparison reports for twelve pairs, in Subject reports for six pairs and equal in four pairs (Wilcoxon signed rank test, $T = 41$, $N = 18$, $Z = 1.938$, $p = <0.02$). There was also much greater variation in the reports on Comparison children, and those on Subjects (with one notable exception) showed unanimously low emphasis on housing, finance and health. This was not accounted for by any obvious differences in the material circumstances of the two groups. Both had almost identical scores on the Difficult Home Conditions Index (Subject $\bar{x} = 1.1$, Comparison $\bar{x} = 1$), indeed slightly more of the Comparison Group had Index scores of 0 (11 Comparison, 7 Subjects), and more children in the Subject Group were living with parents or stepparents who were working. In the Subject Group 16 children had at least one parent in employment, (14 fathers, most in skilled employment, and 8 mothers). Only 10 of the Comparison Group were with employed parents/stepparents (7 fathers and 5 mothers) although three more had separated or divorced fathers in employment and maintaining them. This may indicate that there were social differences between the families of black and white children, with the former from more economically stable backgrounds (as in the studies by Lambeth SSD 1981/82). It is unlikely, however, that Subject children came from markedly more prosperous families, since Subject families also had more children at home than Comparison families.

Although within the quantitative account of a child's background, the absolute amount of material may vary widely (as befits the expectations of individual concern for each child and family), the proportionate emphasis, in remaining constant, makes a general statement which thus conveys a
clear, authoritative message to the court. In the few
individual cases where the order was changed, circumstances
were quite exceptional. In Selina's (Subject Group) report,
for example, the unusually high number of sentences (30) on
material circumstances reflected an exceptional situation in
terms of the family's health, in which almost every member
of her large family, including Selina herself, had suffered
either serious illness or injury. The report was also the
only one written by a hospital social worker, who placed a
high priority on the health issues. In Charles's
(Comparison Group) report, one of the three in which
behaviour received more emphasis than the family, there was
only one brief mention of the relatively minor offence for
which Charles was ostensibly in court. Instead there was a
detailed account of behaviour problems at home and at school
which were thought to reflect the fact that he was 'a deeply
unhappy boy' who had serious difficulties in his
relationships with his parents. This report was also the
only one written by a probation officer, who was 'shaping
up' a case for a care order in criminal proceedings, in
circumstances in which probation officers would not usually
consider such a recommendation - a young boy in court for
the first time for a minor offence.

The fact that some of the exceptional reports were those few
not written by local area team social workers suggests that
the quantitative conventions for an authoritative account
may be specific to occupational sub-cultures within social
work. Indeed, probation officers are known to adopt, or at
least to claim, different reporting styles to those of local
authority social workers. Carlen and Powell (1979) point
out that courtroom lore has embedded within it "sets of
discursive practices which establish probation officers'
authority" and that reports provide a means of staking their
claim, in a manner which is often quite deliberately
different from that which they see as typical of the local
authority social worker.

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Quantitative emphasis is only the first stage and is, to some extent, a subliminal message. As long as the social worker is reasonably competent in this part of the process, the reader/hearer will hardly notice the impact of the message while still absorbing it, and only if reports are absurdly too long or omit to mention relevant matters will quantification become an issue. Quality of information is a different question. Here it is most important that the report presents itself as a tested account. Although the report ostensibly provides the court with information on which the court can make it's own assessment and decisions, in practice, as in Smith's account, most of the decisions have already been taken. All reports contained examples of 'hypotheses' which had been considered, and rejected, thus eliminating the need for further consideration by the magistrates. John's social worker, for example, rejected a 'neighbourhood' hypothesis:

"It cannot be stated with any confidence what precisely were the reasons for John's school refusal. The few words he has said on the subject amount to him 'not liking it' and fearing to leave the house because of some teenagers next door who were regularly tormenting him. Although (his mother) substantiates this latter difficulty, I do not think it explains John's school refusal." (John, aged 12, Comparison Group)

The social worker was also able to substantiate his 'test results' by demonstrating that when John came into care for a few weeks prior to the court hearing, he attended school regularly and happily from a nearby children's home.

Ravinder's social worker firmly cleared the ground of a range of possible hypotheses to do with her family and personality, and equally firmly established a 'culture conflict' explanation:
"She is neither the product of a bad home, nor is she seen as having a bad character. It is becoming evident that she is rather more of a social and racial casualty of one particular immigrant group coming into conflict with another wider, more flexible westernised community." (Ravinder, aged 15, Subject Group)

Adele's social worker, after a detailed description of her large family, their long history of disorganised life, economic problems, homelessness and poor hygiene, established the limits of this 'multi-problem family syndrome' by noting some parts of it which had been rejected:

"Both Mr. and Mrs. C share fully in the upbringing of their children and the family is a close supportive unit." (Adele, aged 12, Comparison Group)

Kay's social worker, describing her father's immigration, ruled out possible hypotheses of disadvantage connected with immigrant status by reporting:

"A cultured man, Mr. S speaks English fluently. He is self employed and owns clubs in the West End....Mr. and Mrs. S went on expensive, exotic holidays taking Kay with them, and were very indulgent to her". (Kay, aged 14, Subject Group)

**Discrediting Rival Versions**

As well as pointing out priorities for consideration and establishing the proven nature of the account, the authoritative statement must also discredit possible rival versions, particularly those submitted by the deviant.

This can be done either by not mentioning rival versions (therefore treating them as not worthy of serious consideration) or by giving them and discrediting them. The example of John's report given above shows a discredited rival version from John and his mother.
Dealing with rival versions presents a complex puzzle to the social worker however. To begin with, the norms of practice, and in some instances the legislation, state that the views and explanations of the subject of reports must be taken into account. Secondly, there is uncertainty over who is the deviant: is it the child or the family or both? Finally there is the problem of possible rival accounts from other professionals, which need particularly subtle treatment.

The child's explanation for at least some of his or her own behaviour was offered in just over half of the reports: twelve Subjects and thirteen Comparisons. For one further Comparison child, there was a specific statement that the child refused to explain her behaviour, while for ten Subject children and eight Comparisons there was no attempt to put the child's explanation to the court. This is unlikely to be because the social worker did not know it, since reports from the residential homes in particular paid great attention to discussing the child's outlook, attitudes and explanations. The withholding of this knowledge from the social worker's report can be seen either as a deliberate strategy, or as an assumption that the child's views are of no value, thereby discrediting them.

There was no apparent difference between the black and white children in whether the child's explanation was given. There was, however, an indication of difference over whether it was accepted. Of the twelve Subjects, ten of the explanations were accepted by the social worker and supported in the report. Of the thirteen Comparisons, only seven were accepted. These numbers are not amenable to statistical testing and the direction of difference can only be given as an indicator worth following up on a larger sample.
Neither the explanation nor the acceptance were necessarily total. A not uncommon formula was for the child to explain an illegal act, such as a criminal offence, or refusal to go to school, but for more generally troublesome behaviour to be left for the social worker's version.

Thus, Margaret, aged 13, (Subject Group) originally came into care because she was running away from home and mixing with a gang of boys of whom her family disapproved. After running away from the children's home she committed two minor offences. Margaret's explanation for one of these offences was accepted:

"The second offence (of theft of food) was motivated by hunger and was committed when Margaret was on the run from the home and living rough."

For the rest of Margaret's misbehaviour, the social worker put forward her own explanations:

"I feel (her behaviour) demonstrates her inability to accept responsibility for her actions. Additionally I believe her actions were designed to achieve recognition and acceptance with this group of adolescent boys".

"Since Margaret's reception into care we have become aware of her deep-rooted and longstanding problems. I believe that her deteriorating behaviour has been an outward expression of her difficulties."

The social worker therefore perceives an explanation on three levels: Margaret's immediate opportunist explanation for only one piece of misbehaviour; a second level of need for the approval of a deviant peer group which in the short term gives rise to much misbehaviour; and a final level of personality and developmental problems which cause her reliance on the peer group rather than on her family to set the standards for her behaviour, and is the ultimate 'true' explanation for all of her misbehaviour.
Similarly, an explanation could be accepted in part only: Trudy, aged 14, (Comparison Group) stated that she had run away and committed offences in order to be taken into care, but refused to say why she was unwilling to live at home, except to allege that her parents preferred her younger brother to herself. The social worker accepted that Trudy had committed offences to force admission to care, but rejected the second part of Trudy's version.

"For reasons we have been unable to discover, (Trudy) will not return. I feel there are many secrets within this family....I consider this rivalry (between the siblings) is used as an excuse to cover other problems within the family."

Using the child's account as the basis for extrapolation in this manner occurred with five of the seven Comparison Group children whose explanations were accepted, but with only one of the Subject children. There appeared to be a greater likelihood, not only of the black children's explanations being accepted, but of them being accepted unconditionally.

Parents' rival accounts were the primary source of reference to neighbourhood in the court reports. Parents very commonly linked their offspring's troubles with having got into bad company in the area, or (in the case of girls) being influenced by delinquent boyfriends. This has also been noted in other research on teenagers coming into care (Fisher et al 1986). Margaret (Subject Group) described above, was said by her family to have:

"links with a local group of adolescent boys (which) became stronger and this appears to have had a strong negative influence on her behaviour."

Similarly, Leonie, aged 15, (Comparison Group)

"started to mix with a group of young people who were older than herself, who spent much of their time outside a public house in (the neighbourhood)."
Velma, aged 15, (Subject Group)

"goes around in a gang with motorbikes and she has a boyfriend....who is awaiting a court appearance."

and Janine, aged 13, (Comparison Group) likewise

"was associating with the crowd of teenagers who hung around Elm Road making a nuisance of themselves."

The concern aroused by girls who adopted unfeminine behaviour and joined gangs, described graphically by McRobbie and Garber (1976) was amply illustrated in the present sample. (Interestingly, none of the boys in this study were described as having gang involvement nor as being influenced by delinquent girlfriends!)

Yet although social workers shared parents' concern and also seemed to see gang behaviour as problematic, they did not in the court reports accept the parents' explanation that gang influence was responsible for the children's behaviour. Rather, as with Margaret, they described gang behaviour as exacerbating an existing problem, and as symptomatic of the underlying difficulties which made the girls prefer to be on the streets rather than at home with their families. This is precisely the argument given by Donzelot (1977) as the basis of state expectations that the family would protect it's young from the temptations of 'the cabaret and the street', and thereby preserve public order.

Similarly, although the bad influence of some boyfriends was not denied, it was repeatedly suggested or implied that it was only powerful because the girl was not receiving enough emotional support from parents and was hence too dependent on the boyfriend. Characteristic is the account of Andrea, aged 14, (Comparison Group) who committed offences while on the run with her boyfriend:
"Andrea's boyfriend seems to have a great influence on her, and unfortunately he is rather immature and selfish which means that she has been involved in a number of offences while with him."

Andrea's family felt so strongly about this boy's influence that they went to the length of moving from their house to a small flat in another district to get away from him, but the social worker clearly saw the boy's influence as a relatively minor factor compared to Andrea's difficult relationship with her stepfather:

"Andrea's father's death had quite an impact on her...it was hard for her to accept Mr. C as a stepfather and on a number of occasions she has said that he can never replace her real father."

Andrea's loss of her father was compounded when, after his death:

"Mrs. C relied heavily on Andrea for support and became like a sister."

Consequently, in the summing up at the end of the report, the boyfriend's influence is depicted as the least important factor in the decision to pursue a care order.

While neighbourhood gang explanations were those most commonly advanced by parents, there were a few alternatives. Most were dismissed even more briefly by the social workers. Selina's social worker quoted a medical report:

"Mrs. S's idea that Selina's disturbance stems from a head injury received several years ago...The symptoms are not in fact likely to be due to brain injury." (Selina, aged 16, Subject Group)

Marilyn's mother was said to believe that her daughter was possessed by demons. The social worker reported briefly:

"(Mrs. S) has had an Anglican priest visit the family in order to exorcise the spirits she believes occupy the house." (Marilyn, aged 13, Subject Group)
This rival account was seen as one on which no further comment was required, even in refutation, and is instead used with other information, as an illustration of just how far Mrs. S is out of touch with her daughter's needs.

More complex was the treatment accorded to parents' explanations which put the blame on the other (usually absent) parent. Such explanations were usually historical and could assume a major part of the explanation taken over by the social worker to account for the child's 'deep and longstanding' problems. This point is returned to later in the analysis.

In general, however, the parents' explanations were doubly discredited, both by being accorded little space and low priority, and by being openly refuted, or contextualised in such a way as to change their significance and use them in evidence against the parent. The disqualification process was in most cases linked with a statement that the parents were ultimately responsible for the child's misbehaviour.

Rival versions from other professionals were occasionally put forward in separate reports to the court, from schools, residential homes, consultant psychologists or psychiatrists. Unfortunately time did not permit a systematic comparative analysis of explanations from other professionals. Where the social workers could not incorporate other professional's versions into their own reports as cumulative witness accounts, they usually seemed to be ignored, thus evading the embarrassment of having to disagree openly with another professional in court. This happened with Oliver, aged 14, (Subject Group) whose social worker accepted and substantiated Oliver's account that his
father was obsessed with Oliver's education to the exclusion of other aspects of his son's well-being, thus provoking Oliver to rebellious misbehaviour. Oliver's headmaster, however, gave a different explanation grounded in Oliver's moral character, and spoke in approving terms of Mr. S's concern for his son's education.

"He is an earnest man who has visited school on several occasions and is anxious for his children to do well....Oliver now seems to resent his father's care and ambitions for him."

The social worker made no reference to the Headmaster's report, and concentrated instead on shaping up the evidence that Mr. S was insensitive to his son's emotional needs.

Similarly, a consultant psychiatrist put forward a subcultural explanation for Leonie's involvement with a local gang of troublesome teenagers as a rejection of her adoptive parents' middle class standards and a desire to return to her working class roots.

"I think it likely that her relationship with a delinquent crowd of boys from a local working class estate on the one hand reveal the fruition of making her feel nearer her biological origins and on the other gave ample opportunity for acting out her angry feelings towards the parents who rejected her, this anger being displaced onto the adoptive parents."

(Leonie, aged 15, Comparison Group)

The social worker's court report said little about the gang friendships, ignored the subcultural issue altogether and instead translated the issue into one of an identity crisis caused by her adoption and relationships with the adoptive parents. The rival account was in this way used selectively in a way which undermined a crucial part of it without openly contradicting it. Leonie's report also raises issues about the choice of psychological and sociological models, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.
While reports reviewed a number of possible explanations and contributing factors, they generally concluded with a statement of the social workers' views of the underlying causes of the child's behaviour. From each the primary explanation was selected. In a few reports there were no concluding statements and the judgements were instead spread throughout the report. These latter were usually instances where the family circumstances were thought sufficiently unstable or chaotic to speak for themselves with no need for detailed comment or for instructions as to how they should be read.

Primary explanations for the child's behaviour concerned the family for 16 of the Subject Group and 16 of the Comparison Group. There was no apparent difference in the explanation of choice between the two groups. The general disorganisation and instability of family life was the most common with both, with parental failure to set appropriate controls or boundaries, or specific family disasters (death, divorce or separation of parents) coming second (Table 39).

In only four cases was the child's problem linked with specific acts of parental misbehaviour, as distinct from general incompetence, (two Subjects, two Comparisons). With the two Subject children, one girl was thought to be reacting to her mother's excessive drinking and violence and one boy to his father's harshness and unreasonable academic demands. With the two Comparisons, one girl was described as resenting her mother's failure to provide adequate physical care and the other had made allegations of sexual abuse against her stepfather.
TABLE 39: SOCIAL WORKERS' PRIMARY EXPLANATIONS FOR THE CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family's Fault</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Family Disaster (Death/divorce/separation)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Disorganisation/Instability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Parental Misbehaviour</strong> (Other than desertion)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Unable to Set Boundaries/Controls</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural/Ethnicity Problems</strong> Linked with Family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent's Poor Relationship with Child</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child's Fault</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Character of Child</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's Escapism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Explanation</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22                           22

* Problematic relationships between children and parents were a common feature of family explanations, but were usually subsidiary. In this one instance it was the only feature of family life mentioned as causing the child's problems.

Only two children in the Subject Group were given a primary explanation which was directly related to issues of race or ethnicity: one Asian girl whose problems were attributed to culture conflict in an account which might have been written as an example for Ahmed's argument; and one boy of mixed parentage thought to have an identity crisis. These accounts were particularly interesting in the way circumstances were described, and this will be taken up later, but they were in no way typical of the Subject Group reports as a whole.
There was not, as far as could be ascertained, any direct link between the likelihood or nature of family explanation as the primary explanation, and the actual circumstances of the family as described in the case records: over two thirds of the children in each group, for example, lived in broken, reconstituted or single parent families, whereas 'specific family disaster' was seen as the primary explanation for very few. In all but one of the instances where problems were primarily attributed to the child's moral character, however, the family had a score of 0 on the Difficult Home Conditions Index, suggesting that this explanation was usually only resorted to when the 'good family' provided no clue to the child's behaviour.

The presentation of the authorised account, having explored alternative hypotheses and rejected or discredited parental versions, therefore concluded with an instruction to the reader which specified the hypothesis to be accepted as the true explanation for X's behaviour. In almost all cases these tested hypotheses were aspects of the family's failure.

Summary

The analysis of the court reports used a combined qualitative and quantitative approach. An external approach, compared the reports systematically with externally produced models and hypotheses, and an internal approach explained the construction of the report. The chapter described the construction of reports within the context of a model developed by Dorothy Smith (1978) for the analysis of a factual account.
It was demonstrated that report writers used the conventions described by Smith to guide the reader into a correct reading of the account, i.e. one which agreed with the social worker's interpretation of the facts. The conventions required the social worker to start by establishing the fact of the child's delinquency (even in civil reports) and the authority of the writer as a source of disinterested knowledge of the family, and of normative reference for the judgement of deviant children and families. The report is then read as the account of a deviant child and family, in which the social worker: establishes the priorities for consideration; presents a series of tested hypotheses about the causes of the child's misbehaviour; calls witnesses to support her chosen explanation; discredits rival versions of events and reaches a conclusion as to whom should be blamed for the misbehaviour.

The establishment of priorities in the reports was examined by counting the number and proportion of sentences referring to specific topics. It was shown that although there was great variety in reporting style, reports gave the greatest emphasis to family, with on average, twice as much space devoted to that as to the child's behaviour, while the local neighbourhood or community was hardly (if at all) mentioned. In the material on families, greatest emphasis was placed on family structure and relationships, with much less on material circumstances and least of all on the parent's approach to discipline or control of their children.

Reports on the Subject (black) and Comparison (white) children were compared on the above variables, both as groups and within matched pairs. There were very few differences in structure between the two sets of reports. Subject children's reports showed a very slightly higher emphasis on family structure, which did not approach 5% statistical significance. Contrary to expectation, matched
pairs analysis showed that Subject children's reports had significantly less emphasis on family discipline than did those of Comparison children. There was also significantly less on material circumstances in Subject children's reports, which did not appear to be linked to marked differences in home conditions between the groups, but possibly reflected a view of white working class subcultures.

Social workers considered rival versions of events from children, parents, and occasionally other professionals. Those from children were given in just over half of the reports and were usually accepted, at least in part; though often being used as the basis for further interpretation to support the social worker's own explanation. There seemed indications of a slight tendency to use and accept black children's explanations more readily than those of white children, but again, differences were very small. Parents' rival versions were usually given, and usually discredited, either by direct refutation or by contextualising them in a way which used them as further evidence of the parents' incompetence. Rival versions from other professionals usually seemed to be ignored rather than challenged.

The social worker's final conclusions were usually that the primary cause of the child's misbehaviour was to be found in the family, though in a few instances the child's moral character was given the central focus. Explanations linked with ethnicity were given for only two of the black children, and as predicted, reports based on family circumstances were usually 'colour blind'.

It can therefore be concluded that the patterns of report construction differed very little for the black and white children, and that where differences were found, they were not always in the expected direction. In general the similarities in the court reports for Subject and Comparison children were much more important than the differences.
The low priority given to material on the children's behaviour, and on family discipline are particular interesting and these issues were followed up in further analysis. The next two chapters examine the social worker's use of models drawn from psychological and sociological theory.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE USE OF THEORY IN THE COURT REPORTS:

1. PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS
Constructing an Explanation

The previous chapter showed that accounting for the failure of parents to control their young appeared to be the central task which social workers set themselves in the court report. Alternative explanations for the adolescent's misbehaviour were not considered unless family explanations proved insufficient, and when alternatives were put forward by third parties, they were usually interpreted as secondary features resulting from family failure, not as valid explanations in their own right. These conclusions are similar to those of other research on social workers' frameworks for analysis, notably Giller and Morris (1981).

Explanation of any kind requires bridges to be constructed between the events of the child's behaviour, and the events in the family life and history, or other events which are seen as contributors to the explanation. The bridges must allow for the interpretation of observed events and for establishment of their significance. It was contended earlier that social workers were more likely to use psychological models than sociological models because sociology did not provide the constructs which enabled links to be made between socially structured phenomena and individual behaviour, and therefore did not lend itself to the formation of a social work problem, amenable to solution by social work methods or resources.

The construction of an explanation requires the social worker first to explain the child's behaviour. If that explanation is given in terms of the family, then the parental failure must also be explained. Even if an alternative is given as the primary cause for the child's behaviour (moral character, perhaps, brain damage, or
neighbourhood influences) the social worker is still legally required to make the case that parents are unable to deal with these problems, to exercise appropriate care and control, in order to justify the request for a care order, although as has been shown this did not always feature prominently in the court report.

**Searching for Theory**

Social workers have been described as undertaking pragmatic hypothesis testing to explain observed phenomena. Nevertheless the process is in effect the reverse of the classical deductively reasoned, experimental application of theory. The social worker begins with the observation, then tracks back and forth between the observation and the theory, rather than generating a hypothesis from theory and then finding or creating an observation to test it.

In any practical enterprise the two way process is integral to the solution of problems, but in the social worker's task the complexity of possible theoretical connections is immense. As an example, the apparently simple observation of a parent failing to give adequate care to a child because he or she is drunk can be understood within several different frameworks.

a. The drinking can be medicalised. Labelled as alcoholism or addiction it becomes an illness or quasi-illness, linking into a whole network of theories about the causes and effects of illness. Geraldine's mother was referred for medical treatment for her drinking.

b. It can be seen as the consequence of external disaster, linking with psychological theories about the effects of grief or sociological theories about anomie. Riya's father started drinking after his wife's death.
c. It can be seen as a personality failure, linked with psychological theories about inability to cope with the demands of daily life through traumatic experience or faulty learning or with biological theories about genetic predisposition. Vicky's father's drinking was associated with his 'dropping out' and becoming a vagrant, and led to, rather than followed, the breakup of his marriage.

d. It can be seen as socially generated, associated with particular occupations or subcultures. Anna's father's drinking was associated with his pressurised management job.

e. It can be seen as a moral failure, associated with value structures which are in their turn considered universal or socially generated. Leila's father's drinking was associated with descriptions of other self-centred, violent, promiscuous and exploitative behaviour.

Furthermore, these explanations can be combined in various ways, so that the initial drink problem may be caused by illness or disaster, but the failure to cooperate with treatment be seen in moral terms, as with Geraldine's mother.

Each explanation draws on a multiplicity of different understandings of human behaviour, singly, in a family context or in a broader social context. The various theoretical structures for explanation exist in their own right, whether or not the teller of the tale refers to them or even is aware of using them, just as the theoretical structure for explaining measles infection exists even when the doctor identifies the disease merely by recognising the spots.
In the present exercise, therefore, the difficulty is to distinguish between explanations which use theory and explanations which recognise phenomena. It is not to be expected that the use of theory can be a tidy or logical process. Figure Five attempts to represent the complex of possibilities available to and used by social workers. It is not by any means an exhaustive representation, indeed it would be difficult to cover every possibility in a two-dimensional diagram.

In Chapters Three and Four, several possible explanations were put forward for the apparently greater likelihood that black children would come into care. Of these, the 'Family Circumstances' explanation could be seen as psychosocial, blending external events and social conditions with the family's ability to cope with them. The others (the Immigrant Extended Family, Family Structure, Social Class and Racism Models) were predominately sociological, but with the two family explanations having psychological components. Figure Five shows the way in which explanations can link the different components, and also the greater flexibility of psychological explanations for this purpose; with many more possible connections.

Identifying models was a complex task. Occasionally a model was identifiable in a separate and cohesive section of a report, but more often it was scattered throughout a report in phrases and sentences whose meaning emerged through a process of accumulation, through the juxtaposition of two pieces of information or comment, or through the context in which comments were made. Analysis required constant vigilance against either missing an important phrase or reading too much into an association which was not explicitly made by the social worker. It was also important to check and re-check texts systematically in order to minimise the risk of selective use of convenient reports, and in an attempt to get reliable estimates of the prevalence of particular uses throughout the sample.
* The theological complexities of this concept have not been explored. The term is used as a shorthand for moral judgement which is treated as an end in itself, rather than being linked with psychological or social causes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanations</th>
<th>Subject Group</th>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 children</td>
<td>22 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychodynamic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 'Acting Out' of family conflicts</td>
<td>(9)*</td>
<td>(6)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Personality/development damaged by infant experience</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Emotional deprivation</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Projection/displacement/transference of negative feelings</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Repressed/unconscious feelings</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 'Identity Crisis'</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Any Psychodynamic</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Based</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Faulty learning</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Opportunism/boredom/search for excitement/attention</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Any Learning Based</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moral Character</strong></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Psychiatric Illness</strong></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures are put in brackets because of the tentative nature of quantification in this analysis.
In explaining children's behaviour it was usual for more than one explanation to be used in a complementary fashion as primary and secondary explanations. For only 6 children (three Subjects, three Comparisons) were unicausal explanations offered and these were all psychological explanations. For 15 children (seven Subjects, eight Comparisons) more than one psychological explanation was put forward, and for 23 (twelve Subjects, eleven Comparisons) there was a combination of psychological and sociological explanations. It was clear that psychological explanations were the option of choice, being used to some extent for all children, whereas sociological explanations were used for only half of the children and were never seen as sufficient to stand alone.

Psychological Models for Understanding the Child's Behaviour

Models were classified into psychodynamic and learning based. In addition were a small number of judgements of moral character which were not clearly attributable to either, but appeared to depend on assumptions of genetic predisposition (or possibly original sin!) or to be linked to personality types. The classification is very broad, but enabled a workable grouping to be developed in the absence of great precision within either psychology or social work as to the exact meaning, or the shared meaning of the many psychological concepts used in the court reports (Sutton 1979).

Because of the complexity of the task of eliciting theoretical models the statistics given in Table 40 are treatable only as indicators, rather than as exhaustive total figures of the frequency with which particular psychodynamic concepts and models were used. They do show
that psychodynamic influence was detected in the majority of reports on both Subject and Comparison children. They suggest little difference in the likelihood of psychodynamic or learning-based explanations being applied to black and white children. There did seem to be a general pattern in which more causal models are applied to the white children than to the black.

**Psychodynamic Models**

Psychodynamic explanations of one kind or another were used for 19 Subject Group children and 18 Comparison Group children, in other words for almost all of the Stage Three sample. These were not used in a precise way, although there were occasional mentions of specific concepts such as 'displacement' or 'projection'. The influence of psychodynamic theory was nevertheless apparent in all but three reports (one Subject, two Comparisons) although it was stronger and more explicit in some than others. The two most common psychodynamic explanations were clearly linked to family pathology. These were: that the child was in some way internalising and expressing or acting out the family (usually marital) conflicts and that the child has suffered emotional deprivation, either following the death or departure of a loved parent, or because of emotional rejection by the parents. In Anna's report the social worker again brings in an expert witness to support the judgement.

