The social organisation of social work

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The Social Organisation of Social Work

by

Michael Roffe

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy of the Loughborough University of Technology

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Abstract

The need to try to work in partnership with parents during a child protection investigation is a legally-derived expectation of social work practice. Yet very few empirical studies have examined what social workers and their clients say to each other when parents are being assessed for the risk they might present to their children. The patterning of such talk, and how this might perform a range of activities is addressed in this thesis.

Social work can be said to derive its practice from twin concerns with 'care' and 'control'. I describe the ways these themes are made relevant by participants in child protection investigations using an approach based on Conversation and Discourse Analysis. The main sources of data are transcriptions of audio recordings of six extended meetings between social workers and parents. The discourse of the worker-client meetings is examined for how it orients to, constitutes and makes relevant the participants' contrasting roles and responsibilities.

A central analytic theme I consider is the conversational management of co-operation in social work. This arises out of my examination of research on the professional-client relationship in social work and also studies of institutional interactions in particular settings. Goffman's (1984) concept of 'footing' and Edwards and Potter's (1992) recent reworking of this within a 'discursive' approach to social psychology are enlisted among other sources to analyse the interactions. The series of analyses which I present show how local interactional difficulties are created by the professional's attempts to affiliate with parents. These are resolved sequentially and interactionally as the talk oscillates between various activities associated with the participants' accountability.

I take social work to be constituted by the orientations of the participants to the control and care dimensions of child protection. Throughout the thesis, the aim is to validate my approach through a dialogue with other research studies and also through considering the participants' own orientations to the issues under discussion.
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This thesis is dedicated to Rosanna in recognition of her dependable and unconditional friendship.
INTRODUCTION

Two parents in danger of having their children taken from them by the Social Services Department because of child abuse allegations are being interviewed by their social worker. Upon receipt of some advice that the couple should try to pull together more when dealing with the children, 'Lucy', the mother provides an explanation of why she and her partner 'Mark' take different approaches to discipline. Her reply goes as follows:

1. [ALM:1:11]

Cos erm the way he was erm, maybe goes with the way we were brought up not with me Dad that wasn't no bringing up but when but when I went to live with me Nan, when I was four, she didn't slap us or anything, unless she really needed to - it's a one-off if she ever slapped us. But him, him he sort o' like belted it into him to do it right and with me I was spoken to. You know I actually got some words that I, you know, Nanny used to speak to me an sit me down an s(ay) well look you can't get your own way on everything you want. But he sort o' like defies what I say cos he thinks he's the man in the house an he thinks he's always right. Whereas now when I seein' things happening here an I think well Nanny would have done it that way, I'll do it Nan's way. And he's sitting down and saying 'No, me Dad was right, I'LL DO IT MY WAY'.

So all he knows how to do is smack whereas I can sit down and talk to Jason [their four year old son]. You know when he's with Jason, I get no response out of Jason whatsoever. He's so cheeky when he's around it's unbelievable.

As a child and family psychologist employed by a social services department, I often work with parents who, like Lucy and Mark, are under suspicion of abusing their children and it is easy for me to recognise Lucy's account as a familiar one. It sounds like the sort of helpful explanation which parents quite often provide for me. And it is also the sort of account which I often reflect on with social workers when we work together on so-called 'risk assessment' interviews with families.
Is there actually anything that makes such a version distinguishable as 'social work talk' rather than the sort of child protection interview that might go on at the police station or accident ward of a hospital?

In this thesis I shall examine some of the patterns which may characterise discussions between social workers and parents. In doing so, I shall be setting out to identify features which might mark it out as different from talk in other settings and particularly the conversational activities of other institutional contexts.

My aim in undertaking such a venture originates then from my sense as an 'insider' about what is going on when social workers and their clients meet in the particularly fraught circumstances of a child protection investigation. Here parents must try to account for themselves in the knowledge that they may lose their children into Local Authority care, yet social workers must try and persuade these compulsory 'clients' to talk openly and to co-operate in partnership to achieve a safe and appropriate arrangement for the well-being of the children.

We can get an indication from Lucy's account of some of the issues that may be relevant to social work participants in such a situation. I have already suggested that in providing an extensive summary of the parents' upbringing Lucy is being 'helpful'. But what are the features that allow it to be heard like this? Apparently without much prompting, the mother gives this detailed background picture to the professional. Yet the passage seems to be working to achieve more than just displaying a willingness to talk about a relevant topic. For example, the mother's
version seems to distinguish between the parents by contrasting their
different experiences as children and the effects of this on their
approaches to managing the children in the current situation. According
to this account at least, Mark only knows how to 'smack' but Lucy can
'sit down and talk' with their son. We might then consider how the piece
indirectly (but not necessarily less effectively) deals with performing
complex social actions such as attributing blame and responsibility.
Clearly the way these actions are done will bear upon the ways that the
participants treat each other. The building up of a trusting
relationship will depend upon the creation of the sense that people are
prepared to tell the truth and to reveal the intimate details of their
thoughts and worries. We can get more of a flavour of this sort of issue
as it actually presents itself in the discussion if we look at some
features of the extract.

A preliminary general point I want to note is that there is a reflexive
dimension to be considered when analysing an account. Lucy's version of
the parents' upbringing not only describes what went on in those past
events but, in the way that it is formulated in the current interaction,
is part of what is going on presently and helps to constitute what is
said as a particular sequence of activities. We should also remember
that the notion of reflexivity also draws attention to the production of
the current text as a social construction. Lucy's 'noticings' of a
pattern in 'the sort of' ways which she and her partner were brought up
are not the only patterns to have been raised. I have already detailed a
pattern as well. This concerns the 'sort of' accounts that parents have
given me, and the sense I have that these are typical and helpful.
We shall be returning to these important issues to do with reflexivity at various points in the thesis. But let us now examine some of the details of Lucy's account with three other characteristics of language use in mind. Following a range of work in the Social Sciences, Potter and Wetherell (1987) have argued that research in psychology would benefit from a greater recognition of the primacy of situated language use in many domains of human activity. They draw out the dimensions of construction, variation and function as central components underlying analysis of such interaction. These notions have proved useful in informing a number of subsequent studies of spoken and written texts and I want to consider how, with the help of these components, we can begin to address the sorts of questions I have raised. My aim in what follows is to pick just a few of the more salient attributes of what is clearly a complex passage rather than to make a claim for an exhaustive analysis at this early stage.

There is an indication of the sorts of persuasive concerns which this passage might be occupied with in the final lines of the first paragraph of the extract:

Whereas now when I seein' things happening here an I think well Nanny would have done it that way, I'll do it Nan's way. And he's sitting down and saying 'No, me Dad was right, I'LL DO IT MY WAY.'

If we look at the way the contrast here is achieved, we can note a subtle, but in terms of the rhetorical design of the passage, possibly significant shift of emphasis in the construction of the parents' alternative decisions about whose 'way' they choose to 'do it' when
coping with the children. Lucy's decision is to base her child management approach on her 'Nan's way' whereas her partner's choice is attributed as 'my way' (that is 'his way').

The mother's version here retains the origin of her approach as being that of her grandmother's which is one itself presented throughout the passage as based on reasoning and explanation. Through producing her partner's response as to do it 'my way' (rather than say 'my dad's way') Mark is presented as having a different motivation from that of his partner's. We shall be exploring Erving Goffman's work on how such changes of emphasis are brought into play by participants in later chapters. He argued that these are potentially important shifts and are ones by which participants regularly attempt to share out accountability amongst those present in the current discussions and also those represented in the versions of events they provide.

The inference that is being laid down layer-by-layer in such contrasts - of which there are a whole series in the extract - seems to be one in which the speaker is deflecting the potential for blame away from herself and onto her partner. She doesn't say it directly but the implication perhaps is that he is the cause of many of their problems. Let us consider how some of the variations in the way in which hitting children is described contributes to this effect.

The mother in fact doesn't use this term 'hit' (which I have just introduced) in the extract but uses three other items. Two of these - 'slapped' and 'belted' - are worked in to the earlier part of the
account in the following contrast:

..but when I went to live with me Nan, when I was four, she didn't slap us or anything, unless she really needed to - it's a one-off if she ever slapped us. But him, him he sort o' like belted it into him to do it right and with me I was spoken to.

We have already noted how the father's quoted insistence that he will 'do it my way' indirectly supports the notion that he is selfish. However, we can also speculate that were the speaker to attribute to her partner the adoption of his own father's approach, involving the son having it 'belted into him', this might be generating further potential problems with the social worker. For to have quoted her husband as saying 'I'll do it me dad's way' could have implied that he abused the children because he too 'belted' them. The variation in the descriptions here is potentially a very significant one and there is a possible danger in making too much of the contrast between the parents' treatment when they were children. In constructing the father's background as being so abusive to him, it might be heard as having directly transferred into the way he treats their children. The final paragraph contains features of its design which appear to try to deal with this difficulty and to re-direct the inference that can be drawn. We can note that a third term is used to describe the physical punishment used on the children here:

So all he knows how to do is smack whereas I can sit down and talk to Jason. You know when he's with Jason, I get no response out of Jason whatsoever. He's so cheeky when he's around it's unbelievable.
This sequence provides a summary of what has previously been said. Such 'formulations' of previous talk tend to do three things. Earlier material is re-presented in a way which deletes some of the original information; also, the new version transforms the account by describing it in a different way whilst still preserving parts of its initial significance (see Heritage and Watson, 1979).

To 'smack' of course is a newly introduced description within this sequence that transforms the earlier 'belt' and 'slap'. Such a construction of the father's behaviour may be relevant for the accountable way it describes how he deals with the children's behaviour. By this I mean it attempts to convey a form of chastisement that remains legally acceptable (in Britain at least). And as such, it deletes some of the implication that Mark might be abusing the children. The construction 'all he knows how to do is smack whereas I can sit down and talk to Jason' also retains (or preserves) the possibility that the Mother may herself use physical punishment on the child but as part of a wider range of disciplinary strategies. We might surmise that this could be an important point for the speaker to establish rather than to make wider sweeping claims that she never hits the children over which she might be challenged.

Already, then, we can get an impression that it is difficult to talk about what is 'really' going on in this extract simply in terms of the client co-operating with the professional. The items I have briefly extracted suggest that Lucy's account could function in all sorts of
ways. And this question of the function of the passage brings us back to my initial enquiry: how might this sort of version become rendered as social work? And if such professional practice is about managing the tension between co-operation and control, how are such notions actually orientated to in dealing with material of the sort in extract one?

Clearly, we need to know more about the interaction in which Lucy's account was provided and in particular what social workers - as well as their clients - do to set up and respond to accounts like Lucy's. We shall be returning to this extract in Chapter Eight, towards the end of the thesis. By that point, hopefully, we will have been informed of how such tensions might operate in social work talk.

Notes

1. 'Lucy' and 'Mark' and 'Jason' (in extract 1) are pseudonyms. This sequence is taken from a more detailed transcription provided in Appendix III. I have omitted here the 'minimal' responses of the other participants for the purposes of this introduction. As is discussed later, minimal turns such as continuers (for example 'mhm') and ratifications ('yeh', 'right') are incorporated as essential features of Conversation Analysis. Leaving them out restricts the analytic possibilities but allows the thesis to get off the ground in more accessible fashion.
2. Mark in fact refers to another of his children, a baby sitting on his lap at the time, as having 'slapped me one' during a lighthearted moment of the discussion. See Appendix III line 472.

3. This is particularly appropriate given that Lucy had been warned for 'overchastising' her children when she hit them, a problem that had come to light during a previous child abuse investigation.
CHILD PROTECTION, RISK ASSESSMENT AND THE MANAGEMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY

This thesis is a study of social work meetings conducted between social workers and parents in the sensitive circumstances associated with child protection. It takes as its data the transcriptions of a number of discussions between social workers and parents who are suspected of having abused their children; some of these clients had previously been convicted of various forms of abuse in the courts. Most of these meetings took place in the family's home and were part of on-going professional enquiries focussed on assessing the risks of allowing children to remain at home with their parents.

The approach to studying this area of human activity is based upon discourse and conversation analysis. In this chapter, I will pick up some of the main themes from this literature and consider their possible application to social work assessments of families at risk. I shall briefly outline three themes of work on discourse and social structure and then make some general comments about the aims and design of this thesis. In the final section I outline the main analytic points which are addressed within the various chapters which make up this study.

In conversation analysis, there has been a growing interest in talk in institutional contexts, most notably in two collections: Boden and Zimmerman's Talk and Social Structure (1991) and Drew and Heritage's Talk at Work (1992). Part of the interest in this work is its demonstration of
the close relationship between interaction in institutional and mundane settings. Institutional interaction is often derived closely from conversational practices that appear much more generally; for example, the sorts of practices that make up cross examination in a courtroom are based on much more widely used practices of producing descriptions to suggest particular upshots (Atkinson and Drew, 1979).

Another part of the interest in this research is its rejection of the traditional micro/macro distinction. Rather than look at talk that happens within social structure - where social structure is treated as a pre-existing macro container in which individuals do their micro acts - it considers how structure is accomplished and constituted in the course of particular practices. We shall encounter a series of examples which instantiate this notion as we proceed through the various themes which are addressed within the analytic body of the study.

A second strand I shall be drawing on comes from Edwards and Potter's discourse analytic reworking of standard cognitive interpretations of memory and attribution (1992, 1993). They have stressed the intimate connection between the construction of descriptions of events and attributional concerns with blame and accountability. Put simply, speakers manage their own accountability by producing versions of actions and events which assign responsibility in particular ways. Crucially, for this to be 'effective' they need to construct these versions as factual or at least resistant to undermining.
As will become apparent, descriptions of actions and events form an essential ingredient in the conversational materials we shall be working with. Both clients and social workers recurrently construct such descriptions, and these descriptions are a major way in which they manage issues of responsibility. We can analyse these descriptions for their double concern with both responsibility and factuality.

The third line of thinking that informs this study is from Billig et al.'s (1988) work on ideological dilemmas. The main point of their argument is that many institutional settings are organized around particular dilemmas which are ideological in the sense that they involve fundamental ideas about authority, knowledge and social relationships. One of the problems for social work participants is that in order to produce something that gears itself towards the protection of children, parents and professionals must work in co-operation. However, lurking in the background is the possibility that the social worker may have to move into a different mode of practice. Her job can potentially change into one of removing the children and turning her back on the co-operative enterprise that she and the parents had formerly embarked upon. The way that this dilemma is approached and presented in discussion is an important thread running through the study. As we shall see, these themes, which might be designated as 'care' versus 'control' are resources which are constantly managed and reworked in talk at work. But it is important to stress that they are resources for action rather than positions which are adhered to or advocated outside of the local contexts of accountability for which they are designed.
The remainder of this introduction provides a brief summary of the content and main arguments of subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Two, a summary of social work studies connected with resistance and accountability is provided. The aim here is to distinguish some of the main ways in which research has conceptualised the nature of the relationship between 'social worker' and 'client'. The argument is made that one of the features of social work in child protection with parents or primary carers who may be a risk to their children is that it takes place in a context of what is referred to as 'resistance'. The social worker's role cannot be fulfilled unless this is 'overcome' and some sort of partnership is achieved.

What a review of the literature on social work highlights is the different ways that resistance has been incorporated into examining the content and the process of social work intervention. Some research has indicated the basis on which successful practice has been accomplished. In a field of enquiry largely based upon interview approaches, research has detailed the general sorts of professional activity that can be predicted to lead to client engagement and professional success. However, I argue that notions such as resistance and engagement need to be explored in the detail of face-to-face social work practice. A number of ethnographic studies have illustrated some of the ways in which social work practice is produced partly in response to the difficulties of securing co-operation with clients. Only a small number of these focus specifically on child protection. The ground-breaking work by Dingwall et al. (1983, 1995) is considered in some detail partly because of its specific relevance to the
present study, and also because of its wide influence on current social work thinking and guidelines for practice in the area of child protection.

Chapter Three introduces some of the main issues which have yet to be considered in researching social work practice in the field of child protection. The themes raised by research in the previous chapter are considered with the aim of improving our understanding of interaction between social workers and clients. I illustrate a number of shortcomings of the current literature by taking some of the findings of one particular study and showing both the areas of understanding which it illuminates and also those areas which remain obscured by approaches which do not focus directly upon resistance in social work as it is instantiated in actual professional-client discussion. My argument is that conversation and discourse analytic approaches hold potential for specifying important areas which are, as yet, relatively unexplored. These include the examination of resistance and engagement as processes of interaction rather than as intrapersonal client problems requiring professional intervention. Some of the basic methodological foundations of conversation analysis are then outlined to provide a foundation for understanding the empirical analyses to come.

In Chapter Four, the potential of a conversation analytic approach to social work talk is suggested by considering some of the studies that have been undertaken in related areas of institutional practice. This review also raises some possible analytic ideas to explore in the data on which my study is based. Work on advice-giving, passing on diagnostic information and clinical interviews, all conducted within the context of medical/health
settings is examined. Much of this material examines discussions with parents about their children. A number of themes arise out of this summary based upon the ways that resistance presents as a phenomenon within the sequences of interaction that are discussed. There appears to be a regular preference for indirectness and caution in the way that professionals in these settings approach their work with their clients and patients. The ways in which co-operation and agreement are conceptualised and pursued in such forms of institutional talk are also described.

The analysis of social work talk in child protection meetings gets underway in Chapter Five where a single short piece of spoken interaction is presented. The question of how to reveal what is going on in this sequence is informed by a conversation analytic approach in which the theme of participants' own interpretations as revealed on a turn-by-turn basis is made relevant. The notion of identity as a phenomenon occasioned within the rhetorical concerns of the speakers is developed based mainly upon Drew's (1987) paper on teasing, and a theme developed in one of Sacks's (1992) published lectures on the relationship between action sequences and the local workings of identity as an occasioned phenomenon. The interactional problems generated by this particular social worker's twin orientations to affiliation with the clients and to warning them of his powers to remove the children are considered. We examine the evidence in the exchanges for how the social worker pursues co-operation through producing the parents' caring characteristics in his construction of his relationship with them. This then poses the interactional problem of how to 'do' a warning. I argue that the evidence in the turns of the sequence suggests that the way in which the social worker produces a version of a
previous discussion with one of the parents proves to be pivotal in terms of moving the discussion into a different sequence of activity.

Chapter Six examines in some detail the concept of 'footing' as it manifests in social work. This idea is based on Goffman's original delineation of the ways that speakers tend in most face-to-face conversation to attribute what they say to various sources as well as taking some responsibility themselves. Whilst there are a large range of linguistic positions describable from an examination of the phenomena of talk (Levinson, 1988; Hanks, 1990), the utility of this concept has been extended to consider how footing can display the workings of responsibility being managed in conversation as people negotiate their accountability in their interaction (Edwards and Potter, 1992). The ways that participants deploy footing practices in certain institutional settings (see, for example, Clayman, 1992; Maynard, 1984) suggests the potential of this concept for analysing social work interaction.

Having looked in some detail at footing as a participants' concern in a sequence of everyday talk, I then turn to some examples of its deployment in the social work transcripts. What I set out to do is to consider how footings are incorporated into a series of passages from different meetings which play up the close and intimate way in which the social worker works with her/his clients and their families. In doing so, however, this generates what I put forward as an interactional difficulty which is very pertinent to social work. This is to do with the need to retain a professional 'distance' so that the worker does not convey that she is setting out to collude with the parents or other members of the family. As
we shall see, this is regarded as problematic both by professionals being interviewed or supervised over their practice and by official guidelines for conducting their meetings with parents. These sources present collusion as occurring where parents have achieved an unhealthy influence over the worker to the detriment of keeping the needs of the child in full perspective. But what we shall be focusing on in this chapter, is how participants themselves appear to manage and deploy rhetorically the distinctions between appropriately close working relationships and the use of those relationships to achieve unfair advantage.

Based upon examining the footings present in the corpus of data, some features emerge that are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven. First, I note a regular interactional phenomenon across the data associated with displays of 'honesty' and the personalised construction of the social worker's views and opinions in footings embedded in some of the sequences. As social workers report on their roles and tasks in working with a family, they try to build up the possibilities for affiliation with the parents. In order to understand the potential ways of doing this, I make further use of Goffman's work, in this section by discussing 'lamination' as an interactional phenomenon. His metaphor suggests different facets of a relationship may be sustained in parallel during interpersonal exchanges. Out of this analysis, it is then possible for me to present a fairly robust sequence connected with the pursuit of co-operation by social workers. The three main elements of this sequence are described, my argument being that as a device, this represents a conversational instantiation of how co-operation and responsibility are pursued during child protection assessments with parents.
In Chapter Eight, the final analytic chapter, we take another section from the meeting considered in Chapter Five. The passage considered here is concerned with the processes whereby the social worker and parents put together an excuse and justification sequence. We see how the turns of talk come to align with each other following an extended fragment where the parent first resists the social worker's advice. I set out to illustrate here how participants go about persuading each other of their authority for providing a particular view of events. I also show how the participants' activities are underpinned by an orientation to co-operation, and I demonstrate how the three-part sequence described in the previous chapter also informs this particular extract.

The discussion in Chapter Nine, which concludes the thesis, takes the reader through some of the main features of social work as a set of institutional activities which have been illuminated and developed over the course of the study. After summarising the role of co-operation as a feature which I have claimed influences the interactions of people involved in child protection meetings, I consider some of the ways that the study is validated. This is done by discussing three main features which pervade my project. These are (i) my attempts to highlight the ways that social work participants themselves deal with the topics and issues under discussion (ii) the theoretical coherence of the study based upon its relationship with other research on institutional and social work interaction (iii) the potential of the approach I have adopted for introducing new and fruitful lines of enquiry into the nature of social work practice. The chapter, and the thesis, ends with some recommendations for further research and application.
CHAPTER TWO

RESISTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

This chapter examines briefly the history of how child protection has come to be a core task for field social workers in voluntary agencies such as the N.S.P.C.C. and in Social Services Department teams designated to work with children and families. I shall provide a summary of current working practices and expectations and then follow this up with an outline of some influential guidelines for social workers undertaking the assessment of families with children deemed to be at risk of abuse within their homes.

I then consider a key component in examining social work practice, and one which distinguishes it, at least in part, from some of the other caring agencies and professions. This is the potential problem that the social work practitioner regularly faces of working with unwilling clients who have not sought help or at least not in the form of social work intervention. Such clients are sometimes said to display 'resistance' to the sorts of intervention and support being offered; this may extend to the very idea of contact with a social worker.

Linked to resistance is the complementary notion of 'engagement', the process whereby the professional negotiates a working partnership with the client. I attempt to demonstrate at points throughout the chapter a common, though sometimes underspecified theme in research on this area. It involves the ways that participants explain their thoughts, plans and
actions and indicate the sources which influence these. As the subsequent arguments of the thesis are developed, we shall go on to consider how accountability manifests as a central participant concern, and potential resource, in social work interaction.

CHILD ABUSE AND CHILD PROTECTION

The recognition that child abuse is a common phenomenon has only come about in the last thirty years or so. It is now accepted that the high child injury and mortality rates commonly documented in medical records and other official statistics of earlier periods are at least partly explained by wilful acts of violence or neglect often perpetrated by the child's closest carers.

The construction of medical explanations of child injury based upon organic causes such as 'brittle bone syndrome' has proved, with hindsight to have concealed a major problem for society of the dangers posed by some parents or other carers. Similarly, and even more recently, it has come to be recognised that diagnoses of childhood complaints involving psychiatric conditions implying a mental origin for a child's presenting behavioural problems have sometimes served to obscure the child's experience of sexual abuse often by their father, stepfather or other males from within their family system (see for example Gillham, 1991).
The job of protecting children from 'abuse' in its various forms is coordinated in the United Kingdom by social workers often working closely with other child care professionals in the overlapping areas associated with child protection. The precise role of each professional associated with an individual case can vary quite widely and social workers can take on various responsibilities as outlined in the following paragraphs. However, the social worker is the only professional whose role is defined and backed by a legal mandate to ensure the protection of a child who may be at risk. In exceptional circumstances, this may even include the removal of a child from their home, a task which may be accomplished with the aid of the police if necessary. It is the social worker's legal responsibility to try to work in partnership with the parents to ensure protection of the child (Department of Health, 1991b). Just how that engagement in partnership is accomplished or resisted remains to be delineated although we shall be examining some research studies which have begun this task.

Within the various activities constituting 'child protection', particular overlapping procedures can be distinguished. These include the identification of children at risk often arising from family contacts with medical professionals, such as health visitors, doctors and paediatricians. It is rarely, if ever, possible to be clear about the exact causes of a child's presenting problems even where there is no doubt that serious trauma has occurred as in some cases of physical abuse. For this reason, social workers will often be involved in monitoring children in their homes. Such activities are conducted largely through discussion with parents and children together with
observation and impressions of interaction within the family. It is
during attempts by the field social worker to liaise with the parents or
primary carers of the child that information about the quality of care
available to the child is gathered. If the parents are not prepared to
contribute details openly and honestly about how the child is cared for
then essential information is lost. This is particularly important where
the child is too young to provide their own perspective. Decisions about
child protection will then have to be based on secondary sources deriving
from other professionals and individuals who can at best only provide
outsiders' reports on the child and family circumstances.

This process of assessment may lead to decisions about whether a child is
safe to remain at home, probably made via a multi-disciplinary case
conference at which other agencies such as the police, health and
education will also be represented. Children staying at home may be
protected by preventative strategies involving further input to the
family. Social workers may also apply for a court order for the removal
of children either pending the completion of an assessment (for example
on an Emergency Protection Order) or following the outcome of that
assessment (on a Care Order). Legal impositions governing where a child
lives may be followed by attempts to rehabilitate the child to her
family. Again, there are possibilities of legal directions to enforce
the social worker's role in maintaining the child's safety during such
arrangements, most commonly through a Supervision Order giving the social
worker rights of contact with the child and control over some important
monitoring activities such as the child's attendance at medical
examinations. Finally, children and family members suffering emotional problems as a result of abuse and its consequences may be offered various packages of counselling and therapy to help them overcome their difficulties.

EXPECTATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK

It is probably a considerable understatement to note that social work in child protection has regularly failed to secure the full confidence of the public over recent years. The Inquiry Reports of a series of well publicised investigations following the non-accidental deaths of young children have often criticised the practice of individual social workers as well as apportioning blame to agency procedures and structures (Department of Health, 1991a). These criticisms have often followed on from quite intense periods of media speculation and pre-emptive denigration of individuals from social work and other agencies (see Aldridge, 1994). Furthermore the publicity surrounding ineffectual practice has not been limited to criticism of failure to remove children from dangerous families. More recently, in a number of celebrated cases sometimes recognisable by their geographical location alone (Cleveland, the Orkneys), members of the social worker profession in general together with the occasional individual from another agency have sometimes been blamed for what has been alleged to be their precipitate and authoritarian activities in removing children from their family before it had been established that the child was at risk (Cooper, 1993).
Low public confidence was perhaps one of the main forces behind moves to establish a set of core practices for social work practitioners involved in protecting children. In the last ten years there have been a number of widely circulated advisory documents which have been aimed at increasing social worker skills and accountability when identifying dangerous family circumstances (see for example Department of Health and Social Security 1985, 1986 and Department of Health 1988, 1995). This has included the increased specification of the procedures which social workers are required to follow where a child's safety is at issue. It has also involved the provision of guidelines about assessment procedures listing the details of the areas which should be discussed with parents and directly observed in relation to the child.

Equally, concerns about the unnecessary removal of children from their families, which could be described as a form of institutional child abuse, has been made a more sanctionable procedure. The Children Act (1989), which is widely seen as one of the most important pieces of child care legislation of recent times, introduced a set of principles in work with families designed to ensure that the child's welfare always remains the priority in assessing families at risk. The Act took into account the common potential in the fraught circumstances which may attach to a child protection investigation for social workers to become enmeshed with the problems of the wider family and particularly the parents. It has been argued that this can lead to unrealistically optimistic expectations about the ability of the family to protect the child. However, one other tenet of the current legislation is that in many child protection
situations, a partnership can and should be negotiated with parents without the need for legal enforcements yet without also putting others' interests (most typically the parents) before those of the child. Court orders are available as a last resort and are only made if it can be clearly demonstrated by a social services department that it will be unable to protect a child by less authoritarian approaches with the parents.

PARTNERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT AND RESISTANCE

The following quote comes from the Department of Health publication 'Protecting Children: A Guide for Social Workers undertaking a Comprehensive Assessment' (1988), one of a series of publications circulated to teams of field social workers in Local Authority Social Services Departments in England and Wales.

Child protection work inevitably involves the use of authority. Many practitioners remain uncomfortable about openly acknowledging and using their authority in their work with families. The positive use of power and authority can be a helpful tool in the therapeutic process as well as a means of protecting a child. It has been argued that 'care' and 'control' are opposing concepts and in the past this has led to different practitioners taking what was seen as a good role (i.e. offering support and
counselling) or a bad role (i.e. taking legal action); but it is now generally agreed that care and control, as any parent knows, are part of the same process.

(from page 11: The Use of Authority and Control)

This passage identifies a dilemma for social work practitioners which occupies much of the later analytic interest of this thesis: how are 'care' and 'control' manifested in social work interaction, and what are the effects on this interaction of what may seem like a carrot and stick approach? I shall be addressing the conceptual and methodological issues raised by such questions in the next chapter. I shall also be arguing that it is partly through the interactionally achieved production of resolutions to this dilemma that social work is constituted as a distinguishable form of institutional interaction. Such considerations will be usefully informed by an examination of the research already undertaken in this area and it is to this which our attention now moves.

As the quote from 'Protecting Children' identifies, there is at first sight something apparently uncomfortable about the notion of the members of a 'helping' profession taking control of their 'clients'. There is also something apparently inconsistent. In most of its current usages, as well as in its etymological origins, for someone to be described as a 'client' implies that they have opted to obtain a service from another individual whom they think has the necessary skills or attributes to help them, in the same way that a 'window shopper' must actively make a choice before they become a 'customer' (Cade and O'Hanlon, 1993). But whilst
both client and customer share the status of possessing identities imbued with a sense of the holder's own volition, the relationship with the provider (of the goods or services which are sought) is different in the two cases. Being a client implies a dependency on the provider in a way which being a customer does not. The customer-provider focus is usually on the provision of a product external to their relationship whereas for the client-provider the 'product' is typically the attainment of something 'in' the client which depends upon the nature of their relationship.

For many activities associated with the helping professions, such as diagnosis and treatment (for example in consultation with a physician), counselling, or psychotherapy there is consistent evidence that the relationship between professional and client or patient is an unequal one by virtue of the different roles and expectations that the two parties take on. However, in none of these other helping activities is the recipient an unwilling participant at the outset. People may, on occasion, be unhappy with the outcome of an intervention in, say, their hospital treatment, but the assumption is that the client has freely chosen the help they receive and there is rarely compulsion to proceed with a course of intervention.

A consideration which does not often need to be taken into account in the majority of decisions regarding professional intervention is whether the effect of the client opting to seek or reject such help directly infringes anyone else's legal rights. For most instances this does not
pertain, even if others may be personally affected by such a choice, as, for example if a person rejects a surgical operation with subsequent implications for that person's future health which may bear heavily on other members of their family. The individual here has, at most, a moral responsibility to their family. It is when other people can be shown to be substantively disadvantaged or endangered by another individual's actions that a legal dimension comes into play. An example of this is the upholding of legal rights for children within the family which social workers are required to consider when intervening on a child protection mandate.

RESEARCH ON ENGAGEMENT AND RESISTANCE

In working with a family to ensure the safety of the children, social workers are attempting to work in co-operation with the family members rather than to investigate what they are doing as outside observers of their behaviour. The first base for attempting to do this is described by one of the manuals cited in the following terms:

At the beginning of the assessment there should be an opening discussion between social worker and the parents to confirm that there is a shared understanding of the nature and purpose of the exercise. It is important to explore with the parents how they see things and what they feel about the assessment. They may show hostility or
aggression or alternatively may appear over co-operative, passive or submissive. Such behaviour is often the means by which a family demonstrates its resistance to change. (The Comprehensive Assessment: Beginning the Work, D.o.H, 1988: 23).

This passage clearly recognises the potential difficulty when starting the relationship and the potential initial reactions of the parents to such an approach. Let us examine some of the literature that might be relevant to what is going on when the family does not buy into this approach.

An understanding of engagement and resistance in child protection can be informed by research on a number of different topics and also by investigations adopting different methodologies. The aim in the following review is to identify some of the problematics with which this thesis will be concerned rather than to attempt to produce an exhaustive summary of social work research in the area. In order to do this it will be necessary to conduct a wide but selective trawl of relevant research and theory. The scope and aims of this are summarised in the following paragraphs before I go on to examine each area in more detail.

Aspects of the relationship between social worker and client are highlighted in the research literature in three main ways. First, there are a number of chiefly interview-based studies with consumers of the service provided by social workers. Some of these have raised serious discrepancies in the perceptions and expectations of the role of
intervention between the social worker and the family. I shall consider briefly the implications of this for child protection work, particularly in the light of the care and control dilemma already highlighted.

Second, conceptualisations of resistance and engagement have been derived from theoretical frameworks employed in various forms of psychotherapeutic work. I shall examine how this has resulted in a recognition of the importance of such processes in child protection social work. However, I will be suggesting that this has not been mirrored by empirical studies which match the complexity and delicacy detailed in therapeutic conceptualisations.

The third research area for examination are the small number of ethnographic studies which have used talk in social work interaction as a primary resource in producing conceptualisations of the relationship between social worker and client. Such studies, it is proposed, are particularly relevant to the concerns of this thesis. The ways in which this material might inform the current empirical investigation are considered. But the lack of face-to-face interactive data is raised as an area needing remedy. Without an understanding of social work as it is done in the room between professional and client it is argued that there will inevitably be the discrepancies highlighted by some of the research we have examined.
The concepts which have been used to try to capture the professional activities under scrutiny, concepts such as 'partnership', 'resistance' and 'engagement', must be further examined in the interactive contexts in which they are used if we are more fully to determine their meanings. Child protection work, it is argued, cannot be understood without reference to the frameworks of accountability within which such professional activities are carried out.

(i) Consumer evaluations of social work

When child protection agencies intervene in a family, the parents have a right to an open and honest approach from social workers who should provide a clear explanation of their powers, actions and reasons for concern. They should strive to maintain a constructive relationship with parents at all times. (Department of Health, 1988: 9)

The theme of partnership and barriers to its attainment may be developed by examining studies of the comments of clients who have formerly been consumers of social work services. Mayer and Timms' (1970) influential study of client views of social work practice gave early definition to what is now regarded as a pervasive problem. This concerned the differences in expectation between client and worker of the purpose of their contacts. In their interviews, Mayer and Timms found that clients typically expected to be listened to and questioned in detail by social workers. They also expected to be given firm and definitive advice accompanied if necessary by direct professional criticism or admonition.
from a strongly moral standpoint. In contrast, social workers viewed their effectiveness as being accomplished chiefly through helping their clients to achieve insight into their problems. Their view was predominantly that only through a trusting and often non-judgemental relationship would genuine change in the client come about. Crucially the role of advice and criticism were downplayed in many interviews with social workers. Other studies have also provided further indications of such differences (for example, Clark et al., 1990; Fisher et al., 1986; Lishman, 1978; Rees and Wallace, 1982).

This dichotomy of views is interesting given the concerns highlighted earlier in this chapter about the possible effects of the non-negotiable status of the social worker's role in child protection. If clients do not in fact expect an empathic relationship as part of their contact with a worker, it might be considered that open use of control and criticism might not present the insurmountable barriers to parental partnership in child protection that some professionals fear. It may be that the holding of power per se is not the obstacle to the evolution of a partnership. This is born out by a number of studies which examine the idea that it is the negotiation of power within the professional-client relationship that holds the key to consumer satisfaction.

Research across a number of different parenting groups demonstrate that failure to negotiate and share control predicts resistance and disengagement amongst the client population. Jones' (1985) study of fostering for example indicated how foster carers who perceived that they
were excluded from the planning for children temporarily in their care were likely to quickly abandon fostering. Parents of children with learning disabilities regularly present the failure of professionals to provide information on their child's progress as a key component in generating dissatisfaction (Campion, 1995).

Another particularly relevant study in this area is that of Howe (1989). He interviewed parents who had been offered a series of meetings by social workers attempting systemic family therapy intervention with the families of adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system. His investigation, based entirely on parental interviews undertaken after their contact with Social Services, yielded a set of provocative insiders' commentaries on the family's experience of working with the social workers in this therapeutic way. The large majority of the families (over ninety per cent) were classified by Howe as not having been engaged in the therapy although many of these had continued to attend over the course of sessions. The latter he termed "'The Ambivalent' and those who felt 'over a barrel'" (Howe, 1989: 45); other non-engaged families who stopped attending at some point over the period of the treatment were designated "The Early Leavers" (ibid: 50).

Howe's categorisations are backed up by a series of verbatim extracts from the parental transcripts selected by the researcher to illustrate some of the ways in which families failed to engage in the work with the therapists. This gives a rich sense of the aspects of the social workers' practice which the families criticised or found hard to understand. It included, for example, the use of video equipment, the
failure to introduce the family to members of the team of workers observing the sessions and the use of a therapeutic style of discourse very different from everyday patterns of conversational interchange. Howe summarises the implications of his study as follows. 'If social workers are to take families into territory which is unexpected, unfamiliar and unnerving, advance preparations and detailed briefings are required. People will not follow, they will not become engaged in emotional expectations without discussion, without rehearsal and without reassurance.' (ibid: 58).

What then was lacking in the social work team approach studied by Howe was a recognition of the need for negotiation before enacting a way of working to tackle the family's difficulties. This needed to involve them fully and to produce, to use the terms introduced earlier, 'customers' rather than 'window shoppers'. We should remind ourselves here that as with most of the research cited in this area, these critical and resistant clients were voluntary and had the option of withdrawing their contact with their social workers and seeking out alternative forms of help.