"(The educational psychologist) concludes that there has always been a strong connection between Anna's home situation and her behaviour in school, where she acts out conflicts that stem from problems within the family....Anna's bizarre behaviour was seen as communicating a need to live elsewhere." (Anna, aged 14, Subject Group)
The second part of this assessment, that the child is communicating an unexpressed and possibly unconscious need, is further highlighted by the social worker in her concluding comments:

"Anna exhibits much immaturity in her behaviour, both in her understanding of her needs and in her ability to cope with her difficulties."

The need for the adolescents to develop 'insight' into the 'true nature' of their needs or causes of their problems is another psychodynamic theme developed in several reports.

The child could be seen solely as a recipient and transmitter of family tensions, or as contributing actively to them by siding with one parent against the other, by changes of allegiance or occasionally with hints of rivalry for the affections of the parent, as in Freudian Oedipal/Electra complexes. All of the examples of this latter are from the Comparison Group. So, in Shelley's family:

"The marital relationship has been a difficult one. At times the problems have been acute and have affected the whole family....Shelley is much closer to her father and appears to come between her parents."

(Shelley, aged 14, Comparison Group)

Shelley's social worker also added another psychodynamic argument used in several reports. Although her family's material standards were described as reasonable at the time of her committal to care, there was a family history of severe problems in which both parents were described as having experienced childhood deprivation, there had been periods of homelessness, unemployment and severe poverty, worsened by Mr. C's drinking and violence. Shelley and her siblings had all attended special schools for disturbed children. These problems occurring in Shelley's early childhood were held to have caused damage to her personality:
"Shelley comes from a family in which the emotional needs of the children are not fully met. The severe difficulties the family experienced when Shelley was young have impaired her emotional development."

The impairment was evidenced by Shelley's inability "to express negative emotions such as anger", her tendency "to live in a fantasy world which does not acknowledge her problems" and her "self destructive tendencies which have surfaced (in care)". It was concluded that Shelley needed "to come to terms with her deep-rooted emotional problems". Although specific psychodynamic terms are not used, Shelley is clearly thought to be suffering from repressed emotions, denial (blocking) and guilt.

The second major source of psychodynamic models referred to emotional deprivation. This was not usually linked exclusively to infant separation from the mother, in the classic Bowlby model, but was rather seen as something the adolescent experienced traumatically as a result of the death or departure of a parent at a critical developmental stage, or as a continuing experience (as with Shelley) because parents had never been able to meet the child's emotional needs. In this manner, Kay's behaviour was interpreted. Kay's parents had separated temporarily on several occasions when she was a baby, at which time she stayed with her mother. When she was three, however, her parents separated permanently and eventually divorced. Kay remained with her father, being cared for by a succession of 'au pair' girls and women friends of her father until he remarried when Kay was six. The social worker reported that Kay's teenaged stepmother, although they were fond of each other, "was never regarded by Kay as her mother". Her problem behaviour was linked to her being:

"very close to her father by whom she feels rejected. Kay has an urgent desire to contact her mother, whom she last saw briefly when she was six...As a result of her disturbed childhood Kay has a need to experience true and stable parenting." (Kay, aged 14, Subject Group)
The longstanding deprivation of mothering and Kay's infant experiences between the ages of three and six were treated as more significant in explaining Kay's behaviour than the present day problems in her life at the age of 15: her father's violence and their strong disagreement over her relationship with her boyfriend.

Similarly, a series of separations was held to have led to behavioural disturbance in Alice. Her parents had separated when she was a small baby but she had remained with her mother and acquired a stepfather when she was two years old. This marriage too had foundered when Alice was eleven, and the report stated:

"Deterioration in Alice's behaviour coincided with her stepfather's departure from home. Alice craved his attention and affection but this was not reciprocated....her stepfather tended to ignore her....It seems that Alice was very close to her grandfather and reacted badly to his death about four years ago." (Alice, aged 13, Comparison Group)

Alice's loss of two important male adults in a short space of time was juxtaposed with an account of her over-dependent emotional relationship with her mother and jealousy of her siblings. Repression and the unconscious are again called into play, and so also is another Freudian concept, the displacement of anger on to people other than its object:

"Following her placement (in care) Alice did not show as much anger or sadness as she would have (been) expected. She protected herself by saying that she did not care....Alice relies on her mother for emotional security but she is so anxious about her relationship with her mother that she even denies her mother has telephoned her....(After going to court) Alice showed how upset she is. Rather than expressing her anger directly towards her mother and sisters Alice attributes her difficulties to other people. She said relationships at home broke down recently because of her mother's boyfriend."
A number of reports used the concept of displacement to account for anger or aggression directed elsewhere than to 'offending' parents, including violence at school and in care. Also used were related concepts of the 'projection' of one's own feelings on to other people and the 'transference' of feelings properly belonging to one relationship into another relationship. Hence the problems which Fenella experienced in her relationship with her father, following her mother's desertion of the family, were explained by the social worker:

"Mr S acted out much of his anger towards his ex wife in his disciplinary attitude to Fenella, the only female member of the family at home with him. Fenella, too projected (sic) her hurt feelings of rejection by her mother by being rude and defiant to her father." (Fenella, aged 14, Subject Group)

Leila had spent the years since her parents' separation moving from one to the other. Leila's problems in her relationship with her mother were explained because:

"(Mrs C) dislikes the same things in Leila that she did in (her husband). She believes her relationship with Leila is to be compared to her relationship with her husband." (Leila, aged 15, Comparison Group)

These extracts illustrate some of the difficulties in identifying models, given the complexity of language. For example, although Fenella's social worker uses the terms 'acted out' and 'projected' she appears to mean 'displaced' since projection, correctly used, is the attribution of one's own thoughts or feelings to another person. Yet although the social worker may have used the wrong word, she has clearly understood the concept and used it correctly. The extent to which concepts were described in ordinary, non-technical language, while still being quite clear in their use does not seem consistent with Bailey's (1980) suggestion that social workers use theory from other disciplines solely or primarily to enhance their own professional expert status: if this were so greater (and more accurate) use of technical terms would be expected.
Learning Based Models

Explanations based on learning theory were less common, but were still found for over a third of the children and were used slightly more often for Comparison Group children. Most often these were of 'faulty learning' caused by the absence, inadequacy or inappropriateness of parental training. Arthur showed behaviour problems during a period when his father, who provided most of the management of the children's behaviour, was living away from home, and his mother was unable to cope by herself.

"Because of the stress she has been under (she) has often been irritable with the children, often shouting at them rather than sitting down and talking with them." (Arthur, aged 13, Subject Group)

This was exacerbated when Arthur's elder brother was suspended from school, providing him with a further unsuitable model.

"Since Jonathan's expulsion from school, Arthur's disruptive behaviour has been more frequent. He enjoys the idea of being sent home where there are no boundaries."

Poor training was often seen to be worsened in this way by specific provision and reinforcement of the wrong models or actions. Julia's aggressive behaviour towards others was connected with the example set by her mother and brother's violence towards her.

"It appears that the household was one where violence as a response to stress was the norm." (Julia, aged 13, Subject Group)

Mona and Molly had parents who positively rewarded bad behaviour. Their father "walks away from any confrontation", while their mother is:
Faulty learning was not necessarily seen as entirely the fault of parents. Bad models and reinforcement could come from peers or siblings as with Arthur. Some children's misbehaviour was linked to opportunism, in circumstances in which children were inadequately supervised; because parental surveillance was lax, as with Arthur, Mona and Molly; because parents worked in the evenings as with Janine; or while children were 'on the run' as with Margaret and Lynne. Moira's illegal sexual relationship with her boyfriend occurred because Jerry's mother "had been allowing Moira and Jerry to use Jerry's bedroom" under the impression that Moira was 16.

As part of the faulty learning, children could learn to enjoy an exciting, undisciplined life free from direct adult control, (though not necessarily from adult exploitation for sexual or other purposes). They could obtain their rewards from, in Donzelot's terms, "the Cabaret and the Street" including the variety and even the dangers of a street-based life. Explanations of this nature were linked with some of the sociologically based explanations, and will be considered later.

Defective Moral Character

Finally, a few children were described as having defective moral character. This was sometimes attributed to failures in training, sometimes to a personality failure caused by defective early experience and sometimes presented as a simple statement in its own right. Boundaries were not easy to draw. Margaret is described, for example, as:
"a strong personality, at times extremely defiant and cocky (but) basically a very likeable child with many positive characteristics." (Margaret, aged 13, Subject Group)

Her difficult behaviour is suggested to occur because:

"all controls on her seem to have been applied externally. She has developed no internal controls or sense of responsibility."

This account of a personality trait made problematic by faulty learning gives a different feeling from the description of Riya, whose behaviour problems began after the death of her mother:

"Although she has many good qualities which indicate that her early upbringing was good, she is a wilful and devious girl who is obviously very difficult to control." (Riya, aged 15, Subject Group)

Only the second quotation here was classified as a judgement of 'moral character' because Riya's 'wilful' and 'devious' character traits occur in spite of good upbringing, i.e. with the implication that they are in some way intrinsic, inborn. Children who were 'wilful' and 'devious' in that they not only defied adult authority but lied and plotted to get their own way were most prone to receive judgements of moral character (though not all who lied or plotted were judged in this way). Equally, children who showed no remorse at the distress or injury they caused received moral judgements. Petra, considered to come from a good home and with responsible parents, was judged in moral terms because:

"her intention to give up crime in the future was based on her feeling that she had lost her touch and so was likely to be caught. She said she was sorry when she upset her mother but I could not see in her any sign of remorse and concern for her victims, or sense of wrongness about her actions." (Petra, aged 15, Comparison Group)
Judgements of moral character never seemed to be linked with what the children had done, even when they had committed serious offences, were violent, or were seen as sexually promiscuous. The motivation (or the reporter's understanding of the motivation) and the child's ability to perceive, and care about the consequences for others were far more important. In this respect the issues of morality are similar to those discussed by Dorothy Smith (1978) in relation to mental illness. They were concerned with collections of phenomena which did not simply break the rules for understanding, but for which there were no rules for understanding - what Smith describes as anomalous behaviour. Moral character, however, was never used alone, as the sole explanation for a child's behaviour, although the degree of prominence given it did vary.

In two Subject children, anomalous behaviour was seen as a possible indicator of mental illness. Selina's violent and unsocialised behaviour took place in a family in which her mother and brother had long histories of mental illness and violence. Although her social worker considered that "most of her violent behaviour is a reaction to her chaotic family, and that once removed she will be quieter", some options were evidently being kept open. Adam's violent behaviour was also not understood by the normal rules for understanding violence, because he did not explain it in terms which had meaning for social workers, and, since his parents had refused to cooperate with the social worker or the court proceedings, almost nothing was known of his history apart from his school record. After seriously violent episodes at school and in his childrens home, and "irrational" demands to be given private tuition instead of going to school, the social worker concluded "Adam is at risk in terms of his mental health" and he was referred to a psychiatrist.
In all other examples of anomalous behaviour, moral explanations were the solution. Moral judgements therefore appeared in this sample to be a default option when individual behaviour could not be fully understood by any of the available rule systems nor seen as mental illness. The data supports Philp's (1979) contention that only the inexplicable is rejected from the social work discourse of knowledge and compassion.

**TABLE 41: EXPLAINING THE PARENTS FAILURE - THE USE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MODELS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Subject Group 22 children</th>
<th>Comparison Group 22 children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychodynamic concepts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycles of behaviour/problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality factors</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to external stress (e.g. bereavement/illness)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress from family breakup/single parenthood</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress from behaviour/lifestyle (e.g. drinking/violence)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress from all sources</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral defect</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As with children's behaviour parental failure to control their children was invariably expressed in individual, psychological terms rather than by use of sociological arguments or perceiving failure as socially structured. Sociological explanations were used for only four Subject families and two Comparison families. Parental failure, however, was less likely to be understood in terms of specific identifiable psychological theories, or to show their influences (Table 41).

In some instances, specific psychodynamic models were used, generally as complementary to the explanation offered for the child's behaviour. One example, given earlier, is that of Fenella's relationship with her father, where both were thought to be displacing feelings about the mother's desertion on to each other. A second is that of Adele's parents, whose fear of life outside the family was said to lead to unconscious creation of school refusal in the children, a classic psychodynamic interpretation of 'school phobia' (Kahn et al 1980). Ambivalent feelings (love/hate relationships) and denial or blocking were used to describe parents' problems in managing their children's behaviour.

A second explanation was found in terms of cycles in which parents re-lived the problems of their own childhood. Leila's social worker recounted the way in which her history of unhappiness, parental conflict and separation was a re-run of her mother's childhood experiences, and commented

"(The maternal grandmother) is a dominant lady inclined to make a fuss, and when a child, Mrs C was ashamed of being forever 'shown up'. Leila has mentioned similar occurrences to me about her mother." (Leila, aged 15, Subject Group)
Cathy's social worker also noted that her problems with her mother were a repeat of her mother's juvenile problems in relation to the maternal grandmother, and that:

"it appears also that Cathy is an exaggerated version of her mother at the same age, who, through force of circumstances has now become the opposite of what she was, (and is) conforming and strict." (Cathy, aged 12, Subject Group)

A cycle could be treated in learning theory terms as being learned behaviour which perpetuates the results of faulty modelling. It seemed more common, however, for the cycle to be treated in psychodynamic terms as an expression of the parent's own conflicts and need to act these out in the relationship with the child.

Cyclical explanations were found in several Comparison families but in only one Subject family. This may reflect greater knowledge of family history in the Comparison families, greater readiness among either social workers or clients to explore the past and relate it to the present with white families (though many Subject children also had a white parent), or greater perceived differences between the upbringing of children and parents in the Subject Group, when most parents had been reared in different cultural contexts.

Psychological explanations were also given in terms of the parent's personality, again not usually causally explained unless linked to a cyclical explanation in terms of their early history. Parents were thought to have difficulty controlling their children because of some fault in their personality, such as rigidity, passive helplessness, or coldness and inability to meet children's emotional needs. These explanations could also be linked to features of family structure or other cultural factors and will be considered in more detail in Chapter Thirteen.
Personality defects were usually treated as something the parents could not help, almost an illness or disability, but in several instances there were moral judgements. These seemed more common with parents than with children, and unlike those applied to children, moral judgements of parents were linked to behaviour and to psychologically determinist accounts. Most were made on parents who were seen as violent, neglectful or irresponsible towards their children. Geraldine's mother regularly spent the family allowance on drink.

"When under the influence of alcohol (she) is extremely aggressive, irrational and out of control....she is very abusive....is hysterical and makes suicide threats."

"The difficulties in this family do seem to centre around Mrs S's drinking and the problems this creates....I have found her attitude (to treatment of her alcoholism) to waver between an enthusiasm for help and a total denial of problems." (Geraldine, aged 13, Subject Group)

Parents who were extremely inconsistent in their treatment of their children were also judged in moral terms, as with 14 year old Alec's (Comparison Group) parents who several times removed him from boarding school and later from care, only to abandon him again after a few weeks, or Mona and Molly's parents, who complained about their children's behaviour, then rewarded it. Parents who were judged in moral terms also had in common, as with Geraldine's mother, a reluctance to cooperate with the help offered by social workers. Mona and Molly's mother

"wants advice and direction but never takes it and continues along her own pattern." (Mona, aged 14, and Molly, aged 13, Comparison Group)

Trudy's parents, regarded as colluding in some ways with their daughter's misbehaviour:
"agreed to regular meetings at the (children's) home but actually failed all the appointments made for them". (Trudy, aged 14, Comparison Group)

This connects with perceptions of non-cooperation as alienation, a point which will be returned to in Chapter Twelve. Moral judgements were not markedly differently distributed between Subject and Comparison Groups, and as with children they were not used as the sole explanation for parental failure.

By far the most common explanation offered for parental failure, however, was stress - the 'family circumstances' model. This was offered in almost all of the Comparison Group but in only just over half of the Subject Group. The nature of the stress varied considerably, from one extreme of Dean, Janet and Petra's families, in which it was that the father worked very long hours, leaving the mother to cope on her own, to Riya's family, recently bereaved, Tara's mother's terminal cancer, and Heather's mother's major epilepsy. Being a single parent was often (but not always) considered stressful, as was coping with a burdensome, unreliable partner. Marital conflict, and even more, marital violence, were mentioned as damaging parental functioning in several families.

"(Tara's mother's) ability to cope is weakened by her medical condition. She recently had an operation to remove a cancerous tumour....and is now undergoing vigorous treatment at X Hospital three times a week. The family are open about the cancer, nevertheless the stress is considerable." (Tara, aged 14, Subject Group)

"The main cause of the final breakdown in (Vicky's parents') marriage has been Mr. C's drinking problem and the total burden of raising the family has been left to Mrs. C. Over the last two to three years, Mr. C has had no fixed abode and has been living in various places such as a squat or with friends leading similar lifestyles. He is often seen in the vicinity in a state of drunkenness and this causes obvious distress to them....The total situation is a very unsettling one for the whole family." (Vicky, aged 14, Comparison Group)
Stress is used, as these examples show, not simply as an explanation for parents inability to cope, but in mitigation, to obtain the reader's sympathy with the parent's hardships. It establishes the parents, in Giller and Morris's terminology as 'deserving', genuine 'care' cases, and it further establishes the authority of the report writer's judgement linked to his or her status as a 'friend of the family' who understands their difficulties.

There was no self-evident explanation for the greater use of stress arguments with Comparison Group families. When the two groups' scores on the 'Difficult Home Conditions Index' were compared, more of the Comparison Group (11) had nil scores than did the Subject Group (7) but scores were otherwise very similar. Marital conflict was a feature of seven Subject Group families and nine Comparison Group families, but the incidence of single parenthood was the same in both groups. Although more fathers or stepfathers in the Comparison Group were unemployed, there were no indications of greater financial problems in the Comparison Group.

There was, however, one indication of different interpretations of life events between Subject and Comparison Group, again reflecting a perception of Subject families as having a different quality of family relationships.

Three children had lost parents through death. In the two Comparison families who had experienced this, there was discussion of the emotional impact of the loss and grief, and the repression of these feelings.

"Andrea's father's death had quite an impact on her as well as the rest of the family. It seems that this was a difficult subject to discuss yet one that is still around and unresolved". (Andrea, aged 14, Comparison Group)
"Don seems to be an unhappy boy who, with his family, has not got over the death of his mother." (Don, aged 13, Comparison Group)

Andrea's father had died five years previously and Don's another six years previously. In the Subject Group Riya's mother had died only one year previously, yet the social worker's perception of the impact of the death was rather more pragmatic.

"It appears that she was the strong person who kept the family together....After her mother's death Riya became increasingly beyond the control of her father." (Riya, aged 15, Subject Group)

Loss, in this Asian family, seemed to be perceived in terms of the mothers role rather than interpersonal terms, and neither Riya's nor her father's feelings about the death are mentioned. Furthermore, Mr. S's reaction to his daughter's refusal to live at home was linked to his bereavement in an interesting way.

"The loss of his daughter is emotionally and culturally distressing to him, particularly in view of his recent bereavement."

Interpreting loss as having both emotional and cultural aspects carries the implication that the bereavement was seen differently from the stand which would have been adopted in a family of a different culture.

This is a single instance based on one social worker's interpretation in one Asian family. Unfortunately time did not permit detailed examination of the interpretation of other forms of loss through divorce or separation, which would have required at least a return to the original files, but systematic comparison of the treatment of similar life-events in the reports on different cultures seems an issue which is worth further exploration in future research.
Different Models for Parents and Children

It has been shown that while the use of psychological theory is extensive in explaining both children's behaviour and parental failure, explanations differ somewhat for parents and children. Children's behaviour is much more clearly linked with identifiable schools of thought in psychology. Parent's failure is explained in far more pragmatic, though still individualised ways. There appeared to be a slightly greater likelihood of parents being discussed in terms of individual morality linked to their observed or reported behaviour. Although stress was used as a common explanation and mitigation, sources of stress discussed in court reports were largely individualistic - illness, bereavement, mental health problems, as distinct from poverty, unemployment or other socially generated stresses.

These differences reflect two characteristics of the situation. Firstly, the antecedents of the children's behaviour were more readily open to discovery by the social worker. She could both observe the state of affairs in the child's home and environment, and obtain historical information from parents, teachers and others who had known the child or family for some time. This made it easier to identify the components of a complete, theory based explanation. With parents, particularly those less cooperative, antecedents were less discoverable, and more dependent on information from a potentially unreliable source - the parent whose failure led to disqualification as a source of reference. It was notable that the few children such as Adam, whose antecedents were unknown because parents would not be interviewed or were not available, were seen as anomalous and social workers had great difficulty in explaining their behaviour.
The social workers' reactions to lack of knowledge of antecedents supports Dorothy Smith's (1978) contention that the teller of a tale wishes to appear all-knowing, and does not allow for the possibility of explanations of which he or she is ignorant. It was rare in this sample for social workers to admit bafflement as to the cause of children's misbehaviour, and bafflement over parents was never acknowledged in the court reports.

Secondly, children and adolescents are not in Western society expected to be fully responsible, whereas adults are so expected. Hence, unacceptable behaviour in children is easier to explain in terms of others' fault, rather than the child's fault. Explaining parents' unacceptable behaviour towards their children, however, must have a different starting point: reasons must be found as to why the parents are not being irresponsible, and a morality factor is thereby built into the situation.

Nevertheless, moral condemnation of parents was comparatively unusual in the Stage Three sample court reports, occurring in barely a third of the families; even though parents were described as abandoning, neglecting, evicting, beating, disliking and sexually abusing their children, squandering their child benefit on drink, and being irresponsible towards their families in many ways. The results support Philp's argument that the social work discourse actively seeks to bridge the gap between determinist explanations of behaviour and compassion and certainly gives no support for a rigid division into 'deserving' and 'undeserving'. Moral character was never used as the sole explanation, either for children's or parent's behaviour.
The analysis of psychological explanations also shows that the use of theory was in general a coherent use. It contained its own logic, attributable to the components of the theoretical model being used, although inter-related with other models when a coherent argument could be made, and was based on and supported by, evidence from observation and report. The individual usage of models was not necessarily consistent between all accounts, and apparently similar events in two families could be analysed quite differently in their court reports. This is to be expected in the use of a pre-paradigmatic discipline, when practitioners might be educated in, or convinced by, different theories within the discipline. The pattern of inter-relationship with sociological models is the subject matter for the next chapter. The use of psychological theory could not be seen as a cosmetic addition to a moral judgement, nor as an attempt to assume prestigious professional disguise.

Summary

The process of searching for theoretical models in the court reports showed the complexity of the range of possibilities, in which any single observed event was capable of multiple interpretations; in which psychological and sociological explanations could be logically combined into multi-faceted accounts. The remainder of the chapter discussed the use of psychological, individualised, explanations.

It was shown that psychological explanations were used to some degree to account for the behaviour of all children in the Stage Three matched sample. For all but six children, multiple explanations were used, and for half of the sample psychological and sociological explanations were combined.
Defective moral character was used as an explanation for a small number of children. Sociological explanations were never seen as sufficient to stand alone. Psychological explanations were most commonly psychodynamic, but learning based explanations were used for a third of the children.

Psychological, individualistic explanations were also those predominately used to explain parental failure. The choice of explanations was much more pragmatic and less clearly identifiable in terms of specific psychological theories, although psychodynamic influences still appeared to be strongest. Parental failure, when not linked to specific psychodynamic theories, was explained in terms of cycles of problems perpetuating themselves (usually because parents were reenacting their own problems through their children) or as the result of stress caused by illness, marital problems of other, mainly interpersonal, difficulties. Defective moral character was used to explain parental failure in a third of the families, always in conjunction with another explanation.

Psychodynamic explanations were used for almost all children, but learning based explanations more often for the Comparison Group children. Although explanations influenced by psychodynamic theory were used also for most parents, the failure of Subject Group parents was more often explained in terms of personality factors, while Comparison Group parents were more often seen as affected by stress from interpersonal problems.
Explanations were coherent and well integrated. They suggested logical and appropriate use of psychological theories, although the range of options used reflected the pre-paradigmatic state of psychology. The use of theory was grounded in observation, and did not appear to be merely a cosmetic or status-seeking addition to a moral judgement. Moral judgements were most likely to be made when behaviour seemed anomalous, inexplicable in determinist theoretical terms, or when lack of knowledge of the family circumstances or history precluded a determinist explanation.
CHAPTER TWELVE

THE USE OF THEORY IN THE COURT REPORTS:

2. SOCIOLOGY AND THE HIDDEN AGENDA
Introduction

The search for sociological influence in court reports was inevitably a more diffuse process than with psychological explanations. Sociology does not provide such complete and integrated structures for explaining human behaviour, and its development is more fragmentary, with detached and often competing schools of thought focussing in isolation on particular aspects of social organisation. In the present study, the relevant aspects were those outlined in Chapter Four: social class, including youth subcultures associated with class; ethnicity, including youth subcultures associated with ethnic groups; and alienation, which could be associated with either class or ethnicity. Neighbourhood was included as a category in its own right.

In categorising sociological explanations for children's behaviour an attempt was made to subdivide both class and ethnicity into 'normal, cultural' and 'rebellious, counter-cultural'. In the event this proved of little use in analysing youth culture explanations because the sociological information in records was not that specific. Social workers had no need to explain the existence of the youth group, and explaining an individual adolescent's participation in the youth group was primarily undertaken in terms of family disaffection.

In explaining parental failure, social class factors were divided into cultural and economic. Ethnicity factors were divided into: those associated with family structure; the 'immigrant extended family' model in which immigrant parents were seeking to use social services to replace family networks; other cultural patterns seen as 'normal' for the
culture; and disorientation associated with immigrant status. Neighbourhood was also included as a category. Even this very rough and ready categorisation, however, proved too sophisticated for the data available, as sociological explanations were given in only six families.

Although it was noted in the material on structural analysis that most reports contained one or two sentences describing the neighbourhood in which the family lived, neighbourhood explanations, it emerged, were never given as influences on parental behaviour towards their children. While youth groups were often described as being localised, meeting in a particular street or on a particular estate, this was usually treated as coincidental - the young people just happened to live there - rather than as being a structured feature of neighbourhood culture or organisation. For only two Comparison Group children were there suggestions that the neighbourhood gang had an independent controlling or directing influence on the child, and this issue therefore proved to be unimportant in terms of social workers' use of sociological theory.

**TABLE 42: THE USE OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY IN EXPLAINING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR AND PARENTAL FAILURE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Base 44 children</th>
<th>Subject Group 22 children</th>
<th>Comparison Group 22 children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children's behaviour influenced by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Culture/Peer Group</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents failure influenced by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class/Culture (Lifestyle)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (Culture)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (Disorientation)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The point was made earlier that sociological explanations were never used in isolation in the court reports but in approximately half of the Stage Three sample (11 Subjects and 10 Comparisons) sociological explanations were used in conjunction with psychological explanations for children's behaviour. The same was not, however, true of parents. In only six families (four Subject, two Comparison) were sociological explanations for parental failure offered, once again in conjunction with psychological explanations. Table 42 shows that for children, these explanations were almost exclusively in terms of peer group influence and/or adolescent cultures, while for the parents the explanation was in terms of a concept which might loosely be called 'lifestyle', since it had only the most tenuous connection with social class. Youth culture and social class were used in both groups with about equal frequency.

It might have been expected that such an emphasis on stress as an explanation for parents' failure to control their children would have led naturally to a linking with environmental hardship, poverty and social conditions. Not so. There was little evidence that radical social work had made an impact, and the sources of stress which were described were usually interpersonal, such as marital conflict, or external circumstances not depicted as socially linked, such as bereavement or illness.