Howe's analysis would seem to confirm both the critical role and the complexity of the negotiation process that must be undertaken if consumer-backed social work intervention is to be seen as reality rather than a politically-driven rhetoric. As I discuss under the following heading, a strong claim has been made that a social work partnership with families can be achieved even where parents are, at least at the outset of the work, involuntary clients who know that they are under suspicion
of child abuse. We need to find out the detail of how this research conceptualises resistance and what strategies are advocated to negotiate a way from resistance to engagement and partnership.

(ii) Resistance in family therapy intervention

As we have already seen, resistance is a concept that is regularly used (by workers and theorists at least) to refer to unsatisfactory aspects of the relationship between field social worker and client in the area of child protection. Social work practice here regularly derives descriptions of its approaches from concepts and terms used in psychotherapeutic theories (see Pithouse, 1987). Not surprisingly then, its work with abusing families is often presented in conceptualisations originating from systemic family therapy. (Berg, 1992; Cooper, 1993). As Dale et al. (1986) note, the concept of resistance has long been used within therapeutic circles of widely differing theoretical persuasion. For example, psychoanalysis has made use of the notion in its model of the individual personality. A person's response to help was described by Freud (1916: 332) as typically involving 'a violent and tenacious resistance which persists throughout the whole length of the treatment...the patient's resistance is often of very many sorts, extremely subtle and often hard to detect.'
The definition and origins of resistance vary from intra-psychic explanations, as in the case of Freudian psychoanalysis, right through to its conceptualisation as being a product of interactions of the family and professional system as in many family therapy models (see Carpenter and Treacher, 1989). For our purposes, a number of common points about the concept emerge. First, as Freud and the earlier quote from 'Protecting Children' make clear, resistance is considered to manifest itself in different ways. Sometimes it might be easily recognised by the professional, such as where a client is overtly hostile to the worker perhaps accompanied by a spoken refusal to comply. But resistance is conceptualised as also presenting in many less easily recognised ways such as where an underlying refusal to engage fully is concealed by the client presenting as passive or over-cooperative. Resistance can on occasion be said to take a covert or passive form (Dale et al., 1986). It is also seen as something to be overcome through engagement strategies which are designed to 'counter a family's resistance to the assessment context and to promote their energetic commitment to the therapeutic opportunity which is offered' (ibid: 92). Ways for therapists to do this are commonly listed and illustrated in family therapy texts (see for example, Anderson and Stewart, 1983; Carpenter and Treacher, 1989; Dale et al., 1986; Hoffman, 1981).

Resistance then is a term which reifies the interaction of the client and therapist and this has enabled various useful influential categorisations of ways to work with this problem. (see particularly Dale et al., 1986, a text which has had wide influence, and is regularly quoted in, for example, the well publicised series of Department of Health guidelines).
However, as we have also seen, the concept of resistance originates in a variety of disparate theoretical frameworks (summarised in Elton, 1987) and arises from preformed conceptualisations of behaviour rather than from study of naturally occurring interactive discourse and the patterns present within it.

Resistance and engagement are treated as two complementary processes (to use a term from systemic therapy), and it is not possible to identify one in isolation from the other. In the relatively few sources which provide illustrations of resistance in spoken interaction, details of the two processes are rarely offered at the level of detailed sequential turns of participant talk. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, relevant material is available in studies from other theoretical sources such as ethnomethodology (see particularly Heritage and Sefi, 1992).

To illustrate the potential problems with treatments of resistance and engagement carried out at a level which does not examine the interactive status of the utterance, I will take an example from Carpenter and Treacher (1989: 134-5). This book, which treats resistance and engagement as central themes in working with families provides a number of examples of therapist initiations of talk about suspected violence and abuse. The authors follow it with some observations on ways of recognising resistance. For example, under the heading of 'Managing therapy and control', they illustrate how discussion with clients might proceed where possible indications of abuse are indicated.
In these circumstances, the therapist must enquire about the injury or missing member gently, but directly, for example:

'I can't help noticing that you have a nasty cut on your face, Mrs Jones. How did that happen?'
'I see that X isn't here today. Where is she?'

When violence has occurred, it is not likely that it will be admitted easily and openly, for fear of the consequences. It is more usual for there to be evasion or flat denial or, alternatively, a minimalizing (sic) of the incident. However, as is usual in therapy, it is the client's responses, verbal and non-verbal, that are the best indicator. The therapist's skill lies in continuing the exploration in as unthreatening and supportive a way as possible in the particular circumstances. For example:

'So you had a disagreement. Have you been having more of those recently? Are they getting more serious?'
'I'm sure you'll understand that that's the sort of injury which (in view of what's happened before) tends to worry people. Can you tell me more about what happened?'
'As you know, it's part of my job to see that the children are well. Can we make an arrangement to see X, please?'
An interesting and, I will argue, important consideration raised by such illustrations is just how the (clients') resistance might be identifiable in responding to such questions: all we have in the extract provided are the therapist's turns in the conversation. We can see too that the way the therapist talk is illustrated is through one particular type of conversational activity, involving direct questioning. There is some implication in the way that the questions are formatted of an orientation to the delicacy of the situation and the caution needed in framing questions in an appropriate way. For example, the structuring of the first question with its 'I can't help noticing' opening format might be designed to convey a neutral, disinterested stance on the part of the speaker. As we shall see in the empirical analyses later, particularly in Chapters Seven and Eight, just such 'noticing' phrases recur in the data of the present study. There are a range of other indications in Carpenter and Treacher's example which suggest the speaker's awareness of the subtle ways in which resistance and engagement can be provoked and defused. For example, formulating a client's answer as 'a disagreement', constructing one's role as seeing that 'children are well', and the use of generalised attributional terms such as 'tend to worry people' to defuse the therapist's personal responsibility for investigating families all suggest a sensitivity to such matters.

As the analytic chapters of this thesis consider in some detail, speakers in child protection discussions topicalise items of importance in their discussions by various subtle means as well as by more direct statements of what they have observed or noticed. The precise way that
such perceptions are raised in dialogue may on first impression seem insignificant. However, I shall be attempting to demonstrate how it is just such conversational items that influence the subsequent course of a conversation and are constituent components of what may be come to be conceptualised as part of a process of engagement and resistance.

(iii) Account based studies of social work and child protection

Talk as it is deployed within institutional interactions is made use of in various ways in the three studies I have selected in this section. I use them to represent the range and potential of 'emic' methods for considering our research problem. By this term, I mean to distinguish the sorts of approach which look at the specifics of what is going on within that institutional culture. This can be contrasted with the adoption of an 'etic' perspective which seeks out the general patterns which might apply across institutions and social groupings (see Gross, 1995: 167-9). I will describe and select details from each study which might inform an understanding of the engagement process in child protection and social work. This will lead to further specification of the areas of social work practice which have been opened up by such analyses and what further questions they raise.

Dingwall, Eekelaar and Murray's (1983, 1995) examination of child protection adopts an ethnographic focus built upon the need to recognise that
abuse and neglect come to exist as socially recognizable phenomena, and hence as a cause of action, only as a result of processes of identification, confirmation and disposition within health, welfare and legal agencies. They cannot be discussed intelligibly without an understanding of the way in which such processes operate, an understanding which must necessarily be moral rather than technical (Dingwall et al., 1983: 3).

This study had a major influence on subsequent political actions to improve child protection chiefly through the framework of social work accounting practices which it produced. Its influence can be traced to the conceptual foundations of the Children Act 1989 and documents such as 'Protecting Children' (Department of Health, 1988) parts of which we have already considered in some detail. The influence is particularly revealed in the legislative recasting of the core assumptions of parents as having responsibilities which must be considered as well as their rights with regard to their children. It is thus a study which explores areas of social work practice which are at the core of our examination of the accountable framework that underlies social worker-client negotiation.

Dingwall et al. provided an analysis which explained examples of inadequate professional action to protect children. These failures were seen as originating from a 'rule of optimism' which the authors identified in the interviews which they conducted in the course of their
research. In adopting this rule, social workers and sometimes other professionals regularly found ways to justify the activities of parents even where there were clear problems in their abilities to bring up children. It was considered that only rarely did the attribution of deviance to the parents figure as an explanation when professionals assessed the capacity of parents to look after their young children.

The 'rule of optimism' was formed as a consequence of two main devices by which potential evidence for the classification of parents as abusers was neutralized. The authors quote widely from health visitors, social workers and others to identify such devices. Using Scott and Lyman's (1968) seminal work on accounts, they specify an ubiquitous use of justification adopted by social workers based upon what they term 'cultural relativism' (op cit: 82-86). This provided an account of differences in child rearing which avoided the ascription of child abuse by producing culturally-derived explanation involving parental disciplinary methods and control. Importantly, this explanatory form, whilst being available to be applied to ethnic minority families, was by no means limited to such situations alone. Its uses were portrayed as indefinitely extendable and could potentially validate a range of unusual or deviant parental practices cast as cultural facets of the upbringing of children.

'Natural love', the other device which they discuss in detail, comprised an excuse (Scott and Lyman, 1968) for deviance. This was based upon the use of a core assumption of the professional that parents tend to love
their children as a fact of nature. This operates independently of cultural norms and renders the ascription to a parent of abusing their child as being dependent upon the argument that the parent does not share with others a natural quality which is a defining characteristic of being human. In effect, this added another major barrier to be overcome before a case of child abuse could be 'recognised' and hence lessened the likelihood of such an outcome of an investigation into a family.

The study further suggested that the rule of optimism served to act as a way of enabling field social workers to grapple with the problem of how to deliver a controlling relationship with clients within a liberal ideology. They argue that the operation of the two 'optimism' devices actively promotes the weakness of social work practice as an institutional achievement in accomplishing the task of 'uninvited surveillance' of families in need. So deviance is constructed as a social worker finding of last resort in the search for a 'liberal compromise (where) the family will be laid open for inspection provided that the state undertakes to make the best of what its agents find' (ibid: 91, emphasis added).

It is in examining the exceptions to the operation of the rule of optimism that Dingwall et al. most closely mirrors the sort of concerns which occupy this thesis. However, their analysis goes further than this. They consider that there are two main types of circumstance which direct social work actions away from optimism and co-operative working towards agency control and enforcement. These comprise what are termed 'Failure of Containment' and 'Parental incorrigibility'.
'Failure of containment' denotes the situation where details of a family's problems have become known across agencies extending beyond the small group of field workers with original casework responsibility. Once this has happened then the rule of optimism is much less likely to be upheld because there is less responsibility amongst specialist agencies. They are more likely to be insulated from face-to-face crisis contact with clients by referral procedures. Such organisational arrangements lessen the possibility that a family's difficulties will come to be minimised.

'Parental incorrigibility' is illustrated by two main analyses in the study. One of these involves an examination of a discussion about a family under assessment between a social worker and solicitor. The other analysis identifies a process of the discrediting of a client in a letter to her from her social worker after she has demanded the return of her children from voluntary care. In both cases, the families have withdrawn their voluntary co-operation with the social services after a period of taking part in collaborative meetings with their social worker. The 'liberal compromise' we noted above is called into question by such parental action because by invoking their rights the parents demonstrate that they cannot work openly with the agency. This implies that they may be concealing something which cannot be revealed in an open partnership with the agency; hence, a doubt is raised about their moral qualities as parents. As Dingwall et al. demonstrate, in particular cases, this may then become the decisive indicator that finally mobilises a compulsory agency intervention to protect the child from a family, now deemed to be acting in morally questionable ways.
Another ethnographic study which draws insights from an examination of accounts within social work is the study by Pithouse (1987). The author took as his source of data a series of interviews conducted over a number of months with a team of social workers working with various different client groups including children and families. He also made recordings both of informal discussions which occurred between team members and of individual supervisory meetings between workers and their team manager. All the material was recorded at the area social work office. Our consideration of the research literature has been particularly concerned with those features of social work which arise out of the nexus of control and care in social work assessment of parents. Pithouse's study elaborates on this concern in an extended treatment of what he calls 'the discreet art of assessment' in child protection.

An initial observation is that Pithouse derives his insights from the ways that social work is constructed in the accounts workers and their managers provide to each other. He focusses on the ways in which social work becomes, to use his term, 'visible' through such contextualised accounting practices. The stuff of social work 'trade' are the informal discussions between colleagues, the descriptions provided for the participant researcher and the assessments of families provided in supervision meetings. He argues that the face-to-face meetings of worker and client are ultimately unknowable in that they occur in private. It is what is interpreted and then re-presented in the company of other social workers that Pithouse is concerned with. He then produces an analysis to reveal 'the background assumptions that underwrite everyday work' (ibid: 128). It is the transformation of the social workers'
face-to-face interactions with clients by a complex system of informal and formal rules which determine what meaning is later ascribed to the original activity with the client. Social work 'trade' then is to be captured through elucidation of the implicit, interpretive features of these rule-governed activities.

Space does not permit a detailed description of all the assumptions which Pithouse goes on to unearth in his analysis, nor would this be directly relevant to our research enquiry. However, we can note that a theme of accountability pervades the social workers' explanatory frameworks which determine in what form social work is revealed in their accounts. We shall restrict our examination of the study to the analyses which most directly deal with this theme.

Pithouse describes, for example, how critical discussion amongst social workers of each other's practice is largely avoided. Yet supportive networks based on a shared view of the nature of the job and the relationship with the service users still get formed within the team. Pithouse shows how this is partly achieved by the construction of typical classifications of 'the clients' and their circumstances. These attribute responsibility for the largely undetectable effectiveness of social work intervention to factors external to the social worker's input. But this talk of, for example character traits or impoverished home conditions is managed so that in referring to specific client-worker relationships, the professional can display his or her caring, motivated qualities in working with, and on behalf of the client. She can also maintain her motivation in the face of a bewilderingly complex
professional activity in which clearly attributable agency successes are rare at best.

The problem of engaging and working in partnership with clients appears to be a major theme of the social workers’ talk to each other. The study examines the function of accounts of this caring orientation towards clients particularly where such accounts occur within the regular supervisory meetings which took place between worker and team manager.

Social 'work' is constructed as occurring in two ways in the study of the meetings. Pithouse claims that whilst it might be indisputable that work is done in the interactions and negotiations of professional and client meetings, it is in the ensuing supervision and inter-professional talk that it becomes both delineated and coloured with a moral dimension. This too requires social 'work' which is skilful and legitimate: good social work is undertaken in the collaborative production of a 'good' account which is 'one that maintains the framework of 'family' and provides detailed pictures of domestic life' (ibid: 124). These pictures are imbued with the quality of the caring relationship as a function of the discussion in which it is produced: 'when justifying the need for more resources or a course of action the client may be eulogised ... alternatively, when defending themselves against an unmanageable demand on their energies and emotions the workers can raise the shared view of clients as unworthy and in need of close regulation.' (ibid: 81)

The warranting and construction of the value of the work undertaken is indicated by the production of accounts within which professional caring
is worked up. This 'stands as proof of her caring involvement and a relationship that may succeed in identifying and relieving the problem.' (ibid: 79) So at the core of good practice in social work is an ability to demonstrate that the worker is orientated to evolving a relationship of care with the client. In this sense workers' versions of what they are setting out to do with their clients involves building an account that locates their practice as invariably built upon caring about their clients. But in their descriptions away from face-to-face interactions with the clients themselves, their accountability may depend upon demonstrating an interactional strategy that allows for a controlling dimension in enacting their role effectively:

( the social workers in the Area office) much prefer to win the assent and cooperation of those they visit. To this end they seek to present themselves as capable and concerned yet sufficiently distanced and formal in order to control the pace and direction of the relationship. While workers define their relationship as 'caring' it is also a subtly but firmly managed affair; an art of skilful self-presentation that balances an affective and official identity. (ibid: 91).

Baldock and Prior's (1981) paper addresses some of the themes present in Pithouse's analysis and in particular the notion of what constitute the core activities that define and influence the social worker-client relationship. However, they do this by examining general details of the conversations in face-to-face meetings between client and professional.
As such their enquiry is complementary to the previous ethnographic materials we have considered.

We should note that Baldock and Prior's research is based upon a small scale enquiry reported in a fairly short paper. It does not therefore claim either the breadth or depth of examination that is undertaken in the other studies we have looked at. Their aim was to undertake a pilot study to investigate similarities and differences between social worker interviews and those conducted by other professionals. They were particularly interested in the extensive work done by Byrne and Long (1976) commissioned by what was then the Department of Health and Social Security. This produced a model of the consultation process in doctor-patient meetings in general practice. It was based upon recordings of almost 100 doctors and identified a sequence of stages in the consultation which was robustly adhered to across the majority of interactions.

Much of Baldock and Prior's paper involves comparison between the work of the two professional groups and sets out to investigate the 'style' of the interviews. The study of doctors had highlighted that much of the interaction was doctor-initiated. This was identified by allocating each segment of the talk to categories based upon the sort of conversational action undertaken and noting which participant initiated shifts of topic. The findings suggested that doctor-centred behaviour predominated in the majority of meetings.
Baldock and Prior based their analysis on 15 hours of audio-recorded material taken from informal sessions (sometimes at the client's home) between 12 different workers and their clients. Half of the workers were trained probation officers and the other half were social workers. The group were not considered to constitute a representative sample but were all involved in a long term professional relationship with their client.

As with our approach to previous studies, it not necessary to pursue all the issues that Baldock and Prior discuss in their paper. But given the dearth of studies of the spoken details of face-to-face interaction in social work, it is worth our while to attempt a brief consideration of the practical and theoretical themes that the paper raises. One major theme which impinges on our interests is the question which the paper raises about the nature of negotiation in social work. Their study considers the problem of what has been termed the 'permeability' of social work interviews (Drew and Heritage, 1992b). This term denotes the overlap between mundane talk which is arguably incidental to the purpose of the meeting and talk that is recognisably task-orientated. Baldock and Prior found that there appeared to be no clear indications about what were the core purposes of the meetings which they studied. This was in strong contrast to Byrne and Long's work and to some of the other research on talk between professionals and their service users.

Because they were unable to discern structure and purpose in the interviews themselves, Baldock and Prior asked the workers involved to summarise their aims for the interviews after the event had taken place. A general attempt to monitor the client and their problems was claimed as
a frequent purpose of their sessions. There appeared to be a consistent orientation to using the interview to check for the warning signs of a deterioration in the client's life or attitude. But this was done covertly and, Baldock and Prior argue, expertly through conversational strategies that concealed this purpose. For example it often involved handing over the floor to the client for long periods of the meeting and letting them talk about what they wanted. This non-directive style was accompanied by the worker taking steps to avoid the implication that they were taking a judgemental stance. For example in the study, expressions of surprise on the part of the worker were rare even though clients would quite commonly produce startling or disquieting information.

The authors do not equate the described social work interview style as revealing a lack of professional control however. They regarded the workers' relaxed and flexible approach as deriving from an ideological position in which non-judgemental talk was seen as beneficial (cf. Mayer and Timms, 1970, discussed earlier). But the style concealed an expertly managed retention of control deployed through various practices and strategies worked seamlessly into the encounter. Some of these we will examine in the analytic body of this thesis. They include processes of authorisation and distancing such as 'footing' (Goffman, 1979) together with professionally-led topic shifting at opportune junctures such as when there were delays caused by external events such as unexpected callers at the house, phone calls and the like. Perhaps the most powerful evidence of the asymmetric nature of the social worker-client encounter was present in the consistent evidence of the avoidance of negotiation which we have noted already. The authors conclude that
although such surveillance was the purpose espoused by the professional,
this object was not explicitly communicated to the clients. It was achieved by getting the client to talk about his or her life while the worker listened, alert for any ominous change. They played the story teller and listener (Whan, 1979). The client was set on his narrative course with a few, fairly precise, closed questions. The clients, for the most part, understood their task in this procedure and rambled on to the encouragement of 'ums' and 'ahs'. When they had run out of things to say, or a gap appeared, another trigger question was asked and so the interview would proceed in a series of stops and starts. Such structure that social work interviews have is based on this 'stop-go' cycle, and characterises the interviews from beginning to end. (Baldock and Prior, 1981: 30)

The authors conclude that social workers are no less in control of meetings with clients than doctors have been shown to be with their patients. The paper concludes with the proposal that such affectations of a relaxed and friendly style should not be misinterpreted as evidence of equal opportunity for either party to set the agenda for their meeting. This was considered to remain firmly within the control of the professional as had been shown to be the case in doctors' consultations.

Where Baldock and Prior consider the significant difference between the two professional groups lies was in the interpretation by service users of their relative status as influenced by these opposing conversation formats. It was in this area that the format adopted by social workers
raised difficulties which had implications for practice. Social workers, they argue, might enhance their status by recognising the skills they have by conveying to clients the limited time they have for their meetings.

Conclusion

Child abuse work is increasingly defined in the language of the administrator. The statutory duty to investigate defines how the client is to be viewed and how the worker is to proceed.....Assessments are made largely within the discourse of child care law and the procedures that now inform all child abuse work. (Howe, 1991)

Taken together, we can draw some general conclusions from our review of the literature. As it is practised in situations where child abuse is suspected, social work involves engaging with parents and carers to complete an assessment of them and their family. This undertaking cannot be successfully completed unless there is some willingness to negotiate a working relationship in which a partnership is formed. Within such a relationship a degree of trust and openness needs to be established if the assessment is to yield anything other than the guarded information which, say, a police statement might reveal. Social workers attempt to investigate child and family circumstances in a wider context of interpersonal relations than this.
We have considered the question of how social workers might begin to attempt this task and how it is informed by studies of social work and its theoretical underpinnings. The research we have examined has investigated a wide range of issues. A consistent factor pervading explanations of what social workers are trying to do appears to be the translation into practice of a philosophy of 'care'. The literature is replete with versions of this ideal. Studies we have looked at have considered how this then informs both the thinking and the practice of its workers. We have seen how, on some occasions, the constructions which result from this ideology can have substantive effects for what happens to families.

Yet as the quote from Howe (1991) above suggests, social work has become a highly accountable enterprise. Providing an opportunity for clients to talk and behave openly and honestly and to reciprocate in this venture does not always appear to sit easily with the tasks which social workers involved in child protection assessments may have to perform. We have seen how the effectiveness and appropriateness of their actions, something which has a high and critical profile in the media, is subject to a complex set of expectations. Over the course of this chapter, the sources of social workers' responsibilities have been considered. Delineations of this responsibility as identified in governmental guidelines for procedures and practice, managerial supervision of social work cases, and the post hoc views of clients are some of the examples which we have considered. They illustrate the complex expectations that make up the framework of accountability within which social work is undertaken.
What is also at stake for the practising social worker is how to negotiate their responsibilities directly with the clients they visit. The way in which this is done presents an interesting and potentially fruitful line of enquiry for our investigation. Discerning the boundary between 'mundane' talk and the 'proper' practice of social work discussion has been revealed by research as an area of difficulty for clients. As we have also seen, studies have suggested that clients may reject social work because of the perceived failure of the practitioner to share and negotiate what they are doing with their clients.

There are, then, distinct expectations for the worker's contact with the family in child protection investigation and assessment. Inherent in the early contact between worker and client for this purpose, are the confluence of negotiation processes involving dimensions of both care and control. Investigating the conversational instantiation of the professional client-relationship in these delicate circumstances presents an opportunity to understand the practice of social work in a challenging and little researched area. As we shall see in the next chapter, it also provides the opportunity for an enquiry into the discursive patterning of such interactions which may have relevance for the wider study of social structure and rhetoric.
Notes

1. Whilst the phenomenon of the female sex abuser has recently been examined (Elliot, 1993), there remains consistent evidence that most sex abuse is perpetrated by men and adolescent boys (Becker, 1991).

2. This perhaps explains why some 'professions' can refer to the service user interchangeably as client or customer, as in hairdressing, for example; the product of such relationships is often a combination of both the quality of the relationship itself and an externalised manifestation of that product.

3. Another example is the legally-sanctioned 'sectioning' of a person to be detained in a psychiatric facility for their own, or others' safety. This may involve members of the helping professions initiating this action against the person's will. Social workers may be designated with the power to undertake this compulsory step.
CHAPTER THREE

THE ANALYSIS OF TALK-IN-INTERACTION

Our review of research in the last chapter has provided some important insights on the reasons why social workers and parents may or may not succeed in engaging together in partnership to protect the child. We have seen how problems in their relationship may be illuminated by a variety of studies which have examined the accounts of professionals and clients. In the main, these accounts have been gathered in contexts outside of the face-to-face meeting of parents and social worker.

We also encountered Baldock and Prior's (1981) arguments concerning the nature of social work talk in the meetings themselves and we considered various material on the topic of 'resistance'. These studies were primarily directed at the general characteristics of the style which social workers and therapists tend to adopt when talking to clients rather than elucidating the processes inherent in the talk as it is produced in the meetings.

A consideration of the latter would seem to require a methodology which takes a more interactive and micro-analytic focus. In this chapter, we will in part be aiming to delineate a methodological base appropriate to describing and understanding interaction in the particular institutional settings which constitute social work. But the sorts of insights that will result from our investigation will also be determined by the view of communication that underlies the study.
Most of the research we have examined up to now has treated the role of language as primarily being a vehicle for the direct transmission of the thoughts, feelings and opinions of the participants in the research project. However, a disparate range of sources have been employed in questioning what might be termed this traditional-realist view of language and the derivation of meaning from language use which it provides. The latter has, until recently predominated in social science research. Social constructionist sources have instituted research inquiries which have started from a very different basis for empirical investigation from many of the studies we have considered so far. So before proceeding with the methodological programme, it will be useful to consider some more fundamental questions about the nature of language and interaction. I will do this initially by taking an example from one of the studies described earlier and investigating the assumptions it makes about spoken discourse. My aim will be to set out some alternative empirical positions and possibilities when using the language of the participants for examining the practice of social work.

THE RHETORIC OF CONSUMERS' VIEWS

A detail from Howe's (1989) study of the views of social work consumers was selected in the previous chapter. This concerned a group of parents who were classified as '"The Ambivalent" and those who felt "over a barrel"'. Howe defined these as 'Families who remained in therapy, but were not engaged yet still held the prospect of help'(ibid: 43).
Later in the text when discussing this group, the author provides an extended series of extracts. These are designed to illustrate how a family's classification within a particular grouping was arrived at. The verbatim accounts were taken from discussions between the families and the researcher. The following sections are extracted from a longer passage provided in the text to illustrate by means of 'Mr and Mrs Keggs's' own comments how their classification in the Ambivalent group was reached:

**On being careful**

Mrs K: Half the answers we gave, we didn't exactly lie, but but we were conscious...er...we watched what we say; you were extra careful because they could run them videos back every time to check on what you had said so you were extra careful.

Mr K: You were frightened to say the wrong things.

Mrs K: You thought to yourself 'Now what do they want us to say here?' Like they told me I was a very deep person. I'm not! I'm just very careful, very careful what I say.

Mr K: Really it meant that partly it was all a waste of time because all you said is what you thought they wanted you to say.

(Howe, 1989: 49)
On the overall experience

Mr K: Well, I think some good did come out of it. You see the state my wife was in, I don't think...er... personally myself, I don't think we would have sorted it out to start with on our own and we'd have a complete bust up. She'd have gone her way and I'd have gone mine, because, well, I think it did help, like, keep us together, you know, to help us get through the crucial part of the first two or three weeks, maybe not necessary (sic) later, I agree, but those first few weeks when...

Mrs K: No, I disagree. I know my mind. I might be the nervous type and highly strung. At some times I felt like it made matters worse, like when they told us to start treating Emma like a mother and father should it made it worse

Mr K: True, she went completely the opposite bloody way so we went back to our usual way.

(Howe, 1989: 50)

I want to examine some of the assumptions behind the way such passages are used in Howe's interview-based study. It should be stressed at the outset that the purpose of this exercise will not be to try to invalidate Howe's research in particular, nor to suggest that the methodologies which guide this and the other studies we have considered are somehow flawed or inferior. The previous chapter indeed highlighted some of the
ways in which such work has helped to enhance our understanding of worker-client interaction. The extract is selected because it provides a ready source of the talk of social work consumers about the problems of negotiation and engagement, the very area which occupies this thesis.

Three main features will be discussed to bring out some of the alternative ways of dealing with research on spoken interaction. This will then enable us to probe further into various analytic approaches which inform the methodology adopted.

CATEGORISATION

One common assumption of the research examined so far is that it is possible to build unambiguous categories and meanings out of the data based upon the researcher's own interpretations. Within this view, the research task is conceived of as involving the 'etic' approach mentioned briefly in the previous chapter (Brislin, 1993). The assumption here is that the conceptual basis for the researcher and the interviewee's classifications are essentially the same. It is therefore possible to study behaviour from outside the cultural system in which the talk originally occurs and from which its meanings are initially generated.

Of course the reader, like the original researcher, can quite probably pick up from the extracts of the interview with Mr and Mrs Kegg something of the flavour of the parents' discourse. How it might lead to its classification under a category grouping 'ambivalent' incumbents may on
first examination appear to be easily identified by members sharing something of the same culturally-derived affinities.

As Garfinkel (1963, 1967) highlighted, 'much that is talked about is not mentioned, although each [actor] expects that the adequate sense of the matter being talked about is settled' (1963: 221, quoted in Heritage, 1984a). The shared cultural resources available to us to make sense of an interview between parents and a research worker investigating views on social work practice will help us to interpret this sort of text. An example from the above extracts may be chosen to illustrate this. The quoted excerpts provide examples of a sub-classification of the category of 'Ambivalence' from a conversational extract of the Keggs 'being careful'. The reader probably holds in common with the researcher and the interviewees a strong sense of what they mean by this phrase but this is clearly over and above what the extract actually supplies. For example, they will know in what sort of contexts that 'being careful' is used and something of its application to describe behaviour in interactions where, to quote Mr Kegg 'the wrong things' are said. So we might use our shared cultural knowledge in this example to detect that saying 'the wrong thing' is not interpretable here primarily as an issue of correctness or accuracy (as in some uses of the expression). Rather it is used to indicate the sensitivity of the speaker to the specific interactional circumstances. Saying the wrong thing could perhaps cause upset to the recipient (say in talking with someone recently bereaved) or alternatively, as in Mr and Mrs Kegg's usage, saying particular things would be 'wrong' in that it might reveal information which could result in critical attributions being made against the speaker. These might
even lead in some circumstances to substantive action being taken against the speaker and her associates. This might happen for example following events reported in a police interview².

The way that phrases like 'saying the wrong thing' become interpreted is an example of the indexical way in which a passage of talk achieves its meaning. The speaker's utterances build upon and achieve a context as the talk proceeds so that we interpret something only in the light of our reading of the rest of the speaker's discourse. We shall see more of this particular feature when we examine the theoretical underpinnings to research on language use later in this chapter.

INTERACTION

One result of etic research approaches is that the interactional features of the data are seldom treated as a significant resource in the interpretation of meaning. The way that viewpoints are produced and modified tend to get concealed in the categorisation of participants' perspectives into discrete sets. If we examine the 'ambivalence' of Mr and Mrs Kegg, as produced over the course of their account, it quickly becomes apparent that the way in which they express their opinions about therapy is potentially significant.

Firstly, if we take again the discussion presented under the heading 'On being careful', we can see that a sort of consensus arises across the turns of their talk. Mr and Mrs Kegg's 'attitude' in this passage gets built up by both of them over the turns of the talk to produce a
'multisubjective' alignment (Billig, 1991) with regard to the topic in question. Mr Keggs' final turn in this sequence, 'Really, it meant that partly it was all a waste of time', appears to be the upshot of a position, at least partly shared with his wife.

This multisubjectivity can be contrasted with a different interactional process which appears to operate in the second extract glossed as 'the overall experience'. Here, there is more of an orientation to an intersubjectivity in which different and somewhat opposing views are presented and argued over (see Billig, 1987; Pollner, 1987). In this passage, Mr Kegg expresses perhaps something of an ambiguity in his viewpoint. This was hinted at in the upshot noted in the first piece, 'partly it was all a waste of time'; the 'partly' and 'all' qualifications appear to contradict each other.

We can also see how accounts are produced at each turn in this second sequence after an initial viewpoint has been expressed. These accounts appear to occur as part of the production of the speaker's argument to bolster the different position to the other speaker taken at that point in the discussion. The orientation of the participants appears to be to these rhetorical ends rather than being geared to producing an 'attitude' to the questions of the interviewer. (As indicated in note 2, the interviewer's turns in fact appear to have been kept out of the extracts).
ACCOUNTABILITY

Howe notes that Mr and Mrs Kegg's comments indicated that they 'remained in therapy but, particularly in Mrs Kegg's case, they sought not to be a committed part of therapy' (ibid: 50. Emphases in the original). The warrant for summarising their behaviour and attitude in this way comes from the explanations which the couple provide in their interaction with the interviewer. Studies of people's self presentation have typically accepted that even where interviewees' comments cannot be taken literally in the research investigation, their underlying opinions and actions can still be identified. The problem is cast as one of being able to develop a sufficiently sensitive and subtle method with which to investigate them (see, for example, McGuire, 1985; Krahe, 1992).

When we look at Mr and Mrs Kegg's accounts, it is apparent that their talk displays an awareness of the attributions that could potentially be made about their behaviour when they were involved in the original therapeutic venture. The management of their accountability for the views they present is detectable in what they say. For example, Mrs Kegg describes their answers as being 'extra careful' ones in the first extract. Mr Kegg notes that 'all you said is what you thought they wanted you to say'. But they both stop short of describing what they said as 'lies'. Indeed Mrs Kegg explicitly distinguishes what they did when she uses this term in saying 'we didn't exactly lie'. To describe their contribution to the original discussions by such a term as lying would of course lay the couple open to negative attributions concerning
their status as decent and reliable people in the original research investigation. To lie would be laying themselves open to the charge of being generally dishonest which might well have consequences for interpreting where the responsibility lay in the failings of the therapy which they claim in the second extract. In other words, the sort of constructions which they use to describe their actions both in past encounters with professionals and in the current conversation have powerful implications for how their accounts are treated in the present as well as in the past interaction.

Edwards and Potter (1992) have taken up the intertwined nature of such attributions in talk and the reports of past events provided within current interactions. We shall see the relevance of their model of accountability and 'discursive action' in a later section of this chapter and in the empirical analyses of my study. However, we should at this stage draw attention to the reflexive dimension of language which such models bring to the fore; the potential significance of this feature was raised earlier in the Introduction (see page 3). This is another component of interaction that is made relevant in social constructionist approaches to language. Such approaches would argue that Mr and Mrs Kegg's constructions of their behaviour are not merely descriptions of what they did in the therapeutic encounter but are constitutive of those circumstances. So for example, when Mrs Kegg says in the first extract 'I'm just very, very careful what I say', we should not just be considering this for its contribution as interview material to build an analysis of consumers' views. We also need to consider how such language use shapes the context in which it occurs.
My brief and partial critique of Howe's interview study is designed to raise some assumptions about spoken language and the potential difficulties inherent in extracting meaning from its original context of use. We have examined in outline how it is partly on the basis of their interactional turns of talk that participants themselves proceed to create such a context for their discussions. It would appear from the review of the literature presented in the previous chapter that the investigation of this process of interaction has not been undertaken within any concerted programme of social work research.

The study of the process of negotiation between social worker and client raises the prospect of developing our understanding of what a partnership with parents involves. Details of the patterning of naturally occurring interactions made visible in spoken sequences would seem to be a prerequisite of any research programme attempting to evaluate the various ways in which workers and parents succeed or fail. In order to begin this task, we have already seen in rudimentary form how we need to examine some basic assumptions about language in use. Under the next heading, I will attempt to elaborate on the start we have made in this venture by tracing some important themes which inform an action orientation to research on spoken language. The implication of my analysis so far is that this venture needs to locate the accountable nature of such talk at centre stage. We shall see later some of the productive avenues of enquiry that have been initiated in various institutional contexts but to lead us into this area, we need to consider briefly some of the theoretical underpinnings of such studies.
DISCOURSE AND SOCIAL ACTION

We must approach linguistic behaviour by observing its social function of co-ordinating diverse actions. Rather than expressing something which is prior in the person, language is taken by other persons as an indicator of future actions. (Mills, 1940: 904 quoted in Shotter, 1989: 141).

The view that language is a neutral medium through which to transmit opinions, events and states of mind has been challenged by work emanating from various theoretical positions but perhaps most notably those of Mills (1940, see above) and later, Wittgenstein (1953, 1980). Empirical enquiries grounded particularly in speech act theory (Austin, 1961, 1962; see also Searle et al., 1979), semiology (Barthes, 1964; de Saussure, 1974) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984a) have created methodological approaches which share the notion that language can only be fully understood as a series of actions which are invariably performed in a social context.

The similarities, differences and cross-overs between these various perspectives are summarised in Potter and Wetherell (1987) where their fusion into various forms of 'discourse analysis' is also described. For our purposes, however, it is worth sifting through some of the more central ideas for brief examination before extracting the more specific methodological insights.
Speech acts and sequences

The concept of action was first rigorously applied to spoken language in the seminal work of Austin (1962) although parallels are to be found in other domains and perspectives on human behaviour (see Wertsch, 1981). Basically, Austin distinguished three types of act performed by all spoken utterances. An utterance performs what he terms a locutionary act in that speakers tend to set out to provide a meaningful reference to something in particular, such as an event or an individual (cf Grice, 1975, 1978). The utterance also invariably produces other effects when it is spoken. Austin termed these the illocutionary force and the perlocutionary effect of what is said. The illocutionary force of an utterance refers to what action is communicated in the words and the way they are spoken. The perlocutionary effects are the wider consequences for the speakers of performing that action in that setting.

Nofsinger (1991: 16) uses a pairing of actions involving the giving and receiving of a compliment (from Pomerantz, 1978) to illustrate the difference between Austin's three components:

1 A: Oh it was just beautiful.
2 B: Well thank you uh I thought it was quite nice,

A locutionary act is produced by A in making the statement that 'it was just beautiful'. But to employ Austin's own book title (1962), the utterance also 'does things with words' in the making of the utterance. Here, it performs the illocutionary act of complimenting B, the second
speaker. Additionally A's action of giving a compliment may elicit perlocutionary effects depending upon the way the second speaker interprets it. In this example, it may be apparent that B is pleased to receive the compliment. So this effect of pleasing the second speaker constitutes a perlocutionary component of this particular speech act.