Sociology and the Hidden Agenda

It was suggested earlier that proceedings on the grounds of adolescent misbehaviour often masked other reasons for wanting the child in care, those which the social worker might term the 'real' reason. Parker et al (1981) term this the 'hidden agenda'. It became clear from the examination of other reports on children that sociological explanations featured far more often in the hidden agenda than in the
In some instances, sociological explanations put forward as rival accounts might be ignored in the court report, as described in Chapter Ten with Leonie's report. It appeared more common, however, for social workers to be well aware of, and to some extent supporting sociological interpretations behind the scenes, but to omit these from the court report. In these instances, the omission must be seen as a strategy of choice, in which sociological arguments are seen either as not relevant, or as damaging to the social worker's case.

In the court report John's social worker had considered and firmly rejected a neighbourhood hypothesis based on John's own explanation for his failure to attend school. In interview, however, it emerged that the social worker's evaluation of the neighbourhood hypothesis was by no means as firm as he had conveyed to the magistrates.

**Social Worker:** "There did seem to be psychological problems involved. But one explanation that he did offer, well I could never make my mind up about whether it was the sole reason and convincing or whether it was just him looking for something, was that they had a feud going with their next door neighbours. And there were a couple of lads, 15 and 16 I think, who would terrorise John whenever he went out of the house, or if they were around when he went out of the house they would call him names and make him generally very uneasy; and this feud had got to the extent of them lighting a fire outside the house and it charred all the back of the house, and one of the bedrooms. So there were problems with the neighbours, but whether or not this explained why John wouldn't go to school - and he wasn't a truant, he was - what's the word? He was a refuser, he just stayed at home all day, he wouldn't leave the house." (John, aged 12, Comparison Group)

Given the choice between a neighbourhood explanation and a psychological explanation that John was following in the footsteps of a reclusive elder brother and sister, the social worker opted for the second in the court report, and reserved the neighbourhood issue for the hidden agenda. The
tactic not only solved a strategic problem in presenting the
court with a more straightforward case in terms of John's
needs; it also helped preserve the social worker's position
as expert, since the neighbourhood hypothesis was the one on
which he was least confident.

**Alienation, Youth Culture and the Peer Groups**

It was shown earlier that nine Subject children and ten
Comparison children were said in their court reports to have
been influenced by or involved with deviant peers, usually
groups or gangs but occasionally specific individuals.
While this was regarded by parents as a major source of
their child's problems, social workers presented it in the
court rather as a 'symptom' of the child's disaffection from
the family than as a 'cause' of problem behaviour in its own
right.

This proved to be an area in which there was a hidden
sociological agenda. Social workers were left in no doubt
about the importance of the peer group while the adolescents
were in care before their court hearing; indeed this often
caused considerable difficulties in residential placements.
Margaret (aged 13, Subject Group) placed in a residential
home in her local neighbourhood, continued to go out in the
evenings to meet her gang, and became involved in stealing
from the children's home with them. When moved to another
home a little further away she was described as frequently
absconding to her home area where her friends were. In the
court report, Margaret's social worker referred to these
incidents fairly briefly, whereas the reports from the
children's homes make it clear that this was a major problem
for them. A 'log book' entry in Janine's children's home
shows her out drinking in the streets with her gang three
nights in succession and having to be rescued from the "local graveyard where she had been drinking with about ten West Indian youths", and the following night from the police station where, after another street drinking session, she was "very drunk and vomiting." The social worker wrote, sombrely

"I warned her of the dangers of being out on the streets late and drunk and of being with boys in that condition, unable to control situations which arose." (Janine, aged 13, Comparison Group)

With both Margaret and Janine a decision was quickly made to move them to another children's home where their friends would be less accessible.

Janine's social worker was unusual in detailing the events in the court report. Patsy's gang also caused difficulties in her neighbourhood residential home while she was subject to an Interim Care Order. The court report states:

"(In the assessment centre) no real controls could be placed on her and she frequently stayed out late or all night....one incident led to Patsy's boyfriend walking into (the centre) and assaulting one of her room mates. This led to an affray at the gates (of the centre) between the (other) girl's relatives and Patsy's friends living on the estate and the police were involved." (Patsy, aged 14, Subject Group)

In the report from the residential home, however, the problems caused by Patsy's friendships with local teenagers are described at some lengths. Problems such as these created such havoc for social workers that the usual result was for the adolescents to be moved eventually to a home at a much greater distance to break the gang links. With those who absconded to their gangs, however, this was no solution. Leonie was considered to be at such risk in her local gang due to criminal activities, drinking, solvent abuse and
experimenting with drugs that she was admitted direct to a secure (locked) unit while awaiting her court appearance. Little was said about the gang friendships in her social worker's court report and instead reference was made to her identity crisis. The psychiatric report to the court however noted

"I think it likely that her relationship with a delinquent crowd of boys from a local working class estate on the one hand reveal the fruition of making her feel nearer her biological origins and on the other gave ample opportunity for acting out her angry resentful feelings towards the parents who rejected her, this anger being displaced onto the adoptive parents." (Leonie, aged 15, Comparison Group)

Leonie had been adopted from a working class family into a middle class family, and was considered to have an identity crisis for this reason. Once again a sociological observation is subordinated to a 'deeper' psychological interpretation but is nevertheless seen as an important component of the total reality of Leonie's behaviour, and relegated to the hidden agenda.

Vicky's social worker raised another aspect of the subcultural links which was of great anxiety to many social workers. Once again this was a hidden agenda, not mentioned in the court report but in another on the file.

"I am concerned that over the past two years or so Vicky has developed strong links in the community, together with good survival skills which enable her to hide out for fairly long periods of time. It may be that Vicky will not be able to resist the temptations of the freedom she has tested." (Vicky, aged 14, Comparison Group)
Having got used to, and learned to enjoy, an exciting and risky life free of adult control (though not necessarily of adult exploitation) was a feature mentioned in many of the assessment and residential reports, usually for girls but occasionally for boys. This appears to be a perfect example of the concerns which Donzelot describes as the sociological underpinning of all child welfare provision, the desire to have young people safely at home in the control of their families, and not leading independent, dissident and socially dangerous lives in the street.

Although their parents might have considered the adolescents to be led astray by bad company, once in care, the girls were more often considered to be instigators and leaders rather than followers. This was not so with the boys, of whom only Perry (aged 15, Subject Group) was described as a leader. The others (apart from the two very young boys, who were simply too young to be leaders in an adolescent group) were described as too aggressive and destructive to be popular with peers, although they could be seen as 'troublemakers' or 'stirrers'. The leadership qualities of those who had them were again considered by social workers a force to be reckoned with in an adolescent group setting.

Velma's residential report read:

"(Velma) is generally friendly with the other children in (the centre) acting like a big sister to some. However, her self-confidence usually ends in her leading them into mischief." (Velma, aged 15, Subject Group)

Perry's community assessment report read:

"Perry has without doubt had one of the leadership positions within the group. If he has chosen on the greater part to interpret his role in a negative fashion this is not to say he does not have the potential to achieve such a position within a positive and wholly legitimate structure."
Petra's influence on others was also a problem in her assessment centre:

"(Petra) colluded with (a friend) when she absconded from the home, lied about their meetings and helped her find places to spend the night." (Petra, aged 15, Comparison Group)

Since the peer group was to assume such major proportions once the child was in care, social workers were evidently aware of it's significance yet chose to play it down or ignore it in court reports, suppressing a sociological explanation. It seems unlikely that this was entirely explicable in terms of it's secondary usefulness as an explanation, with the peer group as a 'symptom' of family problems rather than a 'cause' of behaviour problems. In any case the persistence of peer group problems once the child is away from home partly undermines this explanation. To emphasise the peer group dangers at the point of committal to care, however, would have two effects unwelcome to social workers. It would cast doubt on whether removing the child from home to an adolescent group setting could be expected to influence the child's behaviour for the better, and it would lead to questioning whether social worker adults could be expected to have any greater power to challenge the peer group than did parent adults. Hence the suppression of the sociological argument was potentially useful to social workers in maintaining their authoritative status with the court and supporting their claim to be able to control the child more effectively than had the parents.

There was no evidence of social workers attempting to explain the existence of the gangs in terms of subculture or alienation. Only the individual child's membership of the gang need be explained, and this was done, as outlined earlier, in terms of escape from the family, protest against the family, and the search for more excitement than was to be obtained at home or at school. This was seen as a
personality issue, although reinforceable from outside, as with Vicky. The fact that these escapes and searches often took place in gangs, and that adolescents are vulnerable to peer group influence was 'taken for granted' sociological knowledge, but gangs appeared to be seen as 'normal' adolescent behaviour rather than as representing socially structured alienation. Even the protest against the family was linked to the unsatisfactory features of those individual families, and not to a view of 'the modern western nuclear family'. The only exception to this was in the account of Ravinder's rebellion against her 'traditional Asian' family structure and expectations which will be discussed in the context of ethnicity. The girls' involvement in predominately male gangs was also given no specific gender interpretation. It appeared to be seen as a protest against family restrictions or designed to upset parents, and not as socially structured rebellion against the life imposed on girls (McRobbie and Garber 1976).

Social Class and Lifestyle

Although youth culture was rarely discussed in a social class context, there were a few families in which the parents' difficulties in controlling their children were placed in a socially structured framework. This, too, was often relegated to the hidden agenda, being hardly mentioned in the court report but described at length in other reports. For these families a straightforward social class analysis was not adopted and the concept of 'lifestyle' possibly linked with subcultures, seemed more appropriate. The most marked instance was in Andrea's family, from the Comparison Group, which had for some years adopted a 'traveller' way of life. Although her father was a gypsy, her mother was not, but had taken on her husband's way of life on marriage, and, according to the social worker's file reports:
"The family maintain they were happy living in a traveller's setting...(they) feel that their problems started when they were rehoused on this estate. Although not a traveller by birth Mrs. C identified with these people and her children regarded themselves as gypsies." (Andrea, aged 14, Comparison Group)

The rehousing occurred after Mr C's death, and no reasons for it are given. In another report the social worker notes

"Her parents never married and lived as gypsies, though I am not convinced that they were true gypsies."

No further explanation, or definition of a 'true' gypsy is given and in the court report the family's account is reduced to the brief comment:

Mrs. C met her common law husband Mr. C while 'on the road' and they moved into a caravan and adopted a gypsy's way of life. The family maintain they were happy living in a traveller's setting."

Andrea's subsequent problems were attributed not to her change in way of life but to suppressed grief over her father's death and hostility at the intrusion of her stepfather who "can never replace her real father."

Andrea had received little education while 'on the road' and as soon as she was settled in permanent accommodation and was expected to attend school regularly this brought her into conflict with the education system. While discussed fully in the other reports, this issue, in the court report, was reduced to:

"Andrea's problems originally manifested themselves when she was transferred to special school from mainstream school...she never really attended the comprehensive school that she was allocated."
The social worker, while evidently aware of, and to some extent influenced by sociological explanations for Andrea's problems, chose in favour of psychological explanations as more significant or as more suitable for the court report. The sociological explanations were in effect suppressed in favour of psychological explanations.

Lifestyle also featured in discussion of Vicky's father, to whom she had been close. He had left the family and

"has had no fixed abode and has been living in various places such as a "squat" or with friends leading similar lifestyles." (Vicky, aged 14, Comparison Group)

When Vicky started to leave home for extended periods, refusing to disclose her whereabouts, it was suspected that she was in contact with her father and spending some time 'living rough' with him. This last feature was not mentioned in the court report and was part of a hidden sociological agenda, together with the fear that Vicky was coming to enjoy a similar lifestyle.

Finally Kay's longstanding emotional deprivation was linked with her father's lifestyle as a West End club owner. After her mother left the family:

"Kay remained with her father and was cared for by a succession of young foreign au pair girls....(her school) suspected that she was being left alone on the au pair's night off. This was later substantiated. At the time Mr. S was working from 11.00 p.m. to 4.00 a.m." (Kay, aged 14, Subject Group)

In Kay's court report, however, the social worker made several mentions of the family's prosperous lifestyle, with 'luxuriously furnished' home, and 'expensive, exotic holidays'. The sociological agenda was hidden but in a different way. It was used openly to identify and establish the family's social position, the depiction of a comfortable, even opulent lifestyle was then used to
enhance the argument that Kay's problems must be caused by emotional deprivation, since they clearly could not be attributed to material deprivation. The hidden implication, however, was that Kay's father had devoted more attention to his material success than to his daughter's wellbeing, and the sociological explanation was shaped to imply this without directly stating it.

Social Class and Economic Issues

Apart from these references to Kay's family, the economic aspects of social class were rarely touched on in court reports. Financial problems caused by low income (as distinct from bad management or squandering money on drink) were mentioned in only two families, and a parent working long hours or travelling away with his job, in four families. Several families had been homeless at some point but in only one was recent homelessness said to have contributed to the parents failure to cope with their children, and that was a temporary episode after a fire in the family home. One very clear reference was made to the importance of social conditions, and that was with Adele's family, who had at one point gone to live in Belfast, but had to return to London, even though this meant living for a while in homeless families accommodation, because the strain and danger of life in a front-line district of Belfast was damaging to the family's wellbeing.

There was no evidence of a hidden agenda on these issues, and the conclusion must be, as in other research, that understanding of the effect of social inequalities was either not present or was taken for granted to the point of acceptance. Since the awareness of social class as a background factor in the selection of clients is a longstanding feature of social work, the latter explanation
is the more likely. Although many of the parents were in middle class or skilled manual occupations, and they were therefore, like Packman's (1986) sample, not as a total group among the most economically deprived, the proportion of unemployed parents and single parent families suggests that economic factors must have been an issue for a substantial minority.

Alienation Responses from Parents

Although a number of families appeared to exhibit responses of the kind which Parker (1979) and Fisher (1986) classify as alienation, social workers made no specific acknowledgements of alienation. This did not necessarily indicate a failure to recognise the phenomenon.

There was some evidence of resistance. Only one family (Adam, aged 13, Subject Group) refused cooperation altogether, but several others limited cooperation either by limiting their availability to the social worker, by refusing to take any part in agreeing future plans for the child, or by refusing to visit the child in care. These responses occurred more often in the families of black children. Lack of cooperation was rarely mentioned in the court report, and again was largely part of the hidden agenda.

The lack of cooperation was in some instances acknowledged as representing hostility or reluctance to get involved with social workers. In Cathy's family, the whole family

"mixes smiling cooperation with a failure to keep appointments and unvoiced hostility." (Cathy, aged 12, Subject Group)

Lauretta's parents were described by the staff of the children's home where Lauretta was placed on remand as
"attentive and concerned about their daughter but as unwilling or unable to cooperate with...the social worker". (Lauretta, aged 12, Subject Group)

The social worker herself commented that the parents were reluctant to accept responsibility for Lauretta's bad behaviour and

"adopt the attitude the the authorities will be responsible for all matters relating to the children outside the home."

They did not see how they could be expected to control their daughter

"Since (Mr. S) cannot exercise corporal punishment as he would then be deemed in the wrong by the authorities."

This last response was found by parents in Fisher et al (1986) in a study of northern working class parents, and is a clear expression of resentment at 'the authorities' interference in family life, but in Lauretta's report is represented as a parental defect.

Refusal to cooperate with plans was usually seen as further evidence of parents' inability to function well as parents. This appeared to be the usual interpretation in these examples of non-cooperation or resistance to plans which occurred in the Comparison Group families. In Mona and Molly's family, their father "does not respond to any suggestions that could bring about change" while their mother "wants advice and direction but never takes it". These responses are seen as evidence of the parents' limited intelligence, inability to face reality and resistance to change rather than of their hostility to social workers, or seeing no need for change.
Resistance to involvement in plans for the child could be seen as an expression of personal bitterness or in a cultural context. Janet was one of the children in the Subject Group whose parents did not want her to be in care. While cooperating in general with the social worker, and having Janet home regularly for visits

"Mr. and Mrs. S....have not visited Janet (in the assessment centre) since they feel in their traditional way that it is not their place to visit her on property which is not theirs." (Janet, aged 13, Subject Group)

The social worker did not consider, (or at least did not mention in the court report) the possibility that this might rather indicate resentment at Janet's being in the children's home.

There were three families, all Subjects, in which formal opposition was made to the Care Order.* Geraldine's father was described as accepting that "the children are best off in care" given his wife's drinking and violence but

"unhappy about the fact that outside agencies can interfere in family life." (Geraldine, aged 13, Subject Group)

The parent's objections foundered on the day of the court hearing when Mrs S arrived drunk at the hearing. Margaret's family initially placed her in care by voluntary agreement. When her behaviour dramatically worsened during her first few weeks in care, Mr. and Mrs. S decided that she would after all be better off at home, and opposed the care proceedings. Since Margaret adamantly refused to go home, 

* Data here, is however, probably imperfect. Objections to care orders were not necessarily mentioned on files. In Dean's case, for example, I know of it only because the social worker mentioned it at interview.

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their objection was overruled, but Mr. S was described as angry and bitter about this. In the third family, Dean's parents were thought by the social worker to have opposed the care order because they felt that they should. They wanted Dean to be in care, but did not see why voluntary admission would not suffice. These examples are all of children of mixed parentage, and in all three families the opposition to the care order came from white parents or guardians.

More complex were the situations in which parents broke off contact with their children. Oliver's father put much effort into trying to help his son until the point where Oliver refused to see his father or go home, after which Mr S told the social worker that he "could not be bothered any more with Oliver". The social worker noted

"Mr. S may not be clear about his position vis-a-vis court procedure and legislation. He has refused to make an appointment with me since the Place of Safety Order expired." (Oliver, aged 14, Subject Group)

Perry's mother adopted a similar position. After Perry started running away from home, his mother told his social worker that "social services must sort it out". After he was arrested on a criminal charge and remanded in care she was with difficulty persuaded to attend Perry's first court hearing, but refused to attend the second at which the care order was made. The social worker noted that

"she has not contacted (Perry) at the assessment centre. She has also studiously avoided contact with me." (Perry, aged 15, Subject Group)

In these examples, the social workers interpreted the parents' non cooperation as a side effect of the parents' feelings about the child. They were being rebuffed, not because the parents resented social workers themselves, but because the social workers were trying to make them take an interest in their child. Other possibilities were not reviewed.
There were no families in the Comparison Group where lack of cooperation was so marked. In only one Comparison family were parents said to evade appointments with the social worker, although there were several in which they refused contact with the child.

In a last ditch attempt to explain Petra's delinquency, in spite of her good, caring family, her social worker concluded, in a separate file report (not the court report)

"I think (Mr. C) has definite anti-authority feelings himself, though he insists that Petra complies with what society expects. He has several convictions (for minor offences) which he told me about quite openly....I know Petra's school feel that collusion went on in the past and this may be as parents' own attitudes to school are similar to Petra's. (Petra, aged 15, Comparison Group)

Collusion, rather than outright non cooperation, was mentioned in more of the Comparison families than the Subject families, but still was seen as comparatively rare.

Passivity and unemotional responses of the kind recorded by Fisher et al (1986) were noted for few parents in either group. Where found they were not interpreted as an alienation response, but as an indication either of depression, exhaustion or of damaged personality. Arthur's mother, for example, was described as

"overwhelmed and depressed yet again because of the recurring incidents of disruptive behaviour and petty crimes by the children, Arthur being very much a part of this." (Arthur, aged 13, Subject Group)
At the point of the child's entry to care, however, parents were more likely to be described as angry than as passive, the anger being quite specifically directed towards the child, and these responses were rarely included in the court report but instead in other file reports or in reports from the residential services or specialist consultants. Don's (Comparison Group) social worker commented at a case conference that

"it is impossible to discuss any issues calmly with (Mr. C) or with (Don's older sister) both of whom react hysterically when discussing Don." (Don, aged 13, Comparison Group)

In a number of instances there was evidence of later alienation and dispute with social workers, when plans were made with which parents disagreed, or when children's behaviour failed to achieve the hoped for improvement or even worsened.

At the point of committal, however, these families, as with those described by Packman (1986) and Fisher (1987) more often indicated feelings of relief that something was being done at last, and that the tensions at home had lessened with the removal of their troublesome offspring.

Conclusions on social workers' use of alienation as an explanation for parents' behaviour are of necessity tentative when based only on documentary material. This is the part of the research in which the loss of ability to interview social workers was most regretted. It did seem, however, that while open hostility and refusal to cooperate are recognised, they are usually attributed to a feature of the family circumstances, parental character or parents' relationship with the child rather than in the context of a
socially structured relationship with social services or other authorities. Where non-cooperation is more subtle, taking the form of wariness and evasion, it is particularly unlikely to be presented as alienation. There seemed a slightly greater likelihood of non-cooperation of one kind or another being acknowledged with Subject Group families.

Refusal to acknowledge non-cooperation has also a strategic value for the social worker at the point of recommending a care order. To make too much of it would risk detracting from the social worker's status as the clients 'friend' and therefore reduce the authority of the court report. Furthermore, labelling the parents as uncooperative in court would lay them open to reproof from the Bench and damage the chances of cooperative working at a later date. It might also suggest the possibility that parents have an alternative account of events, which the court should note. In all, the social worker has much to gain by psychological reductionism applied to hostile or uncooperative parents, and much to lose from a sociological analysis.

Race and Ethnicity

It was possible that sociological explanations based on race or ethnicity could have been used directly in the court report to explain children's or parent's behaviour, or have been relegated, as with other sociological issues, to the hidden agenda of confidential file reports. A further use of sociological explanations, however, could be to contextualise other information (as in the material on Kay's family lifestyle) and subtly influence the reading of the information. This latter technique has been criticised by commentators such as Ahmed in lending itself to racism in social work. Race and ethnicity could also be used to marginalise the black children and their families as 'not really belonging'.
Examination of the use of race and ethnicity in the present study adopted three approaches. The search for sociological theory included examples where direct explanations were given, in court reports and in the hidden agenda of other reports, as described above. Additionally, a keywords analysis was used in which all specific references to race, ethnicity, or nationality were noted from court reports. Finally, reports were systematically searched for other stereotypes which might have a racial or ethnic component.

Use of the 'keywords' analysis which counted the references to either race or ethnicity in the court reports, and also to related concepts such as culture, showed that the only common references were the geographic ones, to the country or part of the world from which parents (or in two instances, grandparents) had originated. Presenting geographic origins was usual in court reports on both black and white families. Geographic references were found in 18 of the 22 Subject reports, most usually in the noun form ('Mr. and Mrs. S came to Britain from the West Indies in 1963') which was found in 13 reports. Adjectival forms ('Mr. and Mrs. S are West Indians') which have more potential for marginalisation, were less common, being found in eight reports, but were again usually in the context of simple statements about the parents' immigration. Occasionally, however, they were used as ascriptions of ethnic status. Tara's family were described in the court report in these words:

"Mrs. S and the children are all half-caste West Indians who were born in Britain." (Tara, aged 14, Subject Group)

Other reports describe Tara's parents as 'originating from the West Indies' but it is not clear whether any member of the family was born or ever lived in the West Indies or whether the term 'half-caste' is being used only to indicate that the family were light skinned, rather than having mixed
parentage. Only two reports refer to members of the family as 'black' and none to Afro-Caribbean identity or culture, indicating that the term had not penetrated London social work culture by 1983 when the last reports were written. Only four reports make other direct reference to ethnicity or to specific ethnic cultures. Although ten of the children were of mixed parentage only three reports discuss this issue, one the descriptive reference in Tara's report, above, and the other two because this was seen as an important aspect of the child's family difficulties.

Race and Ethnicity as Explanations for Children's Behaviour

In only two reports, those for Ravinder and Dean was the child's behaviour accounted for significantly in terms, for Ravinder, of ethnicity, and for Dean of race and racism. Ravinder's family were thought unable to meet her needs because their traditional culture was in conflict

"with another wider more flexible westernised community". (Ravinder, aged 15, Subject Group)

Ravinder's court report is a textbook example of cultural explanations being used to bolster a fundamentally racist approach to family structure, and will be considered in more detail in the context of family structure.

Dean's difficulties were thought to be caused, at least in part, by a rather different aspect of his parental culture. Dean's white stepfather was described as hating black people.

"(There is) a problem due to Dean's mixed blood....strong National Front tendencies within the family may have led to Dean being scapegoated." (Dean, aged 10, Subject Group)
Two parents were also seen as directly influenced by ethnicity. Ravinder's family was one, particularly her father, although personality factors were also seen as part of the parent's reactions. In Janet's report her parents' immigrant status was seen as a contributor to her problem behaviour. Janet's parents had been in Britain for twenty years, but

"Neither... have settled and adjusted to the ways or culture of this country. This has made life extremely difficult for them. For example their concern about Janet is expressed in their feeling that this country is too liberal with girls of her age and that she is adopting a way of life to which they are unaccustomed." (Janet, aged 13, Subject Group)

Janet's parents' disorientation and consequent isolation and loneliness was held to be one of the reasons for their over-dependence on their children, and their helplessness in setting appropriate limits of behaviour for Janet.

One further report contained a rather more ambiguous reference. In Cathy's report her behaviour was seen in terms of her acting out a conflict between her mother and grandmother, with the different races of the two protagonists (mother being black and grandmother white) an exacerbating rather than causal factor.

In the other 18 reports neither race nor ethnicity were treated directly as important issues in terms of assessing the reasons for the child's difficult behaviour, the parental failure to control the child, or the child's needs after admission to care.
Although race and ethnicity were infrequently discussed in the court report, they were once again accorded much more significance in private file reports and assessment reports. In all, 16 children had mention of some issue to do with their race or ethnicity in their reports.

Anna's family was one in which parents reported pressures connected with Mr. S's occupational status in a management job requiring him to work 6½ days a week, and disagreements over the appropriate authority and responsibility attached to gender roles. These were noted in the files, as was the existence of:

"racial conflict in the family as Mr. S's father was from (the Indian Sub-Continent) and dark skin is apparent in some of the children." (Anna, aged 14, Subject Group)

In the court report, however, problems over employment are mentioned only very briefly in a reference to Mr. S's responsible job and long working hours, while the gender and racial conflict are not mentioned at all. Anna's problems are attributed to marital conflict and violence in the family, leading to her immaturity and inability to face up to reality. Social workers, even when aware of socially structured aspects of the families' situation, did not appear to consider this appropriate or strategically useful in the court reports.

Three children's arguments and jokes in residential care were reported to have race as an element, in a way which reflected their awareness of their black identity and history and anger about real or suspected racism. Adam's residential staff reported that when 'up in the air'

"he has complained about being asked to do small chores as this he sees as an example of the continuation of the black slave trade." (Adam, aged 13, Subject Group)
Adam also raised vociferous objections to being fostered with an Afro-Caribbean couple and demanded placement with people from his own West African culture.

Similar comments are made in the report from Lauretta's residential home

"She appears to have a very acute racial awareness. She often refers to Jamaica as being her country and when embroiled in a confrontation with staff she has accused them of seeing her as a 'black dog', saying 'all you whites treat black people like that'." (Lauretta, aged 12, Subject Group)

In Lauretta's children's home behaviour such as hers was seen in a culturally stereotyped context. Interacting with the other children

"In anger and/or defence Lauretta can be loud and long in her epithets in relation to colour, as with many girls of similar cultural background."

Although the labelling effect is apparent here, with its implications of cultural racism, Lauretta was not simply fitting in with an existing stereotype in the children's home, since her aggressive and hypersensitive behaviour is described in all her various settings from the age of seven, including her own home. She was committed to care following a serious attack "with racial overtones" on a fellow pupil at her school, which is not discussed in detail in her reports.

Arthur's teacher from his boarding school, in the context of a discussion about Arthur's violent and anti-authority behaviour, noted that

"Arthur will identify with the Brixton Front Line, although this is not generally an issue in the school."

(Arthur, aged 13, Subject Group)
More common in the reports from residential care was a reflection of children's strong, positive sense of their ethnicity.

Perry had become a Rastafarian, and reports from the residential home in which he was placed showed this to be important to him. He followed a Rastafarian diet and

"made his cultural beliefs known and has talked about Rastafarianism to both staff and children in the centre. Perry enjoys....making posters that display Rastafarian feelings....likes dancing to and listening to reggae music and in general displays a strong sense of West Indian culture. He likes to read West Indian poems aloud....(he) has appreciated being encouraged to follow his Rastafarian diet." (Perry, aged 15, Subject Group)

In the social worker's court report the only reference to Perry's chosen culture was to the fact that when he ran away he was able to hide out by staying in Rastafarian houses, and his behaviour was interpreted solely as a reaction to his parent's marital conflicts.

Liking for reggae and soul music was noted for many of the Afro-Caribbean children, whereas white children were simply described as liking 'pop' music. Cultural identification emerged in a number of reports from education units. Ravinder, in spite of her purported rejection of her parents' culture, carried out one educational project

"on India, her choice, and the other about her life. She involved herself entirely in these and enjoyed researching about India." (Ravinder, aged 15, Subject Group)

Lynne, generally described as uncooperative in the classroom

"was recently set the task of writing a project on Jamaica as her thoughts seem to focus on this island and its culture. She has worked well, obtaining information and transferring it to a diary of her own." (Lynne, aged 15, Subject Group)
The children's sense of their ethnic identity, their consciousness of and anger about racism was evidently a prominent feature of their lives to the children and to the social workers and teachers responsible for them. Yet again, as far as the court report is concerned, this forms part of the hidden agenda. It is not discussed in the context of their problem behaviour, nor of the plans being made to help them should a care order be agreed.

Children of Mixed Parentage

Finally there was a group for whom their mixed parentage and identity seemed to be an issue. Although this was mentioned in court reports for only two children, Dean and Cathy, other reports suggested that it was a serious issue for at least four more. In two instances, Anna and Julia, there was reported to be conflict within their families because of the mixed parentage. Anna's example was given earlier. Julia told the social worker that her half brother's aggression and hostility towards her was due to her having a white father. Tara was reported to be isolated at school because her 'vaguely Eurasian' appearance led to her exclusion from the other ethnic groups. Margaret, living with her white mother's cousins but in close contact with her West African father, resented her cousins' insistence that she must "become one of (their) children and belong completely to the family", and wrote in her assessment record

"they used to take me as their daughter which I did not like, as I knew I would never have a proper family again." (Margaret, aged 13, Subject Group)
With these four children their ethnic identity problems were part of the hidden agenda. Dean's problems in contrast were in the open in his court report, but were handled in a remarkably structured way. Although the social worker explained to the court that Dean was suffering due to his stepfather's National Front sympathies, Dean's identity conflict is not said to be 'caused by' his stepfather's racism. Instead, it is 'caused by' his mixed parentage.

"Dean's mixed blood may have aggravated things at home. There are strong National Front tendencies within the family (which) may have led to Dean being scapegoated.... Dean has a low self image due to mixed blood." (Dean, aged 10, Subject Group)

Dean's stepfather expresses himself to be 'fond of' the boy and not wanting him to be 'put away'. Yet in his children's home Dean had nightmares. His assessment states:

"Dean has a mother and stepfather who are white, while his father was black. Although this is not unduly obvious Dean has had nightmares that he is unacceptable to his stepfather, who in the dream expressed hatred of all blacks and his intention to kill them."

The account of Dean's family gives a clue as to the reason for the issue of his mixed parentage being structured as it is. It is difficult to describe the problems without criticism of at least one of the parents.

Herein lies a paradox. Sociological critiques of social work, whether direct from sociologists or indirect through radical or Marxist social work, take as their starting point the assumption that psychological reductionism, by individualising problems which are in reality socially structured, blames the clients for their own social disadvantage. Sociological analysis, by explaining problems in terms of structural inequalities, of the convenience of
social order for the ruling groups, the possible usefulness of racism to this process, and the powerlessness of the poor, exonerates the individuals from blame. Yet this is only true if an absolutely determinist, amoral stance is adopted, and the very process of wanting to exonerate the individual reflects a moral standpoint.

In a sociological analysis of Dean's situation, however carefully the social worker set his account in the context of the social and economic causes and effects of racism, Dean's stepfather would still stand publicly convicted at best of stupidity and insensitivity towards his ten year old stepson, at worst of hypocrisy and cruelty. It could not be otherwise in a community where it is no longer respectable to plead for "keeping niggers in their place" (Allport 1958). How much safer instead to put the blame on Dean's 'mixed blood' or to avoid the issue altogether in the public statement in court as with the other children. To do otherwise would again be to challenge the social worker's status as 'friend of the family' and damage the chances of later cooperative working with parents.

It is particularly interesting that the account of Dean's nightmares about his stepfather is given most explicitly in the psychiatric report, from which the above quotation is taken. In more than one instance psychiatrists appeared readier than social workers to spell out in writing the social input to children's behaviour; perhaps reflecting greater confidence in their own judgement and status, but perhaps also reflecting the 'one off' interview after which the psychiatrist usually had no further responsibility for child and family!
In this issue, as in earlier ones, the choice of individualised, psychological explanations can be seen as a rational choice, not merely as the result of ignorance, blinkered or conditioned perceptions. Psychology enables the social worker to present the court with an explanation primarily in terms of human problems and misfortunes and avoid a social analysis which might depict children or their families as socially dangerous or threatening, while at the same time obtaining the desired result. (The care orders were all granted). Using psychological models can be seen both as a 'routine remedy' in Giller and Morris's terms, and as an effective strategy for achieving objectives combined with damage limitation.

Dean's social worker, however, was not solely concerned to preserve his own working relationship with the mother and stepfather. He also considered Dean's future in his family - the only family available since his natural father's whereabouts were unknown and he had never taken any interest in Dean. In interview the social worker explained the complexities of the family relationships.

"(Mr. S) is a real rough and ready guy....Got strong views....He felt a little bit anti the local authority, he felt they'd dragged their heels a bit....(but) he's cooperated with us all the way down the line, and it's been a revelation, in fact, because I certainly have had to revise what I felt about (him), because it was felt that he probably had a lot of negative feelings about this kid."

Interviewer: "Because of his colour?"

Social Worker: "Yes, in fact when we first placed (Dean), we had him quite locally....and Dad visited him regularly, and we let him go home every weekend, and Dad used to visit him and collect him and we were able to observe quite a lot of physical contact between this boy and his father - his stepfather. There was a lot of cuddling and there was a lot of tears....When he visited one of (the family's) dogs had been put down. It was quite sad because the boy cried, and he needed comforting but it was obvious that Dad wanted to be comforted as well because he was the one that had to
take it to be put down, so there was quite a lot of a
thing going....On several occasions he's had physical
contact with the boy, sits with his arm around him,
talks to him. So I think there's a lot there for (Mr.
S) to give to this boy."

**Interviewer:** "So you didn't agree with the Child
Guidance Clinic about there being a lot of hostility
because of the boy being black?"

**Social Worker:** "I don't know, I don't know, it may be
there but it was certainly - what's the word....It was
certainly suppressed, in what we've seen....(Mrs. S) is
a funny lady, but she's lovely really, and (Mr. S) is,
I don't know. I think we've got to settle the boy down,
you see. The boy's got to find some identity, and
become certain of what he is within himself to get, I
think to get confidence, really, to cope. You see he
is a coloured child in a white family.

**Interviewer:** "You mentioned in your court report that
you feel this is quite a problem for him."

**Social Worker:** "I do, yes...His night terrors are
quite classic, in that he wakes up screaming having
dreamt about a black child being cut in half with blood
all over the place. You don't have to look very far
for an interpretation of what's upset the kid."

This extract has been quoted at length because it
illustrates the enmeshed nature of feelings within the
family, and the social worker's feelings towards the family,
out of which a coherent account must be developed for the
court and a workable plan must be developed for the child.
As well as the social worker's concern to preserve a working
relationship with the parents, and a loving family contact
for Dean, there is also, clearly, a perception of the
stepfather as a 'good' man who cannot therefore be a 'real'
racist and cannot be too harshly condemned as such in
public.
A straightforward reading of the reports might lead to an alternative explanation: the white social worker's tolerance of or sympathy with white racism. Yet the interview extract shows that this would be an over-simple explanation. From an initial perception of Mr. S as racist, the social worker had been forced to revise what (he) felt about him. Furthermore in other instances where black children or parents were described as exhibiting prejudice towards other races this too was relegated to the hidden agenda, as with Tara's rejection at school by black children as well as white, and Julia's victimisation by her brother. Lauretta was committed to care following a racial attack on a fellow pupil, but there was no discussion of this in the court report, while Ravinder's father's objections to her Afro-Caribbean friends were only briefly mentioned in the court report, though discussed in other reports at greater length. Racism and racial prejudice, as much as ethnicity, were issues seen as inappropriate for discussion in the court report, but were evidently subjects of which social workers were much aware.

The final area in which social workers' use of race and ethnicity is explored is the major one of use in the context of family functioning and parental roles, which is the subject of the next chapter.

**Summary**

The use of sociological theory to explain children's behaviour in the court reports was shown to be largely confined to discussion of youth culture and peer group influence important in half of the reports from Subject and Comparison Groups.
Direct explanations for parental failure were hardly ever given in sociological terms, the few exceptions being occasional references to 'lifestyle', used in four families, and ethnic cultural issues, used in two Subject families.

It became apparent, however, that social workers were well aware of socially structured aspects of client's experience, but that this knowledge was kept out of court reports and relegated to the 'hidden agenda' of file reports and children's homes log books. The children's involvement in youth 'gangs' was a major concern for staff caring for the children, but was usually minimised or ignored in court reports. Aspects of parental culture were also treated in similar ways.

In two areas, social workers appeared not to think in sociological terms. Issues of socio-economic status were rarely considered, and social workers rarely interpreted parental non cooperation as alienation, preferring to see it either as a feature of the parent's problems, or as a reflection of parental attitudes to their children. There was little evidence that 'radical social work' had made any impact on social workers' thinking.

There was no strong disparity in the above questions between Subject and Comparison Groups, although outright non cooperation was more often acknowledged with the Subject families (with white parents as much as with black parents). The issues of race and ethnicity, however, proved to be ones of which the social workers had considerable awareness but which were predominately relegated to the hidden agenda. Most court reports were 'colour blind' but there was considerable discussion of the ethnicity in office files and
children's home files. Sensitive issues of conflict within the families of children who had mixed parentage were usually relegated to the hidden agenda, but one family in which the social worker did discuss the issues openly showed the complexity of interpersonal and social issues which could arise.

It is suggested that the relegation of sociological issues to the hidden agenda represents a strategy of choice. Emphasis on youth culture issues in the court reports could throw into question the ability of social workers to influence the children. Emphasis on some aspects of parental culture could seem more openly critical of parents than did the representation of personal problems experienced by parents. There were indications, however, that cultural racism and feature in some descriptions of children and families. The issue of family structure and functioning will be considered in the next chapter.
Introduction

Since the social worker is required to demonstrate that parents are unable to exercise care and control, before a case can be made for committal of a child to care, the presentation of the family life in the court report becomes the central feature of the case. It was shown earlier that most of the content of court reports dealt with the family, and that predominate emphasis was on family structure and relationships rather than on the family's approach to discipline. The proportionate emphasis on family structure, it was suggested, was largely determined by the actual complexity of the family history. Almost all of the children were living in conventional nuclear family settings with one or two parents, including stepparents, but some had experienced frequent changes of parental figures due to the breakup and reconstitution of their families, or experienced frequent parental separations and reunions.

The emphasis on family history, however, clearly reflects the belief that continuity and disruption of parenting are important and this, with the material on relationships, is treated as a measure of the quality of family life. Some of the models used in the past to explain the admission of black children to care have suggested that white social workers' stereotypes of family life in ethnic minorities include an expectation that other cultures have pathological forms of family structure and relationships. These forms are sometimes seen as innately defective, (as in the stereotype of the Afro-Caribbean family still suffering from the harmful effects of slavery) and sometimes as healthy in their country of origin but ill adapted for modern British society (as with Asian protective family structures, and West African use of substitute care).
It was therefore particularly necessary to pay attention to the presentation of family structure and relationships. Earlier results showed that relationships were seen to be particularly bad between the Subjects and their parents; that parents of the Subject children were more often considered to be (or suspected of) neglecting or ill treating them, and that parental failure in the Subject Group was more often attributed to personality problems in the parents. None of these results were absolute, and the area of overlap between the samples was always greater than the area of difference. Nevertheless, the results raise questions about the criteria by which parents were being judged, and about the model of the 'good', 'normal' or 'acceptable' parent or family which was being used as the benchmark.

The treatment of ethnicity in the context of family life was crucial. Did social workers have a sociological understanding of different family forms in a cultural context? Did they automatically marginalise all 'foreign' or 'alien' family forms as inappropriate in a British context? Were some cultural forms stigmatised because they did not meet the requirements of a 'healthy' family as depicted in psychodynamic theory?

An attempt was made to answer these questions by eliciting from the content analysis of court reports the models of good and bad parental behaviour which were being used, and considering whether these were applied equally in Subject and Comparison Groups. Specific stereotypes of black parents and family life, as described in Chapter Three, were systematically compared to the court reports and to other reports, in order to test whether they were in use openly or as part of the hidden agenda.
Family Structure, Roles and Relationships

There was very little difference between Subject and Comparison Groups in the composition of children's families, although slightly more of the Subject Group were in step-parent families (seven Subject, four Comparison) and slightly more of the Comparison Group in single parent families (ten Comparison, six Subject). The bulk of the comments on family structure were straightforward accounts of marriages, births, deaths, comings and goings of family members, and almost all families had started out with a conventional nuclear family structure.

There were no examples of the model described as the 'immigrant extended family' model, in which ethnic minorities were seen as trying to use social services as they might otherwise have used family support networks. Indeed, most of the Subject Group families did appear to have extended family networks in Britain, although in only two or three families in both groups were extended families mentioned as offering active support with the families' troubles and when grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins did become involved, they seemed to find the adolescents quite as hard to manage as did their parents. In two families, Cathy's (Subject Group) and Sam's (Comparison Group) the grandmother's involvement was seen as a major part of the family problems. The general picture, however, was that usual to families in studies of social work clients, of families locked into and isolated with their own troubles.

In the intertwining of roles and relationships within the structure the social worker has to justify the care order and account for the parents' inability or failure to control their young, in effect their lack of competence in one aspect of the parental role, but to do so in a way which will make it possible to continue working cooperatively with the parents after the court hearing. An important part of
the process is for the social worker to establish his or her role as the family friend; not just, as in Dorothy Smith's outline, to add authority to the judgement passed on the family, but to convince the family that the account is written in good faith. Most of the reports pay tribute to the positive qualities of parents - their hard work, concern for their children, and attempts to do the right thing.

"(Selina's mother) is a woman of considerable strength in that she has managed to hold this large family together against all the odds and has given the children a sense of being loved and cared for both materially and emotionally." (Selina, aged 16, Subject Group)

"Although (Vicky's mother) has experienced such a difficult marriage she has managed nevertheless to hold the family together and has provided a stable and warm environment for the children." (Vicky, aged 14, Comparison Group)

"The parents care for Dean. They do not wish to be seen as rejecting him and said that they would not agree to having him 'put away'." (Dean, aged 10, Subject Group)

"I believe (Janine's father and stepmother) have a stable and satisfactory home life and provide a good home for their family." (Janine, aged 13, Comparison Group)

With the aid of such tactics, the knife, if it must be inserted, will clearly be the surgeon's knife and not the assassin's. It was notable, however, that the social workers were more likely to be wholly neutral or negative about the Comparison Group parents than about the Subject Group. In only two of the Subject Group's families could social workers find nothing good to include in the court report, while this happened with ten of the Comparison Group. The Subject Group in this respect were clearly seen
as having parents who, at least, tried harder to be good parents. This is perhaps a contributor to the lesser emphasis on stress in Subject families: the parents, being manifestly 'better' parents, had less need of mitigation by emphasis on their interpersonal problems.

Systematic examination of material on parents' 'good' and 'bad' qualities suggested a number of unwritten 'rules' which seemed to determine the rating of the quality of parental care. The first batch of these concerned the relationship between parents and children, the second concerned the family role structure. They are not an exhaustive account of the parental models used, but it is hoped that they are a useful beginning.

Love and Relationships between Parent and Child

Rule One
A good parent's love is unconditional

Parents were not expected to make their love for the child dependent on returns from the child. This was seen as an absolute, not as a cultural value. Lucy's mother was viewed unfavourably because:

"Whilst (she) is prepared to do a great deal for her children and has professed deep love for them, she clearly expects their obedience and loyalty in return....Lucy's 'bad' conduct in the home and community is, as far as Mrs. C is concerned, a mark of Lucy's failure to love her (especially after all Mrs. C has done for Lucy) and Mrs. C's response is to reject Lucy." (Lucy, aged 13, Comparison Group)

Oliver's father was also deficient as a parent in this way:
"Initially Mr. S gave the impression of being a caring parent, saying he would do anything to help Oliver. However when Oliver...did not wish to see his father, Mr. S said he could not 'be bothered' any more with Oliver. I believe Mr. S does care about Oliver, but only when Oliver behaves in a manner which is acceptable to Mr. S." (Oliver, aged 14, Subject Group)

Even when not mentioned in the court report, conditional love was a background feature which worried social workers. Vicky's mother was praised in the court report, but in interview her social worker explained the other side of the relationship.

"Now Mrs. C., she comes across as a very caring mother, but if Vicky steps out of line, she rejects her, so I think there's something going on (between Mrs. C and Vicky). Well, it's going to take a bit of time really, to sort it out....Mrs. C tends to put all her feelings into Vicky and wants her little girl back the way she was when she was young....Some mothers would say 'oh well, we'll work our way through this kind of thing, (Vicky's staying out all night) but Mrs. C seems to go over the top about it, and then 'I don't even want to see her', you know. So basically the reason we've got Vicky in care is because (Mrs. C) wants her, but only when she's doing - you know, behaving herself the way mother wants her to behave....There's a very funny thing going on between mother and daughter, because they both say they want the home situation to work but when it comes to working for it, it doesn't actually happen." (Vicky, aged 14, Comparison Group)

The social worker takes for granted that for parental love to be conditional means that there must be something innately wrong in the relationship, 'something going on' beneath the surface. It is the secret something which must be resolved before Vicky can return home, rather than the immediate problem of Vicky's behaviour.

There was no difference in the frequency of Rule One violations reported for Subject and Comparison children, but the linked Rule Two was a different matter.
Rule Two
A good parent never rejects the child, no matter how badly the child behaves, or how much the child rejects the parent.

This rule differed from Rule One in that 'rejecting the child' was seen as an act in which the child effectively became an outcast, either emotionally or literally, and could not earn readmission to the family by good behaviour. Parents like Petra's were highly praised. Her mother:

"was prepared keep on trying....even when many people would have given up." (Petra, aged 15, Comparison Group)

and her father had taken time off work to support his wife's efforts to control Petra. Also highly praised were those who kept in close contact with children and visited them regularly once in care. Cause for most concern were parents like Tara's mother whose:

"attitude to Tara seems to border on personal dislike." (Tara, aged 14, Subject Group)

Tara's mother confirmed the absolute nature of her rejection because, seriously ill, she had made arrangements with relatives for the care of her other children in the event of her death, but had made no arrangements for Tara. This information was part of the hidden agenda and was not included in the court report.

Leila's mother also demonstrated this level of rejection because she:

"could say nothing positive about Leila, her criticism was relentless." (Leila, aged 15, Comparison Group)
Parents like Adam's (aged 13, Subject Group) who refused to visit him or have him home for visits once in care, and would not even discuss him with the social worker were casting out their children, as were those who physically barred the door, or evicted their children, often in the small hours of the morning after the child had come home very late. Although the provocation was acknowledged, eviction into the unknown dangers of nighttime streets was seen as an unnatural act.

In the Stage Three sample more of the Subject Group parents were seen to have violated Rule Two. Although the numbers of children whose parents would not have them at home was close in the two groups (13 Subjects, 11 Comparisons) 11 Subject children were unilaterally barred from living at home compared to only three of the Comparison Group. The unilateral nature of the action focussed attention on the harshness of the parent's rejection rather than on the conflict between parent and child, the 'funny thing going on' which had to be understood in families where the breach was mutual.

**Rule Three**

*A good parent puts the child first.*

Parents who gave priority to their own needs were doing badly by their children. Parental selfishness was seen as taking a variety of forms but the most damaging was putting first other relationships which ought to be subordinate. This too was treated as an absolute, not a cultural value. Julia's mother, for example, although she wanted Julia home, was

"unwilling or unable to take the appropriate step in asking (her violent eldest son) to leave home," (Julia, aged 13, Subject Group)
Lucy's mother was one of several parents whose relationship with a new partner was threatened by her uncooperative children:

"as her boyfriend will not accept responsibility for James and Lucy, Mrs. C is willing to exclude them from her life."  (Lucy, aged 13, Subject Group)

Geraldine's father was unwilling to separate from his violent and alcoholic wife

"to ensure that he could at least bring up the children on his own in a stable consistent environment."  (Geraldine, aged 13, Subject Group)

Geraldine's social worker amplified in interview the way Mr. S, initially defined as the 'good' parent, forfeited some of his status when he was unwilling to give priority to his children's needs.

Social Worker: "The husband sort of opted out. He's quite a nice man, quite pleasant, quite easygoing, but would totally opt out. The problems of the family were down to her. He could understand - well, first of all he just thought Geraldine was bad, but then when we said 'maybe it's understandable that a child runs away from this kind of situation', he decided, all right, it's all the wife's problem. He really wasn't prepared to take action to change anything. All right, he was obviously very limited in what he could do about his wife's drinking problem, but the whole point in fact was that he didn't actually move towards the children and try and take responsible care of them, he sort of avoided it all, and kept saying 'well, I just really want a happy solid family....None of this is really my fault?' I did try to talk to him on his own, but actually taking action of his own accord or trying to think of a way he could - you know, he really did have to consider if he was going to stay with this woman, if she didn't want to accept treatment and change, and you know, to think about bringing the kids up on his own and we would try and support him, but he wasn't really - didn't want to pursue that."
This rule did not seem to be more often violated in one group rather than the other. Nor was it obviously linked to gender; surprising in that mothers often seem to be expected to be more self sacrificing on their children's behalf than are fathers, but the data was not checked systematically for gender bias in rule breaking.

**Rule Four**

*A good parent thinks more of the child than of the family name.*

This rule was connected with, but distinct from, the previous rule. Several parents in both groups expressed shame at their children's behaviour. To be worried about the shame which the child was bringing to the family was seen as a detraction from the unconditional quality of parental love. With black parents this could be given a stereotyped cultural context. Ravinder's Asian father was described as:

"always very concerned with the effect of Ravinder's behaviour on the family name....(Ravinder) feared it may be a long time before he forgave her for the disgrace of her flight and the pregnancy." (Ravinder, aged 15, Subject Group)

When he did agree to accept Ravinder back at home, the file reports attributed this to his concern to preserve the family's reputation and appearance, rather than to love for his daughter.

Similarly, Riya's father, also Asian, was shamed by his daughter's refusal to live at home:

"The loss of his daughter is emotionally and culturally very distressing for him." (Riya, aged 15, Subject Group)
In Afro-Caribbean families references were less explicit, but similar implications were drawn for Marilyn's mother, who took her daughter to church to seek the help of the congregation in controlling Marilyn's behaviour. Arthur and Cathy's parents were amongst those worried about their children's troublesome behaviour in the area where they lived, which reflected on the family and caused trouble with neighbours, but their concern is not given a specifically cultural context. Oliver's West African father was thought to be concerned about his educational success rather than his 'real' needs. This appeared to have an element of concern about reputation.

"Mr. S has been very anxious that Oliver attends school and does what is required of him there. It is difficult to have a mutual discussion with Mr. S about Oliver's emotional needs because he seems to view intellectual achievement as paramount...Oliver also feels that he is not good enough for his father." (Oliver, aged 14, Subject Group)

The treatment of shame in some black and Asian families is an explicit example of cultural stereotyping. Although it is probably near-universal for people to wish to stand well in the eyes of their relatives, neighbours and community, the expression of shame is treated as a cultural issue only for black parents. White parents were not exempt from criticism but when shame was mentioned by white parents this was interpreted as a moral, rather than a cultural defect. Lucy's mother provided yet further evidence of her selfishness.

"She seems eager to impart the idea that she has been a good person and mother....she has emphasised how well liked and valued she is as a home help and that Lucy simply caused her shame." (Lucy, aged 13, Comparison Group)

Adele's parents were considered to be loving but rather feckless. They provided further evidence of their irresponsibility when Adele had been missing from home for a week and they failed to report her absence to the police,
"as they feel ashamed of the situation and feel that they will be held responsible for it." (Adele, aged 12, Comparison Group)

Janine's mother was very distressed by incidents in which Janine's sexual behaviour featured in graffiti scrawled on walls in the street where the family lived. She was regarded by the social worker as over-reacting to a trivial matter in a way which demonstrated her lack of mental stability.

Although Rule Four seemed equally likely to be violated in black and white families, there were indications that violations could be interpreted differently in different cultural contexts, particularly in accordance with stereotyped views of Asian culture.

In some of these rules about the quality of parental love, and its importance compared to other emotions and relationships, more Subject parents than Comparison parents were therefore rated badly*. Although Subject parents were more often given tributes for trying to do their best for their children, making great efforts on their children's behalf, than were the Comparison parents, this was seen as dependent on everything going well. When problems arose the parents were seen as more rejecting and personally bitter towards their children.

* In the 22 Subject families in this part of the study, three black children were solely in the care of white relatives, and a further five with both black and white relatives. Where cultural judgements were made, these parents usually seemed to be judged according to the rules applied to white parents rather than black.
This group of rules appear to stem from a view of the sanctity of the parent-child bond in which for the parent to reject the child is an 'unnatural' act. Children's rejection of parents rarely seemed to be seen as initiating moves, but only as a response to parental rejection or other failure. Thus, Tara's social worker commented:

"The rift between mother and daughter seems to have lasted for about two years, and consequently Tara finds it hard to express any warm feelings about her mother".

The rules postulate a 'pathological relationship' model which seemed more often detected in the black families, in spite of the identification of fewer examples of emotional deprivation and bad infant experience in the Subject Group.

A second group of rules about families concerned the proper roles to be adopted within the structure.

**Rule Five**

_Good parents share responsibility for childrearing._

Families in which fathers were seen as giving active support to mothers, as when Petra's father took time off work to help with his daughter's problems, were the ideal situation. Velma's mother and stepfather were similarly praised:

"Mrs. S looks after the family and home in a very capable and responsible way. Mr. S is supportive and caring towards the family."  (Velma, aged 15, Subject Group)

Tara's mother and her new partner are also praised, because they:

"have supported each other and seem happy. Mr. S acts as a father to the children and they all like him."  (Tara, aged 14, Subject Group)
Some division of role or labour according to gender was accepted as within culturally normal limits as in Andrea's gypsy family where her father (now dead) had been:

"the definite head of the household and respected by all members." (Andrea, aged 14, Comparison Group)

In a number of the Subject children's families, however, gender division was thought to be taken too far.