Austin originally formulated his ideas within a debate then in progress about the nature of philosophical enquiry. His concern was not primarily with the application of speech act theory within a programme of practical enquiry. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the social context within which meaning is decided represented a fundamental challenge to empiricists working with spoken interaction. As we saw earlier in our examination of Howe's (1989) interviews with consumers of family therapy based social work, the interactional treatment of discussions about such interventions yields a series of problems for approaches which take speech activity out of its immediate context of use.

In our initial examination of these problems, we saw how participants are constantly producing and recreating a context for the acts which they perform in their speech. The indexical and reflexive features of an utterance appeared to determine its meaning. It was by mobilising these features, rather than by referencing items external to the spoken context, that participants produced their actions. As we shall now consider, describing the sequencing of such actions has particularly informed conversation analysis, an offshoot of the branch of enquiry known as ethnomethodology. As such it has produced a powerful and relevant set of ideas and procedures for our enquiry.
Garfinkel (1963, 1967) pioneered a way of examining the assumptions which people share in reasoning about the social world. His theoretical work on this was informed and demonstrated by a series of 'breaching experiments' (Garfinkel, 1963). In these, he demonstrated how methods of understanding everyday life were shared by participants in going about their joint social activities. By engineering situations where these expectations were challenged, Garfinkel was able to show how people proceed on the assumption that what they and other participants do in their interactions is informed by moral and normative constraints. If someone disrupts these shared expectations, then the taken-for-granted, seamless quality of interaction becomes jarred in ways which often provoke deep and immediate fractures in the participants' working relationship.

Celebrated examples of his demonstrations included the difficulties which recipients experience if their opponent (the undisclosed experimenter) in a game, such as ticktacktoe (noughts and crosses) or chess, begins to challenge the basic assumptions of how the game is played. Typical experiments involved the experimenter without explanation or warning failing to follow the turn-taking procedures or interfering with her opponent's previous move.

Importantly, Garfinkel also examined the effects of such basic disturbances on less specifically game-orientated patterns of behaviour. For example, he investigated conversations about mundane and
problem-solving events where the experimenter's concealed role was to respond to commonplace remarks with queries and comments which challenged the basic interactional assumptions of the other participant. What such investigation revealed was the amount of interpretative work which went on in mundane conversation and the interactants' essential dependence on context as a resource in social situations. Whilst such talk might appear to be haphazard and untidy in its execution, (cf. Chomsky, 1965), Garfinkel showed how participants accomplish meaning only by way of skilled, if 'invisible', procedures. Conversation does not just happen but is done so that understanding is an achieved phenomenon. His work presaged the development of a specific linguistically-based analytic movement which treated context as something which could best be identified by making use of participants' own displays of their understandings of each others' utterances. The primacy of this conversational use of context was taken up principally by Harvey Sacks and his colleagues at UCLA in the late sixties and seventies. It produced what has now become the highly distinctive form of ethnomethodology known now as Conversation Analysis.

Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA) also focuses on the action-orientation of speech. It developed directly out of Garfinkel's work on the tacit procedures which govern and inform face-to-face interaction. Most, but not all of the body of studies that have been undertaken using CA-derived principles have considered primarily the patterning of the spoken interchange that goes on in interaction. (see,
for example, collections of studies in Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; Boden and Zimmerman, 1992; Button and Lee, 1987; Drew and Heritage, 1992).

The major tenets of CA were developed by Harvey Sacks (1992) in his lectures and in a series of papers with colleagues which formed the cornerstone of many subsequent analytic developments (Sacks, 1972; Sacks, Scheglof and Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1968). One way of considering CA is as taking very seriously the ethnomethodological emphasis that activity is indexical (its sense is related to its context of use) and reflexive (it is both responsive to its context and reproduces that context) (Heritage, 1984). When applied specifically to conversation the focus becomes turns of talk, their meshing together in sequence, and the way their organisation (in various ways) relates to the production of activities. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson produced an important set of principles out of which subsequent work on the organisation of conversational activities in mundane talk have resulted (e.g. Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). Presently we will be examining a set of empirical examples which illustrate important organising features of conversation arising out of basic conversation analytic research and we will go on to apply these in our analysis of social work talk. First, however, we need to consider briefly the principles which underlie CA's establishment as a distinct branch of ethnomethodology.

Conversation Analysis is essentially concerned with describing the orderly and accountable way in which social interaction is achieved. It sets out to reveal what are usually tacit but nonetheless highly patterned structures which underlie interpersonal activity. These
regularities are obtained from the examination of actual sequences of naturally occurring (often spoken) data transcribed in fine detail.

The orderliness of the procedures by which social structures are achieved and built up arise from participants' turn-by-turn orientation to the on-going activities performed through their talk, rather than resulting from the following of some externally-derived set of rules. In other words, it is the speakers' displays of the consequentiality of their actions in the local contexts in which they are performed which produce a framework for their interaction. And crucially for the study of social action, not only are these displays made recognisable by and for participants in the ways they shape moment to moment interaction, but they are also potentially available for analytic description. That is, just as participants make the sense of their utterances clear through procedures of recipient design, displays of understanding, and procedures of repair, so analysts can use those displays and procedures to ground their own interpretations of talk.

Sacks, Schegloff and their colleagues' work highlighted the normative organisation of conversational activity. Conversational turns are normatively organised rather than simply following empirical regularities. For example, when one person performs a greeting it is common that the greeting will be returned. But this regularity is not causal - the recipient is not forced to say a return hello; nor is it purely statistical for there are all sorts of occasions when the greeting is not returned. The absence of a return greeting in not an exception that undermines the expectation about a pairing of actions. The
inference from a missed greeting is not 'Oh, you don't need to say good morning back!' Rather, such an absence is treated by participants as an event that can allow a rich set of inferences, 'he doesn't like me', 'she didn't hear', and so on. From the recipients' point of view, if you ignore the greeting you have not abstained from interaction, you have rather made a different contribution to that interaction.

When a speaker produces an utterance, this conduct occurs, and contributes to a framework of intersubjective understanding which is displayed and made recognisable across the sequence of interaction. This is clearly a development from Speech Act theory in its central recognition that the immediate context for what a person says is the previous utterance and that it is in the sequencing of a series of turns within a sequence that the illocutionary actions of talk get accomplished.

The original success of CA methodology was in the identification of important building blocks of conversation and the powerful effects of their sequential placement in cementing utterances into a coherent social interaction. Through the patterning of these basic items, the 'architecture of intersubjectivity' (Heritage, 1984) associated with social activities gets accomplished - such as in accusations and blamings (e.g., Atkinson and Drew, 1979), invitations (e.g., Davidson, 1984; Drew, 1984) and talking about troubles (Jefferson, 1988). In particular, there are two systematic features of conversation that describe the ways in which speakers' turns are arranged and tend to follow each other. As I shall attempt to demonstrate, the identification of these two main
phenomena makes available a whole series of other analytically relevant possibilities. In what follows, we will consider some of these features including the occasioning and positioning of accounts in activity sequences, and the significance of pauses and delays in talk. However, the priority is first to describe what have come to be identified as two of the principal organising features of CA. These are adjacency pairs and preference structure.

(i) The term adjacency pair refers to the linkeage between two actions typically, but not always, occurring next to each other in a passage of talk. After a speaker has performed an action in their turn, this makes relevant a selection from a restricted set of actions in the utterances of the next speaker as the sequence unfolds. Importantly, something of how this next speaker interprets what was said in the prior turn will then be produced in her subsequent turn and made available for further analysis by the participants (see Heritage, 1984a: 255). Of course this does not mean that speaker turns always interpret, or accept, the trajectory intended by the prior speaker's action. What it does mean though is that speakers not only produce actions in their utterances but also display their interpretation of the prior turn of talk. In this way then, turns of talk can be said to be both context-shaped and context-renewing (Heritage, 1984a: 242).

A nice illustration to demonstrate the operation of adjacency pairs is provided in Antaki (1994: 69-70). His examples can be taken to show how what may appear to be a rather obvious phenomenon at first sight in fact has considerable explanatory and heuristic power. Taking the example of
the utterance 'Have you done the washing up yet?', he shows how the next speaker's turn is invariably treatable by participants as having relevance to this first pair part. Antaki goes on to make up four different possible 'seconds' which display varying orientations to the action being performed in the original question. In the following, I have added considerably to his example in order to bring out some of the wider patternings that are revealed by the adjacency pair concept.

First, question-answer adjacency pairings could be represented by straightforward short responses to 'Have you done the washing up yet?' such as 'yes' 'no' or 'not yet'. These treat the question as an enquiry.

It is important to note that it is the relevance of the second part, rather than the immediate production of the answer in the next turn that characterises such pairings. So if the second speaker had not at first replied, we can envisage a sequence perhaps like the following:

A: have you done the washing up yet?  
   (1.6)  
A: well?  
   (0.8)  
A: yes or no.  
B: not yet

Here the questioner displays normative expectations by pursuing a response over a number of turns before eventually getting one. We can see too how an answer as a second part remains relevant right across these turns and that the first speaker does not repeat the question but reminds B with a number of shorter prompts. This suggests that she assumes that the failure to respond is not because the second speaker has failed to hear her.
Another feature of adjacency pairing can also be highlighted by developing an alternative response to Antaki's original example. One fairly typical inquiry sequence might proceed as follows:

A: have you done the washing up yet?
B: you mean last night's saucepans?
A: ye::h
B: yeh I did 'em when I got up.

Here we have what is known as an insertion sequence. Before attending to the original question, speaker B asks a question of her own which is itself answered in the next turn. This is followed by the provision of an answer to the original enquiry which has remained in abeyance over the interceding turns. (See Levinson, 1983 for further discussion of such embedded adjacency pair sequences).

Antaki points out how the response to the first action formatted as 'Have you done the washing up yet?' can often modify the original question. It displays this in the way that it treats the utterance. We can see this operating in the following pair:

A: have you done the washing up yet?
B: okay (0.2) I'll do it.

Here, B's response recasts the question as a request (or perhaps a command). As Antaki notes 'we see that the conversationalists are constantly giving each other context, and that that context can be so powerful that it changes the meaning of what it surrounds.' (ibid: 69).
An alternative context is created in the following pair:

A: have you done the washing up yet?
B: it's not my turn.

A's action is now shaped into a possible accusation by B's response which involves, as in the previous case, treating A's utterance not primarily as a question, even though it is formatted as one, but as a different sort of action.

This process of transformation can even appear to ironize the previous utterance as may be the case in the following (see also Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 42):

A: have you done the washing up yet?
B: what a rainy day it's been.

What the second speaker is attempting to do with the first pair part here is less easily assignable to a particular action type. Antaki suggests that possibilities include that A's turn is being treated as a greeting or a comment about the weather. Clearly we would need more of the sequence to make a better guess although it does appear to be serving to deflect the action trajectory away from the original topic of enquiry.

What this final example also raises is the impression that some answers are more expectable than others. This is given prominence in CA's other major building block for describing conversational interaction which we will now look at.
(ii) Preference structure encapsulates the idea that second pair parts are ranked by conversationalists into 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' responses. The use of these terms denotes that a normative ranking operates in the making of this distinction rather than that there is a desire or predisposition on the part of the speaker for a particular response to be made. So the concept of preference marks the difference between more regularly occurring, expected second pair parts and those seconds that tend to be produced much less frequently and are therefore a potential local disruption to the flow of the interaction.

It has been shown that less expected seconds tend to be differently formatted in talk in various ways to display this dispreferred status (see Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Pomerantz, 1975). Such marking of utterances presents a resource for participants (and CA researchers) in the way it helps to distinguish not just the dispreferred status of the turn but the action being performed. The hearer (or researcher) can then use this information in the production of their next turn (or next research paper). The marking of dispreferred seconds involves an increase in the structural complexity of the turn. With the description of the various pragmatic features of this complexity has come the elucidation of another important dimension of conversational organisation.

There are at least three main components which differentiate preferred from dispreferred seconds. I will outline the main points of these (see also Levinson, 1983: 334-5 and Heritage, 1984a: 265-269) briefly illustrating each of them with some examples from the research literature.
as we proceed.

Firstly, there tends to be minimal delay between the production of first turns and then preferred second pair parts. Indeed such seconds often occur in partial overlap as in the following pair of assessments:

[From Pomerantz: 1984a: 68]

E: e-that Pa:t isn'she a do:[:11?
M: [iYeh isn't she pretty,

Dispreferreds on the other hand are marked by various forms of delays:

[from Levinson, 1983: 335. Slightly modified]

B: she says you might want the dress that I bought, I don't know whether you do (0.4)
A: uh thanks well I'm sorry I really have lots of dresses

Here refusal, which is a dispreferred second following the making of an offer, is preceded by a preface. In this example a rich combination of some of the more commonly found preface components is to be found. These include dispreferred markers ('uh' and 'well'), appreciations ('thanks') and apologies ('I'm sorry'); the initiation of the refusal is also produced in a hedged format ('I really have lots of dresses') rather than with a straight declination. This again would contrast with a typical preferred action in which none of these features would tend to be present.

The third component tending to be present largely in dispreferreds is the production of an account for why the action has been initiated. In the example above, the explanation given concerns the embarrassment of dresses in the speaker's possession. Heritage (1984a) has noted how such
accounts (where offers are being made) tend to orientate to the avoidance of implicit blaming of the first speaker. This is illustrated in our example above by the production of an account which adds new information. As such, it absolves B, who made the offer, from 'blame' because she could not be expected to know of the overabundance of dresses in A's wardrobe.

**Institutional interaction**

Based on the concepts of adjacency pairs and preference organisation, research has gone on to flesh out these 'simplest systematics' (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974) in a variety of ways (see, in particular, the collection of studies in Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). We will make much use of these basic findings in the analytic chapters of this thesis. Most of this earlier work took as its data the minutiae of everyday mundane talk. The strength of Sacks and his colleagues' original investigations lay in their ability to show how an ethnomethodological orientation could display in locally achieved turns of interaction the actual workings of cultural and social interaction. His original analyses revealed how the basic mechanisms he identified could inform the wider interests of disciplines such as psychology and sociology. It highlighted the real possibilities which taking this 'micro' approach held for understanding the structures which make up the subject of social and psychological enquiry.

Adopting CA principles requires the maintenance of analytic interest in examining spoken practice and meaning as it is displayed in even the
smallest and apparently inconsequential of interchanges about what to the outsider may seem merely transient topics. A more recent development has been to import the approach to examine how institutional contexts are produced as such by participants in recognisable and consequential ways. This is clearly a departure from the traditional empiricist position of taking the institution as the structural predeterminant of the patterns of talk that get produced 'within' it. Some of this work has also combined CA ideas with strands from discourse analysis and rhetoric. Examining aspects of this area of study will provide us with a more detailed background before moving into the empirical analyses. This consideration will be undertaken in the next chapter.

Notes

1. Details of the interviewer's turns of talk are not provided. The potential significance of such omissions is discussed later in this chapter.

2. Howe provides further information on 'the Kegg' family at other places in the chapter. He notes that the involvement of Mr and Mr Kegg with the family therapy intervention had come about through suspicions that Mr Kegg had sexually abused one of his daughters. Assessments of the family's ability to protect this child was one of the required features of the social work intervention. Reports to court midway through the sessions persuaded the court that there was no need to take further steps to remove Mr Kegg from the family.
3. Watzlawick et al. (1967) have also made use of this property of next turns and give it a prominent place in their scheme of the 'Axioms of Communication'. They conceptualise the occurrence in some families of pathological forms of behaviour arising from the idea that the recipient cannot but communicate in the second turn, whatever they do or say. Their explanation of mental illnesses includes this notion of the family's role in the genesis of some individual psychiatric conditions. Taking a systemic perspective, their work has been very influential in family therapy models (cf Howe's study examined earlier). The notion of paradoxical forms of communication, arising from the double bind which the speaker finds themselves in, has been exploited in the understanding and treatment of individuals as part of dysfunctional systems (see, for example, Burnham, 1986: Street and Dryden, 1988).

4. The idea for my example here originates from a sequence originally found in Atkinson and Drew (1979: 52); it is also examined in Levinson (1983: 299-300).

5. Nofsinger (1991: 71-2) expands on this point and in a footnote considers in more detail the different ways that analysts have interpreted the concept of preference in second parts.
Conversation Analytic (CA) studies of language use in work settings have grown apace in recent years. These have culminated in the publication of a number of important collections including those by Boden and Zimmerman (1991) and Drew and Heritage (1992a). One of the results of this research interest has been a series of general findings about the nature of interactions at work which are summarised in Drew and Heritage's extensive introductory chapter to their text (1992b).

They note that most of the studies in this area take a comparative focus. Such research derives its analyses at least in part from distinguishing how talk in a particular work setting builds upon the structures of social action found in mundane interaction. Many of the findings of these studies derive from the notion that participants' talk in institutional contexts operates under a series of constraints which lessen the range of possible turn arrangements compared with the wider possibilities allowed in an everyday setting. Institutional forms of talk may limit in some way the contributions which are allowed by participants in that setting. (see, for example, Atkinson and Drew, 1979). The inferential procedures which operate in a work context are also sometimes distinguishable. Particular sequences or forms of affiliation may be specific to that context as, say, in the withholding of surprise in some institutional interview types (see Baldock and Prior, 1981; Clayman, 1992).
One of the dimensions along which institutional talk varies, and which distinguishes it, is in the way that formality is displayed. In CA methodology, this is identified not through any external intuition of how the setting predefines what is going on, but rather is something that is realised in the orientations of the speakers. So formality may be an arrangement present in a specific turn-taking procedure that the speakers and hearers adopt (for example, in court or the classroom), or in the way that participants in television and radio interviews coordinate their interaction around the maintenance of the interviewer's neutrality. The organising goal of such interaction is often the production of information and opinion for an audience which is unable to take an active part in the discussion (see Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Clayman, 1992; Drew, 1992; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986).

It is, however, on the less formal forms of talk at work that our interest concentrates given the nature of the research problem. In many institutional contexts, the form that the interaction takes is not restricted by definitive practices such as special sorts of turn-taking procedures which are prevalent in formal contexts. What occurs in a piece of institutional interaction will therefore be less circumscribed by a specific boundary to the procedures acceptable in that setting (cf. Atkinson, 1992). It may even be that it is this very quality of a non-institutional 'feel' to what is going on which the professional (possibly with the co-operation of the non-professional) sets out to achieve in their interaction. The interaction in that work context may be analysed for how it avoids associations of formality and the easy
identification of any asymmetric character to the discourse. What then can be said to make such informal interaction different from non-institutional forms? To begin to consider this, we need to be aware of the dangers of assuming that merely invoking the setting in which a discussion takes place is a sufficient warrant for claiming that there is something different about the interaction. As Schegloff notes (1991, 1992), ethnomethodology poses at least two expectations which investigators must deal with when aiming to delineate specifically institutional forms of talk and other communication.

The first of these he terms relevance. Descriptions of activities, events, and persons are always partial and selective (cf Drew, 1984; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Heritage, 1984a). It might appear to be 'self evident' why a particular term is used within a work discussion to refer to something or someone. Schegloff's argument is that we need to provide details from within the demonstrable conduct of the participants to be able to show what it is that is specifically institutional about the terms used to characterise the local object of discussion. It is not enough to resort to invocations of the factual correctness of a particular term at a particular point in the sequence. The talk can only be judged as institutionally specific if the locally-extracted details of the interaction bear that interpretation.

But Schegloff goes on a stage further than this in his methodological and theoretical prescription. He also raises the issue of what he terms the procedural consequentiality of what is brought into the interaction.
The problem, he says, is not just to demonstrate relevance but is also to show the context or the setting (the local social structure), in that aspect, is procedurally consequential to the talk. How does the fact that the talk is being conducted in some setting (e.g. "the hospital") issue in any consequence for the shape, form, trajectory, content, or character of the interaction that the parties conduct? And what is the mechanism by which the context-so-understood has determinate consequences for the talk? (Schegloff, 1992: 111; emphases in the original)

Schegloff's expectations present an exacting challenge particularly to researchers interested in the permeable and shifting domain of many informally designed professional-client conversations. But as we shall now explore, a number of studies have provided some evidence for the meeting of such two pronged-analytic demands across a range of work settings.

In order to illustrate the sort of findings that have arisen from CA-derived methodologies, I propose at this point to select three linked areas of analysis within which less formal types of institutional talk have been examined. These all comprise aspects of interaction arising from meetings between professionals in medical settings and their patients (or clients). The sorts of goals managed within these contexts are all, at least in part, geared to monitoring the problematic rejections of the worker's attempts at affiliating with the
service-users. Such sequences tend to occur during the production of some institutionally-derived sequence of action connected with attempts to impart advice or share information. We can therefore examine interactional material relevant to resistance and rejection as it occurs in these institutional contexts and compare it with what goes on between participants in everyday settings.

Such material opens up an area of enquiry with direct relevance to the interaction within child protection meetings. We are into an area in which the negotiation of the precise nature of the relationship is analysed at a local turn-by-turn level. As we shall see, what is produced at a particular point in the interaction of participants is highly consequential in determining the trajectory of the sequence of actions being performed. Such studies yield an original and, I shall argue pertinent way of describing processes such as negotiation and partnership. As we glean ideas relevant to an analysis of social work it will be helpful to tighten our grasp of how this sort of interactional phenomenon is dealt with. This will enable us to begin to get some purchase on the sorts of ways that institutional settings can be said to get produced through talk.
Troubles Telling and the Giving of Advice by Health Visitors

The way in which problems are discussed in conversations between intimate acquaintances have been closely examined by Gail Jefferson in a series of papers (Jefferson, 1980a, 1980b, 1984a, 1988; Jefferson and Lee, 1992). Her studies are particularly germane to interactional problems which may occur when giving advice in a conversational sequence. An institutional manifestation of this problem is later considered when we look at a paper on health visitors' talk with first time parents by Heritage and Sefi (1992).

Jefferson's work suggests that there are quite distinct patternings associated with interpersonal talk in which someone listens sympathetically to a person describe their difficulties as compared to when the listener proffers advice about what the speaker might do to ameliorate them. From a corpus containing mainly examples of such interactions in talk between close friends and intimates, Jefferson hypothesised that there was an archetypal 'Troubles Telling' format with a series of ordered stages against which actual conversations could be matched. This was shaped quite differently from those passages in which a problem experienced by one of the participants was brought into focus during the talk and advice about it discussed and eventually accepted by the problem bearer. Such a passage was designated as an 'Advice Giving' sequence.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, speakers' utterances display a strong awareness of what is expectable in the turns of a sequence.
Jefferson's work displays that this can apply across larger organisational units of speech as well. One of the main points in her analysis was to illustrate phenomena within the talk that influenced the trajectory of the discussion. Rather than being a feature of their internal psychological state, she was able to show that participants' responses were strongly influenced by whether the shape of the sequence fitted the appropriate interactional pattern. The following is an example of her 'Troubles telling' sequence within which the listener moves into 'Troubles recipiency':


   1. Emma: I have to take two tub baths with tar in it
   2. every hhhhhh da:y?
   3. Lottie: Yea:h?
   4. Emma: .hhhhh And I have to have ointment oy put on
   5. fourtimes a da:y and I'm under:: violet ra:y
   6. for a few seconds, a:nd I got a shot in the
   7. butt of vitamin: (0.2) A:::ski:n
   8. (0.5)
   10. Emma: Lo:ttie, honest to Go:d you know, I just
    11. broke out terribly a:uh- hh when I le-eft
    12. ho:me. And, I just- just my le:gs were just
    13. covered.hh

Jefferson and Lee note that Lottie's second turn (line 9) affiliates with the problem and that this elicits and warrants an affiliative response in the next turn. 'Troubles talk' recipients display in their talk what Jefferson calls their 'essential concern' in providing such affiliations. The interest - as displayed in their talk - is in the person and their feelings rather than on the problem and its properties. She found that it is only when this type of person-affiliative response occurs that the participants' turns usually continue to mesh together so seamlessly.
Advice-giving on the other hand is smoothly achieved where the interactional template is one in which the pairing of advice-giver and advice-receiver fits the local circumstances of the talk. A person's advice-giving actions tend to be ratified rather than resisted (regardless of intention to use the advice) when they are produced within such an appropriately formatted 'Advice-giving sequence'. Someone still in 'troubles-telling' mode is likely to resist an early move to give them advice by the other party by virtue of the fact that this realigns their participancy status in the discussion. Part of the problem may be that in receiving advice, the troubles-teller becomes cast as recipient (listener) and the troubles-recipient takes on the role of speaker in giving their advice.

We can see an indication of the sort of local interactional problems generated by a mismatch of 'Advice-Giving' and 'Troubles-Telling' in another part of Emma's discussions with Lottie about her health worries:


1  Lottie: How: 's your foo: t. =
2   Emma: = hh Oh: it's healing beautifully:.
3   Lottie: Good.
4   Emma: The other one may have to come o: ff
5         on the other toe I' ve got it in that but
6          it's not infected.
7          (0.8)
8   Lottie: Why don't you use some [stuff on it.
9   Emma: [I've got peroxide I put
10         o:n it but uh . hhhh the other one is healing
11         very we: ll: I looked at it the other day I put
12         a new ta: pe on it every day so . hhhh[hhh
13   Lottie: [Why don't
14   Emma: you get that nay-uh::: Revlon nai[l:::
15   Lottie: [. hhh Well
16   Emma: that's not therapeutic Lottie really it says
We can note some features of this sequence which Jefferson claims are typical of examples within which advice is rejected. Firstly the advice proffered at Lottie's turns 3 and 4 appears to occur very early in the sequence in response to Emma's description of her difficulties. This prematurity was a consistent feature of Jefferson's data in which advice was rejected. Second Lottie's turns also appear to be occupied with solving the details of the problem rather than with Emma's personal experience of it. This provides an example of the 'essential indifference' to the individual. Jefferson found that this was displayed by participants where there was a mutual orientation to advice-giving and reception.

One of the important points of such work is that it locates the analytic focus within actual features of participants' activity. It turns features of interpersonal relationships such as those associated with advising and showing empathy into local interactional concerns. Their rhetorical effects can potentially be warranted analytically from the interpretations of the speakers themselves as they are developed across the discussion. We will now briefly examine how such work can be linked with an examination of the problematics associated with some of the activities of health visitors. Their advice-giving sequences appear to be regularly resisted by the parents for whom they were devised.
Heritage and Sefi's (1992) paper provides powerful confirmation that the general implications of Jefferson's work have potential relevance for institutional contexts as well. They demonstrated the predominance in health visitor discussions for the professional to give advice to clients across a wide range of situations. These often included situations where the recipients (usually first-time mothers) provided early indications of their knowledge of the matters under discussion and hence showed the potential redundancy of advice-giving for them about the topic under discussion.

On such occasions, when attempts at advice-giving continued (as they often did in Heritage and Sefi's study) it was possible to show the ways in which the health visitor's action was resisted. This was done in turns which varied from overt rejection through to less clearly marked sequences identifiable as what the authors term 'passive resistance' (ibid: 396). An example of the latter is contained in the following extract in which the health visitor (HV) is advising the mother (M) about how to settle her child if she wakes in the night:


5 HV: Always uhm (0.4) on- have a dim li:ght,
6 M: Yeh
7 HV: And uhm (1.0) be ve:ry quiet don't chat her up at a:ll .hh when you change her (. ) change
8 as quickly as possib [le, without any
9 M: [Yeh
10 11 (. )
12 M: Yeh.
13 HV: palaver.
14 (0.2)
15 M: That's right
16 HV: And (. ) so she kno::ws that uh
17 M: (Yeh)
18 HV: people aren't keen on me: at this: uhm (0.2)
The authors note that in the above sequence (which I have taken from a longer extract provided in the text) there are a series of unmarked acknowledgements. Typical examples of such utterances in this extract are 'yeh', 'mm' and 'that's right'. Such objects tend to occur at places in the dialogue where the recipient 'passes' on a place to take the next turn (Levinson, 1983) and indicates to the speaker this intention (see Schegloff, 1982; Jefferson, 1984b). This signals to the speaker to carry on without delay or negotiation. The function of 'continuers' (as such unmarked particles are usually termed) has been contrasted with a different group of objects which display that the previous turn has been treated as new and relevant information for the recipient.

These latter objects are known as marked acknowledgements. Evidence of such features, commonly produced through utterances such as 'oh' (Heritage, 1984b), 'really', or by a repetition of part of the previous advice-giving turn, are not evident in the above datum. What is more, 'that's right' at line 15 indicates more strongly that advice is not what is needed given the present awareness of the recipient. We should also note that the sequence approaches its completion with a clear lack of ratification of the advice at the transition relevant place where it would be most likely to occur. This is suggested by the pause at line

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22, followed by the undermining of the advice implicated in the Mother's final turn. Here she indicates how the problem occupying the health visitor is not relevant to her child's sleep pattern. So what we see here is the way that unmarked acknowledgements form part of a sequence in which the parent displays her knowledge by making redundant the health visitor's advisory approach at this point.

We can summarise the general findings about advice-giving obtained from Heritage and Sefi's study in the following terms. It appears that Troubles Telling sequences as identified by Jefferson are rarely in evidence in this institutional setting. Further, as illustrated in the example above, the alternative Advice-Giving template was not adhered to in typical health visitor interactions with their clients. In so far as negotiation might be characterised within participant attempts to align their actions and roles in the way which Jefferson's patterning predicts, it would seem that the problems of the rejection of institutionally-relevant actions occur in this setting just as they do in some of the social work contexts described in Chapter Two.

There are further parallels to be drawn with accountability and resistance in social work. Heritage and Sefi speculate that advice-giving might be started because it provides a warrant for the professional to engage in intimate talk with parents about the problems they face in looking after their babies. 'Doing' her professional role by displaying an orientation to advice-giving rather than overtly monitoring parents' behaviour may potentially help to manage the professional's face-to-face relationship with her clients. And in the
interactional accomplishment of producing advice, it may still appear to be possible to attempt the monitoring for which the health visitor is also accountable.

This responsibility for checking up on the family comprises a part of the health visitor's officially designated role with infant children and their parents. It may in part explain the strong orientation to advice-giving noted by Heritage and Sefi across their data. However, it appears that the sequence identified by Jefferson is too delicate to tolerate the disruptions imposed in the professional's attempt to realise institutional goals. What appears to happen in health visitors' appropriation is that in attempting to manage a role-related dilemma, the affiliative sequence founders. This is revealed in the clients' resistance, perhaps particularly in the covert forms that it tends to take. Such forms enable the parent to display their own competencies and knowledge whilst avoiding a conflictual relationship which might invite a new and problematic relationship with the incumbent of a potentially highly intrusive role in the life of the family. What is less easy to explain is why the professional persists in the face of this lack of engagement. It may be that the sacrifice is worth making in the management of the professional's own accountability. As Heritage and Sefi conclude, 'The ultimate dilemma of advice-giving as a ticket of entry may be that it can only be bought by spoiling the ball game' (1992: 413).
Before performing many actions such as issuing an invitation, making a request, or passing on information, speakers regularly engage in a series of turns of talk known generically as **pre-sequences** (Levinson, 1983). In the following, for example, the first speaker, John seeks prior information before he makes a tentative proposal:

1. [JGII(b):8:14aff. Quoted in Drew 1984:133]

   J: So who'r the boyfriends for the week. 
   (0.2)
   M: °k°hhhh- Oh: go::d e-yih this one'n that one
       yihknow, I jist, yihknow keep busy en go out
       when I wanna go out John it's nothing .hhh I don' have
       anybody serious on the string,
   J: So in other words you'd go out if I:: askedche out
       one a'these times.
   M: Yeah! Why not.

We can see an indication in this extract of how interactional the process of giving an invitation is; the same could be observed in the everyday performance of many actions. The information provided by the recipient appears to be elicited before the carefully designed proposal follows as an upshot (Heritage and Watson, 1979) of what she has said.

Conversational participants tend to maximise opportunities for affiliation and to minimise disaffiliative ones in the ways that consecutive turns of talk are treated. For example, as Schegloff (1988) has demonstrated where 'news' is passed on, the organisation of the sequence often means that the recipient of the information ends up guessing and providing the upshot. This particularly occurs where bad news is conveyed. Such organisation of passages of talk then enables the troubles-bearer to confirm this in the next turn rather than actually to
impart the information. It is through conversation organised in such ways that a trajectory is produced in which affiliation between parties is maintained.

One of the significances of the pre-sequences mentioned above is that they prepare the ground for affiliative ways of doing this sort of interaction. For example a speaker about to make a request can avoid putting the recipient in the position of coming up with a 'dispreferred' second-part refusal. She can do this by conducting a pre-check on what her response is likely to be before actually making the request. In some cases, a pre-request may also elicit an offer immediately, saving the first speaker from making the overt request at all. This happens in the following sequence:

5. [Levinson, 1983: 343]

C: Hullo I was ringing up to ask if you were going to Bertrand's party
R: Yes I thought I might be
H: Heh heh
R: Yes would you like a lift?
C: Oh I'd love one

Another regularity in pre-sequences is the modification of the way the action is formatted in order to maximise the possibility of acceptance in the next turn. This occurs in the following interaction:


B: Do you want any pots for coffee or any(thing)
A: [We'll I have: (.)
B You know, I have that great big glass coffee m-.hhh maker it makes nine cups.
What we see here is how the invitation is pursued in B's second turn when a rejection is projected by A's turn. This is designed to increase the likelihood of a preferred response being elicited and a display of mutual alignment being achieved.

The conversational principles, such as these pre-sequences, which are involved in sharing and modifying information in the quest for affiliation, appear to be carefully adhered to in particular medical settings. Maynard (for example, 1989, 1991, 1992) has described a perspective display series in his analyses of the patterns of how diagnostic information is shared with parents. Such sequences were part of interviews which took place after the assessment of their child at a clinic for youngsters with learning or medical problems.

The linkage between giving and getting information in these meetings is an interesting one. It appears that the discussions are characterised by attempts by the professional to enlist the parent's viewpoint before producing the medical opinion as confirmation. Such sequences regularly display an orientation to mutuality by constructing a shared perspective. As we have seen, this too underlies the turn design we have seen in some non-institutional forms of activity to do with requests and offers for example. We can see this happening in the following extract between a doctor (Dr) and the mother (Mo) of a young patient (Barry) at a medical diagnostic clinic:


Dr: So...you suspect there's something wrong with Barry's brain then?
Mo: Well, um (.) uh:::m, not really, I would
say (. ) learn::ing (. ) difficulties. You know, like he uh he wasn't grasping.

(about 100 lines omitted)

Dr: Now when you say: uh you know, the ter:m something wrong with the brain, is very vague, we don't like it (.) you don['t like it.]

Mo: [ Yeah right]

Dr: But .hhhhh when we have to descri:be Barry's problems, we would have to say that there is something, that [is not] working right

Mo [ Yeah ]

Dr: in the brain

We can find in the above what Maynard has shown to be a series of patterns of interaction which recur across medical settings where information in the form of professional diagnoses are shared with patients and their relatives. In these circuits of talk, the professional pursues various ways of displaying local agreement with the client. Where the client holds a different viewpoint, the institutional aim is to get the client to alter her viewpoint. Just as in mundane talk, the aim seems to be to keep 'dispreferred' responses to a minimum and affiliation emphasised. One of the main organising devices of these displays of mutual perspective is the way that they go back over previous information and reconstruct its significance.

This last point is exemplified in the above. The first part of the extract followed a long sequence in which the disparity between the parent's and the professional's views seemed to have been lessened. This is evidenced in the Doctor's opening attempt to encapsulate the parent's perspective (Heritage and Watson, 1979). However, the second turn (arrowed above) shows that the mother is continuing to resist the more serious institutional version of the problem that the boy has an organic
and untreatable cause for his problems glossed as 'something wrong with Barry's brain'. We can note that the mother's turn occurs in response to an initial probing by the doctor apparently to get her inference about the nature of the problem aligned with this institutional version.

The failure of the mother to ratify this version occasions a lengthy sequence of turns, omitted above, in which the history of the boy's problem is further re-described by the mother. These details are gone along with by the doctor and then incorporated into a reformulated version to which the parent progressively assents:


Dr: We- we feel that (0.3) Billy [sic] is: hyperactive.
Mo: Yeah.=
Dr: =y'know:, and he has had trouble, (. ) for a long ti:me. [.hhh]
Mo: [Yeah.]
Dr: But we don't see this as something that's just gonna pass:
Mo: Yeah, well I know that,

We can see how this sort of negotiation serves the purpose of getting the agreement back on record once more and paves the way for the final section in the datum. In this, the doctor re-packages the organic nature of the child's difficulties in such a way as to identify with the mother's resistance - 'the term something wrong with the brain, is very vague, we don't like it (. ) you don't like it'. The doctor also displays her own resistance to what is being forced on her by the problem presentation (cf Edward and Potter, 1992). This further aligns her with the mother's perspective and with the difficulties of accepting such bad news.
We can compare this sort of action sequence, produced in an institutionally specific form, with the sort of ways that information is interactionally constructed and shaped between intimates in mundane conversation. This was briefly described earlier. The same sort of structures seem to get put together to achieve these interactional ends in both settings. In both cases the foundations to the operation of the perspective display series are dug from participants' orientation to producing an environment for affiliative displays designed on a local, turn by turn basis. The careful and extended way in which such interactional business gets done suggests a sense of the caution and indirectness which accompanies, and perhaps constitutes the process by which negotiation is undertaken. There are similar orientations displayed in another medical setting which I now want to consider.