"(Ravinder's mother) is a quietly supportive, rather subordinate wife. Her difficulty is that she cannot speak English at all well, seems a rather passive character." (Ravinder, aged 15, Subject Group)

This judgement is made in spite of the fact that Ravinder's mother took a very active part in working with the residential home, supporting Ravinder through the termination of her pregnancy, and persuading her husband to accept Ravinder back home. A similar attitude was taken towards Lauretta's mother

"(Lauretta's mother) adopts a very traditional role as housewife, very concerned about how the children behave in the home but devoid of knowledge of what happens outside the home." (Lauretta, aged 12, Subject Group)

This kind of comment was not made about any of the Comparison Group mothers, even those who were full-time housewives (which Lauretta's mother, was not, being described as a factory worker). Eight of the Subject Group mothers, two of whom were white, were described in the court report as being subordinate to dominant husbands (in three cases to be victims of marital violence). None of the Comparison Group mothers were described in this way at the time of the child's entry to care (although several mothers in both groups reported that former partners had been violent, jealous or drunkards). Dominant husbands did not necessarily drop out of responsibilities to their children however. Arthur's father was praised because:
Parents were expected to overcome personal difficulties in their own relationships with each other in order to help their children. Teresa's parents are approved because, although separated, they:

"have met several times recently to discuss Teresa's problems" and her father has promised "to talk severely to Teresa." (Teresa, aged 12, Comparison Group)

Absent fathers who remained in contact were expected to maintain their children and do some of the work of caring for them. Two Afro-Caribbean fathers received short shrift for expecting representation without taxation. Although Selina was said to be a 'special child' to her father who attended interviews concerning her and took an interest in her possible placement, the social worker noted:

"He has rarely lived in the family home for long periods as he has another family living nearby....(his) interest in the children has been spasmodic." (Selina, aged 16, Subject Group)

He is described as rarely giving his wife anything other than beatings and financial debts. Moral support for her struggles with Selina is apparently not seen as counting for much. Patsy's social worker noted crisply that as well as having his legitimate children

"Mr. S is the father of five illegitimate children from four previous relationships....he has never paid anything for Patsy, however from time to time he can be persuaded to buy Patsy some items of clothing." (Patsy, aged 14, Subject Group)

His help in talking to Patsy in an effort to improve her behaviour is, however, acknowledged.
In both of these examples, the father's financial defaulting is seen in moral, not in cultural terms. The social workers gave no indication of familiarity with the different approaches to fatherhood which could be found in Afro-Caribbean culture. Afro-Caribbean fathers in this sample were presented as a responsible group. Of the twelve children with Afro-Caribbean fathers, only two had lost touch with them, the remainder taking a positive interest which led to many tributes in court reports. Neither the defaulting natural fathers nor the responsible stepfathers were depicted as part of a cultural pattern, or a cultural stereotype.

Absent parents (usually fathers) who had not kept in touch were generally cast as the villains of the tale, the account given by the remaining parent repeated with little comment and less questioning. Cathy's father is dismissed briefly:

"Soon after (the younger brother's) birth he left Mrs. S and has been seen only rarely since. . . . . . He has been in prison a few times and is generally thought unreliable." (Cathy, aged 12, Subject Group)

Velma's father has the same treatment.

"After 15 years of marriage during which the family was subject to a great deal of violence from Mr. S the divorce was granted on the grounds of cruelty. Mrs. S obtained custody of the children. There has been no contact with father since then." (Velma, aged 15, Subject Group)

Some references were even briefer, as with Moira:
"Moira is the only child of Mrs. C's first marriage. Her husband was Jewish and Mrs. C was given custody of Moira when they divorced."* (Moira, aged 14, Comparison Group)

Absent parents, as a rule, were only given lengthy expositions as villains when being used as the basis for an explanation of deviance based on emotional deprivation or infant trauma. Sam's social worker devoted four paragraphs to reporting Mrs. C's account of a disastrous marriage, which had ended ten years previously when Sam was five years old, after an episode in which:

"(Mr. C), while the children were having their evening meal, went berserk, shouting and screaming at Mrs. C who eventually managed to escape from the house, going to a neighbour's. Meanwhile her husband wrecked the family home with a hammer." (Sam, aged 14, Comparison Group)

Sam had refused to continue visiting his father after the divorce. When contact had been lost, most social workers appeared content to let sleeping parents lie, especially those reputed to wield hammers. This decision may not have been entirely dependent on the theoretical models applied to the understanding of family functioning. In only two accounts (both of absent white mothers of Subject children) were attempts to trace an absent parent mentioned.

Absent parents as rule violators were therefore not an important part of the social worker's case for family incompetence.

* No other reference is made to Moira's Jewish origins, either in terms of ethnicity or religion, and there is no obvious reason for its mention in the court report, other than as a racial label which is potentially marginalising.
Rule Six
A good parent does not place too much responsibility upon a child

Part of the stereotype of ethnic minority families is that daughters are expected to do much more work in the house than is usual for British families. The gender aspect of this stereotype was supported, as the seven children whose parents were described in the court reports as expecting unreasonable work and responsibility from their children were all girls. Of the seven, however, five were white girls from the Comparison Group. One of the Subject Group girls, Riya, aged 15, was from an Asian family whose mother had recently died. Riya left home, alleging among other complaints that her father expected her to do too much housework. The social worker made no comment on this allegation, although seeming to accept it, but later in the report she attributed to the school a report that Riya "tends to be lazy".* In two Comparison Group families it was accepted that children left with lone fathers had been given responsibilities beyond their years, but in both instances when the girls were much younger.

"Tessa was approximately ten years old when her mother deserted the home, when it appears that her father placed a great deal of responsibility on her for the wellbeing of her younger siblings. He also relied on her to do a great deal of the household chores, hence Tessa was given responsibility well beyond her years."
(Tessa, aged 15, Comparison Group)

* The school's report to the court contained no mention of Riya's purported laziness.
Similarly, Leila's mother left the family when Leila was eight years old and she was expected to assume the maternal role. By the time she was twelve she was being left in charge of her younger brothers, and "had become the domestic little mother". (Leila, aged 15, Comparison Group)

The child's age was less relevant when the mother was present but was seen as not 'pulling her weight', even if there was the excuse of illness. In Selina's large Afro-Caribbean family, Selina herself was not seen to be exploited but her sister, Barbara:

"does a great deal of the household tasks and looking after the younger children."

It was seen as an indication of the mother's illness that she allowed this to happen and saw Barbara as her "pet (who) acts out the good part of her, just as Selina acts out the violent and disturbed".

It was considered entirely reasonable in these circumstances that daughters should eventually rebel, as did Heather whose mother had allowed "standards in home care....to deteriorate" and accepted the fact that Heather

"assumed much of the responsibility for home maintenance, shouldering domestic responsibilities, assisting in the care of her mother and reviving her from epileptic fits." (Heather, aged 14, Comparison Group)

When Heather protested by withdrawing her labour and leaving home to live with a friend, her return was negotiated by the social worker in an agreement which

"included terms of (Heather's stepfather, mother and brother) improving standards with the aid of involvement from our Home Help section."

This rule therefore was better understood in terms of gender and age than of specific cultural norms.
The rule about the level of responsibility to be expected from children was associated with a perception of the proper status differentials between parents and children.

**Rule Seven**

**A good parent has a proper ordering of status with children.**

The first aspect of this rule concerned the appropriate emotional status. Good parents did not pretend to be one of the children. Kay's young stepmother, while they are very fond of each other, is unable to influence Kay's behaviour because

"she married Mr. S when she was 18 years of age....she was never regarded by Kay as a mother and is called by her first name."  (Kay, aged 14, Subject Group)

Charles's mother is also much younger than her husband and

"always appears to present herself as one of the children and not as a mother".  (Charles, aged 14, Comparison Group)

Equally parents must not become emotionally dependent on support from their children. Janet's parents broke this rule. Instead of providing strength and support for her children, Janet's mother:

"spends a lot of time alone and this results in her feeling....at times very dependent on her children"...."(Janet's) parents rely on their children to strengthen their family life."  (Janet, aged 13, Subject Group)

Lone parents were particularly likely to break this rule as with Andrea's mother

"After (her husband's) death Mrs. C relied heavily on Andrea for support and Andrea became like a sister."  (Andrea, aged 14, Comparison Group)

This was seen in many families to have led to subsequent difficulties when parents found new partners.
"Andrea will not accept (her stepfather's) authority as a parent...she has said he can never replace her real father."

This rule, too, seemed to have no link with specific cultural stereotypes.

The Formation of Rules

Apart from the depiction of Subject Group mothers as subordinate, this second group of rules concerning family structure did not depict different views of family structure in ethnic minorities. The greater perception of rule violation concerning love and relationships were not therefore tied to perceptions of different family structures, and there is no indication that sociological understanding (or misunderstanding) of cultural patterns contributed to the formation of rules for good parenting.

The rules concerning unconditional love and non-rejection, in particular, are treated as natural, taken for granted expositions of the way that parental love should operate. This may even be seen by social workers in biological terms (the tigress defending her young), but the cultural echoes of the parables of the prodigal son, and the shepherd searching for the lost sheep, also appear to have not a little relevance, in a context where rule violators are seen in moral terms. Rules One to Four have a primary base in Western Christian values, and not in either psychologically determined models of healthy upbringing, nor in sociological norms of culturally acceptable parental behaviour.
Rules Five to Seven, concerning family roles and structure, however, do appear to have strong links with psychodynamic models of suitable roles in the modern nuclear family, in which a degree of male dominance ('the definite head of the family, respected as such') must be linked to acceptance of family responsibilities (especially economic responsibilities) while the supportive, but not too passive wife takes responsibility for keeping the house and children clean, and the children are reared in a state of suitable infant material and emotional dependency. The cultural aspects of this model of the family are so ingrained that it does not occur to the social workers that it is a culturally generated model.

Even when rule formation was understood to be value based, however, violation was not automatically seen in moral terms. It could be depicted as a cultural issue, in which the culture of the violator must inevitably be seen as morally inferior, since the values behind the rules are not treated as culturally determined but as 'natural', biological or God-given. Violation could also be seen as a mental health issue, and linked with this, as a personality issue. Violation of rules associated with the psychodynamic model of the healthy nuclear family could also be explained within any of these four frameworks. Culturally based violations here are also likely to be seen as reflecting an inferior (because unhealthy) cultural approach to the family, as the examples have demonstrated.

There were some circumstances in which behaviour which might have been considered rule violation was instead excused or found acceptable. It has been shown that most parents were disqualified from giving an authoritative account of the
children's behaviour because they were seen as primarily responsible for that behaviour. A few were exempt from disqualification. Leonie's adoptive parents were not responsible for her sudden precipitation into delinquency because

"they are caring parents who have worked very hard to help Leonie and her sister overcome the stresses they encountered in their early life, and it must be said that up until this year they had been very successful in this endeavour." (Leonie, aged 15, Comparison Group)

Leonie's behaviour was clearly, in her social worker's account, 'caused by' an identity crisis as an adopted child and difficult memories of her original family from early childhood. When her father gave way to exasperation at Leonie's behaviour by telling her to leave their home and taking her belongings outside to her in the street, this was an 'end of tether' response caused by Leonie, and not a rejection which caused her problems, in contrast to the account given above of Tara's problems with her mother.

Defective moral character on the part of the child could also partly or wholly exonerate parents from blame, as with Petra's parents who had tried very hard to control their daughter. The methods they had applied to discipline and control were seen as sensible and appropriate, albeit ineffective. They accepted appropriate moral responsibility for Petra's behaviour and "are worried that they have gone wrong in some way as parents but cannot see where." Neither can the social worker. Equally, Riya's 'wilful and devious' character exonerates her father from blame and her allegations that he drinks, expects her to do all the housework and has allowed her brother to beat her are not regarded as justifying her behaviour, or as making him a 'bad' father. The social worker notes that "Mr. S clearly cares for Riya and sincerely wishes for her to live at home."
Most parents, however, violated at least one of the rules for good parenting. General parental competence was also measured by the parents approach to disciplining and controlling the children.

**Discipline and Control within the Family**

It has been noted that comments on the parent's methods of discipline and control formed only a small part of the court reports. In most of the families parents were described as having tried to control their children. In only four families (one Subject, three Comparison) was there a suggestion of possible collusion with bad behaviour and even then it was partial as discussed in the previous chapter. In Adele's family, for example, there was a suggestion of unconscious collusion with the school refusal exhibited by Adele and most of her siblings:

"What seems to emanate from the parents is a feeling that the outside world is a threatening and dangerous place....this underlying fear of life outside the family would seem to have contributed to the development of chronic non-school attendance problems throughout the family as primary family ties have clearly been in conflict with wider social expectations." (Adele, aged 12, Subject Group)

In this instance, the fear was thought to have a rational origin in terms of the parent's experience of external events endangering the family, and Adele's other behaviour problems (running away and sexual involvement at the age of 12) were sources of much anxiety to her parents. Any collusion was evidently seen in psychological not cultural or social class terms, in this working class family. It was clear that the sample were not considered to be part of an intergenerational pattern of socialised, subcultural delinquency.
None of the court reports contained a systematic analysis of the family's approach to discipline, and very few gave much detail of the methods used. Most common was a kind of verbal wringing of hands at the family's 'inadequacy' in this respect.

"Janet still needs structure to her life which at the moment she does not receive at home." (Janet, aged 13, Subject Group)

"Vicky needs a firmer structure and clearer guidelines which (her mother) alone cannot provide." (Vicky, aged 14, Comparison Group)

"Arthur's parents now feel that they are at the end of their tether and that Arthur is beyond their control." (Arthur, aged 13, Subject Group)

"(Mrs. C's) problems with Sam have worsened to the point where she could no longer cope." (Sam, aged 14, Comparison Group)

Specific responses which were described towards individual pieces or types of misbehaviour included being kept in or kept away from friends, having pocket money stopped or reduced, and being 'talked to', 'threatened' or 'nagged'. These were all occasional mentions however.

The Use of Physical Punishment

The use of physical punishment was mentioned far more frequently. In the total sample of 93 children, physical punishment was mentioned somewhere in the reports for one third of the children, a far higher proportion than the 7%-10% which Riley and Shaw (1985) found in a general population sample. Physical punishment in the present sample was, however, twice as likely to be mentioned for the black children, (58%) as for the white (20%), and this difference was largely explained by the children in the Subject Group. Levels of physical punishment in the
Disqualified Group were similar to those for the white Comparison Group. There was comparatively little gender difference, again as in Riley and Shaw's sample, but the small difference found was in the opposite direction to the general population sample: 37% of the girls had been physically punished but only 31% of the boys.

It seems likely that the physical punishment arises between parents and teenagers in a context of friction and loss of temper over the teenager's behaviour, since the figures for mention of physical punishment are very similar to those for hostile relationships between children and parents.*

Physical punishment was almost always part of the open agenda, at least to some degree. In the Stage Three sample, as in the total sample, it was mentioned more often for the Subject Group than the Comparison Group. In the Subject Group court reports there were twelve specific mentions of physical punishment of the study children and three more ambiguous possible references, while in the Comparison Group there were four definite mentions and two ambiguous mentions. Physical punishment was defined as any physical violence used towards the child and references were not necessarily to formal beatings or smackings.

* Mentions of physical punishment coded here included only references to punishment for recent behaviour. A number of children were reported to have been victims of violence from an absent partner during infancy, but this was not the subject of the present study.
Most of these examples, however, did not refer to a straightforward use of corporal punishment by parents as a chosen disciplinary method. In only three Subject and two Comparison families could references unambiguously have been interpreted in this way. Tara's mother, for example,

"uses a range of disciplinary measures from withdrawal of privileges to corporal punishment," (Tara, aged 14, Subject Group)

and although she is criticised for being strict, and her children are described as subdued and possibly afraid of her, there is no suggestion that her punishment is exceptionally severe or dangerous to the children. Similarly Tessa's father is criticised for his use of corporal punishment when it was not appropriate, but also without implication that the punishment itself was excessive.

"Her father....it appears, held her responsible for the actions of the younger children, and it is suspected that Tessa was subjected to a degree of physical punishment." (Tessa, aged 15, Comparison Group)

The cause of much more concern, and the reason for most references to physical punishment, was evidence that the parents lost their self control in punishing their children, and that children were in potential danger as a result. A cycle of events in which defiant behaviour in the child led to dangerous loss of temper in the parent, leading to further bad behaviour from the child, provoking the parent still further, until there was risk of serious injury, was described in a number of families, but more often in the Subject Group - eight Subject children were considered to be at risk of serious injury from their families (usually a parent but in one instance an elder brother) but only two Comparison children were so described.
Social workers interviewed, and sometimes in reports, painted graphic pictures of the exasperation which could spill over into confrontation. Dean's social worker described his first visit to the family.

**Social Worker:** "I heard (Dean) before I met him, coming home from where he'd been out, having a slanging match with another kid, actually with some quite strong threats of physical violence between them. It came to the door and it stayed around the door, and then it went into the bedroom and he was hanging out of the window and there were stones being thrown in between. Mum was trying to sort it out and he took absolutely no notice of her whatsoever.

**Interviewer:** "Was she shouting at him, or trying to stop him physically, or....?"

**Social Worker:** "She did both, actually, she tried to restrain him by reasoning which did absolutely no good, she tried to restrain him physically, in fact he dragged her the length of the corridor while she was hanging on to his shirt, and it triggered an asthma attack in her, she had to use her inhaler. He took absolutely no notice of her. He sat picking the stuffing out of the settee with a screwdriver, which she tried to get off him physically, and he resisted and there was quite a struggle....She just sat down and said 'now, you see what I've got to contend with.' She was having this really bad asthma attack. And then (the younger brother) came in, and of course he joined in, and all the while I was there this was all happening, they were out on the verandah shouting, stones were being thrown up, slanging matches with neighbours. His response to (his mother) was 'no' whenever she asked him to do anything or tried to reason with him at all. It was just totally impossible." (Dean, aged 10, Subject Group)

Public conflicts such as this were common in the sample, as were domestic confrontations when erring children returned home at two or three o'clock in the morning.

How much was said about the danger to children in the court report varied considerably, but seemed to be linked to the parents own attitudes to it. Several parents had expressed fears that they might injure their children, and confession of this fear seemed to lead to a toning down of the incidents in the court reports.
In the social worker's file reports, for example, Fenella's father was reported to have beaten her and "grabbed her by the throat" during arguments, and as being afraid that "he may really hurt her in losing his temper". Yet in the court report there was no mention of throttling and only one brief reference that:

"Mr. S was afraid of losing control in response to Fenella's provocation". (Fenella, aged 14, Subject Group)

Dean's mother is also treated gently in the court report

"(She) is fearful of what she may do to Dean. In her frustration (she) shakes him and she is worried she may go too far." (Dean, aged 10, Subject Group)

No instances were found where physical violence was completely relegated to the hidden agenda, however, indicating the importance of the issue in the social worker's case, and the expectation that it would carry considerable weight with magistrates.

Where parents did not acknowledge their guilt in assaulting the child, or where the violence was thought to be linked to mental illness or drinking, concern was more dramatically expressed in the reports, and usually put into the social worker's, rather than the parent's account and language.

"(Geraldine's mother) has on different occasions hit her seriously enough to warrant our concern and for Geraldine to be put on the NAI (Non-Accidental Injury) register." (Geraldine, aged 13, Subject Group)

"Anna has sustained injury after family arguments which are increasingly violent, and could be in physical danger if she remains at home." (Anna, aged 14, Subject Group)

"It was feared that either Selina or her parents would do severe physical damage to each other or to someone else." (Selina, aged 16, Subject Group)
Julia's family worried the social worker by refusing to acknowledge the violence towards the child as a problem:

"The general prevailed attitude in the S family was that Julia asked for what she got. (Mother's) attitude was that if only Julia behaved she would not need to be disciplined." (Julia, aged 13, Subject Group)

Where direct threats were uttered to children these were quoted:

"(Cathy's mother) feels that all connection with her daughter has been severed. She feels that she has been defeated by her and always says that if she catches up with her, which occasionally she does, she (mother) will end up in (prison). (Cathy, aged 12, Subject Group)

All these examples came from the Subject Group. In the two Comparison Group cases where children were thought to be in danger, Janine's mother was among those reporting guilt and anxiety about her behaviour, while Heather was at risk from a recently acquired stepfather who controlled and punished his stepchildren by throttling them.

In these extreme cases it was hard to see any indication of cultural assumptions being made about parents, and indeed six of the twelve Subject children reported as having been beaten were children of mixed parentage living with both of their parents or with the white parent. Two were regarded as at greatest risk from their white parent. The fact that more were found in the Subject than the Comparison Group therefore seems likely to reflect some other aspect of the family circumstances, or of the services provided.

One possibility is the finding noted earlier, that the Subject Group families appeared to have received less help from 'welfare' services than had the Comparison Group, indicating that intervention may be less likely to be considered with black children until the situation becomes desperate. Another might lie in the choice of legal
proceedings, with the legal case for a care order for black children being based on the child's misdemeanours, when for a white child it would be based on the parent's misdemeanours. With white children social workers may feel more confident in criticising parental behaviour and therefore be more willing to choose an open rather than concealed 'child protection' measure, which would require more direct public criticism of parents and have greater implications of moral condemnation. These interpretations are speculative, however, and cannot be followed up within the confines of the present sample.

Personality and Discipline

It was demonstrated in the previous chapter that Subject children's parental failure was more likely to be attributed to personality factors than was the case with Comparison children.

Although allegations that children were in danger had no obvious links with cultural stereotypes there was clear indication that stereotypes of parental personality were used when considering the parental approach to discipline. In twelve of the court reports on Subject families, the suggestion was made that a parent, or both parents, were rigid, authoritarian or too traditional in their approach to discipline. The stereotype was also found in additional reports from residential homes and consultants. This was not synonymous with the use of physical punishment: half of the families where the pattern was described as authoritarian were not reported to beat their children, and half of the children reported as having been beaten were in families not described as authoritarian. This sort of terminology was not used for the Comparison Group families, (although one of the rigid, authoritarian parents in the Subject Group was white).
Hence, Fenella's Afro-Caribbean father, while rated as a 'good' father in most respects,

"reacts to Fenella's manipulative and provocative behaviour by becoming even more rigid and uncompromising." (Fenella, aged 14, Subject Group)

Tara's mother, also Afro-Caribbean,

"has a pleasant, gentle manner with adults but has rigid ideas on controlling children." (Tara, aged 14, Subject Group)

Cathy, whose care is shared between her white maternal grandmother and her British born black mother

"is caught in a contradictory limbo between liberal, over tolerant grandmother on the one hand and strict authoritarian mother on the other hand." (Cathy, aged 12, Subject Group)

Ravinder, from an Asian family, is described as

"a rather fundamentally deprived girl whose emerging positon in rather a hardline family was quite a struggle." (Ravinder, aged 15, Subject Group)

Margaret, of British and West African parentage, is in the care of her white mother's cousins, who:

"responded to Margaret's unacceptable behaviour by increased discipline and increased control and punishments....(after coming into care) it was felt that her (deteriorating) behaviour was a reaction to leaving the more strict and authoritarian environment at (her cousin's) home." (Margaret, aged 13, Subject Group)

It is of particular interest here that the 'authoritarian' labels appear to be properties attributed to the Subject children's situation rather than to the parental culture direct; since Margaret's cousins were white and British, while Cathy's mother was British born and had been brought up alone by her own white 'liberal, over tolerant' mother after her father's desertion. The labels 'authoritarian'
and 'rigid' appear to be triggered by association with people from ethnic minorities and consequently to be both stereotypes in the psychological sense and to be "blemishes of individual character" associated with the "tribal stigmata of race, nation and religion" as described by Goffman (1967).

The cycle in which children's behaviour was followed by parental clampdown, followed by worse behaviour and tighter clampdown, was also described in a number of Comparison Group families, but words such as 'rigid', 'authoritarian', 'hardline', 'uncompromising' or even 'strict' were not used in the court reports where felt qualms about strictness were reserved for the hidden agenda. Janine, for example,

"finds it hard to accept....the well ordered aspects of her father and stepmother's home." (Janine, aged 13, Comparison Group)

She did not want to live with her father

"because of her father's antagonistic attitude towards her going out with her half-caste boyfriend or any other coloured boys, which he felt very strongly about."

The neutral reporting style of the second quotation is in marked contrast to the label of "hardline" placed upon Ravinder's family because, among other things, her father objected to her friendships with "black girls with lower standards" and even more to her Moslem boyfriend. The words 'strict', 'authoritarian' and 'rigid' are also not used for Janine's family.

Adele's parents also became caught up in a cycle of 'punishment/behaviour/worse punishment/worse behaviour'.

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"as her parents responded (to her truancy) by withdrawing privileges unless she returned to school the situation deprecated still further. Every attempt to control her behaviour exacerbated the situation until she started staying out late rather than facing her parents." (Adele, aged 12, Comparison Group)

Eventually her parents were refusing to let her out of the house alone, even to go to school, for fear that she would again run away. No hint that Adele's parents are authoritarian is found in the report and their behaviour is treated as reactive to Adele, rather than representing limitations in their own capacity to control a child.

Charles' father was described in the file reports as being a former soldier with a 'regimental' attitude towards Charles, but this was not mentioned in the court report. Don's father, also a former soldier, was said in file reports to be nicknamed 'the Gestapo' by neighbourhood children, but there is no suggestion that he was authoritarian towards Don. With both boys, authoritarian behaviour was thus restricted to the hidden agenda, and not used as public criticism of the parents. Heather's parents were described in the file reports as adopting an inappropriate approach to discipline and setting unreasonable punishments for minor misbehaviour. This was not discussed in the court report, but reserved for the hidden agenda.

Authoritarian behaviour was not seen as linked with effectiveness in control of children any more than was physical punishment. The label seemed to have more connection with whether parents were willing to negotiate with their children. Nor did the label have noticeable connection with the decision making process, but was rather a question of how events were interpreted afterwards. The label did seem to be used frequently when children became outcasts.
It was obvious that the use of stereotypes did not necessarily require their attribution to a specific race or culture, nor their expression in cultural and racial terms. Indeed the most insidious and potentially damaging stereotypes are those which simply attribute social or personality characteristics more commonly to specific groups without attribution. Allport's (1954) seminal study of racial prejudice defines a stereotype as:

"an exaggerated belief associated with a category. It's function is to justify (rationalise) our conduct in relation to that category."

In the foreword to the 1958 edition of his book Allport noted that open avowal of white supremacy was becoming unfashionable. In the battle against desegregation of schools

"It is respectable to plead for 'states rights' but not for 'keeping niggers in their place'. The norms are changing."

Allport optimistically saw this as an obvious move away from prejudice rather than as a method of disguising prejudice which might preserve the structures of racism while removing its identifying labels. Yet his own data shows that stereotyped associations enable the individual to supply the ethnic or racial label for themselves once the stereotyped link is established. Children given a description of Aladdin as living in China, and being a lazy boy who preferred to play rather than work, would then confidently state that Aladdin was a 'Negro' rather than 'Chinese' because they had already learned to associate 'laziness' and 'Negro' and no longer needed to be told Aladdin's race. In this way the constant repetition of associations, to the point where the association no longer needs to be spelled out, has been shown to perpetuate ethnic and racial stereotypes in literature and the media (Milner 1983).
The stereotype of the rigid, over strict, authoritarian parent was potentially the tip of a stereotypical iceberg, and it was decided to search the available records more systematically for other stereotypes, particularly for evidence of stereotypes which were not directly attributed to race or ethnicity but which are known to be more commonly attributed to black or Asian people. Other stereotypes were less in evidence than expected, and seemed no more likely to be attributed to the Subject Group families than to the Comparison Group.

The linked stereotype of the conventional family structure, with marked gender-role divisions, and the passive or subordinate wife was rarely developed in reports other than that of the social worker, though in two instances psychiatrists who interviewed mothers considered them passive but linked this to depression rather than role.

Religion and Ethnic Stereotypes

Religion was mentioned as an issue in four children's court reports, and for a fifth in the hidden agenda. The stereotype of the religious black family judging everything in moral terms (as described by Pryce 1979), was not dominant in this sample. Only two black Subject mothers (both Afro-Caribbean) were described as very religious. Marilyn's mother, reported by Marilyn herself to believe that her daughter was possessed by demons, and who had called in an exorcist,

"impresses as a very religious person, started attending the Pentecostal church with all her children for help with Marilyn's behaviour." (Marilyn, aged 13, Subject Group)
Mrs. S's religious activities were a cause of disagreement in the family as her husband did not share her beliefs and resented the time she spent in church meetings.

Description is confined to Mrs. S's religious activities as they concern Marilyn's behaviour and therefore does not seem to be 'stereotypical' in the sense of attributing characteristics unrelated to observed behaviour, but it seemed contextualised to indicate that Mrs. S was out of touch with the 'real' causes of Marilyn's misbehaviour.

A Comparison Group family is described in almost identical terms, though without the belief in demons.

"(Moira's mother) is a Jehovah's Witness and attends many meetings concerned with this which causes conflict between herself and Mr. C, who is a Catholic." (Moira, aged 14, Comparison Group)

No mention was made, however, of Mrs. C interpreting Moira's behaviour in religious terms. Nevertheless in both of these reports, the disagreements which religion caused between the parents seemed the primary reason for the inclusion of the comments.

In the second Afro-Caribbean family, Lauretta's home was described as

"comfortable and tidy with lots of ornaments and pictures especially religious ones". Lauretta's mother was noted "to take refuge in reading her Bible in times of stress". (Lauretta, aged 12, Subject Group)

Mrs. S's religious beliefs were again used to support an image of her inability to face the reality of her present problems, but this was associated with other evidence suggesting that withdrawal from Lauretta's problems was one of the features of the family.
that her Moslem boyfriend was unacceptable to her father, but there was no further exploration of religion as an influencing factor in family behaviour. Finally, in Margaret's (Subject Group) white family, her cousins' (especially Mr. S's) authoritarian attitudes were linked in the file reports (not the court report) to their membership of a strict Christian church.

Religion was therefore seen as contributing to family tensions and difficulties, but not in a consistent way. The only common element in these five (two Afro-Caribbean, two white and one Asian) families seemed to be that devotion to religious beliefs was thought to get in the way of normal common sense in tackling family problems. With the three mothers, however, (Marilyn's, Lauretta's and Moira's) religion was quite clearly seen as an escape, a retreat from hard reality. With the two fathers (Ravinder's natural father and Margaret's cousin/foster father) it was seen as a means of setting rules for behaviour which the child had sinned by breaking. The gender perceptions seem as if they may be more important in forming stereotypes than is ethnicity. In any event, religious stereotypes were evidently not of widespread application throughout the sample.

**Education and Ethnic Stereotypes**

The suggestion that parents are stereotypically seen or criticised as too ambitious for their children was also not supported by this analysis. Only one parent, Oliver's West African father, was said to be too concerned with his son's educational prospects. Since Oliver was assessed as having above average ability, this concern was not considered
unrealistic, but the social worker thought that it excluded other important areas of Oliver's development. Obsession with education is a common stereotype of the West African parent (Ellis 1978). Oliver's headmaster did not share the social worker's views, and spoke of Mr. S's concern about his son's education in wholly approving terms.

In all other families references to education were to parents' anxieties about their children skipping school or getting into trouble at school. It was notable that almost all of the children in the Subject Group were described as bright or intelligent, and this was borne out by the educational psychologists' test results, although many were described as underfunctioning at school. In these circumstances, the professionals also thought children should have been doing better at school. Two educational psychologists' reports mentioned Subject children having unrealistic ambitions for their own careers. In both instances these were children assessed as having below average ability who aspired to higher education and professional careers.

This group of children are in many ways atypical of the normal population of a secondary school (if only because so many had been excluded from school or ceased to attend on their own account). The results do not therefore invalidate Ahmed's (1986) arguments in relation to black school children in other settings. They do, however, show that cultural racism in terms of low expectations of pupils did not appear to explain or substantially influence the present sample's difficulties and admission to care.
The search for stereotypes emphasised the importance of a systematic dredge of the reports. It was very easy to reach an impressionistic assessment that a stereotype was present. A first reading of reports led to the impression that black children were more likely to be described as explosive or impulsive, which might have reflected commonly found stereotypes of black people as more 'primitive', 'aggressive' or 'uninhibited' than white people. When a systematic record was made of all adjectives used to describe black and white children, this impression was not substantiated. Only a few of the Subject children were so described, and Comparison children were equally likely to be described in the same terms. The impression received merely indicated the stereotype in the researcher's own mind which led to selective reading. There was in general no evidence of differences in character traits or other descriptive terms attributed to black and white children, although there were occasional individually questionable use of adjectives, as in medical staff's descriptions of Selina's unsocialised behaviour as 'primitive'. No such examples were found in the social work court reports.

Summary

Presentation of the family in court and other reports was examined to clarify the models of 'good family' or the 'good parent' which were being used as the template against which real parents were measured.

Seven rules for good parenting were identified, although it is not suggested that these form an exhaustive list. Good parents were those who gave children unconditional love, did not reject their children following misbehaviour, gave the children's needs priority over those of other relationships
and cared more for the children than for the family reputation. Good parents shared responsibility for childrearing between mother and father, did not place too much responsibility on their children and preserved a status distinction between parents and children.

The first group of rules appeared to be treated as 'natural' taken for granted, perhaps biologically based or God-given rules. The second were cultural perceptions, but were not discussed in the context of sociological models of family structure within a given culture and did not appear to use sociologically based stereotypes of the structure of ethnic minority families. Both groups of rules were in effect treated by social workers as culture-free. They were not, however, treated as value-free, but were frequently linked with moral judgements as well as with psychologically determinist views of parental functioning. It is suggested that because the rules were seen as 'natural' value based rules, any violation, whether associated with culture, personality or mental health, would stigmatise the violator in moral terms.

Social workers usually gave tributes to parents' good qualities in court reports, as well as recording rule violations. The Subject Group parents appeared to be regarded as 'better' parents than the Comparison Group parents, in that they tried harder to be 'good' parents, and more often received tributes for this. Although they were also more often noted to use physical punishment, this was not seen to be punishment used as a controlled disciplinary measure. Most references to physical punishment were to circumstances in which the parent lost self control during confrontations with the child, and hence the child was in danger from the parent. This was noted with more Subject than Comparison children, but did not appear linked to ethnicity, in that several of the Subject children were considered at risk from a white parent or stepparent.
There was evidence of the use of cultural stereotypes associated with rule breaking and with the personality of parents. Although parents from both groups were reported to be shamed by their children's misbehaviour, this was given a cultural context for black children, particularly for the two Asian children. Mothers in the Subject Group were more often depicted as passive or subordinate, and parents more often described as authoritarian or rigid. These stereotypes did not appear to have much connection with differences in events between the groups, and instead were interpretations of events. It is suggested that they were examples of stigma as described by Goffman (1967).

The use of stereotypes, however, did not appear connected with the decision that the children should be in care, because they were later attachments to events which were important in their own right. It is possible that stereotypes may in some families have influenced the perception of whether compulsory powers were necessary, by affecting the social worker's views of the reliability, cooperativeness or moral status of the parents. This evidently could not have been the sole influence on the decision, however, in view of earlier material (Chapter Nine) describing other influences on that decision.
The Approach to Theory and Analysis

In this final chapter the presentation of results and conclusions, and the analysis of their contribution to sociology, will use the framework developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). They distinguish between substantive theory, developed for empirical enquiry into specific areas, and formal theory which is the development of conceptual abstractions to be applied across a wide range of social situations. Glaser and Strauss argue that research must be clear whether its focus is on one or the other, but that substantive research should be developed in such a way that it can generate grounded theory (theory which is based on data, rather than being logically deduced from a series of abstractions). The grounded substantive theory will ultimately contribute to formal theory, and is better theory if developed in a way which builds in the relationship to formal theory.

The present research has been developed with a substantive focus on adolescents committed to care following behaviour problems, comparing the way in which social workers interpret the situation of black and white adolescents and their families. The objectives of the research, stated in Chapter Five, can be briefly restated here:

1. To explore the construction of definitions of unacceptable behaviour.

2. To examine social workers' theories of causality.

3. To compare social workers' theoretical models applied to the situation of black and white children and their families.
4. To examine the justification given for committal to public care as a solution to the behaviour.

5. To contribute to the development of grounded theory advancing the understanding of community (state) interaction with members of the community, specifically with ethnic minorities.

The research did not have as a primary aim the testing and verification of hypotheses derived from formal theory, since the wish was to study a real situation as it occurred, and there was no sufficiently developed body of formal theory to cover the complexity of the substantive topic. Deviance theory, the most likely contender, was inadequate in its focus on criminal offending, whereas the substantive problem was rather one of 'disobedience'.

The concept of control was clearly important in a situation where adults, whether parents, teachers, police or social workers, were defining the behaviour of adolescents as 'disobedient' or 'unacceptable' and acting to enforce their definitions on the young. This area of formal theory was therefore treated as a useful one which could inform the generation and interpretation of data, along with two further formal theories applied in some previous studies of social services clients and of ethnic minorities. These were: theories of stigma, in which children and their families might be seen as 'spoiled' or 'discredited' individuals by reason of their client status, behaviour or ethnic and racial characteristics; and theories of marginality in which clients might be seen as being partially excluded from, or on the fringes of society by reason of their social incompetence at managing their lives and children, or of their status as immigrants, aliens or 'only half British'. Stigma and marginality are the types of theory described by Glaser and Strauss as middle range,
falling half way between theories for one specific situation, and grand theories for a universal understanding of social behaviour. Whereas the issue of control can be seen as linking with a body of grand theory of social control and order it is treated here on a rather humbler level as the control of the young by their elders and the control of clients by welfare professionals.

There is a considerable body of empirical research on troublesome adolescents and young people coming into care which has for the most part used or been influenced by theories of social control, but rather less attention has been paid to the accumulation and testing of data for the other two theories. I have tried to work by replicating and testing ideas from previous research wherever possible, in an attempt at constructive disproof of a kind which refines and advances, rather than merely debunks, previous theories. To this extent I have followed the positivist tradition of research. My criterion for using previous theory and research has however been that of whether it can be used without forcing a fit where none exists, and in this respect I have followed the guidance of Glaser and Strauss in treating the reality of the data as generally more important than the purity of an experimental design which might have led to the discarding of important data as irrelevant to the design. Many hypotheses have been generated by the data as the research proceeded rather than being deduced from previous theory or research. Examples of these procedures are included in Appendix Two.

I have also followed the Glaser and Strauss guidelines in trying to avoid the production of what they term 'exampled' theory, which uses plausible examples to support a case and ignores contrary examples. To this end the approach was one of systematic analysis of qualitative data of the kind described by Silverman (1985).
The starting point for this area of the research was the expectation culled from previous empirical studies, that definition was unlikely to be a constant. Behaviour is defined differently according to the age and gender of the perpetrator, and also is likely to be seen by social workers as 'symptomatic' of other problems rather than as a phenomenon in its own right, at least in some family contexts. There were substantive questions as to whether behaviour would also be interpreted differently according to the ethnicity of the perpetrator as implied by research suggesting, for example, that black juvenile offenders are punished more severely than white (Tipler 1985).

In the present study, examination of reported criminal and status offending showed a general pattern of similarity between black and white children. There was a very slight, statistically insignificant but consistent tendency for there to be higher levels of reported behaviour problems with white children, particularly for those recently referred. While this seemed at first sight to agree with previous findings of earlier intervention in black children's families there were some important qualifiers. Firstly the degree of difference was miniscule compared to the degree of overlap. Secondly, data on the patterns of referral suggested that black children and families were less likely to have had previous intervention by social work and other agencies, but also less likely to have had previous referrals followed up. Thirdly there were small but important differences in the context within which black and white children's behaviour came to the notice of welfare professionals.
Of greater importance was the evidence from records that more than 80% of the children were seen as behaving badly at home, the same proportion at school, and in the community, with more than half defined as behaving badly in all three social contexts. Individual measures of the type or seriousness of misbehaviour, whether criminal or status offending, or wherever it took place, had little discriminating power within the sample. Although unacceptable behaviour was the starting point for the research and the legal justification for the children's removal, it proved relatively useless for discriminating within the sample.

As a result the totality of an individual child's reported misbehaviour showed little apparent connection with the formal grounds on which the committal was based; almost all children could have been brought to court on several other behavioural grounds than the one finally chosen, and which was chosen seemed largely fortuitous. The problematic nature of the assumption that committal occurred 'because' the child was behaving badly was highlighted still further by the analysis of the content and structure of social workers' court reports, which showed how very little space was given to discussing the behaviour compared to that given to discussion of the family. This was equally true whether the misbehaviour was relatively minor such as truancy or trivial theft, or very serious such as violent attacks on others or life-threatening arson.

Yet it would be incorrect to conclude from this either that misbehaviour was important solely by reason of its status as a symptom of family or other difficulties, or solely because it gave the authorities an excuse for intervention in a family seen as in need of welfare control for other reasons. The children's behaviour proved extremely important in moving the action along, in representing the children's power to influence events, and in triggering a process of
escalation, firstly into temporary or voluntary care and then into court committal status. They did this by such means as refusal to accept face-saving compromises offered by adults, and thus created a secondary set of issues which were often as much about the adults' (particularly the social workers') reputations as they were about the children's compliance or wellbeing.

At times the refusal to compromise was seen by social workers as involuntary, an indication of the level of emotional disturbance represented by the behaviour, but often it was seen as a deliberate, calculated move to bring about an end result which the child actively sought, the chance to live as he or she wanted (whether in care or street life) rather than as parents or other adults wanted. The extent to which the child (including the child's peer group involvement) was controlling the events was, however, usually de-emphasised or disguised by social workers in the court report, action which could only be seen as a strategy to preserve the social worker's credibility and the case for social work control through a care order. The behaviour reported was primarily that which led to direct face to face clashes with parents or other adults in authority (defiance, disruption of classes, violence) or represented withdrawal from adult control into a peer group, underworld, or street life (truancy, staying out all night, running away), rather than expressive misbehaviour such as vandalism, dodging train fares or similar issues. The concern was therefore primarily with behaviour which was a direct challenge to adult authority rather than merely a nuisance, however costly.

The suggestion that the contextual definition of juvenile misbehaviour is more important than the behaviour itself is a familiar one developed from the work of Cicourel (1968) and followed in a number of British studies of adolescents in conflict with authority. The present study suggests,
however, that the establishment of a contextual definition is a more complex process than the simple reflection of power relationships between social classes or ethnic groups, or crude distinctions of morality. While these things are important and more important in some families and circumstances than others, a more useful direction for future sociological inquiry is that suggested by Donzelot's (1977) description of the family as both 'queen and prisoner of society' through an interactive process in which children, parents, and the representatives of state institutions seek to use each other to further their own ends, and in which their respective success is not necessarily in direct ratio with their formal power. The question 'How is unacceptable behaviour defined and understood' needs to be redrawn, as 'How is behaviour used to meet the objectives of the parties to the definition?'

Definitions of unacceptable behaviour also took into account a complicated mesh of information and judgement about the child's background, parent's behaviour and personality, the motivation of various participants and mitigating factors which were seen to contribute to the morality of the situation. This takes us into the second substantive area of the research.

Substantive Research Area Two: How are Behaviour Problems explained by Social Workers?

This area included the extent to which causes of misbehaviour were located in the family, the individual and the environment, and the theoretical models which were applied to understanding misbehaviour. The results demonstrated that the social worker's understanding of causality was inextricably linked with the family. Although the influence of the peer group, boyfriends, the school and occasionally the neighbourhood were acknowledged, they were
depicted as secondary and as being powerful only because the family had not succeeded in holding the child. In this respect the social workers' perceptions of the role of the family in controlling its young and preserving social order concur with Donzelot's (1977) analysis of the objectives of the state as exercised through 'welfare professionals'. Where doubts existed in the social workers' minds, as was sometimes apparent, they were nevertheless likely to be excluded from the written records and particularly from the court report.

Atkinson (1978) in demonstrating the similarity between sociologists' analysis of variables associated with suicide, and coroners' 'common sense' theorising about suicide, points out the problem for sociologists which is implied by the similarity: are sociologists simply making explicit and dignifying the everyday assumptions made by officials, or conversely, are the officials reading the sociologists' published work and incorporating its results into their own thinking. The same problem is posed by the similarity between social workers' and sociologists' views of the social control mechanism of the family.

The social workers' emphasis on the family as a focus of problems is hardly surprising. There were few families in this study whose life appeared peaceful or harmonious. They were characterised by histories of disintegration and reconstitution, violence and other demonstrations of hostility between family members, and in most of those recently referred either parents or children or both were refusing to continue under the same roof, at least for the time being. Since this research is based on accounts by social workers, and not by clients, it could be possible that social workers were describing a self-fulfilling prophecy. By choosing to focus on family discontents they were able to present the family as discontented and chaotic.
Nevertheless the stringent definitions of family hostility adopted in the present research required family members to have put their hostility into action, and there is evidence from a previous body of research that although social workers do underestimate the positive feelings in families, their account of events is generally agreed by clients to be accurate. The documentary material on the families composition and relationships presented a sharp contrast in many ways with what is known about families in the general population.

Yet systematic discounting of other influences on behaviour is important in its own right, particularly where parents are the main source of alternative explanations based on peer group, school or neighbourhood. The discounting process reflects an assertion of social worker competence in judgement in contradiction to parental incompetence and the preservation of the social worker's status as a source of normative reference on adolescent misbehaviour.

Social Workers' Use of Theoretical Models: Single and Composite Theorising

Linked with the primary ascription of causality to the family is the domination of individualised psychological models. In this respect the emphasis on the psychodynamic (turned inwards towards family relationships) rather the learning based (turned outwards to environmental cues and rewards) is unlikely to represent a simple adherence to traditional schools of psychology solely because they are the only ones known about, or the dominant influence in social work education. Instead, the observed events of the family's life, and the psychodynamic explanations rooted in
nuclear family relationships are mutually supportive to each other, making sense in the context of the everyday problems which the social worker has to address. The possibility of alternate explanations is not one for which the social worker has to search unless there are elements in the observations which do not fit the psychodynamic model, and cannot be accounted for within this framework.

The complexity of the theoretical structure revealed in this analysis, however, indicates that it is quite common for observed events not to fit, for a complete explanation in psychodynamic terms to be undiscoverable. Previous sociological analysis of social workers' thinking have usually concluded that these awkward observations are either ignored, or re-formulated in psychodynamic terms (Grace and Wilkinson 1978, Rees 1978, Giller and Morris 1981). While there were some individual examples of both processes, the present data suggests that it is more common for social workers to develop an approach which is eclectic, using elements from various theoretical standpoints as convenient.

This is the approach described by Browne (1978) and to some extent by Deacon and Bartley (1975). Both see it as representing limited knowledge and comprehension of theory and the misuse of theory. It would be difficult to explain the present data in these terms, however, for explanations were shown to be a coherent whole apparently based on a strategy which is used consistently by many social workers in different agencies. What occurs seems to be a form of composite theorising in which a mixture of different schools of psychology, supplemented where necessary by sociology, is put together to account in a consistent and overtly convincing way for what is seen in the child's behaviour and family's situation.
It was very clear that learning theory and sociology were seen by social workers as providing supplementary rather than alternative explanations. The discrediting of rival sociological versions put forward by parents and others was concerned with the public discrediting of the author of the rival version as an alternative source of reference; the explanation itself was usually incorporated to some degree at least, as a minor feature in the open agenda or as a feature of the hidden agenda.

In using either psychology or sociology the social worker is restricted by the need to provide a complete explanation for a complex real life situation (which academics and researchers are rarely expected to do). The fragmentary and conflict-ridden states of psychology and sociology (particularly the latter) as pre-paradigmatic disciplines, render complete, internally consistent explanations difficult to achieve.

In some instances it could be done within psychodynamic theory, as with the explanation for Fenella's problems: maternal desertion at a formative period of Fenella's childhood; her resulting trauma and emotional deprivation; her displacement of her anger onto her father mirrored by his displacement of his feelings about his wife onto his daughter; and Fenella's position as the only remaining female member of the household, carrying the burden of the family's anger at her mother. Such complete explanations are more readily available through psychodynamic theory, precisely because it is a logically deduced, flexible and complete theory, but these advantages only operate in a relatively straightforward situation such as Fenella's, where her behaviour problems primarily occurred at home with her father and started soon after her mother's departure but standards of care in her family were seen as generally good and loving.
Composite theorising seemed to be undertaken when circumstances were more confusing and contradictory. The mixture of psychodynamic, learning and sociological theory outlined by Margaret's social worker as a coherent, three tier explanation for her behaviour attributed the thefts she committed to situational cues; her running away and disorderly public behaviour to her need for the peer group gang's approval. Her dependence on the gang was attributed to a mixture of trauma following her mothers desertion, lack of sensitivity to her emotional needs in her guardians' household, and a rigid, authoritarian imposition of external controls, rather than the teaching of internal controls. Composite theory was necessary because Margaret's gang behaviour was not allowed for in a psychodynamic family-based theory, and because the younger children in her guardians' family were 'normal' children making good progress in an apparently stable, loving, nuclear family, as had Margaret until shortly before her referral.

It is an important feature of composite theorising that the bottom line theory, the ultimate, primary explanation must always be in psychological terms. The need to give a complete explanation of an individual's behaviour precludes the possibility of a total reliance on sociology. In explaining Margaret's behaviour the social worker, by implication, must also explain why and how Margaret's behaviour differs from that of Cathy, another black child brought up mainly in a white family; or that of Leonie, another child removed from her disrupted family of origin to a stable, prosperous middle class home where she initially did well. Although these distinctions cannot be explicit in a report which is concerned only with Margaret, the social worker must allow for the possibility of Cathy or Leonie being the next case on the court list, and the magistrates drawing uncomfortable comparisons. Hence the explanation must, in the end, be rooted in Margaret's individual characteristics and circumstances.
Although there was no markedly different use of particular theoretical models for black and white children, it was noted that there was a slight tendency to use more explanatory models with white children. This represents a more frequent use of composite theorising for white children which is at one with the finding that stress and external problems were more often seen as explanatory factors in the white children's families, while relationships and personalities (explicable more easily in psychodynamic terms alone) were more often seen as the problem in the black children's families. Again, the relative nature of these distinctions cannot be over-stressed, nor the degree of basic similarity and overlap between the two groups of families, but there are pointers to the solution of the substantive problem as to differences between the ways in which black and white children arrive in care, and in their subsequent care careers.

Composite theorising is unlikely to be the exclusive practice of social workers. It offers a potentially valuable model for understanding of the way in which other professionals use theory to inform practical decisions and judgements. It may also be a real life example pointing the way towards academic integration of sociology and psychology, of the kind which Atkinson discerned in the commonsense theorising of coroners.

Yet Atkinson's question as to which came first, the commonsense theories or the academic formation of them is not such a puzzle here. It appeared that composite theorising occurred mainly as a way of explaining children's behaviour, and was much less used with parents, even through the greater pragmatic use of environmental stress, and ideas of family structure lent themselves to sociological interpretations. One possible explanation is that a more
extensive knowledge base was available to the social workers with respect to the children's functioning. They were able to observe the children and question the relevant adults, but also the training offered to social workers places more emphasis on child development and psychology, than with adults.

Delinquency and youth culture are also popular topics with the kind of 'misfit sociologists' whom Pearson describes as being most favoured in social work education. The tools for composite theorising are to hand, and provided for social workers by academics.

As with Atkinson's commonsense theorising the elements are interdependent. No one section of a composite theory would stand alone, and the whole only makes sense through the inter-relationship of the parts.

Additionally, there is the relationship between theory and morality. This was more prominent in social workers' considerations of parents than of children which, it was suggested, reflected the greater expectation of responsible behaviour from adults in western society. The results of the present study do not fully accord with suggestions by Rees (1978) and Giller and Morris (1981) that morality, rather than theory, is the underpinning of all social work judgements, and that theory is only top dressing on moral assessment. The infrequent use of moral judgement in this sample does not of itself undermine that argument, since this could simply mean that there are thought to be many more deserving than undeserving clients. Nevertheless a low level of use of moral judgements in this sample, where very few were thought to have claims to sympathy on grounds of illness, bereavement, homelessness or other external factors, and where suspected or proven neglect and abuse of children was a commonly described feature, suggests a use closer to that proposed by Philp (1979) in which only
extreme cases are put outside the determinist compassion of the social work discourse. Even more important, moral judgement was used in two quite specific ways. It could be linked to a determinist explanation of causes, in which the reason for a parent's defective morality might be understood, and even sympathised with (as with Geraldine's mother's drinking), but the failure to face up to the destructive consequences still be condemned. In these instances it was part of a composite theory in which morality is seen to have a determinist psychological basis in a 'healthy' mind and loving, stable relationships. Alternatively morality was concerned with anomalous behaviour, in Smith's (1978) sense of behaviour for which there were no rules for understanding, in which case it was not simply outside the social work discourse but outside all other reasoned discourse. Lucy's mother's selfishness seemed to be treated in this way, indicating that moral judgement was not necessarily concerned with serious or horrifying events, as Philp suggests, and that the explicability of behaviour is more important than its seriousness or consequences in defining it as anomalous. Neither method of using morality is consistent with a view of it as an underlying dimension to all work, or as a base for a top dressing of theory in all cases.

Two areas remain in which social workers' use of theory is ill-understood and scarcely clarified by the present research. The first is the relegation of sociology to a hidden agenda. While the evidence that this happens seems clear enough, the interpretation can only be speculative in data based on written records. It needs to be followed up in a study which interviews social workers on these topics.
A number of possible contributing effects can be considered. It might, for example, reflect a belief (or a realistic awareness!) that magistrates are not likely to sympathise with sociological explanations, as suggested by Whitehead (1986). It might, as suggested in some of the case material, be that sociological elements of the theorising led to more questioning of the social workers' power, or competence to influence the adolescent; or to greater criticism of the client than arises from a psychological explanation. It might simply reflect less confidence in the validity of the sociological interpretation, given the fragmentary state of sociological theory and the need to construct do-it-yourself bridges between the theory and the individual's circumstances. Social workers cannot be expected to demonstrate greater confidence and consistency in using sociology than do most sociologists, and some of the areas in which sociology was most relevant to their observations were also those where the state of sociological theory is both incomplete and disputed - as in adolescent girls' roles in predominately male gangs (McRobbie and Garber 1976) and the ethnicity of children of mixed parentage (Wilson 1984). 'Hidden Agenda' knowledge is not just knowledge which is being kept from someone; it is also knowledge which is being imparted to a closed circle, within a framework for understanding which assumes common values, language and constructs (Garfinkel 1967). As such it is potentially more revealing of the underlying basis for organisation of thought and action, providing that the unwritten words can also be discovered and understood.

Secondly, the results suggest that social workers do not see themselves in a sociological context. This is in spite of the similarity in their understanding of the family's role to that of Donzelot (1977). Social workers did not usually consider the possibility of alienation in clients, either parents or children, at least in writing, as affecting their
own roles within a powerful institution. They preferred to find other explanations for the instances of non cooperation which were experienced. This might, however, reflect dislike of the social control function, rather than lack of understanding of it, although their expressed wish for control of adolescents and parents then becomes problematic.

There were other ways in which social workers might, but apparently did not, perceive themselves sociologically, notably in the standards which they used to define 'the good parent' which included rules about family structure, and a value base about family relationships. Both incorporated 'taken for granted' assumptions which were apparently perceived as universal rather than as socially structured within western, or British culture.

Substantive Area Three: Are Different Models Applied to the Situation of Black and White Children?

Previous research gives strong indications that there are differences in the circumstances and in-care careers of black and white children, and among black children, between those of mixed parentage and those with two black parents. While some studies suggested that children were different populations, other suggested that differences in social work practice exacerbated the situation; in particular that social workers were over-interventionist with black families and too ready to equate inter-generational conflict with bad parenting (Lambeth SSD 1982).
Although there were few differences between the black and white groups in terms of demographic characteristics and material circumstances, the data did support the idea that the black and white children in the newly referred groups were to some extent different populations, albeit with considerable overlap. There was no evidence that over interventionism was a general problem in this sample, indeed the black children's families were more likely to have been subject to previous referrals including self-referrals which had not been followed up. The lower incidence of involvement with other child welfare agencies prior to referral could also indicate that community based help was less likely to be made available to black children and their families.