DISCRETION AND INTRUSION IN THE ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS

Bergmann's (1992) study describes how psychiatrists handle delicate intake meetings with people who may subsequently become admitted to psychiatric hospitals (see also Bergmann, 1987). There are distinct similarities between the psychiatrist's role here and that of child protection social workers. In both situations, the care and control dimensions to the professional's task are potentially present. In order to assess someone in both of these settings, the co-operation of the service recipient is needed; yet in addition, professional responsibilities may include the requirement to impose authoritarian
decisions on the client without further negotiation. As noted in a Chapter Two, social workers may recommend the removal of a child from their parent. Likewise psychiatrists may enforce the hospitalisation of a patient in certain circumstances.

As with the discussion of advice and information-giving conducted earlier, it is possible to link the operation of institutional devices present in psychiatrists' talk to what has been shown to happen in everyday conversation between intimates. By describing this linkeage we will be able to produce some further analytic possibilities for exploration within social work talk.

The main theme of Bergmann's study is the tentativeness which psychiatrist talk-in-interaction displays. There is a delicacy which seems to attend to the manner in which these specialists explore the potential patient's medical history and her presentation on interview. The conversational strategies which Bergmann outlines are derived from work by Anita Pomerantz (1980) on the explorative way that speakers often go about seeking information from another party. This displays a sort of indirectness that is in evidence in the following opening to a telephone call:


B: Hello::,
A: HI:::
B: Oh:hi::'ow are you Agne::s,
A: Fi:ne. Yer line's been busy.
B: Yeuh my fu(hh)- .hh my father's wife called me. .hh So when she calls me::, .hh I always talk fer a long time. Cuz she c'n afford it'n I can't. hhhh heh .ehhhhhh
By describing the state of affairs from the speaker's side, an account is elicited although the speaker has not directly asked for one. This selection of something that is noticed and reported on is an example of the way that a context is specially selected to perform interactional business (Schegloff, 1972). It is formulated in such a way as to attend to the accountability of the original speaker (Edwards and Potter, 1992). Replacing 'your line's busy' with a direct question at A's second turn runs the risk of being heard perhaps as prying into the other person's private life. Even within close personal relationships the conversational evidence seems to be that at a local level, speakers attend to a collaborative approach in which affiliation is worked on from turn to turn.

Note too how the utterance which ends with 'Yer line's been busy' permits the next speaker to continue to shape and hence to negotiate the local context. The indirectness of the potential actions performed in the chosen description of the 'phone line being in constant use (to select another formulation), enables the recipient to contribute to the appropriate trajectory of their discussion; or, to put it another way, B is able to take the next step in formulating the relationship as it is locally occasioned in the current action sequence.

We can get a sense of how this collaboration at such a close level of interactive detail might influence the discussion by advancing some alternative seconds to A's second turn. 'Yer line's been busy' could perhaps be followed by accounts which make available the personal demands this has made on the recipient as, for example in an utterance like 'I
know, I haven't had a moment to myself all night'. An alternative might be to implicate the hard work which the recipient has been engaged in such as 'Yeh, I thought I ought to get back to one or two of my friends while I've got a few spare minutes' or suchlike. A third possibility would be to provide a ratification. 'Sorry about that' as a second pair part would reformulate the previous turn then as a complaint about having to wait to get through.

The point here is not of course whether the hypothetical examples I have come up with could 'really' fit in with a natural sequence of talk at this point. The thrust of Sacks's original argument was made partly to challenge the notion that talk-in-interaction could be created out of simplified and artificial segments devised away from the immediate local conversational context. Rather my aim is to show that a range of conversational slots are opened up by the speaker's use of a device which through 'fishing' around, as Pomerantz terms such exploration, does not close down the recipient's alternative ways of treating the action so performed.

For our analytic purposes, Bergmann's paper makes two main points about the way such explorative discourse patterns are adapted for use in sensitive institutional interaction. Firstly, as Antaki (1994) has highlighted, he shows that psychiatrists often underspecify the object of the noticings they report. For example, their descriptions tend to be downplayed by the use of mitigation, euphemism and elliptical phrasings such as litotes:

Dr. F: ...and somehow also a behaviour seems to have occurred where you really- (0.4) uh acted a little bit (. ) peculiar.

Ms. B: .hhh u:hm-

Dr. F: Doctor Hollmann told me something like you were running across the street not so completely dressed or something like that.

A litotes is a linguistic form which understates something by negating its opposite. 'Not so completely dressed' is an example of this trope and is used to refer to a report by another doctor that the patient was seen without clothes (naked) in the street.

We can also note that it is used in the above passage in a way which indicates the derivative character of the psychiatrist's knowledge. The recruitment of techniques like this which help deal with potential attributions of blame and responsibility - such as the distinction made in the above interview between the source of the report and the speaker making the report - is another common feature of the management of this sort of interaction. Chapters Six and Seven of this thesis examine in more detail how such constructions of the participation status of the speaker in these potentially confrontational contexts provide an important resource in social work meetings to do with child protection.

The second relevant analytic feature of Bergmann's work is the reflexive tension that is generated through such indirectness and cautiousness. As he notes

By describing something with caution and discretion, this "something" is turned into a matter which is in need of
being formulated cautiously and discreetly. Viewed sociologically, there is not first an embarrassing, delicate, morally dubious event or improper behaviour about which people then speak with caution and discretion; instead, the delicate and notorious character of an event is constituted by the very act of talking about it cautiously and discreetly. (Bergmann, 1992: 154).

Bergmann goes on to argue that this discretion seems to engender two very different forms of patient response depending on the interpretation placed upon the psychiatrist's activity. The discretely exploring 'my side tellings' (Pomerantz, 1980) may be treated by the patient as evidence of professional empathy and sensitivity. The patient may side with the psychiatrist's role as a professional affiliator whose job is to elicit the disclosure of intimate personal material by providing a confidential, non-judgemental interactional environment.

However, there is an alternative repertoire of meaning available within this form of psychiatric enquiry. The 'softly softly' manner of the enquiry simultaneously displays a judgemental status to the professional's talk. The fact that the matters being 'noticed' are raised so hesitantly topicalises them as somehow improper and abnormal. And to implicate this marks them as morally sanctionable. Bergmann argues that this then provides an interactional explanation, rather than one based purely on the mental state of the patient, for why in many of the psychiatric interviews which he studied the interview terminated with strong and aggressive expressions of rejection by the recipients. Indeed
the last extract quoted in his paper illustrates how on some occasions
the patient lost control altogether and reacted with a violent protest.
In the example provided she does this by knocking the psychiatrist's
papers off the desk. To use a litotes, this sort of action would not
endear the patient to their assessor. Typically such endings led to a
confirmatory diagnosis about the person's need for treatment and hospital
incarceration.

The ideological dilemmas present in enactments of psychiatric discretion
seem to be the stuff of many institutional settings (Billig et al., 1988;
Pomerantz et al., 1995). As we shall see presently this includes social
work. The extract which concludes this chapter starts to illustrate this
point. In the following the social worker attempts to make use of the
same sort of resources such as linguistic indirectness (arrow 1),
management of his personal responsibility through shifts to institutional
footings (arrow 2) and the continued display of affiliation in the face
of the father's protest (arrows 3 and 4). As with Bergmann's hapless
patients, the display of frustration is perhaps occasioned by the
insinuation of fault concealed within the social worker's apparently
innocuous first turn:

1. [ALM:I:19]

Sw: 1 → I mean I know you don't welcome our input int- into
this but it it is ( ) hh a situation where (.)
you know ( ) you know the law an the way (that) we
operate actually binds us in that way we do have to
make ( ) .hh that thing certain (first)
Fa: what d'you mean I don't welcome your input.
Sw: well you don't welcome us coming into your home
hh telling you how to parent and how to ( )
an what to do (I mean I can well)
Fa: true I don't like [the social ser]vices
Sw: 3 → [no that's fine]
This sort of overt rejection is something which was not apparently characteristic of the previous material we have examined across the present chapter. As we move towards an empirical consideration of child protection social work, let us remind ourselves of the earlier material we have examined and link it to themes of co-operation and resistance.

Resistance, produced as a sequential phenomenon across the turns of talk is one theme which recurs within the conversation analytic treatments of institutional interaction which were selected. As has been illustrated with various examples from the research material, CA perspectives on talk at work have provided a rich source of examples of the interactional ways that resistance can be considered. Rather than seeing it as residing within an individual, the focus is on how 'resistance' gets occasioned by the trajectory of talk. This was particularly in evidence in Heritage and Sefi's article on health visiting sequences where unwanted advice was still proffered even where it was shown to be redundant. The covert and passive nature of a client's resistance at such points seems to distinguish it from the way that participant moves from Jefferson's 'Advice-giving' to 'Troubles-Telling' action templates get blocked in everyday talk.
We have also seen some ways in which resistance could be pre-empted by participants' deployment of the local resources available in the way that talk is organised; as we have seen, meaning and action are co-ordinated on a turn-by-turn basis. What this suggests is that affiliation is something that can, at least to some extent, be prepared for in the design of a turn of talk. The significance of presequences was shown to be a particular feature here. Both Maynard's and Bergmann's studies provided evidence of how professional groups have made use of conversational resources originating in everyday practice. As we saw, Maynard has made interesting use of pre-announcements in his 'perspective-display series'; similarly Bergmann applied Pomerantz's notion of conversational 'fishing' to psychiatrist interviews. In such analyses, they describe various sequences and structures by which institutional talk gets managed and helps it to become analytically distinguishable from everyday talk outside the work setting.

Heading off interactional difficulties through the creation of ongoing opportunities for ratification was shown to be a delicate and cautious process in sequences of institutional talk-in-interaction. This can be linked to the underlying theme of accountability which is evident across the material surveyed. The sequences we looked at, whether they concerned advising clients of how best to look after their babies, telling them of the outcome of a medical assessment of their child, or interviewing them to examine whether they needed psychiatric in-patient treatment, all contained versions of the professional's role in the events being described. These variable accounts of role and personal responsibility are occasioned features of the relationship being
negotiated. The next chapter begins to investigate how such identities get managed in a child protection setting.

Notes

1. Drew and Heritage (1992b) point out that their collection distinguishes 'institutional talk' from 'mundane talk' that happens to occur in a work setting and from talk about work. It is the task focus of specific forms of talk which occupies their text. Such talk is institutional in that participants' identities are made relevant in that interaction for the purpose of realising institutional goals and activities.

2. Transition Relevance Places are described extensively in Levinson (1983, for example at pages 297-8). They occur at the end of turn-units and are point at which the conversational rules for next speaker selection come into play (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974).

3. In a later paper, Schegloff (1992) demonstrates a systematic variation between mundane talk and the collaborative orientation to 'doing interview' in a TV news interview involving George Bush (then President of the United States) and Dan Rather (a well known news interviewer). In everyday talk, a speaker may introduce her turn with preliminaries which are intended as a pre-announcement leading up to an action such as a request. But without the shared orientation to this interactional outcome, there is always a danger of a pre-emptive interruption by the
recipient. This might happen if she has interpreted the early turns as adumbrating a different conversational trajectory. Schegloff notes that the shared context of the TV interview is mutually orientated to by the participants such that this problem of interruption before a turn completion rarely occurs. The 'Bush-Rather' extract is further discussed in Chapter Seven.
This is the first chapter in which I focus on the empirical data from which my study is derived. Further details of the sources of this data are provided in Appendix I. I also describe there some reflexive issues arising from my own experience of the negotiation of my research project with social work colleagues.

To begin to investigate the social organisation of social work, I will work with an example from a meeting in which a social worker is talking with the parents of three small children about 'child protection' in terms of the risks that the parents are considered to present. We shall look in some detail at what happens in an extract of their conversation which lasts only a couple of minutes. The main objective will be to identify ways in which one piece of talk is organised. This will enable us to consider how the participants orientate to the problematics of their encounter and, as my chapter title suggests, to consider in particular how a 'warning' might be managed by the participants and how this action might be constituted as such. In examining these features we will be starting to delineate how, in the local detail of their interaction, the participants are instantiating 'social work'.

The reasons should be noted at the start for beginning the analytic section of the thesis with a single extract, rather than, say, looking at wider patterns discernable across the corpus of data. Wooffitt (1992)
has identified some of the benefits of using a single instance as a pilot study before proceeding to a wider analysis. He suggests how the initial dissection of a sequence may reveal important procedures and mechanisms which flesh out the 'tissues of meaning' (Parker, 1992) present within the discourse. He cites work by Schegloff (1984, 1988), Drew (1989) and Whalen et al. (1988) which have employed single-case analyses to reveal details of the workings of particular conversations. We might add that whilst many of these studies originate from telephone discussions, they have been more widely accessed and deployed in subsequent work on face-to-face interaction. Indeed we have already considered the influence of one of these papers (Schegloff, 1988) in the previous chapter; we saw there Maynard's work on describing how displays of understanding diagnostic information is interactionally produced in medical settings. One of the analytic inputs for this work was Schegloff's single-case demonstration of how bad news generates interactional problems for speakers if it is presented directly to the recipient and how this could be circumvented through various interactional procedures.

There are a number of other studies which have considered the details of the interactional workings of an illustrative example some of which are taken from institutional settings. Amongst these, Drew (1992) for example has made an extended study of a rape case trial; Gale and Newfield (1992) take as their datum a single session of therapeutic intervention in the field of marital counselling. We should finally note the seminal work of Smith (1978) on 'fact construction' which is entirely based on a transcript extending over a few pages in which a young woman's
written account of her friend's apparent mental illness was constructed.

I should stress that no claims are being made at this stage for the representativeness of the piece selected. Indeed, in some respects its use as a piece for early analysis was influenced by the presence of an activity sequence which was not found in the rest of my data. The need to produce an 'on the record' warning did not obtain in the other meetings. As such the target sequence here is a candidate for illustration of the operation of the 'control' dimension in social work. Its selection provides an opportunity to examine how participants handle their interactions when working at this pole of the 'care/control' dilemma.

ACTIVITY SEQUENCES INVOLVING GETTING THE OTHER PARTY TO DO SOMETHING

Many of the actions identified in CA studies take place in sequences where actions, such as requests, blamings and threats are merged together (see Edwards and Potter, 1992). We shall come across repeated instances of this over the next chapters. Before providing the extract which I have chosen to focus on, it is worth considering briefly some general points about how such sequences operate. In discussing this, Sacks writes

We think of an 'offer' as something different than a 'request' or a 'warning' or a 'threat'. But in some situations the offer is simply the first version of getting the person to do something. A person can say yes to an offer which is heard as the first version of
something, where they say yes in order to accept the nicest version of what's being given. Alternatively, someone can use the offer-form when they and the other know that if you don't 'accept the offer' you'll do it anyway. One wants then to reconsider these objects - offer, request, warning, threat not as though they're a series of different things, but to see them as sequential versions of something. (1992, II: 330-1)

My chapter title is designed to raise the question of whether the sequence which we shall be examining shortly is interpretable as a 'warning' for and by the parents. Ethnomethodological research eschews positivistic tendencies to impose an external analyst's understanding of the meanings negotiated. Instead it prefers to use evidence from the turns of the participants within the conversational material to show that this is how they themselves interpreted it. As Schegloff (1988) has made clear, this does not mean that we should treat what participants claim they are doing as definitive of their subsequent actions. Rather, as we saw in Chapters Three and Four, CA has developed understandings based upon a methodology which analyses how actions are constituted in the sequential treatment of the talk. It is this, and not how one participant frames something they say, which guides the interpretation.

It is worth noting, however, some of the features which often constitute and distinguish an action as a warning in speech. Warnings are often constructed as predictions of future events and the probable outcome for the warning recipient. They also commit the speaker to some future course of action, and are often produced through conditional phrases such
as 'if...then' constructions (see Levinson, 1983: 240). Sacks (1992, I: 354) in fact contrasts two examples of this type when he examines how youngsters discuss the perils and pleasures of driving fast cars in his well-known 'hotrodding' lectures. He distinguishes between different invocations of the sources of authority involved in providing warnings such as 'If you step across this line I'll punch you in the face' as compared to 'If you hit me again, I'll tell my father'. As we shall see below, and in subsequent chapters, social work often involves paying close attention to distinguishing personal from agency responsibility when such accountable actions are performed.

The passage I have selected, then, is provided to illustrate how the participants' interaction gives shape to the sequence and how it helps to constitute its meaning for them. It involves an interaction in which the social worker topicalises the issue of the removal of the children over a number of turns. His constructions of the parents' responsibility and of the situation their relationship has reached is not met by clear acknowledgement of this from the parents. So we may ask ourselves what might this sort of passage reveal about how social workers and parents handle, in their discussions, such crucial topics as the removal of the parents' children and what sorts of sequences of interaction might be produced as a result.

The data

The following is taken from the same meeting as the extract used in the Introduction. It involved a male social worker (Sw) and 'Lucy' and
'Mark', the parents of three pre-school children. 'Susanna' and 'Jason' were at nursery at the time of the meeting; 'Alan', the youngest child sat on Mark's lap during part of the session. The parents had both had allegations made against them for causing non-accidental injuries to their children in the recent past. The interview, which was held at their flat, had been arranged by the social worker following concerns raised the previous day by other family members about the welfare of the children when left alone with Mark. The following extract is taken from lines 322 to 391 of the longer transcript provided in Appendix III. The following conversation took place about seven minutes into the session.

1. [ALM:I: 7-8]

1 Sw: .hh if if it was another family if you viewed it from outside an sort of looked at another family
2 an [the [social worker going in there=
3 Lucy: [mm
4 Mark: [*ooooo(gh)ooooohhhhhhhhhhh* ((?stretching))
5 Sw: =an not bothering that the children were being injured while he did the other work
6 (0.4)
7 Lucy: yeh
8 Sw: you'd be sa:ying,(..) >hang on a minute
9 that isn't right
10 they should be protecting the children as well.<
11 (0.2)
12 Lucy: ye:h
13 Sw: .hh an that's very much
14 (0.6)
15 Sw: where we're at=there's a like a two pronged attack I have to ensure.
16 (0.8)
17 Sw: an the Department has: to ensure,(.) by law
18 an (.) because that's the way we operate
19 Sw: .hh that the children are safe.
20 (0.4)
21 Lucy: mhm
22 Sw: that's the <first an foremost thing>
23 (1.0)
24 Sw: .hhh and if
25 (0.6)
26 Sw: we can't ensure that
then we have to ensure it another way.<n
right
okay it is on it is on that basis it's that big.
(1.2)
an (.) it isn't
you know I I remember
you saying last week Mark that you know if I took
yu kids away you'd never forgive me,
Mark: I wouldn't.
(0.6)
but (.) I'm not going to take the children away
or the Department isn't I (.) myself I don't
personally have that power but . hhh
the Department wouldn't consider that
(0.8)
unless you did something
(0.4)
to make it happen=do you see what I mean
(.)
Lucy: mh[m
[it's like a >criminal blaming the policeman cos
he got arrested< .hhh "you know" if you don't
leave the children (.) alone.
(0.4)
with one (.) parent,
(0.4)
ptan if there's no injuries to the children=we're
not going to take the children.
(0.8)
Lucy: ri[:ght
[into care (.) y'know int'accommodation
Lucy: mhm
.hh that's not (.) where we're at we're we're at
situation where we would (.) try (.) to seek
to help you,
(.)
Lucy: mhm
>to ensure that< (.) that wouldn't have to happen

SOME PRELIMINARY COMMENTS: professional cautiousness and co-operation

In the introduction to 'Talk at Work', Drew and Heritage (1992b) note that displays of caution and indirectness are regular features of many institutional settings. We saw this exemplified in some of the material
of the last chapter. An initial examination of Extract 1 indicates that this finding applies to the way in which the particular segment of social work interaction proceeds as well.

This is identifiable in a series of features of the extract. We can first note how the sequence involves over thirty turns before the social worker completes his exposition. These turns are punctuated in the main by what appear to be no more than fairly minimal acknowledgements from the parents which do not make requests for more discussion of the topic.

The information provided by the social worker also unfolds across the turns piece by piece. For example, the introduction of items such as injury to the children (lines 6-7) and ways to 'ensure' their protection (line 12) are followed first by the mention in general terms of social work roles and measures to be taken. Only in the later stages does the sequence move to present details of the actual issue of removing these children from their parents.

Some of the lexical items used and repeated across the passage, most obviously the phrase 'have to ensure', also depict the social worker's, and 'the Department's' activities in terms which build up an impression of the professional system's careful and accountable approach. The talk is constructed in a way which minimises the notion that the personal choice of the worker figures in the actions that might be taken. We can detect both of these features in the following section for example:
The social worker's delivery here is in a slow and considered style with frequent pauses and stresses. The reflexivity of the sequence is also noteworthy. By orientating to the provision of a detailed explanation of the social work task the social worker is also working up, as his activity, the nature of the relationship between worker and client. It is one in which careful, attentive explanation and open sharing of the roles and responsibilities is made visible. It also displays for the clients how the facilitating of their understanding is a goal of the social worker as well as other activities associated with warning and the allocation of blame.

**Accomplishing a warning**

Before proceeding further, I want to distinguish within the sequence some features which contribute to the way the social worker administers a specific warning. My focus here will not be on how warnings are produced; rather it will be on how they are softened and managed in various ways. Suffice it to say that the basic form of the warning that is available - not fully spelled out - has an if X then Y character. That is, the parents are being warned that if they injure their children then their children will be taken into care.
I will take the segments from lines 42 to 49 and then from lines 50 to 59 to illustrate how the activity actually proceeds.

42 Sw: but (. ) I'm not going to take the children away
43 or the Department isn't I (. ) myself I don't
44 personally have that power but .hhh
45 the Department wouldn't consider that
46 (0.8)
47 Sw: unless you did something
48 (0.4)
49 Sw: to make it happen=do you see what I mean

Following from our preliminary discussion, we can note here the indirect way in which the action, which begins to unfold at line 45, is being set up. Rather than issuing the warning directly, it is done partly through a double denial both of the worker's personal agency ("I don't personally have that power") and of the possibility of the removal of the children being initiated by the Social Services:

45 Sw: the Department wouldn't consider that
46 (0.8)
47 Sw: unless you did something
48 (0.4)
49 Sw: to make it happen=do you see what I mean

By this point in the sequence, the specification of exactly what the parents must avoid doing has not been made. A similar reticence is detectable in an earlier part of the same discussion (see Appendix III, lines 57 to 149). There, the idiomatic phrase 'the troops will be going over the hill' warns the parents indirectly:

2. [ALM 1:2]

57 Sw: now I do have to emphasise
58 (0.2)
59 Sw: as I was saying to Lucy you know
60 Mark: °yeh°
61 Sw: .hh tha' if
62 (0.6)
63 Sw: you know if anything had 'appened
64 (2.2)
65 Sw: y'know the troops will be going over the hill
66 basically=
67 Mark: =which they didn't
68 (0.8)
69 Sw: °yeh° it'll be
70 (1.2)
71 Sw: this is (. ) represents like a last chance= yeh?

The reason for the speaker's warning then becomes further clarified in the next part of the turn:

72 (2.2)
73 Sw: there's bin lots of times when (. ) you know
74 the children 'ave got injured
75 (1.8)
76 Sw: an' we're trying to work with you=okay Mark?

But it is not until another series of ten or so turns have elapsed that the potential actions of the Department are confirmed:

3. [ALM:I:3.]

145 Sw: so if the children are left alone
146 (2.4)
147 Sw: then we would consider that a very risky situation
148 an' one which we would have to consider removing
149 the children on

There is a strong resemblance between this and the patterning of our target extract which continues as follows:
Let us briefly compare the warnings as provided at the two different points in the meeting. First, there is an explicit reference to what is expected of the warning recipient in terms of both avoiding leaving the children alone and the active promotion of their safety. Second, both contain conditional constructions often associated with warning sequences and in both cases the linkeage is formulated between the recipients' proscribed behaviours and the responses of the Department and the current speaker as a representative of that agency.

As noted above, in our target sequence, the warning is constructed as a denial:

[From extract 1]

58 Sw: if there's no injuries to the children=we're not going to take the children.

Whereas in the earlier warning it is provided in a less hedged form:
However, in both cases, the warning is provided as a general state of affairs for the parents as warning recipients to avoid. The responsibility is constructed in a passive form (‘if there's no injuries’, ‘if the children are left alone’) where the consequences of the circumstances being warned about then becomes non-negotiable and required by the Department. Hence, the activities to which the warnings are being linked are made to seem like inevitable consequences and the moral distance between the warner and receiver of the warning is played down. This is something which has also been examined by Sacks. He suggests that

if one is attempting to get a set of persons to modify the behaviour of some others who would stand in opposition - or who certainly stand in no commitment - to the set of rules you hold, then you want to be able to permit those who are going to espouse those rules to come on as perfectly well understanding the circumstances of those they're talking to, perhaps even affiliating with them, but in any event, not at all committed to the correctness or the moral rightness of the positions they're espousing (Sacks, 1992, I: 194)

The warning then which we have briefly compared appear to be produced in a way which attends to the relationship between professional and client.
We will now begin to widen our analysis to consider some further ways in which this relationship is managed across the sequence.

IDENTITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

The theme which underlies much of the remainder of the chapter is how the caution and indirectness present in the sequence contain a rhetorical dimension. I shall aim to analyse how the descriptions of the participant's identities are developed out of this theme. Such constructive work will be shown to be geared towards shifting responsibility onto the client to accept social work help as the only way that they can be seen to protect their children.

'Identity' is here considered not as a pre-existing feature of persons but as something worked up and managed during the course of the dialogue. It is talk's product rather than precondition (cf Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). This conceptualisation is in line with much of the work in discursive and rhetorical approaches to social psychology discussed earlier. It contrasts with cognitive perspectives focussing on empirical phenomena as originating in attributes (such as identity) examined outside of the contexts in which they are talked about (Edwards, 1995; Edwards and Potter, 1992). We can get more of a sense of the approach I want to take now if we look in more detail at one particular section from Extract 1.
4. [ALM: I: 7]

37 Sw: you know I I remember
38 you saying last week Mark that you know if I took
39 yu kids away you'd never forgive me,
40 Mark: I wouldn't.
41 (0.6)
42 Sw: but (. ) I'm not going to take the children away
43 or the Department isn't I (. ) myself I don't
44 personally have that power but .hhh
45 the Department wouldn't consider that
46 (0.8)
47 unless you did something
48 (0.4)
49 to make it happen=do you see what I mean
50 (. )
51 Lucy: mh[m
52 Sw: [it's like a >criminal blaming the policeman cos
53 he got arrested< .hhh "you know" if you don't
54 leave the children (. ) alone.
55 (0.4)
56 Sw: with one parent,
57 (0.4)
58 Sw: ptan if there's no injuries to the children=we're
59 not going to take the children.

Immediately preceding this point in the sequence, the social worker had
introduced his and the (Social Services) Department's general
responsibility for keeping the children safe. However, the delicate
interactional problem of topicalising the actual removal of the children
is attended to only when we reach the turns of this extract.

The introduction of the topic of removal is done through a report of what
Mark had previously said (lines 37 to 39). There are some important
features of this version which can be connected with our interest in the
functional orientation of such constructions of identity. I will take
these features under the following two sections. In the first , I will
examine the ways in which a 'warning-implicated' identity for the parents
can be shown to originate in the early turns of Extract 2. The next
section will then trace how the other versions of parental attributes are
occasioned across the passage as a whole.

THE PRODUCTION OF A WARNING-IMPLICATED IDENTITY

By describing how Mark would blame the social worker were he to lose his children, the social worker also makes available the inference that the father has a strong desire to keep his children. As we shall see later, this constitutes perhaps a shared cultural assumption (cf. Garfinkel, 1967). The social worker might expect all appropriate parents to have this attitude towards their children: being a good parent involves wanting to be their primary carer. The social worker's 'assessment' of Mark is then confirmed in the next turn at line 40, where Mark's 'I wouldn't' agreement occurs in a common preferred format without delay or qualification (cf. Pomerantz, 1984a).

Following the work of Drew (1987) on how recipients deal with being teased, we can propose a series of other features associated with Mark's identity as it is occasioned here in an activity sequence involving blaming and warning. Drew's paper describes how teases rely for their effect upon the prior achievement in the sequence of talk of the possible application of the 'tease-implicated identity' to the recipient of this action. In accomplishing the teasing, the sequence provides a deviant identity as a joking alternative to an identity claimed by, or attributable to, the individual at a prior point in the sequence. So in order for the teasing to be brought off, an ordinary, non-deviant identity must first be produced within the sequence for, or by, the recipient.

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In the following example from Drew's paper, the tease depends for its effect upon the minimal identity of an ordinary person enjoying some relaxation (arrow A below) which contrasts with the deviant alternative, of a (lazy) individual wasting their time by watching whatever happens to be on the television (arrow B). Del has just called at Paul's house:

5. [From Drew, 1987: 226]

Del: What are you doing at home.
(1.7)
A → Paul Sitting down watching the television.
Del: huh hhh
B → Del: Watching n-hghn h you-nghn (0.4) watching daytime stories uh? (.)
Paul: No I was just watching this: uh:m: (0.7)
.h.khh you know one of them game shows,

What is of particular interest given our concern with how warning sequences might be achieved, is that teasing appears to be an interactional means of managing tension and potential hostility between people in a way which affirms what they share in common. Teases typically occur in sequences where a person makes inflated claims or complaints about a particular matter. As Drew illustrates, it is this sort of material in the prior speaker's turns which generates the setting for the subsequent tease.

There appears to be a parallel between such teasing environments and the trajectory of Extract 2. As we have discussed, Mark and the social worker's interaction here begins with the agreement sequence about how
Mark would 'never forgive' the social worker were his children to be removed. This then leads on to a sequence which begins by likening Mark's threat to blame the social worker to a different, and stereotypically adversarial relationship at line 52:  

52 Sw: it's like a >criminal blaming the policeman cos  
53 he got arrested< .hhh "you know" if you don't  
54 leave the children (.) alone.  
55 (0.4)  
56 Sw: with one parent,  
57 (0.4)  
58 Sw: ptan if there's no injuries to the children=we're  
59 not going to take the children.  

As noted, a tease-implicated identity can only be produced if a normal identity can first be shown to apply to the person. The latter is minimally required if the subsequent tease is to work. By the same token, we can now see how the social worker's warning pivots on the achievement of a contrasting identity produced for Mark at this juncture. Saying he would 'never forgive' the social worker, which made available his identity as a 'typical caring parent', is now contrasted with the 'warning-implicated' identity of the potential wrongdoer and abuser of his children who is being told of the consequences of breaking the rules. 

We might finally observe the presence of another feature in the formulation and delivery of the warning sequence above. It appears that the recognizability of teases is regularly provided for in the exaggerated constructions which are used in the material through which the tease gets produced. (We can get an impression of this if we consider the description 'daytime stories' which was used to tease Paul in the example provided above which, in its exaggeration, perhaps brings to mind the childishness and coddling of a child's story at bedtime.)
Sometimes these constructions of more extreme activities are produced in formulaic phrases. This phenomenon is present in the way the social worker implicates the warning identity, with his comparison of Mark's complaint to the criminal blaming the policeman.

**THE OCCASIONING OF RESPONSIBILITY**

37 Sw: you know I I remember 
38 you saying *last* week Mark that you know if I took 
39 yu kids away you'd never forgive me, 
40 Mark: I wouldn't.

A feature of the social worker's turn which begins at line 37 is how it raises blaming and responsibility in an indirect way through a report. Instead of at the outset denying his primary agency in removing the children, the social worker attributes this view of his role to Mark. So rather than indicating that the topic of removal of the children is the sole one for clarification, it also indirectly suggests that Mark's misconception needs to be addressed.

The issue of responsibility is also attended to in the social worker's precise formulation of the time when Mark originally raised this blame-related topic. 'I remember you saying last week' takes us back to a relatively recent occasion but one that occurred before the current allegations being investigated by the social worker at the meeting. This indirectly raises the implication that Mark has had the chance to discuss these matters before and that, given the allegations that have since been made, it is not yet possible to discount the possibility that it is Mark's actions, rather those of the social worker which still need to be the topic of discussion.
We will return to examine in more detail just how responsibility in social work is constructed and managed through the practices of 'footing' in Chapters Six and Seven. However, I want to look more widely now at the process by which responsibility gets occasioned across the whole sequence. Sacks provides a useful analysis of the way in which a series of actions involving attempts to persuade someone to do something may occasion various 'operative identities' in the two parties. He uses this concept to examine how actions (for example requests) and the way they are modified may be brought about by the recipient's rejection of a previous action like an offer. The quote from his 'Lectures on Conversation' provided earlier gives an indication of how a particular family of activities, such as commissives, may be sequentially performed and contextualised within particular sequences. However in order to help unpack the way these actions get occasioned and then re-presented, I will first need to describe one of his illustrations of this concept in more detail.

The following is an extract from a longer sequence provided in one of Sacks's lectures (Sacks, 1992, II: 318-331). The sequence comes from a conversation at the dinner table involving Ethel and Ben, their son Bill and Max, who is Ethel and Ben's stepfather-in-law. At the meal, various suggestions are made to Max that he should try some herring to eat. One of the areas of focus for Sacks's analysis concerns the different speech acts directed towards Max and the way they implicate a series of local identities for him which have implications for his family's responsibility. These are linked to the participants' awareness of the
fact that Max’s wife has recently died and that this may have implications for how they must look after him. The following is a slightly simplified extract in which for brevity I have edited out some of the turns. I have retained sections in which the main attempts to persuade Max occur.

6. [From Sacks, 1992, II: 318-320]

Ben: You haf to uh, Uh, (1.0)
Ben: Hey this is the best herring you ever tasted I'll tellyuh that right now. (1.5)

1 → Ethel: Bring some out so the m- Max c'd have some too.=
Ben: Oh boy
1 → Max: = I don'wan'ny
((7 turns omitted))
Ben: S:: -col' water fish is always better.
Max: ( ) when they uh, can it.
Ethel: MMMm it's
Ben: Cold water fish is-

2 → Ethel: Ouu Max have a piece.
Ben: This is
Ethel: Geschmacht
Ben: the best you ever tasted.
((4 turns omitted))
Ethel: It's duh::licious. It's geschmacht Max.
Max: What?
Ethel: Geschma:cht,
(0.5)

3 → Ethel: Max, one piece.
3 → Max: I d'n want.
(4.0)

4 → Ben: Yer gonna be- You better eat sumpn becuz yer g'be hungry before we get there Max,
4 → Max: So.
(0.5)

5 → Ben: C'mon now I don' wanche t'get sick.
5 → Max: Get there I'll have something.
5 → Ben: Huh?
5 → Max: When I get there I'll eat.
6 → Ben: Yeah butche better eat sumpn before. Y'wan'lay down'n take a nap?=
6 → Max: =No,
Ben: C'mon.
(1.0)
Ben: Y'wan sit up'n take a nap? B'cuz I'm g'n take one.
Sacks proposes that the pattern of attempts to elicit an acceptance, each followed by Max's refusal, is displayed in the construction of local identities which operate on the recipients' interpretations of the refusal as he persistently turns the family members down. These sequential interpretations shape the subsequent actions by his relatives as they display their responsibility for him. Given that he is now more dependent on his family following the death of his wife, Sacks invites us to interpret Max's resistance as occasioning the escalating sequence. So the initial offer at arrow 1 above becomes variously formatted as a request, (arrows 2, 3 and 7), a warning (arrows 4 and 8), a threat (arrow 5) and a command (arrow 6).

As these actions are produced, Max's refusal has become interpretable by the family members in terms of his evolving local identity which elicits these increasingly desperate-sounding attempts to get him to agree.

Thus, to use Sacks's identity ascriptions, Max comes to represent 'Just a person sitting at the table' through 'recently widowed man' then 'stubborn old man' and then 'vulnerable old relative'.

I want to suggest that Sacks's approach to this analysis comprises a
useful heuristic device for our examination of my target sequence, although I do not intend to try to push the comparison with Sacks's piece too far. If we look again at the early turns in the social work extract, we find that it is locally concerned with building the professional system's responsibility for protecting the children. These turns then get produced as the upshot of his argument:

7. [ALM:I:7]

15 Sw: .hh an that's very much
16 (0.6)
17 Sw: where we're at=there's a
18 like a two pronged attack I have to ensure.
19 (0.8)
20 Sw: an the Department has: to ensure,(.) by law
21 an (.) because that's the way we operate
22 .hh that the children are safe.
23 (0.4)
24 Lucy: mhm
25 Sw: that's the <first an foremost thing>
26 (1.0)
27 Sw: .hhh and if
28 (0.6)
29 Sw: we can't ensure that
30 (0.6)
31 Sw: then we >have to ensure it another way.<
32 Lucy: right
33 Sw: okay it is on it is on that basis it's that big.
34 (1.2)
35 Sw: an (.) it isn't

In the above, the social worker's descriptions of his responsibility are not verbally ratified by Mark. Lucy produces minimal acknowledgements which, as we saw when we examined Heritage and Sefi's paper on health visiting, do not treat the information provided as 'news'. In parental treatments of unwanted advice, the sorts of unmarked ratifications produced by Lucy tend to be associated with passively resisting the actions of the other speaker.
In Sacks's sequence Max's refusals repeatedly elicit an upgraded attempt at persuasion. We can discern a similar process at work in the exchanges of Extract 3. If we look closely at the social worker's turns at this point and the seconds that follow them, we see that there are a series of constructions which strongly emphasise the children's safety as the paramount responsibility. The presentation of these items is achieved in a short series of distinct phrases which are delivered with marked changes of pace and stress. Each of these utterances is followed by extended pauses in which next speaker ratification does not occur. Such design features are associated with sequences in which there is an orientation to the pursuit of a next-speaker confirmation in the subsequent turn (see Pomerantz, 1984c). The segments of this what might be termed 'warning-designed' sequence are arrowed below:

(we have to ensure)
22  →  .hh that the children are safe
23  (0.4)
24 Lucy: mhm
25 Sw: →  that's the <first and foremost thing>
26  (1.0)
27 Sw:  .hhh and if
28  (0.6)
29 Sw: →  we can't ensure that
30  (0.6)
31 Sw: →  then we >have to ensure it another way.<
32 Lucy: right
33 Sw: →  okay it is on it is on that basis it's that big.
34  (1.2)
35 Sw:  an (.) it isn't

Following Sacks, we might consider that such warning-implicated constructions are provided to be acknowledged as such by the couple. Their failure to occasion this response provides an interactional explanation for how the activity sequence moves towards the construction of an alternative identity for the parents beginning at about line 35.
Here, the social worker changes tack and moves into the sequence which we examined earlier (see extract 4).

It will be recalled that in doing this, the social worker begins by reporting on Mark's avowal that he would 'never forgive' the social worker for the removal of his children (line 39), a version which Mark confirms. I have argued how this exchange enables the production of a contrasting warning-implicated identity to begin.

We can see then that the interactional basis for such a shift lies in the parents' implicit rejection of the social worker's attempts to get his warning ratified, just as Max's resistance elicits further attempts to get his co-operation. In the remaining section of this chapter, I will try and pull together the threads of my argument and consider this in the light of some of the research on social worker accountability which we reviewed earlier.

IDENTITY, RESISTANCE AND 'THE RULE OF OPTIMISM'

We have seen some close parallels between the operation of institutional exchanges and the ways that actions, such as teasing and commissioning, are done in examples of talk from ordinary settings. Presently I want to consider how our analysis might link up with some of the research which we looked at earlier when we considered ethnographic studies of social work. In particular, I shall make a connection between our analysis of the activities of participants in face-to-face interaction and the
explanatory framework for social work practice put together in Dingwall et al.'s (1983) study. This will prepare the way for a fuller enquiry as we pursue other analytic themes in subsequent chapters. But first, let us summarise the main points of the analysis so far.

The relationship between identity and warning

As we have explored, identity can be treated as an occasioned phenomenon which is produced as part of the overall design of a sequence. A rhetorical approach to the social psychology of identity requires an analysis of how identity constructions contribute to the action orientation of the (spoken) text. As Potter and Wetherell (1987: 187) recommend, "There is room here for an approach to the perennial social psychological issue of persuasion in terms of the process of interaction between producer and recipient, and the detailed linguistic format of the persuasive text."

We have examined how the social worker at the start of our extract attempts to enlist the parents' co-operation by displaying his orientation to an open sharing of his roles and responsibilities. In aligning with them is this way, the sequence implicates the clients' identity as being like any ordinary caring parents. But this later poses a problem for the interactional sequence.

We have seen various indications of the way that caution and indirectness, are orientated to in the target social work sequence. It
appears that the early, warning-orientated turns of the professional are not ratified by the parents perhaps partly because of the indirect way in which the 'warning' is delivered. But I have further argued that part of the explanation for the indeterminate responses of the parents, and the subsequent trajectory of the sequence can be found in the locally-achieved context. Such an explanation represents a potentially radical departure from conceptions of resistance, examined in Chapter Two, which are based upon cognitive models of individual functioning. These would adduce reasons for parental resistance based upon motivational or perhaps cognitive deficiencies in the parents.

The indications from the participants' own orientations in the sequence suggest that a different, warning-implicated identity must first be achieved within the turns. The pivotal nature of the turns describing Mark's statement that he would 'never forgive' the social worker were his children to be taken away is an important feature of the analysis (see lines 37-40). It was argued that the social worker's version at this point provided a normal parenting identity which is aligned with by Mark in his next turn. It is following this ratification that a deviant identity ascription emerges in a turn which then proceeds to produce a warning sequence.

52  Sw:  it's like a >criminal blaming the policeman cos he
53        got arrested< .hhh "you know" if you don't
54      leave the children (.) alone.
55 (0.4)
56     with one (.) parent,
57 (0.4)
58     ptan if there's no injuries to the children=we're
59     not going to take the children.
Here, then, the parents are finally identified as potential abusers and the terms are specified under which the children will be able to remain with them.

PARENTAL INCORRIGIBILITY AND NATURAL LOVE

In this final section, we will consider briefly some connections between my example of social work talk-in-interaction and Dingwall et al.'s concept of 'the rule of optimism'. It will be recalled that their study indicated the sorts of justification and excuses that professionals tended to use for maintaining or separating families. Justifications for taking action to remove children clustered around two sorts of identified problem presented by the family, one of which was termed 'parental incorrigibility'. Similarly the excuses for not removing children in what were sometimes seen as potentially abusing home circumstances included situations where the parents exhibited 'natural' caring feelings for their offspring. As I shall now consider, versions of themes very like these are represented in the social work extract. I shall then go on to examine how it is not just their presence that is of note, but the way that they are used as interactional resources. In effect, then, they become part of the way that social work in child protection gets 'done' through this extract.

'Natural love', in which the essentially human feelings of nurturance and desire to keep the parents' offspring safe, is something which we see being constructed for the parents in the opening part:
The argument that I have made is that this construction of the recipients as being ordinary, caring parents is a rhetorical feature of the interaction in the social worker's pursuit of co-operation with them. It seems in the passage that the parents are being enlisted as potential members of a wider community ('if you viewed it from outside') to justify the means by which child protection is done and backed by the legal and societal obligations that this places the social worker under. 'You'd be saying ... that isn't right' claims an expectation that both he and the parents share membership of the category to whom social workers are accountable in 'going in' to families' lives and doing the 'bothering' that 'children were being injured'.

So the parents are recruited to confirm that the social worker's role is one which they too share. These parents, as ordinary parents, far from resenting his presence, actually require that he take on a proactive role in protecting children. Moreover, his attribution of the way members might hypothetically react to social workers who don't attend to the children's needs as well, captured in the down-to-earth reasoning of the phrase 'hang on a minute that isn't right' further moves it into the arena of ordinary, everyday parental expectation rather than into some optional, esoteric practice (cf. Wooffitt, 1992).
'Parental incorrigibility' or lack of parental co-operation, which, as we have seen, Dingwall et al. found to be an ubiquitous source of explanation when removing children is also a resource deployed within the extract. This is most clearly indicated in the following passage from later in the sequence:

Sw: if you don't leave the children alone with one parent an if there's no injuries to the children we're not going to take the children...into care y'know into accommodation that's not where we're at we're at the situation where we would try to seek to help you to ensure that that wouldn't have to happen. (from lines 53 to 69; slightly simplified).

We can note that here the warning to the parents is constructed to combine two conditions which they must adhere to. They must not injure their children but they must also comply with the social worker expectation that they don't leave the children in the care of either parent on their own; in other words they must demonstrate their co-operation.

I have argued that the turns at lines 37 to 40 hold a particular significance for the interaction, and for the subsequent trajectory of the sequence. The themes identified by Dingwall et al. are distilled at this point in the discussion:

37 Sw: you know I I remember
38 you saying last week Mark that you know if I took
39 yu kids away you'd never forgive me,
40 Mark: I wouldn't.

We have already discussed earlier in the chapter how the social worker's 'you'd never forgive me' version of Mark's feelings towards his children also retains a favourable, caring sense of the father's attitude as a
parent. Following Drew's work on teasing, we saw how this became a rhetorically significant first, and pivotal step in the way a warning subsequently gets achieved in and through the production of a different warning-implicated identity.

Let us now consider how the theme of parental co-operation is articulated as part of the rhetorical design of the passage. This potential problem of parental incorrigibility is made relevant at this point in the dialogue through the presence of two features of the utterance. The first of these can be discerned with the help of some basic findings from Conversation Analytic research concerning how co-operation is pursued. Sacks et al.'s paper (1974) on turn-taking rules specified how conversation is organised to deal with the problem of the selection of the next speaker. These rules operate partly to facilitate the seamless interaction which characterises much conversation. Gaps are minimised between speakers and often there is little difficulty in the next speaker beginning their turn. There tends to be minimal interruption at the places where a transition of speaker is likely (see, for example, Nofsinger, 1991). One of the ways for the current speaker to get a response is to name the recipient for whom her own turn is designed. This occurs in the above. Mark is directly named in the utterance (line 38) and this targets him as a potential next speaker, or makes his failure to respond an accountable matter in the talk.

In association with the pursuit of co-operation, we can note that there is some evidence from earlier in the sequence that his engagement is indeed in doubt.
Sw: hh if if it was another family if you viewed it from outside. an sort of looked at another family an the soc[ial worker going in there=

Lucy: [mm

Mark: ["oooohhooohhhhhhh" ((stretching?))

Sw: =an not bothering that the children were being injured while he did the other work

At line 5, Mark produces a vocalisation associated with someone stretching, a behaviour associated with relaxation, and sometimes also associated with less than full engagement, or even boredom, with the activities going on around them. We can speculate that this display, interpretable as passive resistance, may be another feature of the shaping of the subsequent trajectory of the passage. As we have already seen, the social worker (who is doing most of the talking) tries to work up to an action which, being highly significant for the parent-professional relationship, is one for which the social worker is seeking acknowledgement. Interestingly, in the next turn, begun at line 6 in overlap with Mark's 'stretching', the social worker makes a reference to a (hypothetical) social worker who was 'not bothering' (line 6). This topicalisation of lack of engagement is perhaps a further indication of the interpretive work the social worker is engaged in.

The social worker's turn also raises the topic of client blaming in a way which implies that the maintenance of a partnership may be a future problem. 'I remember you saying... if I took yu kids away you'd never forgive me' raises this difficulty. A client who harboured an unforgiving attitude could not be expected to co-operate with the professional. However, the social worker's construction of the way Mark made this attitude known is also noteworthy. 'I remember you saying'
equates with the original conversation taking place in a face-to-face meeting between client and professional. It implicates the client as having issued a threat (or warning); this adds a further issue for establishing future co-operation between them.

Summary

In this chapter, we have examined some details of a piece of institutional, child protection related talk in which a social worker is engaged in a delicate interaction with some parents. Delicacy, which is manifested in various forms of indirectness and caution, is a feature of many work settings where the relationship between client and professional is orientated to as part of a wider set of institutional goals and tasks. In the course of the chapter, we examined how this was discernable in the actual pattern of the conversational exchanges. We also demonstrated some of the ways in which such features might contribute to the instantiation of social work as a potentially distinctive institutional practice.

Analysis of the extract suggested how a preliminary consideration of themes of 'care' and 'control' might be orientated to in actual social work interaction. The dilemma for the participants in this meeting appeared to condense around the interactional problem of maintaining co-operation whilst issuing a warning using the same set of conversational resources. We tried to show how this generated a difficulty at a local turn-by-turn level. It appeared that 'identity', as an occasioned feature was constructed to display two different sets of
possible characteristics for the parents. In order to 'warn' the parents, it was necessary to modify their 'operative identities' (Sacks, 1992) previously built up to display their natural caring qualities. This move was accomplished in a manner which resembled the ways that teasing gets done in everyday talk.

These two building blocks of identity also figure strongly in Dingwall et al.'s analysis (1983, 1995). They put together a framework for retaining or dispensing with the 'rule of optimism' in assessing clients. The themes of natural love for children and doubts about co-operation with professionals both appeared to figure strongly in the exchanges of the piece as discursive accomplishments.

We can conclude this initial empirical analysis by noting how, by the end of the passage, the social worker does not appear to have sacrificed the pursuit of partnership in referring to circumstances in which the children would be taken away from their mother and father. At the conclusion, he is still able to infer that there remains a professional motivation to co-operate with the parents:

64  Sw:  hh that's not (.). where we're at we're we're at
65  the situation where we would (.). try (.). to seek
66  to help you,

This seems to be moving both professional and client towards a mutual sense of responsibility for child protection although the final line still retains echoes of the 'control' option:

69  Sw:  to ensure that (.). that wouldn't have to happen
3. It is often the case that the accomplishment of a warning involves the provision of an account. Compare, for example, the orientation to warning embodied in signs which try to exclude the public from a tract of private woodland. Two examples could be the typical 'Keep Out' board and the more creative version 'Keep Out. Adders'. In the second of these, the recipient's understanding is enlisted as part of the action performed by the sign. Which version is more effective may depend upon the attributes of the person being warned, such as their attitude to, and interest in, things herpetological.

4. Sacks (1992, Lecture 6) as one of the strands in his wider analysis of how ordinary members' actions are made accountable, notes the systematic ambiguity of the use of the term 'you' in conversations in spoken English. He points out how 'you' can refer not just to the participants present in an interaction but to the recipient (and also the speaker) as members representative of a wider population. The first person plural, 'we' can also be used in this way although it can contrastingly be used, or heard as excluding the person(s) being spoken to. The potential significance of such changes of footing is further developed in Chapters Six and Seven.
CHAPTER SIX

FOOTINGS AND SIMILAR DEVICES USED IN CO-OPERATION WITH CLIENTS

The management of professional collaboration and collusion with families

So far in the study, we have seen examples of the ways in which social work participants in one particular meeting deal with the matters which arise in the course of their conversations. Instead of providing straightforward expression of their viewpoints and attitudes, the speakers appear regularly to deal with the topics of their conversation in an indirect manner. For example, presentations of the actions that the social worker might take to protect a parent's children were done in a way that displayed an interactional caution. Information was introduced over a series of turns with opportunities provided for the parents to ratify or ask questions of what might be done.

Such findings build upon published studies which we discussed earlier where similar phenomena were present. The professionals in Maynard's 'perspective display' analyses for example tend to systematically delay their assertions. Similarly, the psychiatrists in Bergmann's research rendered their versions of an individual's problematic behaviour in ways which were hedged and proofed against a morally questionable interpretation by the hearer.
In this chapter, I want to lay the groundwork for examining how co-operation is pursued with social work clients and to look at some ways that participants deal with collaboration and collusion in the reports they provide. Chapter Seven will then go on to develop some of these ideas as I examine a particular sequence which recurs across my data and is associated with building up an alignment between professional and clients.

In order to begin our examination of these processes, we must first acquaint ourselves with some of the ways that participants can display their relationship to what is discussed as a conversation proceeds. Understanding the potential alignments of parties involved in spoken exchanges is made easier by an expansion of traditional categories such as 'speaker' and 'listener'. We shall be referring to the seminal work of Goffman (for example, 1981) in moving from what he argues are these imprecise and analytically unproductive notions to develop a more fruitful analysis of the positions achievable within mundane and institutional accounting practices.

Goffman's concept of footing

Goffman introduced the concept of footing to help understand the alignments that are possible when people take part in social interaction. He identified and began to classify the frameworks by which communication is organised. Building from the idea that there were a whole range of ways in which engagement in conversation is displayed, he expanded speaker and listener participation in interaction into more specific
'production formats' and 'reception roles' and showed the subtle ways that individuals take up and differentiate a stance towards others present. Footing was presented as the main device by which analysts could proceed to uncover the ever shifting patterns of participation in interactional activity.

A change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance. A change in our footing is another way of talking about a change in our frame for events. (Goffman, 1981:128).

These footing changes are a regular phenomenon of everyday and institutional interaction. Goffman's gives examples such as a teacher moving from instructing pupils to telling them off, or a politician beginning and completing a meeting by switching to more intimate and joking periods of small talk. Later commentators, notably Levinson (1988), have drawn attention to the incompleteness of Goffman's scheme and have developed his work to make some fruitful advances into our understanding of the subtle interpersonal arrangements that may be achieved between participants.

One aspect of footing that has received attention is the different alignments that participants display with respect to their own talk and that of others. In particular, Goffman noted that three main 'footings' were often available to speakers. He distinguished between the (a) animator, (b) author, and (c) principal of what is said. The
animator is the person who currently utters the words spoken. The agent who originated and composed the words of the speaker through which the beliefs and sentiments are expressed is known as the author. And finally, the party whose viewpoint or perspective is currently being conveyed via the utterance is termed the principal.

These categories of footing have been drawn on and refined in a number of recent papers (see, for example, Clayman, 1992; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Maynard, 1984; Potter, 1996b). I propose to take a short series of examples from my own corpus of data to illustrate the way these categories are used in social work talk. In particular, I shall be setting out to introduce some of the ways social worker-client alignment is managed. This will then allow us to move on to consider the way footing and footing shifts are involved in some institutional features of social work conversations. In this first extract, the three footing categories of animator, author and principal are not separated out, the speaker embodying them all at the same time.

1. [RM:1:1]

   Sw: cos I thought it was important to talk to you on your own

Here the social worker produces the utterance herself and is hence its animator. She displays what is said as a personal opinion ('I thought'); that is, in Goffman's terms she is its principal. There is also no indication that she is following a script of prearranged lines, so she is also likely to be treated as the author of what is said.
It is important to stress that these categories are used here as participants' concerns. That is, to say the speaker in extract 1 constructs their talk as principal ('I think') does not mean the analyst should be committed to the speaker being in fact the principal (cf. Potter, 1996a). For example, to say Clayman (1992) is considering the way footing categories are involved in the management of neutrality in television interviews does not require that the conversation analyst is committed to a position on whether the interviewer is actually neutral or not.

Our second example is also taken from the early section of the same meeting. The addressee for the social worker's comments in extract 1 is Marie, who is the only other person present as they talk (we should note however that the fact that the session was tape recorded means that we cannot say that the audience was limited just to the other person present when the words were uttered.) Marie is the mother of a child, David, who is referred to in later extracts and about whom there are child protection concerns. She refers to her former partner Ron in the following extract.

2. [RM:I:3]

1 Marie: cos I says to her I really did doubt
2 Sw: if Ron would have turned up anywa:y
3 Marie: mmm
4 Marie: with me being there .hhh he finds it hard
5 Marie: to stay in the same room as me

Whilst we can note here that two other individuals, 'Ron' and the 'her' of line 1, are referred to by the first speaker, it appears that she does not draw any distinctions between her roles as animator, author or
principal. However, another layer present within her utterance can be described as an example of what Goffman termed embedded footing. Marie refers to what she said to the unspecified female recipient in that previous discussion in her opening words 'cos I says to her'. She then presents the gist of what she actually said, beginning with the phrase at line 1 'I really did doubt'.

This embedding of the individual as a figure in the account she is reporting - the 'I's in extract 2 - is a pervasive, and potentially significant feature of spoken language because of the flexibility it permits in accounts which speakers provide. Adopting such footings allows a regulation of the relationships negotiated in the current interaction through these accounts of past activities of the speaker:

unrestricted displacement in time and place becomes possible, such that our reference can be to what we did, wanted, thought etc., at some distant time and place, when, incidentally, we were active in a social capacity we may currently no longer enjoy and identity we no longer claim. (Goffman, 1981: 149).

By this sort of reporting, the speaker, embedded as an actor in the reports has a powerful means of influencing the current talk as well. We can get an indication of this if we look at lines 4 and 5 of extract 2. In describing there how Ron 'finds it hard to stay in the same room as me', the speaker has produced a construction which is potentially relevant to how she might present issues of, say, blame and responsibility in negotiations with her social worker. As we shall see
later, embedded descriptions allow speakers to deal indirectly with matters of stake and motivation which are often at issue, and provide an important set of ways of achieving influence over the judgements that are made of them.

Let us now look at some examples where distinctions are made between the speaker's interests and those of other individuals - as authors and principals - whose positions are indicated via footing shifts across the course of a discussion. In the first of these, the source of a viewpoint is modified in the final lines of the extract quoted:

3. [RM:1:1]

1 Sw: I think David needs to have someone to talk to
2 I mean no one has listened to what he wants
3 Marie mmhm
4 Sw: cos my manager Jim Harford thinks
5 that (.) he needs someone for himself yeh?

In lines 1 and 2, the social worker animates a viewpoint about the needs of David (Marie's son). In lines 4 and 5, she then goes on to present a different principal for this view by attributing this viewpoint to her manager whom she then names. As Clayman (1992) has suggested, shifts of footing such as this often occur, where some contentious viewpoint has been presented. The contentious view can thereby be constructed as someone elses's opinion.

Our next extract provides another example of this, but one in which the introduction of a controversial notion is accompanied by a number of attributions concerning the authorship of the opinions being presented.
Here the social worker shifts from the original enquiry at line 1 to a viewpoint that is distanced from her own and describes a conflicting opinion in line 4. In this line, Ron is presented as holding the views expressed, and this is followed up with a voiced quotation from this source which claims that Marie is 'back on the booze'.

In this extract then, the speaker creates a distance between herself and the quoted opinion in a number of ways which serve to convey that these are not just conjectures on the current speaker's part. The partner's opinion is variously formulated as 'Ron feels', then 'he believes' and finally 'he said'. Not only do these reports serve to emphasise that these are Ron's and not the current speaker's views, but they also add increasing weight to the implicit claim that he really holds these opinions and it is not just, say, a rumour that is being passed on.

The factuality of the social worker's claims are further supported by the way that Ron's opinion is presented partly through the use of a phrase which is claimed to resemble one that he used. The social worker says
(and then partly repeats) that he said 'something like she's back on the booze' using phrasing and delivery possibly imitative of the original speaker as she does so. This further adds to the impression that this is a real opinion that she is presenting, which may be both harder to undermine and at the same time retains the implicit neutrality of the speaker with regard to what she has quoted (cf. Clayman, 1992; Wooffitt, 1992).

It is important to note that so far we have followed one particular avenue of enquiry developed from Goffman's footing concept. We have not examined the multiplicity of roles that can be distinguished when considering the reception of an utterance. As Goffman outlined, there are various ways of classifying these reception roles, and Levinson (1988) has made a more definitive (and elaborate) listing of these. We should also note that there have been other ways in which footing has been incorporated into describing the organisation of interaction.

Studies of Aids counselling sessions (Perakyla, 1995; Perakyla and Silverman, 1991; see also Hanks, 1990) have built upon the notion of footing in considering the typical pairings of speaker and hearer roles that tend to occur in such settings. They have noted the sorts of alternative alignments that tend to occur in different formats for such sessions, most typically in what they term the 'Interview' format and the 'Information Delivery' format. In the former, professional counsellors and their clients adopt and maintain an orientation to the alignments of Questioner and Answerer and in the latter as Speaker and Recipient. We shall be returning to some ideas linked to this work in the next chapter.
where I consider a particular sequence which recurs in my corpus of social work talk. However, I next want to examine some further ways in which social workers display, in their talk, a distinction between their own interests and those of other agencies.

Footing and externalisation

As we have seen, to understand what is going on in spoken interaction, the points at which footings change are often significant and serve as an important resource in managing responsibility for the things that are said and attributed to other speakers (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Clayman, 1992). The examples examined so far suggest that the changes are often clustered around points in the exchange where contentious items occur.

There are various other means by which the individual can manage the introduction and pursuit of conversational topics that may be contentious and present potential difficulties in achieving participant alignment. In this section, we will consider some examples of these. As we shall see, there is a close overlap with the previous examples of footing. However, in the following examples, some other ways of constructing a separation between the professional's own interests and that deriving from another source are considered.

We can track the management of this sort of distinction in the following piece from the meeting between Marie and her social worker at another
point where a controversial topic is under discussion. It occurs where
the social worker is talking about how her client's drinking habit could
be seen as a problem when it comes to a court case. As she reaches a
point where she describes how consideration had been given to removing
the mother's child from her, the source of this viewpoint is shifted
away from the individual worker and onto a less clearly specified agency.

5. [RM:I:19]

1  Sw:  there's there's there's a long enough history
2  (. ) of your drinking to make it look bad=
3  =an I have to be honest with you
4  (0.6)
5  Mo:  "mm"
6  Sw:  yeh I I mean I'm not going to be deliberately
7  writing in the report that this has been a major
8  problem because (I) in in in our opinion it hasn't
9  otherwise .hhh David would have been removed
10  Mo:  yeh
11  Sw:  yeh?
12  Mo:  "mhm"
13  Sw:  however
14  (1.0)
15  Sw:  I (. ) we we also can't say that it never happened=
16  Mo:  =yeh

There is a shift of emphasis here from the 'I' who will be the author of
the social worker's report in line 6 to the later versions of an
institutional consensus implicated in 'our opinion' (line 8) and later in
'we also can't say that it never happened' (line 15).

Another indication of the institutionally-orientated design of the
sequence is also detectable in the prosodic features of the turn
construction as well as these lexical shifts (see Drew and Heritage,
1992b). The modifications from the personal 'I' to a usage implicating a
departmental responsibility are preceded by a repair which produces the
modified version. At line 8, the repair is accompanied by repetition
and intonational stress on the newly-introduced position: '(I) in in in
our opinion'. The modification is in the same direction at line 15, and
is again accompanied by a slight disruption to the speaker's fluency
indicated by the repetition at the point of shift of position: 'I (.) we
we also can't say that it never happened'.

An even more subtle shift which draws on external sources in managing the
interactional alignments of participants occurs in the following extract
from Pomerantz (1984b). The author introduces the passage with the
information that a young man's long hair is a source of disapproval for
his mother. So when the discussion moves on to his friend's haircut,
this can be analysed for how participants deal, in their description of
another person's appearance, with a potential source of disagreement.

6. [from Pomerantz, 1984b: 622]

1  Mo:  is this the uh piece of sculpture one of your
2  friends made for you?
3  Son:  Yeah.
4  (2.5)
5  Son:  That's John. He cut his hair by the way.
6  Mo:  Oh he did?
7  Son:  Yeh.
8  Mo:  Do you like it?
9  Son:  Uh. Yeah. [(He looks)
10  Mo:  [I heard- uh, I read two or three
11  columns and I hear it over TV that it's becoming
12  old- it's becoming passe
13  (2.9)
14  Fa:  They what?
15  (1.5)
16  Mo:  The longer hair
17  Fa:  Which is John.
18  (1.0)
19  Son:  ((possibly suppressing laugh)) The guy with the
20  real long hair
21  Mo:  How sh- How short did he cut it
22  Son:  Very short. I mean, yih know
23  Mo:  Just a regular hair[cut
24  Son:  [-combable.
Pomerantz's study was primarily concerned with how competing claims to know something get warranted in conversation. As a way of building on Pomerantz's analysis, I want to use the extract to add some further distinctions to the ones which Goffman made.

To introduce some of these extra points then, we will select some features of extract 6 which are related to the way in which the mother achieves a distance between her interests and those of an external source. We will start by looking at how a warrant for this source is worked into the account beginning at line 10.

10  Mo: I heard- uh, I read two or three
11     columns and I hear it over TV that it's becoming
12     old- it's becoming passé

This turn can be considered for the work it does in pre-empting difficulties that might otherwise have arisen in the subsequent interaction. It does so by producing an account which gets modified so as to try to strengthen the positioning of the speaker in relation to a possibly contentious viewpoint. The mother's self repairs, such as 'I heard- uh, I read' at line 10 are interpretable as visible signs of the way in which she is working up her account to fit the activity sequence. (This might be contrasted with the view that they are merely evidence of speech performance errors for example). In order to show where the responsibility for this viewpoint lies, and to manage the speaker's own positioning with regard to this viewpoint, the construction of this turn displays the use of a number of features which may affect the inferences that are drawn by those involved in the interaction about the view it
First, in this turn the mother distinguishes sources for the view expressed that are external to the speaker herself. Despite the absence of clear discrimination of her own view, we can note that whilst the mother's opinion is left unclear, her turn performs further rhetorical work connected with the disagreement. The viewpoint she is expressing is given extra credibility by the consensus that is worked into it (Edwards and Potter, 1992). Two different media sources are cited and further, in the use of the expressions 'I hear' and 'it's becoming' (line 11), the impression is created of the regularity with which this view is currently being expressed. These expressions provide a 'scripted' account of how things are changing rather than implying that a single report is the source (Edwards, 1995).

A further point we can note is how the opinion which the mother conveys is done in a manner which implies the unmotivated way in which she found out about the change in hairstyle fashions. The construction of her turn makes available the inference that the critical information was not actively sought by her, but that she came across it. As we shall find in subsequent chapters, this sort of display of impartiality is a feature of social worker reports in the data.

An important question is raised by the mother's show of disinterest in the above example. We need to examine not only the sorts of analytic classifications which the footing concept and other externalising devices makes possible. In considering the relevance of this material for
examining our data, it is also important to raise the question of the way that participants treat, and are influenced by such separations of viewpoint. We will examine this issue in a number of sequences which appear later in the chapter. The sequence in extract 6 above is not sufficiently extended to be able to trace what effect the mother's enlistment of a different source has on the interaction with her son. However, there are some indications in the final lines that the son has not become fully aligned with his mother. Displayed in these turns is an example of the alternative inferences made available by different descriptions.

19 Son: the guy with
20 the real long hair
21 Mo: how sh- How short did he cut it
22 Son: Very short. I mean, yih know
23 Mo: Just a regular hair[cut
24 Son: [-combable.

The mother's second turn here at line 23 emphasises the unexceptional nature of the state of affairs being described. The son's previous turn (line 22) is treated as providing information that his friend's haircut is 'just a regular' one. This undermines the notion that what John has done is unusual or singles him out as noticeably different. In contrast, the son's turns emphasise the difference between the friend's past and present appearance. They make available an alternative interpretation that his friend has taken an extreme course of action and sets up the inference that such a change is one which it is less likely that the son himself would be prepared to make in his own appearance. As Pomerantz (1986) later discussed, descriptions can be formulated in an extreme way to display a person's normative orientations. So the two versions of the haircut are implicative of alternative interpretations of conforming to
what people tend to do. The mother's version implicates this sort of short haircut as unexceptional, and hence unproblematically undertaken; the son provides in his description for the contrasting interpretation that the friend has taken an extreme, and hence less socially desirable course of action. The inference might be drawn that the son would not find it easy to follow suit.

Drew (1990, 1992) has drawn attention to the maximal properties of descriptions such as the mother's 'a regular haircut' and how they are often produced to promote an alternative inference to that of the other version in the way that we have just considered. He has shown how such descriptions can operate in the institutional setting of the courtroom and can provide support for a witness's version of events. In the following fragment, for example, 'A' stands for the attorney and 'W' for the witness who is answering questions in connection with her allegation that the defendant raped her:

(from Drew, 1992: 495)

23 A: Well you knew at that time that the defendant was interested in you.
24          did'nt you?
25          (1.3)
26 W: He asked me how I'd been
27          (1.1)
28 W: Just stuff like that
29 A: Just asked you how you been (0.5) but he kissed you goodnight. (0.5) is that right.
30          (0.5) izzat right:
31          (0.5)

The witness's description acts as a rebuttal which is then challenged in the attorney's final turn which provides a contrasting version. Drew proposes that the indirectness of such activity sequences is a feature which enables disagreements to be done in a way which mitigates the
possibility of conflict. In court settings, such descriptions also delimit the sort of information that is provided for the judge and jury and hence act as a covert way of affecting the inferences that they might make about blame and responsibility.

PARTNERSHIP AND THE EXTERNALISING OF RESPONSIBILITY: DEALING WITH CO-OPERATION AND COLLUSION

As the examples so far are designed to illustrate, describing the positioning of speakers and other agencies in interaction provides a means of examining the relationship between participants and the way that this is locally regulated in their turns of talk. Under the present heading, I shall aim to set out some features of social work interaction in which an orientation to partnership is displayed through footing and other similar devices. It will be recalled that in Chapter Two, we examined how social work guidelines (for example, D.o.H, 1988) identify the crucial requirement for social workers of engaging with clients in an 'open and honest approach', and trying 'to maintain a constructive relationship with parents at all times' (D.o.H., 1988: 9). Over the rest of this chapter, we will consider how these notions are instantiated within various sequences.

Examining how the participants' affiliation is occasioned and resisted will enable us to begin to identify something of the conversational patterns which inform such official notions of the co-operative endeavour. However, we will also need to consider how social workers balance the quest for partnership with the avoidance of the allocation of
too much control and responsibility to their clients. In other words there are limits to the partnership, and it is not one based upon equal access to the tasks and decision making activities involved in child protection. In the sequences which follow we will be noting some ways that the achievement of a shared responsibility is attempted. In particular, we shall find how the professional versions of those responsibilities unfolds in a way that encourages them to be treated as on-the-record versions of what needs to be done through partnership, but not through the relinquishing of the worker's control.

Getting roles and responsibilities on the record

The two examples which follow within this section illustrate how footing and externalisation enable the social worker to regulate the distance between her own personal responsibility and that which is allocated to other sources. In extract 7, an increasing institutional accountability is displayed as the sequence develops with implicity less responsibility taken by the professional herself:

7. [JLRB:II:73]

1 Sw: .hhh well what it'll be with Tony .hh I shall put
2 the report in I shall do it in conjunction
3 with you .hhh I shall talk to you about what
4 I'm putting in it .hh we'll sit down together
5 .hhh an then I'll
6 (?Fa): mm
7 Sw: submit it an as soon as it comes back with approval
8 (1.0)
9 then then Anthony (c'n) be returned but
10 Mo: cos we don't
11 Sw: .hh we can't return him until we got the approval
12 Fa: oh we we totally agree with that but we just
13 wondering like ((turn continues))

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We saw how the building up of an account performed rhetorical work in
Pomerantz's example above. There, the mother's descriptions of how she
came across the view that long hair was 'passe' was done using embedded
descriptions of her activities which displayed her unmotivated approach
to finding this out in the media. In extract 7 an embedded account of
the social worker's plans provided in the first turn (lines 1 to 5) is
also rhetorically designed to display accountability. But in this case
it provides details of how she will involve the parents in the completion
of her report. We can note a number of features of this design.

First, it attends to a dilemma identified in Edwards and Potter (1992,
1993) in the interpretation of what 'really' went on when an account
emanates from a number of various sources. They provided an analysis of
a political scandal which examined how reports of a meeting with a
politician can be alternatively supported or undermined depending on how
the relationship is constructed that exists between the different
individuals providing the information. The argument that a consensus of
opinion supports and provides further evidence for the facts that are
claimed can potentially be undermined. This is achievable by implicating
that the sources of the consensus have brought this about through active
collusion to work up an agreed version. The independence of particular
individual accounts is brought into question by the use of this
alternative explanatory resource.
This problem of attributing collusion is an important one in social work as well. Back in Chapter Two, we examined some of the potential criticisms of social work practice where the worker becomes overly concerned with building a relationship with parents and ignores the need to keep the child's safety as the paramount principle guiding their work. The 'Protecting Children' manual which I quoted from contains the following example of what it calls 'professional dangerousness':

Dangerousness is not confined to individuals and families. It can equally be applied to professionals and agencies. Professional dangerousness may be illustrated by a social worker being allowed to...collude with a family in order to avoid the real issues - 'it would damage my relationship' is a phrase commonly used by a dangerous professional.

(D.o.H, 1988: 12; see also Dale et al., 1986)

Extract 7 shows an orientation to these issues. The social worker's first turn describes a relationship with the parents in which she will work 'in conjunction' with them to produce her report. But their relationship is precisely delimited as she (re)constructs their responsibility across the sequence. We can see this most clearly if we separate out the utterances which make up the items of a three-part listing of the way the social worker's report will be completed:
So the relationship is one which is reflexively constructed to imply how the putting together of the report will fully involve the parents. As has been noted, three-part lists are often used to provide an impression of completeness. The version above also lays claim to a close relationship through the descriptive terms used to encapsulate what the participants will do together. In compiling the report, the social worker says they will 'sit down together'. We will see later in the chapter various examples of the way that reportings of where people sit can implicate the nature of their activities together and hence have implications for how their relationship is to be judged.

However, the relationship in extract 7 is described in a way which, although displaying closeness, avoids implying that it will be based upon collusion. The social worker retains the authorship of the report in lines 3 to 4 - 'I shall talk to you about what I'm putting in it' - and it will be she alone who 'submits' it for approval. So she is both the principal and animator embedded in the version of the report.

Another feature of the orientation to accountability in the extract is the way in which responsibility, both for the report and for the decision to return the child to his parents is dealt with. The pro-term 'we',
which recurs across the turns, refers to a series of different origins of
the position being outlined each time it is used:

4  Sw: ...we'll sit down together  
5      .hhh an then I'll  
6    ?Fa: mm  
7  Sw: submit it an as soon as it comes back with approval  
8      (1.0)  
9  then then Anthony (c'n) be returned but  
10  Mo: cos we don't  
11 Sw: .hh we can't return him until we got the approval  
12 Fa: oh we we totally agree with that but we just  
13    wondering like...

At line 4, 'we'll sit down together' co-implicates the parents and the
social worker. At lines 10 and 12, 'we' is used by the parents to refer
to themselves as a couple. At line 11, 'we can't return him' will
involve a group of professionals. 'Until we got the approval' (also line
11) appears to enlist the parents, as well as the social worker, as part
of the 'we'; the parents will presumably be the 'ultimate destination'
of the communication following the agreement to return the child².

External agency is emphasised particularly where there is a move from
discussion of sharing responsibility to talking about professional
activities where decisions will be imposed upon the parents. We can see
this in the above section where the social worker restates more strongly
that they must wait for an external decision before Tony can go home.
This occurs at line 11 where by saying 'we can't return him till we got
the approval', she highlights the distance between her own personal
responsibility and that of the professional system that has the power to
take action in response to the report.
A third aspect of the account is its provision of a hypothetical version of what will happen in the run up to the child, Tony, being returned to his parents. As Perakyla (1995; see also Wooffitt, 1992) has discussed in the context of counselling talk, the use of hypothetical questions can enable professionals to introduce and pursue client responses to sensitive topics. In the final lines of extract 7, the social worker handles the uncomfortable topic of the continued removal of Tony from his parents' care through distancing herself from the 'approval' which she can claim, in line with the parents' wishes, to await. By describing and laying out in careful detail the steps which will have to be taken before the child's return, the professional is also able to get a version of how she and the parents can work together. But it is in a form which still incorporates a refusal to accede to what the parents want, and (as we shall see in extract 9) continue to press for. The social worker can maintain this stance across the ensuing turns yet at the same time maintain the orientation to co-operating with them.

The sequence we have just looked at continues in extract 8 where we see the continuation of the packaging of the social worker's control over the phased rehabilitation of the parents' other children:

8. [JLRB:II:73-4]

1 Fa: oh we we totally agree with that but we just
2 wondering like (you know not s-)
3 Sw: but having said that there's no reason why you
4 can't have him at ho:me
5 (0.2)  
6 Sw: longer (at) periods at a time ("as long as he
7 returns back at night") .hhh an so like with
In the turns of this extract, the social worker continues to provide itemised clarification of what access the parents can have with their children. This is done in a way which further pursues on-the-record agreement which is now forthcoming as pieces of the child protection plan continue to be distinguished and then confirmed. Interestingly, a few lines later, it appears that the parents themselves, picking up on this hypothetically-driven plan, contribute to the provision of an accountable version. And although the social worker seems to dispute their assumptions in her next turns, we can detect further indications of the participants' orientation to the achievement of continued alignment in the mother and father's final turns.