There were a number of indications that the black children were more likely to have been seen as child protection cases, at risk within their families, for whom a different set of legal procedures might equally have been invoked. Relationships between children and parents appeared particularly strained in the newly referred black children's families, with more children unilaterally evicted by parents and more running away from home, and more parents who refused to see their children. There were also more children who had been victims of parental neglect or violence, often at a level which indicated dangerous loss of self control in parents and would be hard to see as culturally normal approaches to discipline. Although levels of offending and committal to care in criminal proceedings were similar for black and white children, the black children in this sample were less likely to have been prosecuted (in contrast to the general trends in juvenile
And it seems likely that this represents a greater perception of them as 'welfare', rather than 'real delinquency' cases. There was less emphasis on family discipline in black children's court reports, a further indication that behaviour and control were not seen as the 'real' problems.

In line with this, social workers made less use of composite theorising for black children indicating that their behaviour was seen as having relatively straightforward explanations in terms of their family situation. Environmental stress was less likely to be depicted as a cause of parents' difficulties, and instead, mitigation arguments took the form of praising parents' good qualities and sense of responsibility towards their children. Black children's own accounts of causality within the family were treated as having higher credibility than those of white children, reflecting their status as victims rather than discredited villains.

In contrast, parents of white children were more often seen as disorganised, irresponsible and colluding with children's misbehaviour, children more often discredited as reliable witnesses.

The substantive question therefore seems to have shifted in emphasis. From "are different criteria used to judge the behaviour of black and white children?", it has became "Why do social workers choose to base legal proceedings on the child's behaviour rather than the parent's behaviour and why are they apparently readier to do this with black children than with white children?".
There was also evidence that cultural stereotypes of families and individuals were used: parents of black children were more often described as rigid and authoritarian, with mothers depicted as passive and subordinate to dominant husbands. The cultural stereotypes were found in a large minority of the black children's families, but were not found in all, or most of them. They were found, though to differing degrees in the families of both Asian girls in the sample, and although a sample of two is hardly conclusive, it is possible that stereotypes are more pervasive and powerful with Asian families than with other ethnic minorities. It was not possible in this sample to take the issue any further, but it should certainly be the subject for further exploration. Apart from this, however, there was less use of stereotypes than expected and no apparent difference in the emphasis and structure of court reports. None of the other pathological models of the family discussed in Chapter Three were evident. Reports on the whole were both 'colour blind' and 'culture blind'.

This did not, however, mean that social workers were unaware of race, ethnicity or culture as important issues in clients' lives. They were usually dealt with by consignment to a hidden agenda, eliminated from the court report, or at least underplayed. The sociological question here is whether race issues and sociology become hidden agenda items for the same reason, whether race issues are seen as part of the sociology problem, or whether different forces create similar effects.

The arguments for similar forces are, that:

a) Both sociology and race are issues seen as potentially political and therefore too sensitive to raise in court proceedings, likely to upset magistrates.
b) Both sociology and race issues offer fragmentary and incomplete explanations for individual circumstances. They both lack language and constructs to enable creative translation of social problems into social work problems.

c) Both sociology and race issues are potentially challenging to social work by offering rival accounts of the origin of problems, of a kind which social work is not able to influence, and which lead to questions of the social workers' competence in judgement and action.

The arguments for different forces are:

d) Race is a taboo area, in which a socially structured 'colour blindness' is used to evade challenges to racism. The existence of the 'hidden agenda' would suggest this to be a deliberate evasion.

e) Social workers' discomfort with discussions of race and ethnicity reflects the wider lack of consensus and generally accepted language and constructs for dealing with the issues raised. In their context, colour blindness may be used as one form of self protection rather than as institutionalised racism.

These questions remain for exploration in a more directly focussed research project.
Substantive Area Four: What is the Justification for the Use of the Public Care System as a Means of Control, and are the Same Justifications used for Black and White Children?

This question too has had to be redefined, since it is suggested that the issue of control of behaviour was a secondary rather than primary concern in most of the cases studied. It is evident from the material on the children's committal that virtually all of the children newly referred would have come into care in any event, because they were unwilling or unable to continue living at home, while the longstanding cases occurred in a context of worry about the children's care stretching back to their infancy.

The question then becomes, "Why were compulsory powers resorted to, when voluntary agreement would in most instances have been adequate", a question which then raises issues about the social workers' wish for the formal power of a court order rather than a pattern of equal cooperation of the kind which good practice guides indicate (DHSS 1985). The greater use of interim compulsory powers for black children may reflect the greater frequency of child protection arguments but this begs the fundamental questions.

The present results support the previous research on social workers' decision making in suggesting that the use of compulsory powers was probably more a matter of convenience to the social worker than of features of the families' situation, but also suggest that this is fundamental to the enhancement of social workers' status and power vis a vis the family. In its turn the preservation of status and power depends on the parents being depicted as unsuitable to retain the care of the children. The assertion of power in relation to the parents is probably more significant than the power over the children, which was often illusory, and soon recognised as such.
The use of control arguments linked with access to resources is, however, also an important one. If a realistic perception of rationing procedures, it would account in part for the use of compulsory powers for children seen as needing very specialised help, which was shown to be more common with the black children in the sample.

The Contribution of the Present Research to Formal Sociological Theory

Three areas of formal theory were identified as relevant to the substantive problem. These were marginality, stigma and control.

Marginality
Marginality has the status of a concept rather than a fully worked out theory in its own right. It has been used to explore specific situations (e.g. Cross 1982) but there has been no overview putting these specific uses of the concept into a comprehensive theoretical structure. In the present research it was a relevant concept because previous research indicated the common use of distancing techniques to represent black clients as 'not really British' immigrants, foreigners, aliens. This is recognised by Watson (1977) and Stone (1985) as an intrinsic part of the British approach to race and was held in some research on children in care to represent 'using geography as an excuse' (Pinder and Shaw 1974) for racist practices in social work. An added feature was the common analogy drawn in social work literature between being black and being physically or mentally handicapped, through the conjunction of both groups as 'hard to place', thus representing black clients as impaired and therefore incomplete members of society. The previous research and practice literature seemed to offer a basis for a contribution towards a grounded theory of marginality.
The distancing hypothesis was tested by using a keywords analysis which searched for distancing language of a geographic kind and of the kind described by Ahmed (1984). Reports were not found to make extensive use of distancing language and labels or to refer extensively to either parents or children as immigrants. In line with this there was no use of what was called the 'Immigrant Extended Family Care' model to explain black clients' attitudes to the social services, and views of black children's family structure were rarely set in a cultural context attributed to other countries or communities. In general court reports were both colour blind and culture blind, more concerned to eliminate questions of different status than to enhance them.

The impairment analogy could not be tested directly in this research as it did not deal with the children's post-committal placement. The only relevant finding here was that more of the black children were defined as needing specialist resources, but this did not necessarily equate with being 'hard to place'.

The conclusion is that marginality did not prove a useful concept in analysing the situation of these children and their families. If black clients are marginalised it must be detected in more subtle ways, but present indications are that the concept has a poor fit with data on committal to care.

**Stigma**

Goffman (1961) defined the stigmatised person as tainted, a person of spoiled identity, who may be avoided but who may also receive charity and sympathy. He makes a distinction between the discredited, whose stigma is publicly known, and the discreditable whose stigma is invisible and unknown, who has something to hide and is vulnerable to exposure.
In these terms black people interacting with white racists in a white racist community are clearly discredited. Behaviour, however, whether adolescent delinquency or parental incompetence, is discreditable until known, when it becomes discrediting. Additionally Pinker (1971) suggests that public welfare provision relies to varying degrees on the maintenance of social distance between the donor and recipient of welfare. He points out that public services used primarily by the working classes (such as financial assistance, and social work) are stigmatising, whereas those heavily used by the middle classes also (such as health and education services) are less so. To be a social work client therefore also makes an individual discreditable to the community as a whole, and discredited to the social workers and other officials who must know of the client status.

In the present study the possibility of stigma was intrinsic to the issues of the substantive research. All children and parents were initially discreditable on the dual grounds of their behaviour and client status; most also were

"members of the lower class who quite noticeably bear the mark of their status in their speech, appearance and manner and who, relative to the public institutions of our society, find they are second class citizens." (Goffman 1961)

The black children and their families had the additional possibilities of stigma, not only through their visible racial characteristics but through the known or stereotyped characteristics of their culture, including family life and childrearing methods.

The analysis of the court reports showed that they followed the pattern described by Dorothy Smith (1978) in which the writer of the report (the social worker) becomes a source of normative reference, setting the standard by which children's behaviour is deemed unacceptable and parental failure to care for or control their children is treated as
discrediting. The discredited status of parents showed in the way that their versions of events were discounted as 'true explanations' for their children's behaviour. Black children's parents were shown to be vulnerable to additional discrediting on the basis of assumptions about their personalities and family structure. Those who violated the rules for good parenting risked being discredited on moral grounds, as did those who demonstrated anomalous behaviour which was inexplicable by the usual determinist theoretical models applied to client behaviour.

Social workers, in making their judgements, could be seen as those whom Goffman calls

"'the wise', namely persons who are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatised individual and sympathetic to it."

It was shown that reports were presented in such a way as to protect the social workers' status as a friend and sympathiser: mitigation was used to stress the parents' good qualities and describe the stresses they faced in caring for their children; sensitive issues of criticism of parents were often kept out of the reports and relegated to a 'hidden agenda'.

The stigmatised person does not necessarily accept spoiled identity. Goffman describes a category of 'disaffiliates', 'those who use their differences to challenge the social order'. Page (1984) notes that stigmatisation by others is not the same as 'felt stigma' and that those stigmatised may contest the legitimacy of their disadvantaged position. In the present study, such reactions would have surfaced as indications of alienation and lack of cooperation. It was
shown that there was little evidence of lack of cooperation, from parents and that where found, lack of cooperation was most likely to be perceived by social workers as linked to the family dynamics rather than to feelings about the social worker, i.e. it was translated into a further aspect of family pathology and a further basis for stigmatisation.

The stigmatising process was not so clear with the children. They seemed less vulnerable to being considered discredited persons than did their parents. Children's explanations were often accepted in whole or in part, especially those of the black children. Children were also less subject to moral judgements than were parents. It seems possible that infant status acts in some circumstances as a protection against stigmatisation, by denying responsibility and therefore blame to the child. The child achieves victim status, and this, with its connotation of innocence, is incompatible with being tainted or spoiled. It is suggested that further development of stigma theory must consider the circumstances in which some groups are protected against stigmatisation.

Control
In Chapter One, an initial list was made of ways in which power and control were integral concepts to the relationships between the various parties to the committal to care. The dimensions were: older and younger generation; the state and the family; the state and the delinquent; the majority and the minority cultures. As a result of this research, it is clear that even in such a relatively simply social activity as the removal of troublesome children into public care, control assumes far more complex aspects. The possible control-power axes can be listed anew:
Even this list is a considerable over-simplification. 'The family', for example, is not necessarily acting as a unity. Parents, stepparents, grandparents and other adults in the extended family (including older siblings) may be striving for authority over the child, and may be competing with other family members for control. 'Other adults in authority' may include a considerable range of possibilities, in the present research it included social workers from social services departments, education departments, child guidance clinics, hospitals and voluntary agencies, teachers, psychologists and psychiatrists, foster parents, residential workers, probation officers and police, intermediate treatment and other youth workers.

The types of control which were exercised, or attempted, ranged from coercive use of physical force in which children were beaten, locked in their rooms or in secure units, or locked out of the house, to the control of information which families gave to social workers, or social workers gave to magistrates.

Furthermore almost all of the control/power relationships were triadic rather than dyadic in a pattern of occasionally stable but more often shifting alliances. At times, parents and social workers acted together to control the child; at others police or teachers and social workers acted together to control the family; one parent sided with the child or
the social worker against the other parent; or otherwise
disunited branches of a family came together to resist the
social worker's interference; professionals from the
majority culture supported a child from a minority group
against the parental culture; social workers and clinicians
combined to keep a child out of the criminal justice system;
and so on ad infinitum.

Because of the shifting and varied alliances, the usual
divisions into 'consensus' and 'conflict' theories of
control are irrelevant, since almost every combination
included both consensus and conflict, at least on a
temporary basis. An attempt to force the data into the
usual mould of social class analysis applied to social work
clients could only be done at the cost of ignoring much of
the data.

It was possible, however, to pick out some issues which
could be described as common issues of consensus and common
issues of conflict between the adults involved in the
transactions. There appeared to be a substantial amount of
consensus between the parents, social workers and other
officials surrounding the prescription that 'children ought
to behave themselves': they ought not to come home too late;
to stay out all night on a regular basis; to run away from
home; to steal; to defy, insult or attack their parents; to
have 'unsuitable' friends, (especially in the case of girls
unsuitable boyfriends); to miss school, at least to the
point where it leads to trouble; to disrupt classes; to
drink; take drugs; or tell lies to parents and others as to
their whereabouts and activities.

In areas of consensus, definitions were broad rather than
precise - exactly how late home was too late, or whether a
particular friend was unsuitable might be subjects of
disagreement, but the consensus between adults on the
general principles gives little support to the labelling
theory position that behaviour is defined as acceptable solely in terms of who is making the definition. The position of the children in this consensus is, however, far from clear. At times they were described as setting different definitions for their own behaviour, and ones which conflicted with adult definitions; at other times they were reported to act as they did deliberately to annoy adults, or to force the authorities to intervene and speed admission to care. This implies participation in the consensus, with an understanding and strategic use of the consequences of rule breaking.

Areas of conflict between the adult parties generally surrounded the issue of what should be done in the event of children not behaving, how they should be punished, what should happen if they continued to misbehave, what would stop future misbehaviour and whose fault it all is.

The areas of conflict between adults over the causality and appropriate action in juvenile misbehaviour seem to divide adults much more along the lines familiarly used in deviancy research - social workers and clients, the authorities and those under authority, the family and the state, the majority and the minority. Yet it is essential here to avoid the mistake of those schools of Marxist sociology, as described by Bell and Newby (1977) in which the state is defined as oppressive, rather than demonstrated to be oppressive. Nor does the data fit neatly with Bailey's (1980) proposition that theory is irrelevant because the scope of social workers' professional power is puny in relation to the prescription of social workers' duties and activities by the state. On the contrary, the data suggests considerable room for manoeuvre within the constraints of the legal structure, and control of information in the way described by Donzelot, at a level which markedly affects the
power of the most evident of state institutions, the legal system. The control of information was used at times to deliver the client to the court's judgement as a bad parent or a child without conscience, at other times to protect the client from the court's judgement, as a parent who tried to do her best, or a child suffering intolerable pressures in the family.

The network of shifting and flexible alliances with the family, in Donzelot's terms as 'both Queen and prisoner of society', bears closest resemblance to the interactionist pattern of 'negotiated order' described by Strauss et al (1964) in which a framework of formal authority is adapted by the participants who work out solutions to problems presented by, or not covered by, the formal rules, in a process of tacit rather than explicit negotiation. The negotiations are not part of a grand social design, whether functionalist or Marxist, but are given some central focus and coherence by the formal framework.

Once again, however, the position of the children presents some interesting questions. The extent of adults' formal and informal negotiating rights, and their actual power, can be traced to the formal legal structure, and to the practical realities of the situation, in particular their control of information, resources and decisions. The children, however, are almost totally devoid of formal rights or power. They have no official control over either resources or decisions and relatively little over information. Yet they were clearly important contributors to the negotiations in three respects: in giving accounts which could be used by adults; in taking action to which adults had to respond; and in discussing and agreeing (or failing to agree) compromise solutions to the various conflicts in their social networks. In future development of theories of negotiated order close attention should be given to the different levels of negotiating rights, and the legitimacy of parties to the transactions.
Finally the research has shown that the issues of definitions of misbehaviour, and the issues of what to do about misbehaviour (including understanding of it's causality) are not necessarily containable within a single model of social control. There are a number of ways in which the results have supported previous analysis of the situation of social workers interacting with families, and of the position of black children and their families in relation to the public care system. Yet the answers are not by any means all to do with race and on many of the substantive questions gender seemed far more important, evidenced initially by the greater likelihood that girls would be removed from home on their first court appearance, their predominance in the sample of new referrals, and later by the greater degree of conflict described between girls and their families, and the importance of girls' peer group links in exacerbating the conflict.

The Contribution to Future Research

There are also implications for the work which social workers undertake with young people and their families. The lack of an obvious connection between the theories used and the circumstances of those involved reflects the state of the academic disciplines as much as the state of social work, but it is a matter for social workers, as much as for sociologists, to establish the validity of the explanations chosen.

It is hoped that the research contributes to a sociology which tackles the complexity of a total, real life event, while grounding its development securely in the data. Some light has also been thrown on the future direction needed to address the gap between the actions of individuals and their contribution to a social process.


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THE DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

1. Schedule for Completion from Case Records.

2. Schedule for Interview with Social Workers.

3. Proforma for Content Analysis of Court Reports.
The schedule included some precoded and some open-ended questions. Where a variable is marked* the codings given were developed from answers to open-ended questions for the purpose of statistical analysis.

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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Subject number/sample</td>
<td>Original 1, Extended (new boroughs) 2, Extended (original boroughs) 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sex</td>
<td>Female 1, Male 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Date of Birth</td>
<td>Age at Committal Years/1, Half Years 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Local Authority</td>
<td>Original Borough 1, Other Inner London 2, Outer London 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Date of Referral to SSD</td>
<td>Length of time referral &gt; committal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Date of Committal to Care</td>
<td>Less than 3 months 1, 3 &gt; 6 months 2, 6 &gt; 9 months 3, 9 &gt; 12 months 4, 12 &gt; 18 months 5, Over 18 months 6, N/I 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Codings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section of 1969 Act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Var 5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care 1(2)(c)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(2)(d)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(2)(e)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care (combination)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and Criminal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/I</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of first court Appearance</td>
<td>Not Coded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was he/she admitted to care on a Place of Safety order?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Var 7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was he/she in care awaiting the court appearance or prior to committal?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Var 8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim Care Order</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.O.S. only</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2 1980 Act</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in Care</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/I</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in care, where was he/she placed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Var 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Centre</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's Home</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Residential</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Home</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in Care</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/I</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With whom did the child live before admission to care?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Var 10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both natural parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother/Stepfather (cohabitee)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father/Stepmother (cohabitee)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Alone</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Alone</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relative</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/I</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* There were no children in the sample committed under S.1(2)(f)*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Codings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Was there any contact with SSD prior to research referral? (If yes, note sequence and dates).</td>
<td>Self-referral by family 1 Referral by other agencies 2 No 3 N/I 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 12) Were other social work agencies involved prior to research referral?</td>
<td>Education Welfare Officer 1 Child Guidance Clinic 2 Probation 3 Voluntary Agency 4 More than One 5 No 6 N/I 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Who first referred the child to social services? (research referral)</td>
<td>Police 1 School/EWO 2 Health Services 3 Child Guidance Clinic 4 Voluntary Agency 5 Parent(s) 6 Child/Self 7 Other 8 N/I 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. What was the incident precipitating referral? (Exact wording from file as far as possible)</td>
<td>Arrest of Child 1 Child Running Away 2 Violence by Child 3 Violence towards Child 4 Overdose/Self Injury 5 Exclusion from School 6 Incident Concerning Another Family Member 7 Financial/Material Crisis 8 Other 9 N/I 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. What were the reasons for referral?</td>
<td>Child's Behaviour 1 Family Relationships 2 Conditions in the Home 3 Behaviour/Relationships 4 Behaviour/Conditions 5 Conditions/Relationships 6 All Three 7 Other (specify) 8 N/I 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Were any of these apparently more significant than others? (Give reasons for judgement)

(*Var 16) If the child's behaviour was a reason for referral or for subsequent involvement, what was the cause for concern? (Check each relevant; note additional problems or additional details)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHECKLIST</th>
<th>Specific Behaviour</th>
<th>Problems:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(41) Stealing at Home</td>
<td>At Referral only</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(42) Stealing Outside</td>
<td>Before Admission to Care</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(43) Truancy</td>
<td>Before and After Admission</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(44) Exclusion from School</td>
<td>After Admission only</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(45) Violent to People (home)</td>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(46) Violent to People (school)</td>
<td>N/I</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(47) Violent to People (elsewhere)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(48) Staying out late/all night</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(49) Running Away</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(50) Drinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(51) Drug Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(52) Solvent Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(53) Sexual Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(54) Damage to Property (home)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(55) Damage to Property (school)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(56) Damage to Property (elsewhere)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Codings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. (Var 17) Was there any behaviour which led to a police caution, finding of guilt, or criminal proceedings? (Specify offence and action taken)</td>
<td>Child Prosecuted 1 Child Cautioned 2 No Action Taken 3 No Offending 4 N/I 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 18) Extreme Behaviour Index</td>
<td>Score = 1 for each item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of the following behaviour:-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence to People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solvent Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Away</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying Out Late/All Night</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing Outside the Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous Behaviour (e.g. Arson/TDA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 31) Did behaviour include suicidal/para suicidal/self-injury?</td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 29) If the child was in care prior to committal, were behaviour problems experienced in the placement?</td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not in Care 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 68) Status Offending Index</td>
<td>Score = 1 for each behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive Behaviour at School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Away</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying Out Late/All Night</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing Outside the Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solvent Abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. (Var 32) If family relationships were a reason for referral or subsequent involvement, what was the cause for concern? Note any additional information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Codings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discord between both parents:- At Referral 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Referral 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/I 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Var 40) Discord Child/Both Parents 1
Discord Child/Mother 2
Discord Child/Father 3
Discord Child/Stepmother 4
Discord Child/Stepfather 5
No Discord with Parents 6
Discord Other Carers 7
N/I 8

(Vars 33-37, 39) Also: For each category as for Var 32.

(Var 38) Discord with siblings - as for Var 32.

20. Were any of the following conditions in the home a reason for referral or for subsequent involvement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Var 60</th>
<th>Mental Illness of Parent(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(61)</td>
<td>Physical Illness/Disability of Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(62)</td>
<td>Mental Handicap of Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(63)</td>
<td>Alcohol Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(64)</td>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(65)</td>
<td>Poverty, Debts or Consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(66)</td>
<td>Poor Material Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(67)</td>
<td>Parental Criminality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Codings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(68) Neglect/Illtreatment of child(ren)</td>
<td>Established at Referral 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Established After Referral 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alleged at Referral 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alleged After Referral 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Mentioned 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 19) Difficult Home Conditions Index</td>
<td>Score = 1 for each of above conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 57) Were parents noted as using physical punishment with the study child?</td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Number of siblings in the home (excluding adults who have left home):</td>
<td>None 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four or More 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 22) Did any of them come into care? (Give details)</td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A (only child) 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Did any siblings appear to have similar problems in behaviour to the sample child? (give details)</td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Was there any apparent reason for the choice of 1969 Act Section used? (If Yes give details)</td>
<td>Not Coded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Codings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Note the sequence of events from the</td>
<td>Not Coded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family's first contact until the child's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>committal to care, with dates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FOR CHILDREN FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Codings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Where were the child's natural parents</td>
<td>British Isles 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>born?</td>
<td>West Indies 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indian Sub-Continent 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Africa 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Europe 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elsewhere (specify) 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. How long has the foreign born parent(s)</td>
<td>Less than 5 years 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been in Britain?</td>
<td>6 &gt; 10 years 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 years or more 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Born in Britain 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not in Britain 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Var 27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Where was the child born?</td>
<td>Code - as for parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Var 24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. If the child was not born in Britain, how</td>
<td>Less than 1 year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old was he/she at entry?</td>
<td>1 - 4 years 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Var 30)</td>
<td>5 - 10 years 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 - 16 years 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Codings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Race&quot;</td>
<td>Caucasian 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian (Indian Sub Continent) 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African/Afro Caribbean 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed Parentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Afro/Caucasian) 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed Parentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Asian/Causasian) 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed Parentage (Other) 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/I 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Could you tell me how you first came into contact with this child? (Probe whether standard allocation procedure or specialist worker)

2. Were the family cooperative with your initial enquiries?

3. What did you think was the most significant aspect of the child's behaviour (if further clarification is asked for - why was he/she doing it?)

4. What did you see as the most significant aspect of the family's situation (in terms of whether the child should or should not stay at home)?

5. (If recommended a care order) How soon did you begin to feel that the child would have to come into care? (Probe whether other solutions were considered and why they were rejected).

6. With whom do you normally have to discuss or clear a recommendation for a care order? (Probe reason for choice of section to use).

7. What was the family's response to the decision?

8. What was the child's response?
9. Did the court query the request for a care order on the child's first appearance?

10. (If the recommendation was not for a care order) How soon did you reach a decision about the best solution for the child?

then Questions 6, 7 and 8 as above.

11. Why do you think your recommendation was not accepted by the court?
Part A - Structural Analysis
Analyses the Social Worker's SIR only and looks at the proportionate focus on family, neighbourhood, community and culture.

Part B - Analysis of Theories and Ideologies
Analyses the Social Worker's SIR only and looks at the individualist (psychological) and collectivist (sociological) theories and ideologies used in the presentation of information.

Part C - Analysis of 'Keywords'
Analyses all available reports to the court on the black children and uses a 'keywords' list to isolate references to race or culture.
1. Case Number .......... 
2. Sex M/F ............
3. Date of Birth ..../../....
4. Local Authority .......... 
5. Content Analysis Sheets Completed:
   1. |___| (S W Reports)
   2. |___| (S W Reports)
   3. |___| (All Reports)
6. Reports available Field SW .......... 
   Res SW .......... 
   Psychiat. .......... 
   Psychol. .......... 
   EWO .......... 
   School .......... 
   Other .......... 

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A. Structural Analysis of Social Worker's Report to the Court

1. How many sentences are there in the report? (excluding identifying details and headings)

2a. How many sentences refer to the child's deviant behaviour? (List on attached sheet)

b. How many of these refer to behaviour before the age of 7?

c. What is the child's explanation for the behaviour? (Exact words)

d. What is the social worker's explanation for the behaviour? (Exact words)

3. Family Background: How many sentences refer to the family? (Excluding lists of family members)
List all sentences on attached sheet under sub-headings:

1. Family composition/structure/roles
2. Family relationships
3. Discipline/punishment/supervision
4. Material circumstances (income, housing, health, employment)
5. Parenting qualities

4. How many sentences refer to neighbourhood/community or culture?

________

List under sub-headings:

1. Neighbourhood
2. Parent's social network
3. Class or ethnic culture
4. Youth culture

5. What is the social worker's recommendation? (Exact words)

6. What is the reason given for this recommendation? (Exact words)
Check whichever are present and list references indicating them. One response can have implications for more than one category.