9. [JLRB:II:74]
44 straight on Bridie ((mother's name))
45 Sw: it it is a lot
46 Fa: it's a lot

The next extract is from the meeting between the mother, Marie, and her social worker introduced earlier in this chapter. It shows a more overt and extended concern with the pursuit of getting on record professional concerns and warranting decisions being taken which are against the wishes of the mother.

10. [RM:I:21]

1 Sw: social services aren't on anybody's side=
2 Mo: =mm
3 Sw: yeh? (. ) our (. ) one an only (. ) right or duty
4 .hh is:: (. ) to ensure the welfare of the child.
5 Mo: "yeh"
6 Sw: yeh? hh now I'm going to see David=
7 Mo: ="mm"
8 Sw: yeh? an I'm gonna talk to him
9 (0.8)
10 Sw: what if:: (. ) when I see David=
11 Mo: =mm=
12 Sw: =yeh (. ) he says the things that he has
13 apparently said to the policeman.
14 Mo: mm
15 Sw: again (. ) you know
16 (1.0)
17 Sw: I want to stay with my Dad.
18 (0.8)
19 Sw: how would that make you feel?
20 (1.0)
21 Mo: pt well I've been having David now at the week-
22 eversince we went back to court (for) two weeks
((Mother's turn continues for another 10 lines))

Here, the opening section includes a variety of marked and unmarked acknowledgements by both speakers latched onto the social worker's piece-by-piece description of her planned work with David. However, the passage also shows some strong similarities with extract 7 in the way in which participants deal with the problem of collusion. We
discussed in connection with this previous extract the social worker's construction of the collaborative approach to compiling her report which was displayed as one which would involve the parents in discussion, but not in decision making. The social worker was able to convey this and avoided the implication that the parents would share in being the source behind her report.

In extract 10, the positionings adopted by the social worker are produced by referencing two sources separate from the social worker herself as the sequence progresses, these being used as devices for deflecting her personal accountability. She thus provides a version which minimises the interpretation that she has a personal stake in adopting the form of intervention with the child which she later describes. In the early lines, she provides a version of her role which distinguishes the social services 'right or duty....to ensure the welfare of the child' (lines 3-4). This sets up her reason for interviewing David (the child) based upon the role expected of her (Halkowski, 1990). It also provides a warrant for why she must 'see' and 'talk' to the child himself. As with the dispute over long hair in extract 6 we can note here again the unmotivated sort of investigation which these embedded terms convey. They provide the inference that her involvement with him is as a disinterested party rather than as someone who has a pre-sharpened axe to grind on his behalf.
The second origin behind the position taken up by the social worker is that attributed to David himself (lines 12 to 17). This is accompanied by a series of continuers by the mother which are acknowledged by the social worker at the start of each of her next turns. The social worker then adds on another piece of information. As we found in extract 7, the social worker is able to introduce a hypothetical but in the context of the current meeting, a potentially very controversial opinion. This is achieved through a hypothetical question (cf. Perakyla, 1995) which attributes the origin of the viewpoint, and the authorship of it to a statement the child himself might make: 'I want to stay with my Dad.' (line 17)

Externalising as a way of managing accountability and hence distancing oneself from personal motivation has been analysed in various news interview contexts (for example Clayman, 1992; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1992). As we have seen earlier, Edwards and Potter (1992) have described the twin orientations to consensus and collusion in alternative accounts of the facts during the reporting of a potential political scandal. Another of the scenarios they investigated showed how news interviewers can also display their neutrality whilst at the same time confronting the interviewee with highly critical opinion. They show how this can be accomplished by renewing the footing and hence attributing criticism to other sources; for example, the reading of a letter of resignation from a senior politician to the prime minister can be analysed for how it sets out to achieve this effect.
There are further parallels between the ways in which participants attempt to provide for their accountability in political and social work settings. For example Edwards and Potter's study also highlights how the same set of accounting resources is made use of by the interviewee who is expected to answer such blame implications. In the next extract we will see how the mother raises doubts about the way in which her son might come to be influenced by his father, rather than the viewpoint expressed representing his real opinion. This resembles the sort of doubts which can be raised by questioning whether reporting of a political meeting is impartial and independent, or whether it arises from a version worked up by a process of collusion.

In order to establish something more of the specifics of the way that social work participants deal with this problem, I want to focus in the next section of this chapter on the variations in how the social worker's relationships are reported and the functions that these constructions might serve in undermining the inference that they are colluding (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

**Avoiding collusion**

After the mother has described the current arrangements for her access to her son in extract 10, her turn is completed by dealing with the problem raised by David's possible preference for staying with his father. She does this by suggesting to the social worker ('Kay'at
line 32) that David's father ('Ron') might 'put him up to this' as we shall now see.

11. [RM:I:21]

Mo: ((turn begins at line 21))
30 David can be sayin one thing to Ron he wanted to
31 stay there or sayin(by)Ron could be putting him
32 up to this which it does happen Kay I'm not
33 Sw: I'm not denying that but if I [I'm not about to
34 Mo: [yeh .hhh
35 Sw: interview David (.) in Ron's living room
36 Mo: yeh
37 Sw: yeh?
38 Mo: yeh.
39 Sw: if I pick David up an [take him out
40 Mo: [right
41 Sw: once he feels comfortable with me because >I mean
42 it's been a long time since we've m- (.) since me
43 an David have had a chat yeh< .hhh but but once
44 he feels comfortable with me again
45 I'll take him out
46 Mo: "mhm"
47 Sw: an we'll go to the park or have a walk an I'll
48 talk to him
49 Mo: talk to him
50 Sw: but uh or we might play some games an draw some
51 pictures yeh? (.) that's what I'll do.

What we find in the turn designs of this extract is a continuation of the response pursuits initiated earlier. The social worker turns are responded to by a series of ratifications as she describes the impartial, but sensitive way in which she will re-establish her relationship with David. The worker presents her planned activities with David in a way which, as we also saw in extract 7 uses a three-part listing to imply the attention she will give to this task:

[from extract 11]

Sw: [1] I'll take him out
Mo: "mhm"
Sw: an we'll go to the park
We can note here how despite the complexities of the listing, the mother produces a strong ratification as displayed by the part-repetition of the previous utterance in the final turn of the fragment. The social worker's description of how she will work with the child is contrasted with an alternative which she provides as a rebuttal: 'I'm not about to interview David (.) in Ron's living room'.

The nature of the relationship provided in the version which follows this is one in which the precise formulation of what the participants do together - and the setting in which it takes place - can be used to make available very different inferences of the relationship between the actors. Again, we saw an earlier example of this in extract 7 where the social worker built a rhetorical effect partly by describing how she would 'sit down together' with the parents.

Drew's (1992) paper on contested evidence in court provides an extensive analysis of the part which such constructions can play in influencing judgements about relationships:

[from Drew, 1992: 489]

A: An' during the eve:ning: (0.6) uh: didn't Mistuh ((name)) come over tuh sit with you (0.8)
W: Sat at our table.

Drew points out how the descriptions 'sit with you' and 'sat at our table' whilst not contradictory versions of what happened, are
designed as part of the witness's (W) and the attorney's (A) attempts to characterise the scene in alternative ways. As with the use of the 'maximal' descriptions which we discussed earlier using a section from the same paper, this impinges on how their descriptions are designed to provide for different inferences about the relationship between the woman and the defendant earlier on in the evening of an alleged rape. 'Sat at our table' is formulated to indirectly challenge the previous description and make available (to the jury) the implication that she did not have an intimate relationship with the man prior to his assault on her. In contrast, 'sat with you' is a construction which equates with a closer and more intimate liaison.

In much the same way, the social worker's formulation of the manner in which she will engage David makes available a different inference from the former idea that his father will have been able to influence what David says to the social worker. There are two components to the conversational design of this alternative construction of the relationship. Both of these work towards distancing it from any collusive implication.

First, the sequence presents material which implies the independence of the relationship to be re-formed between social worker and child. The social worker indicates — and later re-emphasises — that she will be taking David out, in other words away from his father's home and hence hearably away from Ron (lines 39 and 45). Her descriptions of what they might do also reinforce the inference that Ron will not be part of these plans. For example, the early constructions provide
footings which distinguish David and the social worker as individuals who will be getting together. This is done through a series of lexical items and proterms which make them visible in the talk specifically as individuals. Items which are less specific as to whom they refer, such as the plural 'we' (which could then hearably include the father) are delayed. So we can distinguish the pairings 'I - David - him' (line 39), 'he - me' (line 41), 'me - David' (line 43), 'he - me' (line 44) and 'I - him' (line 45) in the following social worker turns:

[from extract 11]

39  Sw: If I pick David up an I'll take him out
40  Mo: [right
41  Sw: once he feels comfortable with me because >I mean
42        it's been a long time since we've m- (. ) since
43  Mo: me an David have had a chat yeh< .hhh but but once
44  Sw: he feels comfortable with me again
45  Mo: "mhm"
46  Sw: an we'll go to the park or have a walk an I'll
47  Mo: talk to him
48  Sw: talk to him
49  Mo: talk to him
50  Sw: but uh or we might play some games an draw some
51  Mo: I'll take him out
52  Sw: pictures yeh? (. ) that's what I'll do

We can further note in the above that the social worker repairs her use of the inclusive plural form 'we' from 'since we've' at line 42 and self-corrects this to 'since me and David'. It is also noteworthy that subsequent usages of this potentially more ambiguous pro-term 'we' only occur after tokens possibly indicating ratification by the mother at line 46 and line 49. So her responses are immediately followed in the next turn by 'we'll go to the park' (line 47) and then 'we might play some games' (line 50).
The second way in which a relationship free from the taint of collusion is implied is in the characterisation of the activities which the social worker and child will be doing together. This is achieved through a series of underspecified activities which convey the sort of things they might do, such as going to the park, drawing pictures, chatting and talking. However, the way in which this will be used to inform the social worker's view of the child's wishes is left unclear. The activities described convey the unmotivated style of the social worker's intervention and imply that her goal is to achieve an intimate and friendly relationship with David. However, they stop short of providing further details of what they might actually focus on within these general activities.

Edwards and Potter's (1992) Discursive Action Model raises the notion that there are two levels on which accountability is handled in conversation. There is the responsibility of the speaker as an actor in the version of events being provided in her account. And there is also the implications which this has for the current conversation. So in our example, the social worker's talk is also rendering a version which orientates to managing the present interactional circumstances in providing for what she will be doing with David. The systematic vagueness in what the social worker provides in her report orientates to both of these levels. For in working up a non-specific version of her future intervention, she is also able to avoid providing information which might occasion attempts at negotiation or persuasion by the mother in the current interaction. This would present local interactional difficulties in making sure her discussions with the
mother themselves avoid becoming attributable as collusion with her.

As we have considered, the details of the exchanges in the later part of extract 11 work to exclude particular constructions being placed on the relationship. There are a number of other similar examples in my corpus of recorded material and in the final section of this chapter, we will examine two of these. As I shall set out to demonstrate, the extracts selected illustrate how collaboration and collusion can be strongly orientated to as participants' concerns. We shall be considering how collaboration is emphasised in the first extract and collusion is played down in the second. Footing and externalisation play an important role in the conversational attempts to accomplish both of these effects. The extracts have been selected because they occur near the outset of the meeting and involve social worker reports of their interactions with other members of the clients' family. As we shall see, the reason for the meeting and the views of others seem to be of immediate concern which are highly visible in the early stages of the discussion.

RESISTANCE, FOOTING AND EXTERNALISATION

One of the phenomena that has come into play in a variety of ways over the course of previous chapters has been the problem of resistance and the ways that social work practitioners attempt to circumvent this and so to engage their clients. I have examined such issues from a research perspective which focuses on spoken interaction as a basis for understanding the ways that relationships are negotiated and
presented. We have seen how ethnomethodological work on various forms of institutional discussion has been able to illustrate how resistance arises as an interactionally-generated phenomenon.

Heritage and Sefi's (1992) work on health visiting for example has described some of the processes whereby the professional's problem of getting access to first-time mothers is dealt with by regular and repeated advice to them. As we learned, the difficulty is that without first negotiating a local environment in which the advice is relevant and demonstrated as wanted at that point in the exchange, the likelihood is that it will be rejected albeit often in an indirect way. The problem of gaining what Heritage and Sefi call a 'ticket of entry' to the family is a live one for social work professionals as well. We will examine how this is dealt with in both of the social work extracts which follow.

**Tickets of entry**

The first discussion below is from a fragment in which part of the worker's way of accounting for 'why I'm here' is to provide a footing which highlights information telephoned to her by 'Joanne', who is the aunt of the social worker's client 'Paula'. The sequence plays up this relative's role as the source behind the description provided which implicates the importance of having the meeting. A collaborative version of this problem is worked up as the social worker provide details of this earlier call which Joanne confirms on a turn-by-turn basis. I shall be considering how their version is built
up and dealt with as they try to engage Paula, who is a young woman due to attend court in connection with a child protection investigation involving her baby.

12. [MJP:I:1]

1  Sw:  right the tape recorder's on now
2   (0.6)
3  Sw:  okay (. ) right the the reason why I'm here then
4  Jo:  =yeh
5   (0.2)
6  Sw:  pt and er (. ) you were basically expressing
7  Jo:  yeh=
8  Sw:  concern about Paula=
9  Jo:  yeh she [was
10  Sw:  [that
11  (0.4)
12  Sw:  Paula didn't know whether she was coming or going
13   (0.4)
14  Sw:  um=
15  Jo:  =she didn't
16  Pa:  do I ever.
17  (1.4)
18  Sw:  >I'm not gonna say yes or no Paula but <you know
19  (0.8)
20  Sw:  (. ) you know your situation but .hh Joanne's
21  (0.4)
22  Sw:  obviously concerned um (. ) about:::
23  (0.4)
24  Sw:  the court hearing an how it was affecting you
25   (0.8)
26  Sw:  um
27  (0.4)
28  Sw:  an that's why I'm here really
29  (1.2)
30  Sw:  have you got anything to say about that.

As with a number of the previous extracts considered in this chapter, we can see in this extract the pursuit of a response across the sequence. We examined earlier (for example in extracts 7 and 9) how the externalisation devices adopted in such sequences in conjunction with listings that conveyed the wide-ranging nature of the social worker's activity were deployed with rhetorical effect. The earlier
turns in extract 12 also work up this sort of device with the three components (arrowed below) being ratified by Joanne who is displayed as the principal behind the attributions being articulated by the social worker:

7 Sw: pt and er (.) you were basically expressing concern about Paula=
8 →
9 Jo: yeh=
10 Sw: =erm that (.) she seemed quite distressed
11 Jo: yeh she [was
12 Sw: [that
13 (0.4)
14 Sw: → Paula didn't know whether she was coming or going
15 (0.4)
16 Sw: um=
17 Jo: =she didn't
18 Pa: do I ever.

We can first note here how the footings in the sequence provide Joanne as the source of the information and enable the speaker to address Paula indirectly. It is also noteworthy that her participant status as indirect target is renewed across the three parts of the list (cf. Antaki, 1994: 129). The third part is completed with a generalised item which is provided through an idiomatic construction: 'Paula didn't know whether she was coming or going' (line 14).

Drew and Holt (1988) have analysed sequences in which idiomatic constructions tend to occur. They noted that idioms often appear at a point in an exchange where a complaint about a personal difficulty is being formulated and rounded off. They found that the local conversational environment was typically one in which affiliation with the speaker's difficulty had been withheld by the recipient up to that point and that the idiomatic phrase was often followed by a shift of
In providing a 'complaint' for Paula, targeted as indirect addressee, we might thus consider that the early turns are another part of the device which is designed to elicit a response. The social worker's 'ticket of entry' has been built up through this version in which the idiomatic completion provided in the report further contributes to the implication that the social worker then has good reasons for making her call and for getting an account from her client to explain more about the client's current state of mind.

Paula, the recipient does indeed make a response immediately after her aunt's ratification of the problem which demonstrates an orientation to the response pursuit trajectory. However, her utterance, 'do I ever.' (line 18) occasioned by the previous descriptive sequence is subsequently treated in the turns which follow as requiring further clarification. These further pursuit turns orientate to the normative expectation that an account will be provided as evidenced in the pauses between the final utterances. When this response is not forthcoming, we can also note that the social worker's repeat of her 'ticket of entry' at line 28 is interpretable as a further indirect pursuit before a direct question is eventually posed in the last line of the piece.

28 Sw: an that's why I'm here really
29    (1.2)
30    have you got anything to say about that.

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In considering how this final response pursuit section is occasioned we need to go back to Paula's utterance 'do I ever.' at line 18. This is not produced with the typical rising intonation of a question. It is also formulated as a scripted description (Edwards, 1994) and so could be taken to imply that the social worker's description of their concern about her mood now as a singular presenting problem is in fact typical of the pattern of her thoughts and feelings. So 'do I ever.' could be interpretable as a rebuttal of the previous description. This makes available the alternative inference that the social worker's presence is not as warranted as the previous sequence implied, an inference that the social worker's renewal of her external footing in the next turn is designed to undermine: 'you know your situation but .hh Joanne's obviously concerned...' (lines 21 to 22) and also provides an explanation from within the sequence itself for why the speaker repeats her reason for 'why I'm here' at line 28.

Over the course of this chapter, we have made considerable use of various studies which have examined footings within the institutional context of news interviews and particularly the findings in Clayman (1992) and Edwards and Potter (1992). Up to now we have highlighted some of the ways in which footing and externalisation are devices which enables the management of accountability and how externalising the source of a controversial opinion can assist in conducting an 'interview' be it with a politician in the radio or television studio or with a parent on a child protection home visit. The argument we have made has been based upon the notion that it requires all the participants in an institutional encounter to 'do interview'.
This is well illustrated in a powerful analysis by Schegloff (1992, see also 1991) of the structuring of such an interaction between George Bush who was the vice-president of the United States at the time and his interviewer Dan Rather, a well-known political commentator. I have selected a short sequence from this meeting to show how the interviewee displays this orientation to accomplish their interaction as an interview by systematically delaying his reply until the question has been produced:

13. [from Schegloff, 1992: 121-122]

6 Rather: .hh Mister Vice President, tha:nk you for
7 being with us toni:ght, .hh Donald Gregg
8 sti:ll serves as y'r trusted advi#sor,=he
9 w'z dee:ply involved in running arms t'he
10 Contras an' he didn't inform you.=
11 [(0.5)]
12 Rather: [=_.hhhh] + Now when President Reagan's, (0.2)
13 trusted advisor: Admiral Poindexter: (0.6)
14 failed to inform hi:m, (0.8) the President
15 (0.2) fired'im.hh
16 (0.5)
17 Rather: Why is Mister Gregg still: (. ) inside the
18 White Hou@se'n still a trusted advisor.=
19 Bush: =Becuz I have confidence in im, (0.3) en becuz
20 this matter, Dan, ...

# Bush brings his hands together and mouth opens
+
Bush separates hands
@ Bush's lips part (with in-breath?)

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Schegloff notes that in ordinary talk, we would expect that the recipient would interject at one of the transition relevant places which occur at many points within the speaker's turn. We can note how the non-verbal evidence suggests that Bush is indeed closely monitoring the preliminaries which eventually lead to the delivery of a question and that his answer (which starts 'because') is immediately produced and meshes closely with the 'why' of the question. This all points to a shared orientation to the basic notion that in news interviews at least, the notion of an interview requires that a question is asked before an answer is produced.

Our analysis of the way in which participants in social work 'interviews' interact suggests that a different normative structure is in operation in the way that the meetings are co-constructed. We have identified a pattern in which the incumbent of the professional role works to get agreement on record by pursuing this across turns of talk. Footing and the other devices we described in this social work context can serve to deflect personal responsibility to external sources and hence display neutrality in the same way as is done in news interviews. However, as we have seen in extract 12, a display of collaboration in the pursuit of an 'answer' can be resisted by the respondent. Extract 14 indicates that making an attribution to an external source can also provide a resource for delaying a response by the second speaker:


1 Sw: °(well)°
2 (0.4)
3 Sw: what I'd like to talk to you about first
4 (0.4)
5 Sw: yes thank you very much!
6 .hhh ("smiley voice")(what I'd like to talk
7 to you first (. ) is is about erm
8 (1.4)
9 Sw: wha(. ) tuh (. ) uh Alexis
10 (0.6)
11 and Simon were telling me last time
12 I (went) to see them
13 (0.8)
14 Sw: which is that Lucy had gone away [+]
15 (0.4)
16 Sw: and left Mark alone with the children "again"
17 Lucy: "right" was that volunteered information
18 or did you ask her
19 (0.4)
20 Sw: I was asking "her"
21 (0.6)
22 Lucy: "r::ight::
23 (0.2)
24 Sw: how things w- (. ) you know sort [-] of how .hhh
25 if they'd seen you an [ stuff like that=
26 Mark: [ when?
27 Sw: =basically I was fishing. (. ) I'll let you know
28 I wanted to see what was [(happening)
29 Lucy: [ N O:: S E:: Y!=
30 Mark: [(that d-)
31 Mark: =that day Alexis saw us we all went out together
32 di'n't we cos we wen- (. ) we they turned up
33 on la- on the Satd'y on the a fortnight ago
((turn continues))

We can note here that the social worker again appears to be seeking to
provide himself with a 'ticket of entry' in which his visit is displayed
as an appropriate reaction to the information he has received. As with
extract 12, he maintains a footing that indicates the derivative source
of his information and positions the clients present as an indirect
target rather than addressing them directly:

[from extract 14]

Sw Alexis an Simon were telling me last time I went to
see them... Lucy had gone away and left Mark alone with
the children again (from lines 9 to 16)
Sw: you were basically expressing concern about Paula... that she seemed quite distressed... Paula didn't know whether she was coming or going
(from lines 7 to 14)

These indirect constructions in which the recipient is named in the third person rather than addressed directly serve to emphasise that the social worker is reporting information from another source rather than making an interpretation herself. She thus further distances herself from the responsibility associated with that report and sets up the need for an account without having to ask directly for it. As we have seen the client Paula in extract 12 responds to these turns with a question which undermines the notion that anything is different in her presentation. This subsequently occasions another set of turns which pursue an account relevant to the reported concerns. Its effect is also to delay her explanation whilst the social worker builds up another chain of response pursuit turns.

In the case of the 'Lucy and Mark' example, the parental resistance also takes the form of an inserted question. However, in this case 'was that volunteered information or did you ask her' implicates the alternative possibilities of collusion between the social worker with the relatives or that the social worker had been 'nosey' (line 24). As we discussed in Chapter Five, this sort of tease-implicated characterisation tends to get occasioned after the 'po-faced' provision of a normal identity. We considered how a more appropriate version of the worker's role is constructed earlier in the turn when we discussed the maximal properties of the social worker's description of his meeting earlier in this...
chapter. Once again though the recipient's response functions so as to resist the need to provide a response in the next turn and does this using resources made available from the immediate previous turns.

In the next chapter, we shall identify sequences which tout for affiliation in a manner which contrasts with the external footings which we have been discussing. I shall provide details of some ways in which participants may produce tickets of affiliation through sequences which market a personally-experienced version of the problem, rather than originating from contact with other people and agencies.

Notes

1. In his detailed examination of collusion as an interactional process, Goffman (1981) analyses it as a form of 'subordinate' communication taking place in addition to the 'dominant' interaction which is occupying people at the time. One example would be when people chat incidentally whilst they are occupied with some task together. He further divides collusion into a series of sub-categories as follows:

   When an attempt is made to conceal subordinate communication, 'collusion' occurs, whether within boundaries of an encounter (collusive byplay) or across these boundaries (collusive crossplay) or entirely outside an encounter, as when two bystanders surreptitiously editorialise on what they are overhearing (collusive sideplay). (ibid: 134).
2. I am assuming here that the social worker would get 'the approval' first and then pass this on to the parents at a separate meeting. Levinson (1988: 198) distinguishes between the recipient as the indirect target where she is present when a communication to her is directed through another party, and the ultimate destination where she is not. I examine an example where a participant is indirectly addressed during a meeting later in this chapter (see extract 12).

3. An alternative way of distinguishing the parts of the list would be as follows.

45  Sw: I'll take him out  
46  Mo: °mhm°  
47  Sw: 1 an we'll go to the park or have a walk  
48  an I'll talk to him  
49  Mo: talk to him  
50  Sw: 2 but uh or we might play some games an draw some  
51  pictures yeh? (.)  
52  3 that's what I'll do.

The third part here is more characteristic of the generalised constructions that tend to be used to complete lists (Jefferson, 1990). However, I have preferred the differentiation provided in the main text because of the Mother's ratification of list completion at line 49 when she repeats the previous speaker's utterance 'talk to him'.
In this chapter, I want to explore the workings of some further conversational patterns linked with co-operation which emerge from my analysis of the corpus of material upon which this thesis is based. By describing a number of recurrent features associated with talk which identifies the social worker's personal viewpoint, I shall hope to develop some of the ideas introduced in the previous chapter. In particular, we shall be setting out to discover how distinctions made by speakers concerning their participant status can actually lead us to an improved understanding of how partnerships might be built with parents. In the final section I shall then distinguish three elements of a way in which engagement with this client group is sometimes attempted. We have already considered some details of the manner in which an orientation to forming co-operative relationships is displayed in the previous chapter. But, we shall now be considering conversational sequences which are possibly more specific to social work talk where participants attempt to manage the 'control/care' dilemma they are faced with.

One of the themes that was picked out in our review of literature on professional intervention with parents was the identification and deployment of the worker's personal qualities and attitudes as an important component in social work practice. A number of the sources we considered make this assumption. For example Pithouse's (1987)
ethnographic study of social workers' accounts, which was examined in some detail, discusses the ways in which professionals demonstrate their concern towards their clients in their accounts of these relationships when talking to their colleagues and managers. The negotiation of an intimate and co-operative partnership with service-users was described as a 'firmly managed affair; an art of skilful self-presentation that balances an affective and official identity.' (Pithouse, 1987:124).

One approach to attempting this balance which we have already investigated is by referring to external sources. Other individuals and agencies can be linked to contentious and potentially conflict-provoking opinions and interventions that the social worker talks about. We have found examples of this in talk dealing with the question of when a child might actually be allowed to return home or when raising doubts about the clients' truthfulness. I now want to switch the focus to look at how the worker may provide self-attributions to set against these allocations of outside responsibility and to consider what such practices might achieve.

Baldock and Prior (1981) in another study we have considered noted the regularity with which workers turned to this sort of personal linkeage in their accounting practices. They included the following list in their paper which was taken from examples of the invocation of external authority which they gathered:

1. [from Baldock and Prior,1981:35]

   SW: I know it doesn't sound very nice put that way, but that's the section of the Act, I have to say it like that.
Well, I'm concerned about how the court will react. We must take that into account mustn't we?

I understand what you mean ... but the supplementary benefits people just wouldn't wear it.

I don't think it's going to be tolerated much longer, Emily, they have to apply the rules here.

I'm sorry, but that's something that's out of my control.

These examples use a range of modalised verbs in constructions which seem to attend to the relationship between the speaker and the addressee as well as to the wider matters under discussion (Goffman, 1981; Latour 1987). For example, rather than conveying simply the (legal) facts regarding 'the Act' in the first utterance, the speaker embeds her activity (perhaps a warning to do with the Act's requirements) within an affiliative sequence. This displays an attentiveness to how her client might interpret what she reports the Act says, and also displays her alignment with the client. In noting 'I have to say it like that', the professional too is put in a non-negotiatory position and 'identifies' with her client (cf. Maynard, 1992: 349).

The other extracts also display a distancing of the speaker's own position from the activities or expectations of the external source. We see here how potentially contentious material is attributed to an external source originating either in legally-sanctioned rules (in the first example), the workings of a particular official body ('the court' or 'the supplementary benefits people' in examples two and three), or, as in the final two examples, in some unspecified body but whose status is still clearly identified as external to the speaker.
Baldock and Prior's examples of externalisation, which they note were a common feature in their data occurring in ten out of their twelve interviews, also suggest that it is not just the shifts towards external sources that can be analysed for the ways that participants manage their relationship. We also need to examine the function of the personal footings which are adopted and the ways that these are constructed.

PROFESSIONAL-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS AND CO-OPERATION

The examples in the Baldock and Prior paper provide an interesting starting point but there are two other features which we need to bring in to help develop our understanding of the interactional significance of these devices. As I have argued earlier in the thesis, in adopting a CA approach, we need to locate personal footings within the sequential environments within which they occur. A second feature raised briefly in the previous chapter was how the 'I', embedded in various ways in Baldock and Prior's examples, can also often feature as an actor within the version provided. Goffman distinguishes modalised first person constructions as 'the addressing self'. As we have seen, the depiction of the personal pronoun within the report he termed as a 'figure' embedded within that account.

The changes of positioning which such footing shifts make possible can be illustrated by considering a sequence from the final extract of the last chapter. This extract is taken from the first part of the recorded interaction in the 'Lucy and Mark' transcript (see Appendix III, lines 6 to 33).
What I want to look at first are the social worker's turns at lines 15 to 23 in which the social worker has come under pressure to account for his earlier interview in which he obtained some potentially damaging information from Lucy and Mark's relatives. The social worker here formulates his earlier contact with Alexis and Simon in the form of a version which implicates that this was a routine visit not carried out specifically to check up on Lucy and Mark:
We saw in the previous chapter a brief example of Drew's work (e.g., 1990, 1992) on maximal properties of descriptions. The things that went on in a reported event or meeting can be formulated to imply or exclude particular intentions of the actor at that time. Alternatively, the sorts of items that are selected for description can make available the interpretation that a particular type of relationship pertained which ruled out the possibility of a more intimate or focussed liaison having taken place. Drew’s example included a very similar generalised completer as part of the witness' indirect rebuttal of the notion that earlier in the evening she had a close relationship with the man who had allegedly raped her:

3. [from Drew, 1992: 495]

27 W: He asked me how I'(d) bin: en
28 (1.1)
29 W: J-just stuff like that

What is clearly apparent in comparing the close resemblance between the descriptions in the two institutional environments is how they both make use of the same available property of description to provide an inference for the nature of their relationship during the reported meeting. For example, both complete their characterisation with the generalised phrase 'stuff like that' which builds upon the sort of innocuous activities introduced with specific items. The versions provided thus deal with the
speaker's accountability in a confrontational sequence through the attributions it makes available.

However, if we examine the turns which follow these versions in the two settings, we can get an indication of how the changes in personal footings in the social work extract suggest that different principles of co-operation are in operation from those in court. The social work extract proceeds as follows:

22 Sw: =basically I was fishing. (.) I'll let you know
23 I wanted to see what was [(happening)
24 Lucy: [ N O:: S E:: Y!=
25 Mark: [ (that d-)

The 'I' of the first two lines here shifts from the embedded figure of the actor in the account, the 'I' who was 'fishing', to the 'I' who is addressing Lucy and Mark in the current talk who provides an explanation of what he was setting out to do in his meeting with their relatives. This shift is further emphasised by the 'honesty' claimed in the phrase which links the two, 'I'll let you know'.

This sort of display of co-operation is not in evidence in the following utterances of the courtroom interaction. In the next turn, the attorney sets up a contrast between the witness' and an alternative version designed, as we have seen, to implicate her responsibility. The paper goes on to discuss that these contrast devices are a repeated feature of this sort of this setting:

4. [Da:Ou:2:1. Quoted from Drew, 1992]
30 A: Just asked yuh how (0.5) yud bi:n (0.3) but
31 he kissed yuh goodnigh:t. (0.5) izzat righ:t.=
We have an indication here of the ways that witnesses and the professionals who examine them in legal contexts produce courtroom interrogations. The following example taken from another study would probably be a highly accountable sequence outside of a forensic examination:

5. [from Levinson, 1992: 99]

A: how many men were with you?
B: Three.
A: No more than three?
B: Well, perhaps as many as five.

In ordinary conversation, 'three' sets up the inference that no more than three men were present, whereas in court, co-operation is geared to providing only enough information to prevent the legally sanctionable inference that the witness is in contempt (see Levinson, 1992).

PERSONAL FOOTINGS AND DISPLAYS OF AFFILIATION

In extract 2 then we have seen how the social worker's final turn reflexively formulates his positioning with regards to the parents as being one of openness and honesty. We can note that the next turns at lines 24 and 25 initiate quite different actions by Lucy and Mark. These display alternative responses to the social worker's report (cf. Drew and Heritage, 1992: 32-33).

[from extract 2]

23 Sw: I wanted to see what was [(happening)
24 Lucy: [ N O:: S E:: Y!="
Mark's 'that d-' is hearable as the beginning of a defence against the report that they left the children alone with him. His next turn (line 26) begins 'that day Alexis (saw us) we all went out together' and continues with an account of where the family went with both of the parents in attendance. As such, it acts to rebut the social worker's version and recasts this as an action sequence performing an accusation.

Lucy's comment 'Nosey!' occurs in overlap with Mark's response. Chapter Five discussed the way in which such constructions can deal with the challenge to co-operation that an accusation might be expected to generate. As Drew's paper on teases (1987) shows, such a device enables the speaker to draw attention to conflict between the participants. However, it does so in a way which keeps open the possibilities for a continuing relationship based upon mutuality. This may be achieved through its occasioning of shared amusement such as through laughter tokens or by other displays of appreciation of the tease.

So the very presence of Lucy's tease-implicated item at this point also raises the question of the nature of the conversational environment which occasions such a device at this point (Drew, 1987). It is to these co-operation related topics that I now want to turn our attention.
Building affiliation: the laminated nature of social work talk

In developing the concept of footing, Goffman made plain that he was setting out to understand how participants co-ordinate the tasks they are undertaking together. Central to his work was the notion that footing changes enabled the maintenance of different alignments within a sequence of interaction:

[I]t must be allowed that we can hold the same footing across several of our turns of talk. And within one alignment, another can be fully enclosed. In truth, in talk it seems routine that, while firmly standing on two feet, we jump up and down on another.


He provides an illuminating example of how a sequence of interaction can involve various layers of alignment at the beginning of this paper. It involves an analysis of the formal and highly ritualised signing of a statute in the Oval Office of the White House. Goffman examines the sexist banter which Richard Nixon, President of the United States at the time, initiates with one of the newspaper reporters who were present to witness the ceremony. The woman in question was teased by the President about the fact that she was wearing trousers rather than the skirts which Nixon apparently preferred women to wear.

We need not be concerned with the precise details of the ways that the talk shifted from the formality of the political event to the teasing in which President Nixon engaged. However, a number of important general
points arise from Goffman's discussion which are relevant to our examination of social work talk. We have of course already made some use of Drew's work on teases over the course of our analysis. First, the example provides evidence that even within highly formalised, 'serious' occasions, the business at hand can be punctuated and interwoven with other alignment arrangements between those present. In the quote above, Goffman suggested that interpersonal exchanges are regularly layered in this way.

What is more, these layers are not to be conceptualised as separate strands of interaction which function independently of each other. Rather, they reinforce each other in a way which participants seldom comment on. As Goffman concludes:

> When Helen Thomas [the journalist] pirouetted for the president, she was employing a form of behaviour indigenous to the environment of the ballet, a form that has come, by conventional reframing, to be a feature of female modeling in fashion shows, and she was enacting it - of all places - in a news conference. No one present apparently found this transplantation odd. That is how experience is laminated. [Goffman, 1981: 156]

I want to consider in more detail this idea that relationships as enacted in interpersonal situations are laminated. I will be concerned with the way in which the alignments made possible by different footings can be distinguished or combined within a sequence. Or, to put it in terms of the metaphor, I want to separate out some of the layers within the
institutional laminate which tend to occur in my corpus of social work talk and to consider how the layers themselves may strengthen each other. I shall be providing examples of a pattern of exchanges that I have identified occurring fairly regularly across the corpus.

We can begin this examination by noting briefly how Nixon's attempts to display alignment with the journalist and the overhearing audience, highly artificial though Goffman predicts they may have been, bears quite a resemblance to the sort of orientation that social worker participants may take up with respect to each other. Goffman notes that Nixon was usually keen to show that he could get in touch with ordinary people. His shift of footing to display an intimacy at the signing of the bill may be compared to the shifts to more personal positionings in the footings that we introduced earlier in the chapter. We may consider these displays too for the way in which they provide an opportunity for maintaining affiliation and highlighting what the professional and client have in common at times of conflict. The further question to be addressed as we look into social work interaction is whether such shifts might be incorporated into the institutional patterning by which social work is done.

Earlier we saw Lucy's attempted tease ('Nosey') of the social worker occurring in the midst of the accomplishment of interactional business of a confrontational nature. The appearance of such a device appears to help co-ordinate the separate layers of confrontation and collaboration which must be managed at this point in the exchange. The tease was provided at a place in the sequence in which, as we have seen, there was
strong evidence from the other two participants that some sort of defence was made relevant as the next action in an activity sequence involving accusations of deceit and dangerousness. Another example of the promotion of interactional alignment in an unpromising environment occurs in the following social work extract:

6. [(JP:II:59)]

1 Sw: how did you feel at ((name of child's school))
2 last week when they (. ) made the comment that
3 .hhhh there's an undercurrent! of sexuality
4 (1.2)
5 Sw: in the room (. ) with Martin
6 (0.4)
7 Sw: (think) that was one of the things
8 [Stephanie said
9 Pam: [well I didn't quite understand
10 Sw: I was (. ) a bit huh cur(h)ious abo(h)ut that
11 because he's (. ) still a twelve year old boy
12 (an that)
13 (1.4)
14 Pam: pt well I'm still quite .hh even though he's twelve
15 I (was) still really angry
16 Sw: yeh=
17 Pam: =from the things that he's learnt at other schools

This extract comes from a long discussion between a social worker and a woman ('Pam') following a recent meeting at her son's school which included his class teacher ('Stephanie'). The mother became angry at frequent intervals during the meeting with the social worker. Interactional difficulties in the meeting occurred particularly when discussing the problems presented by Martin who had allegedly sexually abused a number of individuals. One of the features of the lamination of the activities in the above extract relates to the strong contrast that is worked up between the school and class teacher's attributed viewpoint
and that of the social worker. I want to show how by displaying various features of the difference between this other professional group and his own participant status, the social worker can increase the potential for alignment with Pam, the mother. Let us first use the above interactional sequence to distinguish some of the features of these two layers of external and personal footing and the way the social worker's turns pursue a mutual stance. Following this, we shall see how such lamination of their experience gets recycled in a subsequent piece of interaction.