1. Theories to explain the child's behaviour:-

   a. **Individualist (Psychological)**

      Possible are:-

      i) Psychodynamic (acting-out of family conflicts, behaviour as a 'symptom' of family problems, child as a 'scapegoat' for family problems).

      ii) Laingian (child reflecting competing and conflicting demands from parents).

      iii) Emotional Deprivation (loss of loved parent or other significant person, disrupted relationships, cold, unloving parent(s)).

      iv) Faulty Learning (reflecting inappropriate modelling, poor, inconsistent training, copying parents).

      v) Opportunism/situational cueing (lack of supervision, ease of delinquency in the circumstances prevailing at the time).

      vi) Disorientation (child wrested from familiar environment, placed in unfamiliar).
vii) 'Organic' factors (illness/brain damage, heredity, IQ).

viii) Moral character

ix) Other

b. Collectivist (Sociological)

Possible are:-

i) Cultural Influences - ethnic/normal (implies usual acceptable behaviour in the subculture).

ii) Cultural/ethnic/rebellion (implies response to alienation/racism/power imbalance).

iii) Cultural/ethnic/conflict (problems of reconciling family and indigenous culture).

iv) Cultural influences/class/normal (usual acceptable behaviour in the subculture).

v) Cultural influences/class/rebellion (implies response to alienation/economic position/power imbalance).

vi) Group pressures (youth culture) - peers/friends (e.g. 'bad' influences).

vii) Group pressures - neighbourhood/community (e.g. 'bad' neighbourhoods).
2. Theories to explain parents' behaviour/failure to control the child

a. **Individualist (Psychological)**

Possible are:-

i) Psychodynamic (e.g. parental conflicts/rivalries/cycle of problems/incomplete personality/damaged relationship with child).

ii) Personal stresses on parent(s) (e.g. illness, housing, unemployment).

iii) Moral character of parent(s) (drink, criminality, 'fecklessness', selfishness etc).

iv) Disorientation (stresses of immigration, never having settled in Britain).

v) Other

b. **Collectivist (Sociological)**

i) Cultural/Ethnic/Family Structure

ii) Cultural/Ethnic/Immigrant Extended Family

iii) Cultural/Ethnic/Other

iv) Cultural/Class/"Lifestyle"

v) Cultural/Class/Economic

vi) Neighbourhood

vii) Other
C. Analysis of Keywords in all Court Reports for Black Children

Check number of mentions of following keywords with context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>No. mentions</th>
<th>Geog</th>
<th>Cult</th>
<th>Vis</th>
<th>Rac</th>
<th>Oth</th>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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<td>Racist</td>
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<td>Ethnic</td>
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<td>Minority</td>
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<td>Culture(al)</td>
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<td>Immigrant</td>
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<td>Individual countries/</td>
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<td>continents (noun)</td>
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<td>Individual countries/</td>
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<td>continents (adjective)</td>
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<td>Afro-caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<td>Coloured</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>Non White</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oriental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</table>

**Geographical** - i.e. place of birth or migration, whereabouts of relatives etc.

**Cultural** - custom, way of life, tradition etc.

**Visual** - appearance, feelings about appearance.

**Racist** - innate characteristics due to origin e.g. IQ, personality, talents.

**Other** - any not easily classifiable.

Sentences not classified must be written out in full. Racist category must only be used if the reference is clearly not cultural.
FURTHER METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS

1. Introductory Paper for Original Sample Boroughs at Stage One of the research.

This paper, which was given to social workers before interview, outlines the original plan for the research. Later amendments made to the design are described in Chapter Five.

2. Modifications Undertaken to Content Analysis.

3. Availability of Reports for Content Analysis on the Stage Three Sample.

WEST INDIAN ADOLESCENTS COMMITTED TO CARE

Background

This research originally developed from some earlier work which I carried out on behalf of DHSS: an analysis of data on all black children placed in what were then approved schools (Cawson 1977). This showed that the boys were more likely than white boys to be committed at a first court appearance, (girls in approved schools had always been highly likely to be committed on their first appearance). Explanations put forward were either that it represented discrimination in the judicial process, or characteristics of the childrens' family background which increased the likelihood or early removal from home. Neither explanation was supported from the data in the DHSS study, but the nature of the data made it difficult to clarify the issues.

There have also been indications that the proportion of black children in CHEs had risen since the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act come into effect (Pearce 1974). Furthermore several studies have shown that the proportion of offenders committed to care at a first court appearance has risen and continues to rise, and that it cannot be fully explained by an increase in cautioning for earlier misbehaviour (Giller and Morris 1981, Thorpe et al 1980, Cawson 1981). These studies suggest that social workers are more predisposed to early committal to care than would be expected from the theory on child care practice. At the same time there has been increasing awareness of the stresses to which minority group children can be subject and that this can create considerable problems for social workers (Cheetham 1982, ADSS/CRE 1978).
The Research Project

The present research hopes to answer some of the questions raised by the earlier work and to throw light on matters of concern to social workers when faced with behaviour problems among West Indian* adolescents. The concentration on West Indians is because they are the largest minority group coming to care and because issues of family life and relationships in particular are seen as very different from those of Asian adolescents in social work literature.

The focus will be on adolescents who are committed to care on a first court appearance, under S1(2)(c)(d)(e) and (f) or S7(7)(a) of the 1969 Act. They will either have committed a criminal offence or be truanting, 'beyond control' or 'in moral danger'. The latter groups of adolescents in particular are a particularly under-researched problem and virtually no British studies have been carried out on them. The common feature is that the children will all have come into care following problematic behaviour.

By using case records and interviewing social workers the research will explore the factors which lead to an early care order. Issues covered include family structure and background, school and environment factors and cultural factors.

* The term West Indian is used as a shorthand for all children with at least one parent of West Indian origin. It is expected that most of the children included in the study will be British born.
The Sample

The sample will consist of 50 West Indian and 50 white children from Inner London. In addition to being committed to care on their first court appearance, children in both the West Indian study group and the white comparison group must meet the following criteria:

a) Be between the ages of 10 and 16 years at the time of committal.

b) They and their families must have been clients of the social services department for less than six months at the time of committal. (Excluding transitory single visit contacts for reasons not connected with their children.)

c) The child must not have been in care prior to the present episode.

The purpose of these criteria is to select a group for whom a decision has been taken that early committal to care is in their interests, and exclude those for whom committal to care is the culmination of long attempts to help the family by other means. However, some basic information will be collected on all first appearance committals, to help in sample selection and to give a picture of how children in the sample fit into the general pattern of early committals in the local authority concerned.
Methods

The sample will be collected prospectively to avoid problems of retrospective methods such as problems in recall or changes of staff. Information will be collected from case records and each social worker will be interviewed. Material will be handled in the strictest confidence, and identifying details will not be included in the questionnaires or tapes. All records will be destroyed as soon as the analysis is complete. Tapes will not be transcribed in full or quoted in a manner which could lead to the identification of individuals. Social worker interviews will not be tape recorded without the individual's consent.

Reports

The research is registered for a PhD with the University of Surrey, and is under the general supervision of Malcolm Cross, Deputy Director of the Research Unit on Ethnic Relations at the University of Aston. As well as the thesis, it is hoped to produce a book for publication and articles for appropriate professional journals. A summary of results will be given to all who assist in the research. Reports and papers will go to local authorities for comment prior to publication, but no individual clients, social workers or authorities will be identified in the reports.

References

ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES/COMMISSION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY (1978) Multi Racial Britain - the Social Services' Response. CRE.

CAWSON, P. (1977) 'Black Children in Approved Schools. DHSS.

CAWSON, P. (1981) 'Young Offenders in Care'. DHSS.


PEARCE, K. (1974) 'West Indian Boys in Community Home Schools'. Community Schools Gazette 68 Nos. 6, 7 and 8

1. In the original proforma for content analysis of court reports, it was intended to list systematically all references to the family under the following headings:

- Family composition/structure/roles
- Family relationships
- Discipline/punishment/supervision
- Material circumstances
- Parenting qualities

In the event, the amount of material available made this too laborious a process, and the analysis was modified. Systematic, complete lists were made only for family roles and discipline, and for parent's good qualities mentioned by the social worker. Sentences on family composition, relationships and material circumstances were listed in full for only the Original Sample. For the Extended Sample they were only counted.

2. An additional analysis was attempted, to explore personal qualities attributed to the child and family members by listing adjectives used to describe them in the social workers court and file reports, together with other reports from psychiatrists, psychologists, GP's, schools etc. This was introduced to follow up an impression that some terms, e.g. 'explosive', 'impulsive', were more frequently used for black children than white, and seemed a valuable way of searching for stereotypes.
This too was very time-consuming, and it was completed for half of the Stage Three Sample. Since no evident patterns were emerging, I concluded that the results were unlikely to justify the time spent at a late stage of the analysis, and abandoned it. I also would have liked to develop a 'synonym cluster' analysis rather than relying on individual words, and to analyse this material within the matched pairs. This was too complex an issue to be added as a sideline to the present research, however, and would have justified a study in itself within a different theoretical framework.

3. The analysis of theoretical models originally attempted to identify a more detailed and sophisticated use of theory, but had to be simplified as the brief references in court reports did not allow for such precision.
The Stage Three sample consisted of 22 Subject and 22 Comparison children. The systematic content analysis was carried out on the Field Social Worker's report to the court, which was available on all 44 children. The 'Keywords' analysis for Subject children only was carried out on all available reports prepared for the child's assessment. The examination of the hidden agenda used all available reports held (for the Original Sample) in the local authority court section or (for the Extended Sample) in the assessment record prepared when the child was awaiting court appearance. There were at least two additional reports available on all except one Subject child, and most children had between 3-6 additional reports.

The availability of additional formal assessment reports was as follows:

**TABLE 43: AVAILABILITY OF ASSESSMENT REPORTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Subject Children</th>
<th>Comparison Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field Social Worker's Court Report</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Social Worker's Report</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatrist's Report</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist's Report</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Report</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Welfare Officer's Report</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Centre Education Report</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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- 508 -
The research used two approaches to hypothesising: a
positivist approach in which hypotheses were deduced from
theory and previous research, and tested empirically; and
the method of generating hypotheses from data suggested by
Glaser and Strauss (1967) in which a theoretical
relationship was inductively reasoned from observations and
then further tested by use of systematic observations.

Examples of the first process are:

a. Hypotheses about the use of marginalising techniques
such as referring to British born black clients by
foreign labels were logically deduced and tested.

b. The analysis used and tested hypotheses drawn from
research by Giller and Morris (1981) which suggested
that judgements of morality (the deserving and
undeserving) underpinned the social worker's decision
making and use of theory in judging and controlling
delinquents.

c. Hypotheses about cultural racism as described in
literature on social work practice, were developed and
tested.

Examples of the second process are:

d. Hypotheses were generated from data which suggested that
sociological awareness was present, but reserved for a
hidden agenda. This was in contradiction to previous
research on social workers' use of theory, which had
suggested little or no use of sociology. Further
analysis of reports other than the social workers' court
reports was undertaken to explore this issue.
e. Early statistical analysis carried out to check the validity of combining the Original and Extended Samples suggested that gender might be a more important issue than initially expected, and gender was subsequently built into all further analysis, where it frequently demonstrated stronger statistical relationships than did race.

In some instances analysis resulted from a combination of the two processes.

f. Reading the reports suggested a different use of adjectives to describe black and white children. This was linked with a body of theory and research about racial and ethnic stereotypes to form and test hypotheses about the use of negative stereotypes of black people.
MAJOR BRITISH STUDIES OF BLACK CHILDREN COMING INTO CARE AND IN CARE

This list includes all accessible, published studies known to the researcher which deal specifically with black children in care or which have substantial findings on groups of black children in a general child care study. Omitted are general child care population studies which do not give separate data for black children; studies which focus exclusively on the patterns of care for children after admission, and give little or no data on the children's characteristics and families; and local statistical surveys which give no detail beyond the numbers of black children in care to the agency. There are also local unpublished studies, but these are difficult to locate and references in newspaper or committee reports rarely give detailed information.

1. Language
   The abstracts use the language of the original research report to describe ethnic or racial groups. The variation in terms reflects the confused and tortuous thinking behind the labels, and the changing fashions in acceptable words.

2. Findings
   Space does not permit a comprehensive report of findings, many of which are not directly relevant to the present study. Reporting here is restricted to a description of the ethnicity and behavioural characteristics of the population coming into care and rates of admission compared to white children. Many
studies also suggest gender differences within the group of black children and a different gender balance (more girls, fewer boys) when compared to samples of white children. Studies also commonly show differences in age structure and care careers associated with ethnic grouping.

3. Methods
Many studies have major methodological problems or limitations. This is too complex an issue to deal with in a brief chart of this nature, and findings reported are restricted to those which seem to have reasonable validity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Date</th>
<th>Location/Subjects</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Explanatory Model</th>
<th>Comment and Important Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>National survey of children in NCH care</td>
<td>Why are so many Non-European children in care?</td>
<td>Family Circumstances</td>
<td>5% of children in NCH care were Non-European. Almost all were illegitimate children of mixed parentage with USA or African fathers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's</td>
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<td>Home 1954</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gale 1963</td>
<td>National survey of children in NCH care</td>
<td>Why is the number of Non-European children in care increasing?</td>
<td>Family Circumstances</td>
<td>Proportion of Non-Europeans risen from 5% to 15% in ten years. Changed ethnicity patterns and fewer of mixed parentage (63%) linked with admission of children with immigrant parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenkins 1963</td>
<td>42 coloured and 40 white children in foster homes in one children's department</td>
<td>Are coloured children harder to foster? Why do white people want to foster coloured children?</td>
<td>Family Circumstances. Some suggestion of institutionalised racism in mother-centred social work.</td>
<td>Almost all coloured children were illegitimate children of mixed parentage with white mothers. Suggested that lower standards were accepted in foster homes for coloured children due to perception of the children as 'hard to place'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author/Date</td>
<td>Location/Subjects</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Explanatory Model</td>
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<td>Barnardo's 1966</td>
<td>National survey of children in care and community programmes, including young adults who had left care.</td>
<td>What is the best way to care for the rising numbers of coloured children in care?</td>
<td>Family Circumstances, with some reference to Immigrant Extended Family and Racism Models.</td>
<td>Proportion of coloured children in Barnardo's care rose from 7% to 20% in ten years. Most were of mixed parentage with white mothers. The first comprehensive project, acknowledging that racism is endemic in Britain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzherbert 1967</td>
<td>150 West Indian or half West Indian children in care to LCC children's department. Some comparison with white children.</td>
<td>Are approaches to child care social work culturally appropriate for West Indian children and families?</td>
<td>Immigrant Extended Family and Family Structure with some reference to Family Circumstances and Racism.</td>
<td>Most children were of mixed parentage, apparently with white mothers. Questions many common assumptions about immigrants, shows most black parents had support networks in UK, and social workers ignorant of the positive aspects of West Indian culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shapiro 1968</td>
<td>35 coloured and 65 white illegitimate children in care to one children's department</td>
<td>Are the circumstances of coloured and and white illegitimate children different?</td>
<td>Family Circumstances. Some reference to Racism Model.</td>
<td>Almost all coloured children were of mixed parentage with white mothers and West Indian or Asian immigrant fathers. Desertion by mother more often the cause of admission than with white children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author/Date</td>
<td>Location/Subjects</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Explanatory Model</td>
<td>Comment and Important Features</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lambert 1970</td>
<td>Police Division in Birmingham, children sent to approved school and in care. (Research also included adults)</td>
<td>Do the nature of crime and characteristics of offenders differ between ethnic groups?</td>
<td>For juveniles, primarily Family Circumstances, influenced by Immigrant Status.</td>
<td>Coloured children were under-represented in approved school committals and less serious delinquents. Many, especially those in care, were of mixed parentage, and these were younger and more deprived than other coloured children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foren and Batta 1970</td>
<td>All children coming into care and sample of those in care to Bradford children's department</td>
<td>Are child care services used differently for coloured, half-coloured and white children?</td>
<td>Family Circumstances (for half-coloured children) and Immigration/ Family Structure Models for Coloured Children.</td>
<td>Low rates of admission for coloured children (mainly Asian). Major finding that circumstances and care careers of children of mixed parentage (half-coloured in Foren and Batta's terminology) were close to those of white rather than other coloured children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author/Date</td>
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<td>Research Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raynor 1971</td>
<td>53 coloured infants accepted for the British Adoption Project (action research monitoring placements). National survey of non-white adoptions</td>
<td>What are the adoption placement needs of non-white children? What affects the success or failure of placement?</td>
<td>For children coming into the project, mainly Family Circumstances. For Asian mothers giving up babies, a 'Family Structure' model often used to explain why families did not support pregnant daughters.</td>
<td>Two thirds of the children put forward for the Adoption Project were of mixed parentage with an Asian parent including a small group described as being mixed Negro-Asian parentage. Most parents were in social classes 1-3, and many mothers were students. The results suggest major criticisms of discriminatory social work practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowe and Lambert 1973</td>
<td>Survey of all children in care for over six months to local authorities (28) and voluntary organisations (5)</td>
<td>What is the extent of unmet need for family placement?</td>
<td>Assumes a 'Family Circumstances' model to explain why the children came into care, and a planning/administrative model for their staying in care.</td>
<td>One fifth to one quarter of all children in long term care were coloured, 63% of mixed parentage. No differences in characteristics or care careers between coloured and white children, but single illegitimate children were in care earlier and longer than children of marriage/cohabitation.</td>
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<td>Author/Date</td>
<td>Location/Subjects</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Explanatory Model</td>
<td>Comment and Important Features</td>
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<td>Holman 1973</td>
<td>Children placed in private foster homes compared to a sample of local authority foster children</td>
<td>Why are children placed privately for fostering? Are standards of care acceptable?</td>
<td>Family Circumstances and Cultural Model to explain why children came into care. Suggestion of institutionalised/cultural racism and social worker attitudes in relegation of some children to poorer private sector foster homes.</td>
<td>Challenges Fitzherbert/Ellis's view of the way West African and West Indian families used care. Showed most parents forced by circumstances to find care, and excluded by policies from the public care system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearce 1974</td>
<td>National survey of boys in community homes with education who have one or two West Indian parents</td>
<td>Are West Indian boys over-represented or wrongly placed in CH(E)s? How do large numbers of these boys affect the schools?</td>
<td>Racism, with some reference to Family Circumstances, influenced by parents' and children's immigrant status. Psychological model of personality damage due to deprivation and racism.</td>
<td>West Indian boys over-represented compared to census figures, and less serious delinquents. Pearce considered this to reflect racism in the judicial process, but ignores the role played by social workers in choice of CH(E) placement. 18% of boys of mixed parentage. One third of UK born boys and half of West Indian born boys lost contact with parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author/Date</td>
<td>Location/Subjects</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Explanatory Model</td>
<td>Comment and Important Features</td>
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<td>Pinder and Shaw 1974</td>
<td>Children in Care of a London Borough and a national voluntary organisation - 244 coloured and 122 non coloured</td>
<td>To what extent did coloured children and their families experience specific problems as they went through the process of care?</td>
<td>Family Circumstances, explanations for children coming into care. 'Cultural Racism' detected in social workers' attitudes to families.</td>
<td>Half of the coloured children were of mixed parentage, and had more deprived family circumstances and care careers than &quot;fully coloured&quot;. More children described as 'fully coloured' came into care for behaviour problems. Criticises social workers' attitudes to parents and stereotypes about cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Batta and McCullogh 1975</td>
<td>194 boys admitted to Aycliffe classifying CH(E) from N.E. England (82 coloured and 112 white)</td>
<td>Do coloured and white children have different family backgrounds or criminal histories?</td>
<td>Assumes Family Circumstances Model. Describes Racism Model as 'speculative'.</td>
<td>Over half of the coloured boys were of mixed parentage, with these coming from more deprived backgrounds than boys with two coloured parents. Most being illegitimate children of white single mothers. Coloured boys had less serious delinquent histories than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author/Date</td>
<td>Location/Subjects</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Explanatory Model</td>
<td>Comment and Important Features</td>
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<td>Cawson 1977</td>
<td>National sample of 438 children in approved schools who had one or both parents of New Commonwealth origin. Comparison with a group of white boys.</td>
<td>What were the characteristics of black children in approved schools? Were different processes occurring in the committal of black and white children?</td>
<td>Original Harris Survey - Family Circumstances and Immigration, with reference to Racism Models. These models tested in Cawson paper.</td>
<td>20% of children were of mixed parentage. Boys were less delinquent than a white comparison group. Black children had more stable backgrounds than white. Early committal of black children to approved schools could not be explained in terms of family circumstances.</td>
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<td>Batta and Mawby 1981</td>
<td>Children in the care of Bradford SSD - review of several studies</td>
<td>Are services used differently by ethnic minorities and the white population?</td>
<td>Assumes 'Family Circumstances' Model.</td>
<td>Non-white children are under-represented in the care population compared to Bradford's population. Almost all non-white children were of mixed parentage and there were different patterns of admission and care careers from other ethnic groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author/Date</td>
<td>Location/Subjects</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Explanatory Model</td>
<td>Comment and Important Features</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lambeth 1981/2</td>
<td>1375 children in care to Lambeth SSD. 49% black, 51% white.</td>
<td>Are there differences in the characteristics and needs of black and white children in care?</td>
<td>Primarily Racism Model with some indications of differences in Family Circumstances.</td>
<td>Black children over-represented in care compared to Lambeth's total population. (No distinction is made between ethnic groups.) Different patterns of admission and care careers for black and white children and more black children from stable economically sound backgrounds. Very critical of cultural racism in social work. No difference in offending rates between black and white children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilkinson 1982</td>
<td>All children in care in Tower Hamlets SSD</td>
<td>What are the characteristics and needs of children in care?</td>
<td>Family Circumstances</td>
<td>Over half the children had ethnic minority parentage, most of mixed parentage. Patterns of admission and family background differ for these children.</td>
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FURTHER ILLUSTRATIVE CASE EXAMPLES FOR DEFINITIONS OF FAMILY PROBLEMS

These examples are included to illustrate those categories which were defined in Chapter Seven but for which no case material is included, or for which further clarification is helpful.

1. Mental Illness
The example of Pauline in Chapter Seven is one of the most explicitly described in the sample. A number of children, particularly those in the Disqualified Group, had histories similar to that of Monica, whose mother suffered from a longstanding depressive illness.

Monica, aged 14, a child of Afro-Caribbean parentage from the Disqualified Group

Monica's first admission to care had occurred when she was three years old, on her mother's admission to psychiatric hospital. At ten years she was again in care for a lengthy period when her mother's illness re-emerged and Mrs. D was again hospitalised. Monica returned to her mother at the age of twelve, but spent the next two years moving between her mother and eldest sister, due to her mother's inability to cope with her. Mrs. D's illness put such a strain on the parent's marriage that it ended during her second hospital admission.

2. Severe, Chronic or Terminal Physical Illness/Disability
This was comparatively rare in the sample, although a number of parents were described as having had shorter term illnesses in the past. One example, however, was Tara:
Tara, aged 14, a child of Afro-Caribbean parentage from the Subject Group

Tara was referred to the Social Services Department by her mother, who felt unable to control her. When the social worker followed up the referral, it emerged that Mrs. S was receiving treatment for a serious cancer which was potentially fatal. Although Tara had a poor relationship with her mother, once in care she confided to the residential social workers her fear of her mother dying. Mrs. S was shortly expecting long term hospitalisation, and had made plans for her younger children to be cared for by other relatives on her death.

3. Mental Handicap (affecting ability to work or leading to provision of specialist services for the mentally handicapped)

Although several parents are described as being 'of low intelligence', only one family in the sample was rated according to the above criteria, and even this was a borderline example.

Darrell, aged 12, a white child from the Comparison Group

The Social Services Department had known of Darrell for many years but had no active involvement as the family were unwilling to accept this. The whole family were regarded as of low intelligence. One severely mentally handicapped brother was permanently hospitalised and two others were at a special school for children with learning difficulties. Mrs. C had herself attended a special school for the 'educationally subnormal', and was also regarded as mentally unstable, having in the past had short admissions to psychiatric hospital.

4. Drug Misuse

A potentially sensitive area here in terms of the subjectivity of judgements of 'misuse' as distinct from 'use', and the cultural acceptability of some drugs in particular groups. The definition was that parents should have received medical treatment for drug problems or have been subject to criminal proceedings for the use of illegal drugs. As it happened, in only one family was there any mention of drug use by parents; this too was borderline in terms of the above criteria.
Velma, aged 15, a child of mixed (British/Asian) parentage from the Subject Group

Velma was referred to the Social Services Department after being admitted to hospital following an overdose of sedatives. It transpired that she had broken into her parents' medicine cabinet and taken her mother's medication. Mrs. S was described by a psychiatrist as having a 'heavy dependence on sedatives and painkillers' which was part of a 'long family history of dependence on alcohol and drugs'. Several of Mrs. S's relatives, including grandparents, had received treatment for alcohol or drug misuse.

5. Alcohol Misuse

This was rather more commonly mentioned. It was even harder to define than most, but was defined in terms of parents having had medical treatment for alcohol problems, criminal convictions involving drunkenness, or drinking to a level which appeared to affect the family's economic and social functioning. In Geraldine's family (Chapter Seven), the effect on the situation was in terms of her relationships with and safety at the hands of her mother. In Micky's, the drinking caused different problems.

Micky, aged 13, a white child from the Comparison Group

Micky lived with his father and a new, very young (teenaged) stepmother. He was referred to the Social Services Department after going into the local police station and refusing to return to his home. Subsequent enquiries suggested a number of problems in his behaviour and environment, but attempts to plan for Micky's future were hampered by his father's drinking. Mr. C was frequently so drunk at his appointments with the social worker that no sensible conversation could take place. His drinking was also said to cause serious financial problems for the family: he was frequently in debt and shortly before referral had been threatened with eviction for rent arrears.
6. Poverty, Debts or their Consequences
This problem could be linked with an inadequate income, as with the example of Sheila (Chapter Seven) but was also a measure of whether a family could live within it's means. Some families had problems (as with Micky above) linked to income being spent on alcohol. More unusual was the following example which I hesitated before coding under this heading. I eventually did so as it contributed to instability in the children's lives, especially as Oliver was an able child who was doing well at school, and his father was said to be educationally ambitious for his son.

Oliver, aged 14, a child of mixed (European/African) parentage from the Subject Group

Oliver was originally referred to the Social Services Department after repeatedly running away from home. His father is described as a 'student' and the family lived in a comfortable, middle class area. All the children of the family attended private schools, but when the social worker contacted Oliver's school to obtain information for the court report, the Headmaster reported that as Mr. S had not paid the school fees for over a year, Oliver would have to leave the school at the end of term.

7. Poor Home Conditions
This was defined as homelessness, serious overcrowding or substandard housing, living in squats or serious hygiene problems to the level of a potential health hazard. The last category is very subjective. Social workers are sometimes criticised for giving children in care 'unrealistic' middle class standards of material surroundings. In the writer's experience material standards in children's homes are often rather poor, compared to an ordinary comfortable working class home (an impression confirmed by a recent DHSS report on a
large scale inspection of residential homes (DHSS 1985b) and I tried to avoid coding as 'poor hygiene' anything which might have been rated as passably normal living conditions. Dirty conditions at home were a source of friction between several children and their parents, as with Heather (Chapter Seven).

Keith, aged 15, a child of Afro-Caribbean parentage from the Disqualified Group

Keith first came into care as an infant when his mother suffered a psychiatric illness and was hospitalised. He returned home at the age of four years, but remained there for only a year, when his mother requested his readmission to care (under the legislation of that time, the 1948 Children Act). Reports throughout Keith's childhood give repeated descriptions of the 'filthy, squalid home conditions and the children being inadequately fed'. Although Keith, once in care, kept in regular contact with his mother, as a teenager he refused to stay at home overnight due to the dirty conditions there.

8. Criminality of Parents

Chapter Seven gave an example in which the father's imprisonment tipped the balance over whether his daughter, Katy, could remain at home. In some other instances the criminal behaviour of parents or stepparents more directly concerned the safety of the children.

Joey, aged 10, a white child from the Disqualified Group

The D family had been known to the Social Services Department since before Joey's birth. When Joey was eight years old the social worker became extremely concerned because his mother began cohabiting with Mr. Y, a former patient in a special psychiatric hospital who had a record of sex offences against children. Subsequently Mr. Y was convicted of offences against several more children, including one of the D children, and sent to prison. Within a few months, however, Mrs. D was again cohabiting with a Mr. W, another man with a history of sex offences against children.