The external source of the 'undercurrent of sexuality' attribution at line 3 gets renewed and further specified at lines 7-8 when an initial answer is not forthcoming. We know that this is a frequently displayed pattern where a speaker tries to put a distance between herself and a controversial statement. The externalising effect is further heightened in the above by a number of other features of the social worker turns. There is an intonational stress on the word 'undercurrent' and we might also note that its delivery is in a tone somewhat different from the social worker's normal voice. This further adds to the impression that these words, as well as the general viewpoint that they convey, were originally composed by individuals at the school: to use Goffman's term, the origin of the words used do not arise from the current speaker. The social worker also adds '(think) that was one of the the things Stephanie said' which reinforces the impression that he is trying to remember the precise detail of someone else's spoken opinion, rather than his own.
The mother's overlapped response 'well I didn't quite understand' then seems to occasion the social worker's next turn. The latter displays a number of features that align it with the mother's answer and marks the shift to a personal footing:

10 Sw: I was (. ) a bit huh cur(h)ious abo(u)t that
11 because he's (. ) still a twelve year old boy
12 (an that)

We can note first that the construction of the first part of this turn mirrors the mother's previous 'I didn't quite understand'. Being 'a bit' curious or not 'quite' understanding are both versions which play up the same incompleteness of the sense which the speaker made of what the school was saying. They each build on the earlier tentativeness in the way that the social worker referred to what he could recall that the teacher had said at lines 7-8. Further, the social worker's stress on the 'I' in 'I was a bit curious' also conveys the interpretation that he means here 'I too' rather than setting out a reaction which contrasts strongly with that of the mother.

Another feature of the alignment design of this turn are the laughter tokens which are produced when the social worker notes his curiosity. Jefferson (1979, 1984a) has analysed in some detail the sorts of interactive environments in which laughter is shared or declined by participants. She has also considered the production of laughter particularly where the participants are involved in talking about one of the incumbent's troubles (see Chapter Four where we introduced the notion of 'Troubles Telling' sequences). The reader will recall that a possible
'trouble' that the social worker has just drawn attention to is their shared failure to make sense of the school's 'comment' about Pam's son's sexuality. One of Jefferson's findings which is relevant to this is the way in which a recipient can project an alignment through the manner in which an utterance is delivered. The presence of such laughter tokens can then occasion a similar display in the next turn. Alternatively, as in our target sequence, the next speaker may decline to treat their problem as an occasion for this display of mutuality. This is partly achieved through the mother's next turn which presents extra details of the problem in a manner which does not include further laughter particles.

A third feature of the social worker's alignment orientation is to be found in the account which is provided in the turn. We can consider this in the context of the way in which it is subsequently dealt with. As we shall analyse presently, the mother deals with this turn by treating the account as one with which she disagrees:

10  Sw:  I was a bit huh cur(h)ious abo(h)ut that
11    because he's (. ) still a twelve year old boy
12    (an that)
13    (1.4)
14  Pam:  pt well I'm still quite .hh even though he's twelve
15    I (was) still really angry
16  Sw:  yeh=
17  Pam:  =from the things that he's learnt at other schools

The social worker's first turn contains a description of Martin as 'still a twelve year old boy' which appears to be treated by the mother as attributing blame to her son, rather than (as may have been the social worker's intention) being designed to raise doubts about the
appropriateness of the school's 'undercurrent of sexuality' report for a youngster of this age. In other words, the action orientation behind the formulation of the boy as being twelve years old is treated by Pam as implying that her son is old enough to have some responsibility. The alternative interpretation would be of him 'still' being a child at twelve years of age and hence too young for the attribution of the 'sexuality' metaphor.

Whatever the social worker actually did intend in his account, the organisation of the mother's next turn suggests that her response is a disagreement with his assessment. Pomerantz' (1984a) study of such second pair parts indicates that dispreferred responses to assessments typically display features which have much in common with other types of action pairs. For example, the seconds tend to be marked by a gap before the next speaker responds and by a further delay within the turn before the disagreement is produced. This delay often involves the use of prefices such as 'well' and the disagreement being initially stated in a weakened form before the provision of a stronger version over a number of turns (see for example Levinson, 1983). There is evidence of all of these features across lines 14 to 17:

13 Pam: pt well I'm still quite .hh even though he's twelve
14 Pam: (1.4) I (was) still really angry
15 Sw: yeh=
16 Pam: =from the things that he's learnt at other schools

The point about extract 6 is that there is a strong display of alignment by the social worker but this does not result in a visible shift in the
client's affiliation towards the personal position he reports. We should emphasise of course that this is not to be deduced from the mother's insistence that she was 'still really angry' in the final lines of the exchange. As we have seen earlier, it is possible within conversations through devices such as teasing to highlight points of conflict with another speaker yet maintain an orientation to co-operative interaction.

What then occurs a few turns later is a recycling of many of the same elements within the discussion:

7. [JP:II:61]

60 Sw: how does he get on with Mary now?
61 (1.0)
62 Pam: well
63 Sw: ( ) relationships=
64 Pam: =soon as they're home together they argue
65 Sw: *yeh*
66 (3.2)
67 Sw: is:=she worried about (what I'm saying)
68 trying to get back to this undercurrent of sexuality
69 "again"=>that they seem to pick up at ((school name))<
70 (1.4)
71 Pam: w::what d'you mean
72 Sw: well it's just this comment that Stephanie made
73 about him being .hhh they they see him as well as (.)
74 potentially a sexual person=>that he has< a sexuality
75 [about him
76 Pam: [yeh
77 (3.0)
78 Sw: now
79 (0.6)
80 Sw: it's not (I say) it's not something I've picked up
81 when I've me'im
82 (0.6)
83 Sw: but then again I've
84 Pam: HE WOULD NOT try anything like that with ME
85 or his sister (.) he would not

We can see that this sequence follows much the same pattern as the previous one. It starts with the social worker asking a question and
then initiating an activity sequence in which he uses the same sort of external footings to raise controversial topics before distancing his personal position from these attributions. Once again the sequence does not appear to result in a display of alignment between the speakers.

PERSONAL FOOTINGS, PUZZLES AND SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITY SEQUENCES

By contrasting the witnesses' maximal descriptions with an alternative version of previous events a barrister can undermine her account (Drew, 1992). The adjacent placement of such opposing descriptions creates a discrepancy or puzzle for the overhearing jury. By the use of such a device, a barrister who is cross-examining the witness makes the inference available that the witness' version doesn't resolve this difficulty. It sets up the inference that her testimony is unreliable and the prosecution case is thereby weakened.

The social work extracts we have just examined also set up a puzzle for the participants. In these passages, the social worker displays his inability to resolve a discrepancy between the school's description of a boy's 'undercurrent of sexuality' and the worker's own failure to 'pick (this) up'. He then poses this problem to the boy's mother in their current discussion.

Another of the differences between the sequences in this setting and that of the courtroom and some other institutional environments, such as the news interview, is the introduction of personal footings to attempt to deflect the responsibility for raising such contentious matters. In
externalising the source of a controversial phrase, the social worker further distances his own position from the viewpoint he is expressing. However, the two 'undercurrent of sexuality' extracts we have examined also create a context in the discussion in which, on a turn-by-turn basis, the participants display their orientation to the difficulty introduced by the social worker as one that he himself is experiencing.

The formatting of such a discrepancy as a problem of achieving a social worker's personal understanding appears to be a repeated way in which the workers interact with their clients. As well as the recycled discussion of extracts 6 and 7, there are a series of other examples across my corpus of data which occur both as recycled sequences within a single meeting and across different worker-client interactions.

By constructing the problem as one which the social worker owns, this makes relevant the client's next actions in responding as potentially helping the worker resolve their local difficulty. In other words, a next turn in which, say, the client provides more information is itself then treatable as a display of co-operation because of the activity context created by the social worker's initial request. So through such a sequence, 'co-operation' is made available as a possible trajectory of their interaction through the introduction of personal footings by the social worker. The presence of these constructions in this institutional context is therefore potentially of consequence for the way that a pattern of interactions which are institutionally-linked might be investigated.

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A THREE PART CO-OPERATION SEQUENCE

In the extracts which follow, I shall be distinguishing three interlinked phases of social work interaction occurring regularly in the meetings I recorded. In doing so, I shall be setting out to present this as a candidate pattern of social worker-client spoken interaction which occurs in response to the functional demands of this institutional setting. My main aim here then is to introduce a sequence by which those involved in child protection meetings manage—in their conversations—the dilemma of partnership and control.

The conversational elements which comprise this pattern will be defined in terms of (i) a repeated formulation introduced by the professional (ii) the structures out of which this is constructed and (iii) the co-operation-related activities which are performed across the turns of the sequence. More specifically, I shall be setting out to show how the professional's topicalising of a difficulty or puzzle, formulated in the sort of personal terms which we have analysed earlier in this chapter, can lead to a stable sequence which results in an alignment of the participants by the end of the sequence.

One of the things we shall need to do over the course of my explication is to examine the distinctive features of the elements in some detail and to consider how the turns of talk are linked up. However, to begin my analysis, it will be helpful to illustrate the general features of the sequence in more detail and then to identify them in operation within a
couple of extracts.

In Element One the professional formulates a difficulty she is experiencing in terms of her own personal understanding of an aspect of her work with the clients. This is often worked up across a number of turns in which the speaker's position is woven in with that of external sources. The latter may also be spelled out in more detail across the sequence such as in various references to 'the Department' or 'the Social Services'. Alternatively, the source of the external viewpoint may be left more implicit by using terms which do not make direct reference to human agency, such as impersonally modalised constructions ('it appears that' or 'the reason that concerns remain') (cf. Latour, 1987).

Within these constructions of an external perspective on the problem, the client's difficulties are adumbrated in terms of a pattern which has been detected although this is often provided in unspecific detail. For example, the phrases used may draw attention to the deficiencies of the client's overall functioning ('it seems that you can't quite cope') or allude to the extent of the problem, say in terms of the length of time ('the files suggest there's been a long history') or the previous lack of success of professional intervention ('no one seems to have been able to have helped you sort it out').

Element Two then follows. This consists of a sequence in which the worker pursues a response to her Element One formulation and, in order for progress to Element Three, acknowledgement from the client occurs. However, there sometimes appear to be two distinct orientations
distinguishable within this phase. The client may not in fact acknowledge the 'pattern' of difficulties as described in the previous turns or she may even dispute aspects of this description. What appears to occasion the move to Element three is when acknowledgements of the professional's personal difficulties or puzzlement are displayed. As we shall see, there is evidence from within the turns at this point of the interactional delicacy of the participants' alignment. In the second of the two illustrations to follow, we shall be examining the ways in which the professional may repackage their constructions of their relationship with the client and transition into the third phase become delayed until client acknowledgement occurs. Commonly during this phase, the topic of the talk includes description of the need to work in partnership, or deals in some other way with the relationship between client and professional.

Element three displays participant alignment and is occasioned by the production of the acknowledgement components of Element Two. Typically a change of patterning of the 'communication format' occurs. As was discussed in Chapter Six, the latter term has been used by Perakyla (Perakyla and Silverman, 1991; Perakyla, 1995) to distinguish between the changes in footing which arise in exchanges of speech in various institutional contexts. Counselling sessions may take the form of - and be orientated to, and instantiated by participants as - an 'interview', in which the counsellor asks questions and the client answers. Alternatively 'information delivery' exchanges may be distinguished where the participants are aligned as speaker and recipient and they organise
their interaction to allow the speaker to deliver information whilst the other(s) present acknowledge receipt of this in their turns.

What marks out Element Three is that a sequence is set up in which these formats are assumed by the participants without further negotiation. For example the social worker may take up the conversational role of questioner and the client align herself in a complementary role in providing answers. As discussed earlier in the thesis, such 'interview' phases tended to occur very infrequently over the social work meetings as a whole. Alternatively, the client or professional may embark upon a set of 'information delivery' turns which set out to explain some feature of the pattern introduced in Element 1 and hence display a co-operative approach to explaining or further illustrating the social worker's puzzle. The presence of Element Three may be taken as an indication that the participants have achieved a symmetry in their conversational exchanges which constitutes a first base in achieving a co-operative orientation to resolving the care/control dilemma.

Let us now take a concrete example to illustrate this candidate three element co-operation sequence in operation. In the opening turns of the following extract, the social worker appears to be seeking to get the clients' perspective on what sort of professional support they might need, if any, to bring up their baby safely. We might remind ourselves when we read the extract how the way the parents' opinion is sought resembles the way professionals in paediatric health clinics tend to seek service users' opinions before pursuing an alignment of views between parent and professional in the subsequent turns (see, for example,

I should also caution that although in the examples which follow, I have attempted to be quite precise about the point at which the three elements begin and end, the main aim of this exploration is to distinguish the general bandings under which I have identified the three elements. Clearly, there will be further analysis and research necessary to identify more accurately what is going on at points of overlap between the phases. The reader should treat the boundaries between the phases as being somewhat provisional and heuristically employed in this initial presentation of the co-operation model.

The move into Element 1 begins at line 27 following what appear to be a series of attempts by the social worker to achieve an 'interview' alignment.

8. [LSA:II:14a]

1  Sw: okay so you think that people are over reacting
2    a bit to when they say that you
3    need some sort o' you know (. ) help to make sure that
4    Christopher is looked after properly (. ) er:: I (. )
5    can I just ask you::
6    <what do you think would be a reasonable involvement>
7    from people who weren't part of the family=I mean .hhh
8    d- d- d'you think that you could cope
9    with nobody visiting Christopher?
10    (1.6)
11    Sw: you should have somebody every week or so?
12    (1.0)
13    Sw: every day?
14    Fa: uhhh about once a week would (be en(gh)ough)=
15    Sw: =okay so what can the two of you do to convince
16    Social Services that they only need to pop in
17    once a week?
Fa: plenty o' love an attention
make sure that he's fed
properly and you know er: is (nappy is) clean

Sw: yeh but I guess that <what Social Services concern is>
an' I'm using some words that are sort of legal ones
here (.) the needs of the child must always be paramount
>'that means' come first< and (.)
y' don't seem to do those things (you've described)?

that's the thing everyone has noticed
an' it sounds like a pretty big job to me that you know
you've got i- in front of you to c- (.)
hhh I mean I'm not sure who hhh that I know how you're
gonna do all this I mean for like w-
it m- means you both being there all the time=

Fa: =right

Sw: [are you
Mo: [(well you) not there most of the [time
Sw: [*right*

Fa: [(I will)
Mo: [(you have to) go out=
Fa: =I will

Sw: right so you're say::ing it might be difficult
Fa: yeh of course it's gonna be difficult sometimes
but I I I'm quite capable of bringing 'im up
Sw: I know what (you're getting at) but
>\text{'d} you see what I'm saying< it's no good
trying it again (.) you know (.) ( )
on your own unless
you're prepared first to to (sort it) with me::
an for us to keep working together on *( your problem)*

Fa: ye:[h
Sw: [so that we can make sure that Christopher's
all right [an that is something that I feel
Fa: *((I get you:: )
Sw: I can help both of you with=
Mo: =right (.) yeh
Sw: oka:::y,
Fa: "yeh"
Sw: .hhh ((coughs)) n(gh)ow I (.) w- we need t- to
get on to some of the questions we need to talk about
(fairly rapido)=I've got some of these from
d'you remember (.) hu I said we call it huhu
the ora(h)nge book?

Fa: uhhuh
I want to ask you about your routines for feeding by

what sort of thing does Christopher (most)

like to eat=(you know) what does he (take to)?

well he likes [most things really

[likes (his rusks)]

Element 1

The Pattern dimension to Element 1 is spelt out by the social worker particularly over lines 27 to 33 above. We can note that this is first constructed in ways which put a distance between the speaker and the authorities who are attributed as holding the concerns. The current speaker makes a 'guess' (line 27) at the concerns of Social Services that 'everyone has noticed' (line 33). By doing this, the speaker deflects the accountability associated with the possession of such a viewpoint away from herself, and makes the distinction between herself as animator and the agency as the source of such views; we have of course identified similar externalising devices over the course of this and the previous chapter. We can also note at lines 28-30, the specification of the origin of the view about the welfare of the child being 'paramount'. This term originates from the 1989 Children Act where the Welfare Principle is enshrined in law, and refers to the child's needs being the 'paramount' consideration (see Bainham, 1993). The speaker makes it clear where the authorship of the words comes from when she says 'I'm using some words that are sort of legal ones' before explaining in other words what it might mean.
We find too that this separation out of worker from her agency and from
the clients is initiated in a particularly strong way earlier in the
segment. At lines 15-16, the parents and the Local Authority's tasks are
linked in the question that the social worker poses: 'what can the two of
you do to convince Social Services that they only need to pop in once a
week?'. The pro-term 'they' seems to place the speaker (who is, of
course the family's social worker) outside of the cordon of
responsibility at this point in the dialogue.

B. The strands of the Puzzle for the social worker that are woven into
the sequence are pulled together immediately after the problem has been
formulated as belonging to the parents (lines 34-35). The social worker
presents her reaction to it in a form which quite emphatically emphasises
the size of their task - 'it's a pretty big job' (line 34). The speaker
distinguishes that this is her personal opinion in the ensuing passage.
In commenting on the size of the job, she adds, 'to me'. She also says
'I mean I'm not sure who .hhh that I know how you're gonna do all this'
(lines 33-34). This provides a commentary on the requirements being
placed on the couple which establishes through the personal pronoun, 'I',
that this is the worker's own doubt or puzzle. The pro-term is then
recycled and articulated with emphasis following what appears to be a
self correction when she says 'I'm not sure who .hhh that I know'.
Acknowledgement is distinguished in Element two of the Co-operation sequence. It can first be considered with reference to lines 39 to 50 of Extract 8. After the Father produces an immediate unmarked acknowledgement - 'right' latched onto the previous turn at line 39 - a set of exchanges follows involving all three participants. These are instigated by the mother's comment at line 42 which appear to be directed at her partner, rather than the social worker. There is evidence for this interpretation in the mother's next turn where she appears to qualify what she says with '(you) have to go out'. This indicates an insider's knowledge of the person being addressed which the mother is unlikely to possess with regards to the social worker.

Whatever the intention of the speakers over the following turns, we can note that the social worker's further enquiry at line 48 secures a response by the father ('yeh of course it's gonna be difficult') which seems to be a preface to a disagreement. It is followed with a qualification ('sometimes') and an assertion that makes available the interpretation that he remains at least not fully persuaded of the need for outside help in child rearing. We can thus note that by line 50, there is little conversational evidence of a shift in position. The parents continue to indicate their resistance of the constructions of the patterning of their difficulties formulated in such terms as 'which everyone has noticed' and 'the Social Services concern'.

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The pursuit of 'acknowledgment' then continues over a series of turns accompanying a change from the social worker talking about the pattern of their difficulties to the production of a series of co-operation implicative formulations. Beginning at line 51 the social worker appears to affiliate with her client's claim to be 'quite capable' of bringing up his child.

At line 56, the phrase 'us to keep working together' links the parents and professional over what they are expected to undertake together. The speaker's next turn then overlaps with the father's 'yeh' at line 58. Particles such as this often function as continuers where the previous speaker is handed back the next turn, as happens here. The shift of origin to 'we' that she produces at line 59 'so that we can make sure' speaks for both parties. It builds their mutual responsibility to resolve the difficulties which had been outlined in Element One.

There is a more marked series of acknowledgements produced towards the completion of this phase. We can note at line 61 the Father's 'I get you:::' occurs in overlap with the social worker's turn at this point. It also displays that the respondent has understood the implication of what the social worker means. Following this upgraded acknowledgement by the father, the mother produces 'right (.) yeh' (line 63) without delay at the completion of the social worker's offer that she can help. This would seem to add to the sense that both the parents have orientated to completing the acknowledgement phase. As we shall see when we consider our next example, this acknowledgement by all the parties present seems to be a significant feature where the professional is negotiating with
more than one client.

Element 3

The move to Element Three is completed with a final check that the parents are aligned, the social worker's 'oka:::y' at line 64 and the father's 'yeh' in the next turn being immediately followed by an announcement of the questioning that the worker plans to initiate. The pre-announcement of these questions to come is done in a way which resembles one of the sorts of device which Perakyla and Silverman (1991) describe in their analysis of speech-exchange systems in a similar context. The introduction of delicate issues is managed with similar devices indicative of the interactional sensitivity of the exchanges. They identify how speakers (typically the professional in Aids counselling) sometimes secures the go-ahead for multi-unit turns by numbering in advance the items that they are going to talk about. For example, they provide an extract which opens as follows:


1 C: As far as sex is concerned, it means:
2 keeping to the safer sex guidelines.
3 P: U[mh
4 C: [For two reasons..hh Firstly: (0.5) to
5 try and prevent them passing it on
6 to anyone else:=
7 P: =uh-hum
8 C: A:nd (. ) secondly: because really
((turn continues))

We can notice here how the patient's (P's) continuers at lines 3 and 7 serve to maintain and display their orientation to the interaction as
recipients of information. Similarly, across our target datum, the clients' turns are aligned to information delivery and then questioning in Element Three. (We also found a very similar interactional sequence when we took Schegloff's (1992) analysis of the Bush-Rather co-orientation to the achievement of an 'interview' in the previous chapter).

At the beginning of this section, the parents are aligned as recipients of the social worker's advice-orientated turns which began some turns back when she introduced the idea that they needed to work together. This alignment then continues at line 71 where the Father's 'uhhh' affiliates with thelaughter tokens of the previous turn, and also seems to serve to give the go-ahead for the social worker's next turn in which she inserts another pre-announcement prior to the questioning activity to come (see Levinson, 1983: 350). The maintenance of alignment then continues as the social worker formulates the sort of question she wants to ask (line 73) with the parents waiting until she actually poses the question in her next turn. As with the Bush-Rather analysis, the readiness of the recipients to take up alignment as interviewee is further evidenced by the lack of delay in their reply when a question is
finally posed. We can also note how both mother and father appear to be similarly aligned given their overlapping responses, and that both respond with the same item 'likes' in their answers as used in the formulation of the questionner in the previous turn.

Another feature of the progression towards Element Three is the establishment of a different and shared source for the origin of the views which the professional articulates. We can find various evidence for this across the turns which immediately precede Element Three:

66 Sw: hhh ((coughs)) n(gh)ow I (.) w- we need t- to
67 get on to some of the questions we need to talk about
68 (fairly rapido)=I've got some of these from
d'you remember (.) hu I said we call it huhu
70 the ora(h)nge book?

First, the change of pronoun from 'I' to 'we' in the opening line is one which is often used to speak on behalf of a collection of individuals. Clayman, (1992) provides the following example:


1 G: ...we don't wanna see one another, (.) .hh
2 on a weekend where we just have (.) y'know
two da:ys if [even tha]:t
4 S: [Right, ]
5 (.)
6 S: tch I [ don't blame you.]
7 G: [tuh relate tuh o]ne another. .hh Y'know
8 we'd like- (.) a little bit longer than that:t.
9 (0.2)
10 S: Right,=
11 G: =I mean I don't (.) really care that much.
12 But he does.

Here, the first speaker indicates that it is not only for herself that she is speaking in the earlier lines. She uses the pro-term 'we' (lines
1-3, 8) to refer to herself and her boyfriend, both parties sharing the identities of author and principal. However, in the final line, she distinguishes her boyfriend as holding the viewpoint she has animated, and in so doing shifts her footing.

In the social worker's turn, the shift is in the other direction from an individual to a shared perspective in connection with the questions she and the parents need to talk about. As with some of the previous examples we considered in Chapter Six, we can note the design features of the speaker's turn in the modification from 'I' to 'we' in the opening line. This enables her to introduce the questioning as a collaborative exercise, which involves them 'talking about' the questions. This can be contrasted with if she had said for example 'I need to ask you some questions' with its less affiliative connotation.

The turn in fact contains repeated uses of the proterm 'we' which perhaps serves to further emphasise the co-operative endeavour that is being worked on in the local context. There is a further reflexive dimension to the way that the social worker also makes reference in the third usage of the pronoun in this turn to a particular text which she jokingly reminds the clients is referred to as the 'Orange Book'. This is the vernacular name given to the guideline manual provided for social workers carrying out a child protection risk assessment (D.o.H., 1988) and from which various passages have been quoted in the current study (see, for example, pages 25 to 31). We can observe that by reminding the parents of this manual, the social worker is including them in an insider's understanding of the informal term for the text. We can also note that
in pointing out the source of her questions, the professional is also once again making use of an external resource in managing her accountability. By providing details of the origin of her questions, she may achieve a distance between her personal responsibility and that of her role as the poser of intimate questions about family functioning that the child protection manual may raise.

Figure 1.
A three part co-operation sequence in child protection talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC FEATURES</th>
<th>STRUCTURE</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELEMENT 1: Formulation of the problem</td>
<td>(a) Puzzle presented in personalised footing</td>
<td>Laminated interaction arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Pattern presented (external source)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEMENT 2: Fulcrum</td>
<td>Acknowledgement tokens</td>
<td>Modified footing speaking for the clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEMENT 3: Alignment</td>
<td>Adumbration of the topics to come (e.g. numbering or information check)</td>
<td>Pre-sequence leading to Interview or Information Delivery (e.g. Questioner/Answerer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Achievement of 'Co-operation'

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At this point, let us review the candidate sequence I have described and illustrated. The diagram (figure 1 above) presents schematically the main features of the three phases within which I have described the pursuit of co-operation in social work. There are a number of important themes which I want to emphasise which bear on the workings of the three phases as an interactional sequence. The worker's formulation of the problem in terms of the puzzle/pattern distinction initiates the entry into the three phases. However, it is only when acknowledgement is forthcoming that the interaction moves into the final alignment phase. For this reason, I have identified in figure 1 Element 2 as the 'fulcrum' around which the participants' alignment pivots.

A second point to stress is the laminated structure of the interactions out of which alignment arises. We noted earlier in the chapter Goffman's use of this metaphor to present the way in which more than one set of interpersonal relationships can be sustained in the exchanges across a sequence of talk. As he showed, it is possible for formalised, role orientated interactions to be conducted yet, across the same sequence, for other relationships to be displayed. The reader will recall his example of the teasing of the journalist during the ceremonial signing of a Bill at the White House. In Element 1, the social worker's indication of her personal orientation to the work is presented alongside an external, official viewpoint and, in so doing, a contrast is achieved.

We can also remind ourselves how the sequence is organised through the
participants' orientation to the underlying care/control dilemma which, as we discussed at some length in the opening chapters, can be said to underlie social work. This is instantiated within this sequence. The work can be analysed with reference to the underlying dilemmatic requirements of the professional's work and participant orientations to various features of the care/control dimensions to practice. The underlying role-related theme driving the sequences is the professional's aim to display a wish to work in partnership whilst at the same time sustaining a distance from her clients and emphasising the priority to retain control and authority to protect the children if this is required. The important thing about the candidate sequence is how it displays this trajectory towards co-operation being achieved as the social worker continues to do the other parts of the job.

I shall provide a number of further illustrations of the candidate sequence shortly in order to suggest something of its range and flexibility of uses. However, before doing so, I have selected a second example to show how the sequence can appear in environments where the need actively to pursue co-operation does not appear to be necessary. We can therefore consider how the function of sequence is not there to get just agreement from the clients but more specifically to achieve a consensus over the goals of child protection. We can find in the following extract an interesting example of how the social worker's version of the professional task for the workers and parents leads to alignment.

There are two professionals involved in the following discussion with the
parents of four young children, all of whom have been kept in care for a long period. 'Anthony', the oldest child is referred to in the extract. The opening speaker, 'Tm' is the Team Manager of the social worker ('Linda') for the family.

11. [JLRB:I:1-3]

1  Tm: right
2    (4.0)
3  Tm: we=Linda as I say I've already explained
4    that Linda an I h've
5    (0.8)
6  Tm: had a discussion (. ) before we came to see you
7    as we 'ave done in the past .hh a:::nd
8    .hh we knew that we were meeting you
9    as you just as you just said before
10  we put the tape recorder on
11 .hhh that the (. ) the=you wanted to
12  meet us before the case conference
13  cos you wanted to start to get an idea
14    (0.6)
15  of the issues (. ) that we would be looking at
16  in (. ) the ca- at the case conference an
17  looking at the issues for .hhh
18    (1.4)
19  Tm: getting ahead on what on what what would be
20  the terms on which we would be saying
21  yes we would be able to recommend that the
22  children came home
23    (0.4)
24  Tm: is that right?= 
25  Fa: =yeh [(that's right yeh basically yeh yeh
26  Sw: [that's it isn't it really >I mean really
27  that's what we said< yes [that's what we discussed
28  Fa: [basically yeh yeh yeh
29  Sw: wasn't it. (. ) good uhuha
30  Fa: yeh
31    (0.8)
32  Tm: ri(gh)t the ( ) other things
33    (0.8)
34  Tm: we::: worked out we wanted to say to you .hhh
35  was that the basic (. ) our basic attitude
36  is that we do want to return the children
37  home .hh but the but is .hh that we've
38  gotta make sure that things are gonna be safe
39  Fa: "yeh"
40  Tm: .hhh that
41    (0.6)
and also that particularly in Anthony's case
as he's subject to a care order
we've got to we will have to make another
submission under the hhh the PCP
remember the placement of children with parents
report that we did (. ) before
yep so we'd have to resubmit . hhh obviously . hh
as (. ) as your case has >already been written up
once< (. ) it'll (it won't) (. ) the basic details
>won't have to be written up again< but the
new situation would have to be
we we haven't got to go to court have we
[no no no no
[(in in the cir-)
]>oh that's all right I just er<
d'you remember the [one that I did before
[yes
[(it has to put all that in)
[yes yes yes
.hh well it's got to be (. ) basically updated
right= =yes
(0.8)
.hh and we and .hh we also we're also
cos we're all mindful of the baseline
that we that we were working from before
was that we got to a state where . hhh
 everybody was aware that half an hour
could be a dangerous time
you know [it was a time limit you know
[yeh
yeh
and [that
[that's right yeh
that's you know (. ) that we've got to be
relatively better than that
"yes"=
=yeh=
yeh?
=yeh yeh
(2.4)
.hh okay so (. ) point (. ) I mean (. )
we've worked out six points that we think
are the sort of things that you are going to need
satisfy us on
(0.8)
yeh?
Underlying this extract are some typical dilemmas that child protection professionals face. We can unpick three strands of the dilemma which are presented here. The first of these, is that it is not just that the workers must understand what is going on in the family, and reassure themselves that the children would be safe at home. It is also that the workers must *report* convincingly on this and convey their assessment in other settings such as in a case conference to other members of the professional network (see lines 16 to 22), and also to managers with executive power (lines 45 to 59).

A second strand concerns the need for these particular workers to be sure that the children's safety is not compromised in any plans that are made for rehabilitation (lines 34 to 38; lines 76 to 78). It is not that the workers are in charge of the implementation of such plans but they will be arguing for this course of action during the decision making process (lines 20 to 22).

Similar constructions of the social worker's dilemma are also present in the following two examples selected from my data:
12. [ALM: 1: 3]

135 Sw: to be able to persuade a court that
136 I'm going to be able to do [that
137 Lucy: [ye:] (h
138 Mark: ((sniffs))
139 Sw: I'm gonna have to .hh prove to them and to myself
140 (1.2)
141 Sw: that the children are safe while that goes on

13. [RM: I: 19]

1 Sw: there's there's there's a long enough history
2 (. ) of your drinking to make it look bad=
3 =an I have to be honest with you
4 (0.6)
5 Mo: "mm"
6 Sw: yeh I I mean I'm not going to be deliberately
7 writing in the report that this has been a major
8 problem because (I) in in in our opinion it hasn't
9 otherwise .hhh David would have been removed
10 Mo: yeh
11 Sw: yeh?
12 Mo: "mhm"
13 Sw: however
14 (1.0)
15 Sw: I (.) we we also can't say that it never happened=
16 Mo: =yeh

Space does not permit the inclusion of further examples, although it would appear that such constructions pervaded much of the corpus.

We can also note that a third feature of the dilemma presented to the parents in extract 11 also recurred across many of the data extracts. As with the first strand of the dilemma noted above, this was also concerned with reporting on aspects of the parents' behaviour which could be related to child protection. Not only did social worker's explain to their clients how they had to report on their assessment to other external agencies, but the social worker also received reports on the parents upon which they were expected to act. The following illustrate some of the ways in which this sort of material occurred in the data.
(At the beginning of the extract, the social worker is talking to Joanne, Paula's aunt, but Paula, the mother of a young baby is the indirect target. See Chapter Six, page 185).

1. Sw: right the tape recorder's on now
   2 (1.2)
   3 Sw: okay
   4 (0.6)
   5 Sw: right the the reason why I'm here then
   6 Joanne (is yu) phoned on Monday
   7 Jo: yeh
   8 Sw: pt and er
   9 (0.4)
   10 Sw: you were basically expressing
   11 a concern about (. ) [Paula=
   12 Jo: [yeh
   13 Sw: =erm that (. ) she seemed quite distressed
   14 Jo: "yeh [she was"
   15 Sw: [that
   16 (0.4)
   17 Sw: >Paula didn't know< whether she was coming or going
   18 (0.4)
   19 Sw: um=
   20 Jo: =she didn't
   21 Pa: do I ever?
   22 (1.4)
   23 Sw: >I'm not gonna say yes or no Paula but< you know
   24 (. ) you know your situation but .hh Joanne's
   25 obviously concerned um (. ) about:::
   26 (0.4)
   27 Sw: the court hearing an (. ) how it was affecting you

15. [LSA:II:14a. See extract 9]

27 Sw: yeh but I guess that <what the concern is>
   is that you don't always seem to do those things.
   29 (0.6)
   30 that's the thing that people have noticed
   31 an' it sounds like a pretty big job to me that

16. [ALM:I:1. See Appendix III lines 20 to 33]

15 Sw: I was asking "her"
   16 (0.6)
   17 Lucy: "ri::ght::"
   18 (0.2)
   19 Sw: how things w- you know sort of how .hhhh if they'd
   20 seen you an [stuff like that=
   21 Mark: [when?
   22 Sw: =basically I was fishing. I'll let you know
   23 I wanted to see what was [(happening)
We can detect the possibility of this third strand occurring in fact in our target extract across lines 71 to 77:

[from extract 11]

71 Tm: .hh and we and .hh we also we're also
cos we're all mindful of the baseline
that we that we were working from before
was that we got to a state where .hhh
(1.2)
76 Tm: everybody was aware that half an hour
could be a dangerous time

Here, in the use of the inclusive terms 'we're all' and 'everybody', there is the possible referencing of others' opinions outside of the current social worker-client partnership.

Let us now remind ourselves of how the extract continues so that the second and third elements can be distinguished. This will allow us to consider more specifically the way that the move to Element 3 is delayed, despite, as we have seen, the auspicious trajectory provided in the clients' strong acknowledgements in Element 1.

78 you know [it was a time limit you know
79 Mo: [yeh
80 Fa: yeh
81 Tm: and [that
82 Mo: [that's right yeh
83 Tm: that's you know (.) that we've got to be
84 relatively better than that
85 Mo: *yes*=--
86 Fa: =yeh=
87 Tm: yeh?=--
88 Fa: =yeh yeh
89 (2.4)
90 Tm: .hh okay so (.) point (.) I mean (.)
we've worked out six points that we think are the sort of things that you are going to need satisfy us on

Tm: yeh?

or areas that we wanna (. ) hh be able to report progress on [or ( )work with you on ]

Mo: [right yeh

Fa: yeh yeh yeh right

the first one we've called alternative strategies

what do you think you can do differently when

(Anthony is playing up)

well we've got to get him to

((turn continues))

The point I want to emphasis here is the precise way in which the alignment of the speakers is organised in the 'co-operation sequence'.

First, the acknowledgment of the pattern of the clients' difficulties - that 'half an hour could be a dangerous time' - is immediately forthcoming. However, there is a delay before the beginning of Element 3 despite the early announcement of the 'six points' to be discussed (the latter being another example of the sort of numbering device encountered in the first example (see extract 8 above)). This gap before the social workers actually proceed to the first question at line 102 seems to be occasioned by the participants' lack of acknowledgement of the puzzle dimension as reformulated at lines 92 to 93.

We can get further purchase on this by examining lines 93 onwards.

Following a delay after his previous turn, the professional appears to pursue an acknowledgement ('yeh?'), and, when one is not forthcoming, modifies his formulation to one which implicates more strongly the co-operative venture they will be involved in. He does this by shifting his footing so as to speak for the clients (line 97) using the construction 'we wanna .... be able to report progress on'.
Only when this gets acknowledged does the alignment get back on track at line 101.

It is also important to stress here how both the clients contribute to the maintenance of the trajectory towards an interview alignment at this point. Their acknowledgements (lines 99 and 100) appear to ratify the worker's modified formulations exactly at the places where a transition is relevant. So as with our previous example, these particles appear to function not just to acknowledge the co-operative nature of the work, but also give the go-ahead for the first of the question-answer pairs to come.

**Other functional aspects of the three part co-operation sequence**

To complete our examination I want to provide some other brief examples. Given the introductory nature of my thesis, and the data base upon which it rests, my aim here is not primarily to make any claims for the frequency with which the sequence occurs within such institutional forms of talk. Whilst examples are identifiable in each of the six meetings which I recorded, it is not appropriate to attempt any quantification of the device in question. Further work will be needed to demonstrate the range of convenience of the sequence across different settings, both from within child protection and in other institutional environments where co-operation is at issue.
However, two factors have guided the selection of the following extracts. First, they all contain a fairly short series of turns over which the move across the three elements occurs. Hopefully, this will allow the reader easier assimilation, whilst also suggesting the tightly organised way in which the sequence can operate. Second, I have opted to use examples which, at least to the outsider, might be argued to raise 'sensitive' topics which are closely related to the professional's role. As we have discussed at various points across the thesis, following ethnomethodological perspectives, my aim has tended to be to consider how phenomena like 'sensitivity' can be approached by using the participants' own orientations to the talk at hand. Interestingly, it would appear that the candidate sequence occurs at the beginning of at least half of the meetings from which I have obtained my data. As we discussed in the previous chapter under the heading Tickets of Entry (page 184), there is evidence from within the conversations that, as in some other informal institutional settings where the nature of the worker's activities is under negotiation, the professional needs to provide a co-operation oriented reason for her meeting to justify 'why I'm here' and to promote open discussion (see Heritage and Sefi, 1992). However, I have elected to omit further analysis of these examples where the meeting gets off the ground in the interests of brevity.
Co-operation: four examples of sharing responsibility

The following extract provides a fairly straightforward example of entry into the three element sequence. Phases one and two are numbered below:

17. [117:5 from Silverman, 1987:58]

1  Dr: | Hm (2.0) the the reason for doing the test
2  Fa: 1 | is, I mean, I'm 99 per cent certain that all
3  Mo: | she's got is a ductus
4  Fa: | → Hm hm
5  Mo: 2 | I see
6  Dr: | However the time to find out that we're
7  Dr: | wrong is not when she's on the operating table

In Chapter Six we analysed very similar shifts of footing to the one here which implies the taking of less personal responsibility. This is captured in the change of personal pronoun from 'I' (line 2) to 'we' (line 6). We can also detect a series of other features which are relevant to our current exploration. Clearly, the 'pattern' dimension is also present in the reference to a 'ductus' which presumably has medical diagnostic features. In stating that he's '99 per cent certain', the doctor's first turn provides the implication that despite the implied confidence in the judgement he is making, the professional retains some degree of doubt. In sharing the puzzle, we see a similar orientation to those we have described earlier to producing a display of openness with the client achieved through a personal footing in which an area of doubt is owned by the
professional.

In this case though, the problem that the professional shares with the parents then becomes constructed as a responsibility which seems to implicate all three participants. The father and then the mother at lines 4 and 5 produce acknowledgements of the initial formulation which are followed by the resulting upshot, 'however the time to find out that we're wrong'. Given that the earlier explanation provided appears to recommend the test to the parents (see Drew and Heritage, 1992: 31), the footing shift to 'we're wrong' in this final turn does not exclude the parents from being a part of those who are implicated in the responsibility for the decision to be made. Indeed, a few lines later, the parents and doctor proceed to align themselves as questioner and answerer as the parents take up the co-operation implicative trajectory by themselves initiating the 'interview':


1  Mo: Um, the other thing er, will it have to be done
2  hospital? (1.00)
3  D: Well it would be optimum if it was this hospital
4  Fa: Hm
5  M: Well no it's only that er we live down in Countyshire
6  D: Hm
7  M: And er
8  D: No it's better done in a proper children's heart unit
9  F: Hm
10 D: And the reason he was sent up here was because that's
11 what the unit is
12 F: Hm
13 M: Oh it is a children's hospital up here. I didn't
14 realise that.

Using Goffman's distinctions then, the professional's phrase in speaking for them all, makes available the possibility that the
principal or viewpoint behind the decision taken to do the test raised in the first extract includes the parents themselves. We might speculate that attaining such a shared position could be an important part of dealing with future accountability were things to go wrong - in the operating theatre for example.

This way of producing a joint decision as displayed in the turns of a conversation is detectable in the following example as well. As with some of the other extracts presented here, we have met this sequence before. It was originally compared with extract 17 for the similar ways in which the speakers in the two sequences shift footings:

19. [RM:I:19]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sw: there's there's there's a long enough history of your drinking to make it look bad=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>an I have to be honest with you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;mm&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sw: yeh I I mean I'm not going to be deliberately writing in the report that this has been a major problem because (I) in in in our opinion it hasn't otherwise .hhh David would have been removed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mo: yeh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sw: yeh?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mo: &quot;mhm&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sw: however</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sw: I (. ) we we also can't say that it never happened=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mo: =yeh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sw: okay so are you clear about what I will be saying,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sw: I shall have to put something about (the past )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The problem which the social worker is sharing with her client here is to do with the way in which the report she will be writing will deal with the client's 'drinking'. We can note how the checking of agreement at lines 10 to 12 precedes the move to a footing which is
repaired to become one which uses the plural 'we'. There is some evidence from within the sequence that this change of pro-term marks a viewpoint which includes the mother as well as the agency perspective which is implied in the earlier 'our opinion' at line 8.

First, the social worker's earlier turn (lines 6 - 9) had described the social worker's task in terms of the report she would be writing. The position marked by the final footing shift to 'we also can't say' moves to a claim made about a different sort of activity. A construction which would more clearly exclude the mother might be 'we can't put or write that it never happened'. Second, the shift of terms from 'I' to 'we' in the final lines is marked by a repetition of the 'we'. This might indicate a further shift of origin. As we saw in our previous examination of this extract in Chapter Six, the speaker repetitions in this passage seem to accompany changes of footing rather than occurring in the more random way which might suggest other causes of speaker disfluency.

As the above extract moves into Element Three we find another of the devices which Perakyla and Silverman (1991) identified where a speaker retains the floor in a multi-turn unit. Earlier, I described an example of the way numbering could serve to announce a series of items to come. Here, the worker conducts what Perakyla and Silverman describe as an information check. In asking 'are you clear about what I will be saying,' (line 17), the speaker prefaces her explanation to come and sets up the alignments of the participants as information deliverer and recipient.

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We find another example where alignment within the 'information delivery format' is achieved in the following extract. A repetition occurs at line 64 in the following sequence from the 'warning-implicated' passage we examined in Chapter Five. This marks a similar shift of footing to the one analysed in the previous extract:

20. [ALM:I:8. See Appendix III lines 364 to 391]

42 Sw: but (. ) I'm not going to take the children away
43 or the Department isn't I (. ) myself I don't
44 personally have that power but . hhh
45 the Department wouldn't consider that
46 (0.8)
47 Sw: unless you did something
48 (0.4)
49 (. )
50 Lucy: mh[m
51 42 Sw: [it's like a >criminal blaming the policeman cos
52 he got arrested.< . hhh "you know" if you don't
53 leave the children (. ) alone.
54 (0.4)
55 46 Sw: with one (. ) pa.rent
56 (0.4)
57 45 Sw: ptan if there's no injuries to the children=we're
58 not going to take the children.
59 (0.8)
60 61 Lucy: ri:[ght
61 62 Sw: [into care (. ) y'know int'accommodation
63 Lucy: mhm
64 64 Sw: hh that's not (. ) where we're at we're at
65 the situation were we would (. ) try (. ) to seek
66 to help you,
67 (. )
68 Lucy: mhm
69 69 Sw: >to ensure that< (. ) that wouldn't have to happen
70 Lucy: "(
71 71 Sw: [BUT
72 (0.8)
73 73 Lucy: y'know (. ) if:
74 (0.2)
75 75 Sw: you create the situation where I can't . hhh
76 guarantee the children are safe.
77 Lucy: mm
It is noteworthy that as in the previous example, the social worker produces the shift towards a shared position here articulated as 'where we're at' after there has been an acknowledgement by the parent that the professional system's power to remove the children has not been deployed (lines 58 to 59). The contrasting orientation of the social worker towards co-operation is also clearly displayed in the later part of the sequence through the formulation she provides at lines 64 to 66: 'we're at the situation where we would (. ) try (. ) to seek to help you >to ensure that< (. ) that wouldn't have to happen'.

The reader will be familiar with this particular extract from Chapter Five where we considered how a warning was produced and orientated to by the participants. The turns which comprise the beginning of Element 3 here again seem to function to maintain participant alignment as information deliverer and receiver. The pre-announcement of the warning to come, seems to be implicated through the stressed 'But' and 'if you create'. The latter phrase is clearly also indicative of the start of a warning sequence as we considered in Chapter Five. We should also recall that in our earlier analysis, we noted the way in which warnings can serve to laminate interaction arrangements in which aspects of both a caring and a controlling relationship are maintained by the warner.

In the final extract, some of the same features of Elements 1 and 2 are present as we have discussed with reference to Extract 20. We can
note that this section comes from earlier on in the same meeting taken from the 'Lucy and Mark' transcript. The jointly-implicated upshot here follows on immediately from an unmarked acknowledgement of the explanation for the predicament described by the social worker. There is evidence that this acknowledgement is delayed and follows extended gaps between the utterances of the previous turn. The pursuit of co-operation is also completed with turns of talk in which a shared hope is implicated in the principal behind the final position. To 'work ... with yourselves' in the penultimate turn also affirms that one of the goals of the social work intervention is to achieve a co-operative relationship:

21. [ALM:I:3-4]

1 Sw: .hh you know a lot of people do manage
2 er and t- it seems that you can't quite manage
3 (0.2)
4 Sw: an I think you know if we could help in that way
5 as well that'll re- further reduce the stress
6 (0.6)
7 Sw: .hh that the family's under
8 (0.6)
9 Lucy: mmm
10 (1.0)
11 Sw: umm
12 (0.6)
13 Sw: that's
14 (0.4)
15 Sw: >how I'm seeing it< but to be able to do that
16 (. ) and also >to be able to persuade a court that
17 I'm going to be able to do [that<
18 Lucy ye:::[h
19 Mark: [((sniffs))
20 Sw: I'm gonna have to .hh prove to them and to myself
21 (1.2)
22 Sw: that the chi- children are safe while that goes on
23 (2.5)
24 Sw: okay?
25 (1.2)
26 Sw: so if the children are left alone
27 (2.4)
THE PURSUIT OF CO-OPERATION

In considering the role of the social worker in child protection at the outset of this thesis, we quoted from one of the Department of Health guideline publications (D.o.H., 1988) which has had wide circulation amongst social work teams. The manual provided a recognition that 'care' and 'control' were both required parts of the professional armoury when working with parents in investigations of child abuse. Taking up the discussion which we quoted at this earlier juncture (see page 25), the section entitled 'The Use of Authority and Control' continues:

It is perhaps understandable that members of the helping professions remain uneasy about imposing themselves and their authority on what are usually involuntary clients, although parents (sometimes after initial anger and hostility) generally
prefer an honest and straightforward approach. Often a parent's abusive behaviour has resulted from loss of control, and external controls are not only necessary for child protection but can also be reassuring for the parent. Authority should not however be exercised without responsibility or to excess. An authoritarian and punitive approach will ultimately be destructive.

What we have examined over the present chapter has been some of the ways that social work conversations actually deal with the issues identified within this passage. In doing so, I have not speculated on the possible underlying motivations and intentions of social workers which documents such as the 'Protecting Children' (D.o.H, 1988) raise. Rather, I have attempted to analyse how social work activities in the data, such as may be connected with the workers 'imposing themselves and their authority', may be examined and dealt with over sequences of interaction. In particular, Goffman's conceptualisations enabled us to make more sense of conversation than is possible without his disassembly of the participation frameworks which underlie the interaction order.

We have noted that versions of the social work participants themselves are constructed within the accounts. Such accounts seem to make a regular distinction between 'external controls' prescribed by the document quoted above and the 'honest and straightforward' social worker herself who regularly appears as an individual actor embedded within the sequence. As we saw in the previous chapter, the versions
provided of the relationships between the worker and the other professionals and associates of the clients can be examined for the rhetorical constructions of what has or will be undertaken as part of social work intervention.

One of our main points for investigation has been the problematic nature of the client-professional relationship and ways of describing this. We have now illustrated in some detail the sorts of patterning by which co-operation can be produced and pursued within the turns of conversation. 'We can't say it never happened', the quote from a social work example incorporated into the title of this chapter illustrates that participants can undertake to speak not just on behalf of themselves but for other people particularly when important issues are at stake. In the following chapter we shall consider what may be accomplished even when a speaker abandons trying to substantiate a claim that child abuse in the family 'never happened'. In doing so, we shall be exploring important themes associated with the justification and minimisation of violence towards children.

As the final analytic chapter, this will enable us to complete our study of professional responses to child abuse by looking at the important topic of how backgrounds and behaviours of family members may be brought into rhetorical play in social work talk. Participants may attempt to restrict attributions about their responsibilities and to head off the implication that an incident of child abuse was their fault; as we shall see, just as we have explored over the current chapter, there are features of such discussions which may serve to
unite the professional with their clients. We shall also get another opportunity to examine the pervasive presence of the three element co-operation sequence.

Notes

1. This sequence is a nice example of a dispute about measurement arising out of differences about what participants are claiming as 'normal' (Sacks, 1992,1: Lecture 8). Often descriptions about everyday events and people's responses promote an alignment amongst the participants without the need to negotiate the meaning of an utterance further. For example if someone asks 'What have you done at school today?', the answer 'nothing' (i.e. nothing out of the ordinary) may be treated as unproblematic, not needing to be accounted for in further turns despite the potential such an answer holds for confusion and concern if taken literally (cf. Garfinkel, 1963). However, as we see in the sequence, the boy's age in this case seems to get dealt with by the participants as promoting different inferences about his responsibility and possible sexual interests. Sacks discussed the rhetorical constructions of 'normality' in many of his lectures (see for example, Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; see also Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1990).

2. Perakyla (1995: 251ff) notes the ambiguity and wide range of contexts in which the word 'concern' often appears. He suggests that this may be put to rhetorical use for example by professionals in the
business of caring and showing concern for their clients. Enquiring after a client's concerns is a way in which counsellors may elicit a client's perspective without first having to name what those difficulties might be yet retains an orientation to their potential seriousness. This leaves it to the client to define and specify the relevant information.
My main aims are two-fold in this final analytic chapter. Starting with the first sequence of talk with which we opened the thesis, I want to demonstrate further the utility of applying a Conversation Analytic approach by expanding upon the analysis presented there. In particular, I want to show how the sequential placement of the description which we examined, and particularly how it is dealt with in the subsequent turns of talk, can be brought into play to make sense of what is going on in this piece of social work interaction. In short, I want to consider how the description itself was occasioned as part of an institutional activity sequence and how it goes on to help shape what the participants do.

My second aim is to use this passage to examine the notion of co-operation from another angle. We have already considered at some length how the sequences present in my data can be shown to display the speakers' orientations to the pursuit of affiliation. In particular, the discussion of the past three chapters has focused on how accountability is made a live issue for the participants (particularly in Chapter Five) and also how responsibilities are pursued and shared out between professional and clients (in Chapters Six and Seven). The dimension which I shall be exploring presently is the idea that such rhetorical work is not just done through particular types of activity (such as the
'warning' of Lucy and Mark) nor simply through the conversational structuring of the interaction (such as in our three element sequence).

It is through and within the descriptions provided that clients and social workers display an orientation to the sort of relationship that they are building and negotiating in their activities.

At this point let us remind ourselves of the extract which began the thesis. I will reproduce it within the sequence from which it came transcribed now in CA conventions (The section is numbered as in Appendix III. The fragment provided on page 1 of this thesis is taken from lines 538 to 582 below.)

1.[ALM:1:9-10]

480 Sw: yes I think inside that
481 Mark: °(gop)°
482 Baby: °(  )°
483 Sw: there is the idea that
484 (0.8)
485 Sw: that you au-=need to make
486 a <very, united front.> towards the children
487 Lucy: mhm
488 Sw: it is something I've <notic:ed> if you l[ike
489 Mark: [((sniffs))
490 (1.0) [++]
491 Sw: that
492 (0.2)
493 Sw: poor old Mark [-] here
494 (0.2) [++]
495 tends to get the blame.
496 (0.6)
497 Sw: for a lot of [-]
498 ?Mark ((?rocking baby))"shshshshshshshshshshshsh"
499 "shshshsh"
500 Lucy: not really you know, >only when he do(h)es<
501 some(h)ting huhuwrro(h)[ng >(the(h)n yes) he does=
502 Sw: [haha
503 Lucy: =get the [blame<
504 Sw: ["yeh"
505 (0.6)
506 Sw: a:n
507 Mark: (wish I'd had fucking) kids now

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508 Sw: yeh=what I'd like (. ) what I'd [like tu happen
509 Mark: [()] can you tek 'em
510 Lucy: no
511 (0.6)
512 Sw: see u- u- it's like everything else with children if
513 if they see that they can
514 (0.8)
515 Sw: you know if you yell at them an an Lucy says aaah
516 (1.4)
517 Sw: they think aaaah huhuha
518 Lucy: "m(h)mm"
519 Sw: this needn't necessarily be::
520 Lucy: ye:::h=
521 Sw: =but if you're both there saying (. ) you know
522 (. ) you shouldn't do this,
523 (0.6)
524 Lucy: >I mean we've< tried this
525 before but ( )
526 Sw: [an then the other one just
527 (0.4)
528 Sw: yes=oh it'll take time this u- these
529 things are
530 (0.2)
531 Sw: believe me th- these things will
532 take weeks to take any effect at all.
533 (0.4)
534 Lucy: (it) took >months with us an (he) didn't get
535 anywhere=cos he was arguing with me<
536 (0.4)
537 Sw: yeh
538 Lucy: .hhh cos erm the way he was erm >(maybe sh-) goes with
539 the way we were brought up< .hh u:::m
540 (0.4)
541 Lucy: not with me Dad that wasn't no bringing up .hh but when
542 but when I went to live with me Na::n.
543 (0.4)
544 Lucy: when I was four <she didn't> (. ) slap us or anything
545 un[less she really needed to=it's [a one off if she
546 Sw: [mm [yeh
547 Lucy: ever slapped us .hhh but (. ) him he >sorto'like< (.)
548 belted it into him to do it right
549 Sw: "yeh"
550 Lucy: an with me I was spoken to
551 (0.2)
552 Sw: mm
553 (0.2)
554 Lucy: you know I actually got some (words) that I- you know
555 (. ) Nanny used to speak to me an sit me down an s
556 well look you can't get your own way on
557 everything you want .hhh but he sort o' like
558 defies what I say .hh cos he thinks he's the man
559 in the house an he thinks he's always right
560 (0.4)
561 Sw: "(y[eh]"

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There are three features of this passage which I now want to concentrate on bearing in mind the themes of the chapter. These will be concerned with how Lucy's description of her partner's and her own upbringing operates as part of a sequence of activities.

The first point is that Lucy's description, beginning at line 538, appears to be designed to warrant her resistance of the social worker's previous advice. We can note some similarities with Heritage and Sefi's (1992) paper on health visiting with which we have become familiar over the course of the study. One of the features of such advice was that it tended to be delivered regardless of the clients' response and whether they indicated that such advice was being sought. Lucy in fact appears to resist the social worker's viewpoint and suggestions on a number of occasions. For example at line 500 she responds to the social worker's comment that Mark 'tends to get the blame' with 'not really you know only...
when he do(h)es some(h)thing huhuwro(h)ng'. At line 525, she says 'I mean we've tried this before but' and then produces an even less hedged disagreement when the social worker persists. In response to his advice that it will 'take weeks' to get a change in the children's behaviour, she backs her claim with 'it took months with us an we didn't get anywhere=cos he was arguing with me' (lines 535-6).

We might then consider the account of the parents' upbringing which follows for how it supports this progressively stronger rejection. The approach that I want to suggest here is to examine the passage for how it authorises the viewpoint which the speaker presents. Relevant to this is Gergen's (1989) conceptualisation of the 'warranting voice':

people furnish rationales as to why a certain voice (typically their own) is to be granted superiority by offering rationales and justifications....One of the most compelling and essential means of achieving warrant is through reference to mental events. That is one may claim superiority of voice by virtue of possessing particular characteristics of mind. One may denigrate others' claims to voice by elucidating their infirmities of the inner region... [Gergen, 1989: 74]

If we consider Lucy's account as an attempt to warrant her version in disagreement with the social worker, this then helps to explain the pervasive presence of the contrast structures in the account (see the Introduction). Lucy needs a warrant for 'denigrating (Mark's) infirmities of the inner region', and she obtains it by showing how her
own experiences of being brought up were so different from his. It is these very experiences - being spoken to, rather than being 'belted', having an explanation provided rather than being influenced to act simply because you're 'the man in the house' - that enable her then to recognise such weaknesses in her partner, yet to explain these not as faults but as by-products of his upbringing.

We have here another example of the layer of Edwards and Potter's Model of Discursive Action in which a version is constructed not just for what it does in the account but also serves a function in the present interaction. Lucy's description of her upbringing has a reflexive component in that its design does not just warrant her account of Mark's upbringing but it orientates towards accomplishing a denial of the relevance of the social worker's proposal that the couple should combine forces when trying to manage the children.

I want however to consider another feature of the construction at this point that bears on Lucy's rejection of this advice. It concerns some of the specifics of her descriptions of her partner and what other inferences they make available. If we look at the way that Mark's limitations as a carer are put together, I think that it is possible to make out a feature that has a bearing on how the hearer is being 'instructed' to minimise the father's responsibility for his behaviour towards the children (cf. Smith, 1978) as well as to warrant Lucy's rejection of the possibility that she can work more closely with her partner on child management.
Sacks (for example 1972) produced a framework for making sense of how particular descriptions come to be put together in the way that they are. He noted that there are a number of rules or maxims by which people draw inferences about what is going on when interpreting or providing descriptions. He described these rules as belonging to a series of Membership Categorisation Devices. One such rule is that particular activities tend to be linked (or bound) to particular categories. For example, babies 'cry', and mothers (and maybe fathers) 'pick up' babies. Based on such culturally-derived expectations, Sacks noted that when people hear descriptions of particular activities, they will tend to link the activity to the sorts of category that is typically bound up with it. And if there is some discrepancy (for example if the baby is doing the picking up and the mother is doing the crying) then an account will need to be provided to resolve the flouting of this rule and the confusions that may otherwise be generated in interaction.

As Wowk (1984, see also Watson and Weinberg, 1982) has gone on to illustrate, these rules can provide a way of understanding how descriptions are employed rhetorically to convey implications about individuals without actually stating them directly. In other words, judgements about a person can be conveyed by the way that their activities are described. The speaker can avoid some of the accountability issues that she might have to deal with if she were, say, to provide a negative assessment of someone directly.

I want to suggest that the activities used to describe Mark leading up to
and during Lucy's description of his upbringing convey not only that this upbringing was inadequate. The way his behaviour and thinking is categorised also make available the inference that he is not to be treated as a fully autonomous agent in the way that the speaker is. So, his responsibility for what he does now (for example when he disciplines the children) is minimised as a result. The following extracts are taken from Lucy's descriptions of her partner:

Activities used to describe Mark

from lines 500-503: 'only when he does something wrong then yes he does get the blame'

from lines 535-536: '(it) took months with us an (he) didn't get anywhere=cos he was arguing with me'

from lines 557-559: 'but he sort o'like defies what I say cos he thinks he's the man in the house an he thinks he's always right'

from lines 572-574: so all he (knows) how to do is smack whereas I can sit down and talk to Jason

In these descriptions, where I have argued that the speaker is rejecting the social worker's advice, her disagreement is done through descriptions which take up a particular footing, rather than through direct denial of what the social worker is suggesting. Mark is described as 'arguing' with the speaker (rather than that the couple argue), 'defying' what she
says. The constructions here implicate the speaker as the figure having authority in the account (see Goffman, 1981 and Chapter 7) with whom her partner comes into conflict. This implies that he is opposing her authority. And we can note that no account is needed of why the figure should be accorded that authority, or of what it is that she 'says' that is being defied. These are 'entitlements' (Watson, 1978) bound to the category of being in charge - like a parent with their child - and do not need accounting for. So Mark's delusions, for example that 'he thinks he's always right', and shortcomings, 'all he knows how to do', are inferrably those provided by the person with the warrant to make these judgements.

In order to make this last point a bit more explicit, let me summarise where we are up to. We have dismantled the mother's account in a way which attempts to build on the analysis which introduced this thesis. Our aim has been to show how, by the time that Lucy summarises the upshot of her account, various themes have been developed by the speaker. These are occasioned by her attempts to reject the advice of the social worker. I have paid particular attention to the way the speaker warrants her account. We have seen how this version also orientates to reducing the responsibility which her partner should be charged with when he is trying to manage their children's behaviour. Not only is this attempted through the construction of an account of his upbringing. It is also in the inferences that are made available for the sort of category to which his reported behaviours and thoughts belong that an excuse for his failings as a parent - and perhaps their failings as a couple - is worked up.
As we have seen, the version which Lucy provides of her partner relates what it was like for him (and her) when they were children. In describing her problems with him at the present time, it also makes some use of the categories which I suggest are bound to the notion of the child. In that he 'defies what I say' (line 558) and that he 'does something wrong' (lines 500-501), Mark is being described in terms which make available such a categorisation. And clearly, minimising Mark's responsibility in this way could serve an important rhetorical function in terms of dealing with blame. For as Heritage has suggested

actors believe themselves to be, and treat one another as, confronted by real choices in conduct for which, unless 'excused', the chooser will be held accountable as the agent of his or her actions. Moreover,...an actor (for example a child) who is deemed to be ignorant about some aspect of his circumstances is held less accountable as the producer of a 'choice'. (Heritage, 1984: 130)

The relevant question to consider next is how the way Mark is 'excused' is treated within the interaction. As before, I shall provide a 'full' transcript at this point, beginning with the lines that completes Lucy's formulation at the end of her account:

2. [ALM:1:10-11]

578 Lucy: (>y'know<) when (. ) he's with Jason (. ) I get
579 >no response out of Jason whatsoever<
580 (0.8)
581 Lucy: he's so cheeky when he's around
582 [++] it's unbelievable
583 (0.6)
584 Sw: [-] I've noticed [+] actually that
Sw: it's as I say
[-] it's one of the things I've noticed about the
children is that .hhhhh "i" it's almost it's not [+]
(0.4)
Sw: on [-] a defiance=cheeky level they don't even seem to
(0.4)
Sw: if you forgive me Ma(h)rk hu they don't
[++] (even seem)
Lucy: don't give a damn hahahaha=
Sw: =they don't [even] seem to notice=
Mark: [hey]
Mark: =it's pick on Mark day today [-] (is it)=
Sw: =no i- [it certainly .isn't no it's the other way=
Lucy: [no:::
Sw: =i- in fact in a lot of ways
(0.4)
Sw: umm
(0.8)
Sw: (what I:) (.) in this respect it's almost it's coming
from Jason isn't it I mean you shou- (.). you shout at
him to try an stop him sa- doing something
(0.4)
Sw: an it's not like there's a defiance, is there=it's not
like he turns round an says
(0.6)
Lucy: no! [ha hahahahaha .ha hahaha .hhh
Sw: [an thinks about it an thinks no to hell with you
I'm not going to do that (.). it's absolutely as if you
weren't in the room he just (.). keeps going. (.). I've
noticed this
Lucy: ye[::h
Sw: [+] an in fact when both of you I mean that's both
of you actually
(0.6)
Lucy: mm=
Sw: =both of you shout
(0.4)
Sw: and it's
(0.6)
Sw: him an
(0.6)
Sw: Susanna are [-] hurling acr[oss the carpet
Lucy: [ahahahahahahahahahaha
Sw: a::nd (.). it's not as if they turn round an (.). as ev-
(0.2)
Sw: it's as if they've haven't even heard you
(0.8)
Sw: "did y"'=have you noticed that=
Lucy: =(he does ) several times yeh
Sw: yeh (.). it's quite s- it's it'[s a-
Mark: [((sniffs))
Sw: it's=
Lucy: =it's [(more annoying)
Sw: [amazing.
The three themes which we investigated within Lucy's account were (i) the speaker's warrant for disagreeing with the social worker (ii) the underlying concerns of the passage with allocating responsibility (iii) the exoneration which the account provides for Mark's behaviour and for Lucy in liaising effectively with him. These same themes can also guide our analysis of the social worker's response.

PROVIDING A WARRANT

What happens next in the interaction is that another account is occasioned, this time provided by the professional. The social worker's initial turns function as a pre-announcement of the description to come...
of what he's 'noticed' (Levinson, 1983). As we shall now discuss, the way this is presented as a 'noticing' conveys the unmotivated approach of the social worker. It too provides a warrant for his 'voice'.

Lucy's account of the 'facts' has been based upon the insider knowledge that she has worked up in connection with the parents' background. Such an account is hard to undermine (cf. Billig, 1987). We might note that this is reinforced by the fact that it is not challenged at any point in the sequence by her partner. Mark, who is part of the audience, and possibly an indirect target of a 'complaint' here (cf. Levinson, 1988: 166-7; see also Antaki, 1994) does not dispute what Lucy says, although there are various transition places across the turns where he could self-select as the next speaker.

It would therefore be difficult for the social worker to put up an effective alternative to challenge whether indeed Mark had 'had it belted into him' for example. However, by shifting the goalposts, onto what the social worker has observed and can report on, he marks out a different playing field on which to do his disagreement. This is new ground, which as we shall see involves retrospective descriptions of the children's behaviour, on which his 'voice' can be warranted.

Reformulation of past events, which are 'seen but unnoticed' are, as we have seen, a feature of courtroom interaction where they are used reflexively to undermine a witness (Drew, 1992). In fact, there is evidence that such a process is a pervasive feature of institutional accounts in less confrontational situations. As Edwards and Mercer
(1987) suggest, such redescritions provide an important means to allow the professional to balance the problem of producing client-led change whilst maintaining control over the process. Teachers, when educating pupils within a child-centred ethos may re-describe for the pupils what 'really happened' during an experiment in order to move the lesson in a direction which adheres to hypothetico-deductive principles. Similarly Davis (1986) has pointed out some of the ways in which psychotherapists may distinguish something in their client's account which 'strikes' them as significant and becomes topicalised as part of the source of exploration of what is the 'real' problem. The pursuit of a shared version in our social work extract involves descriptions of the couple's children which also present features the social worker has noticed as significant. As we shall now examine, this produces a version of events which seems to work at limiting the parents' role in failing to deal successfully with the problems their children present.

MINIMISING PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Let us compare some examples of the social worker's description with Lucy's earlier account:

3. [From Lucy's version (see extract 1)]

572 Lucy: [so all he (knows) [-] how to do is
573 (0.4)
574 Lucy: smack (.) whereas I can sit down and talk to Jason
575 (0.4)
576 Sw: mm
577 (.)
578 Lucy: (>y'know<) when (.) he's with Jason (.) I get
579 >no response out of Jason whatsoever<
580 (0.8)
581 Lucy: he's so cheeky when he's around
582 [++] it's unbelievable
Both of these descriptions are concerned with talk about the patterns of interaction rather than single events (cf. Edwards, 1995). For Lucy, Mark's use of smacking is presented as a 'scripted' intervention as is the problem which it causes of Jason's regular cheekiness. The phenomenon that the social worker has noticed is also presented as a repeated one, this time in a hypothetical form (Wooffitt, 1992). However, he describes a very different type of event which, as the sequence continues, makes available an alternative interpretation of the locus of the problem and where the blame lies.

One of the features of this pattern of events is that it is formulated as a parental response to Jason's behaviour, geared to stopping him 'doing something'. So the cycle of events is instigated by the child, rather than by the parents. This account of the reason for the parental intervention - that they are trying to stop him - contrasts with Lucy's presentation of Mark's way of acting. His smacking, is used to characterise what her partner (and perhaps sometimes she) does whatever the precise circumstances associated with the child's behaviour at the time.
One of the things, then, that the social worker's construction of events does is to raise the question of the linkeage between what the child is doing and the parents' response, rather than to focus on the limitations of the carer alone. As Smith (1978, see also Edwards, 1995) has demonstrated, descriptions of events also make implications available about the dispositions of the actors performing them. So the question that is being implicitly raised is what sort of thing might the child be getting up to and does this merit the sort of response - the 'shouting' - to stop him doing it?

Jason's behaviour goes on to be formulated in extreme terms through a sequence which incorporates further modifications of the pattern that the social worker is reporting on. In particular, he brackets both the children together in this 'amazing' pattern and also notes that it is actually both the parents who 'shout' in their attempts to control them:

5. [ALM:1:10-11. From extract 2]

620 Sw: =both of you shout
621 (0.4)
622 Sw: and it's
623 (0.6)
624 Sw: him an
625 (0.6)
626 Sw: Susanna are [-] hurtling across the carpet
627 Lucy: [ahahahahahahahahaha
628 Sw: a::nd (. ) it's not as if they turn round an (. ) as ev-
629 (0.2)
630 Sw: it's as if they've haven't even heard you
631 (0.8)
632 Sw: *did y'*=have you noticed that=
633 Lucy: =(he does ) several times yeh
634 Sw: yeh (. ) it's quite s- it's it'[s a-
635 Mark: (((sniffs)))
636 Sw: =it's=
637 Lucy: =it's [(more annoying)
638 Sw: [amazing.
639 (0.2)
There are a number of features provided within this extreme case sequence that we can consider for the work they do in minimising parental responsibility (Pomerantz, 1986). First, the way the children's behaviour is described contributes to the sense that it is not just that they ignore their parents that is difficult but that it is hard to understand why they behave as they do. They don't even 'turn round' when the parents shout, and behave 'as if they haven't even heard' them. This is claimed to rule out the standard interpretation that their behaviour is cheeky or defiant.

Such child reactions, which the social worker displays as beyond even his experience and would present him with problems of self control, convey his recognition that the parents are powerless to intervene effectively. In fact he does more than this. In constructing the children's behaviour in such extreme terms, the account implicates the parent's behaviour as actually being a controlled reaction: the most they are observed to do, even in these extremely difficult circumstances is to 'shout'.

The implication here is perhaps not only that the children are out of control despite their parents' efforts but that they are at some risk of injury as a result of their lack of awareness. Items such as 'hurtling' across the carpet and 'tearing' round the room not only add to the out-of-control impression of the scene but are terms which could describe reckless behaviours putting the child doing them in some personal danger regardless of what the parents do.
In earlier chapters I introduced and then illustrated some features of Dingwall et al.'s work (1983, 1995) on 'the rule of optimism' and how we could discern similar features in operation in my corpus of data. Some of the conceptual mechanisms whereby social workers pursued co-operation with their clients and warned them of the potential consequences of non-compliance were discussed. One of the patterns of 'agency justification' which their work described was what they termed 'cultural relativism' (Dingwall, et al. 1995: 82-86; see Chapter Two page 42ff). This was concerned with the professional reception of culturally-derived child rearing practices. The authors argued that this was a pervasive factor through which professionals came to justify a whole range of parenting activities not just originating from ethnic or class-based diversity. For, they suggest

Cultural relativism has no internal limit to its theorizing. It is indefinitely extendable, so that any small group or articulate individual can find their own theories being elevated to the status of a culture and turned into a justification. What may seem like eccentricities or perversions are elevated into valid cultural statements. Frontline workers are led either to an open acceptance of the client's justifications, if called for, or to concluding that the fault lies within them, for failing sufficiently to empathise with the alleged deviant. Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner. (1995: 89).
Lucy's earlier account of the origins of the family's difficulties is one which is based on a theory of parenting. She makes particular use of a model of explanation based on the direct transference of parenting styles from one generation to another. What our single case example expands upon is the sort of conversational arrangements by which justifications can be accomplished interactionally. In the case of the Lucy and Mark discussion, it is in contesting over the description, rather than in 'open acceptance' (however that might be displayed) of where the problem lies that the justification of the parents' reaction gets done. I shall return to this point in the final chapter. However, for now, we can record how this fragment of conversation illustrates a way in which the social worker can avoid taking up a position towards his clients' culturally-linked formulations. Interestingly though in re-describing what he has 'noticed' is the problem, we see a series of alignments being taken up and, following Dingwall et al.'s observations, a strongly marked display of 'empathy'. It is to an examination of these processes that we turn our attention in the final sections of this chapter.

6. [from extract 2]

622  Sw: and it's
623         (0.6)
624  Sw: him an
625         (0.6)
626  Sw: Susanna are [-] hurtling acr[oss the carpet
627         [ahahahahahahahahaha
628  Lucy: a::nd (. ) it's not as if they turn round an (. ) as ev-
629         (0.2)
630  Sw: it's as if they've haven't even heard you
631         (0.8)
632  Sw: *did y'*=have you noticed that=
633  Lucy: =(he does ) several times yeh
In this sequence, the social worker completes his description of the pattern he has noticed. He then goes on to provide a reaction to how the behaviour of the children would probably affect this. This report-then-personal-reaction process has been described in Emerson and Messinger's (1977) study of how intrapersonal experiences get described and then formulated as a complaint. Their work suggested how the two items were rhetorically linked and orientated. A complaint is concerned with persuading the recipient of the relevance and factuality of the version provided.

Drew and Holt (1988) have gone on to develop this work, taking a conversation analytic perspective to show how idioms are a particular construction which may feature strongly in complaint-making in some sequential environments. They suggest how idiomatic expressions have a robustness which may serve to bolster the complaint particularly where affiliation has not been forthcoming as the problem is described. They raise the importance of such work on complaints when studying how
troubles get dealt with because 'making a complaint is the stage at which sometimes vague perceptions of something being wrong are cast into the public domain in an effort to mobilise help in remedying the trouble.' (ibid: 502).

In our sequence it is the social worker who is making the 'complaint' on behalf of the clients. As we have already considered, importantly this gives him some control over the construction of the problem. However, as our example highlights, making a complaint also enables the establishment of a common ground with his clients and a resulting sequential display of affiliation as the topic heads towards completion. We have of course described some features which suggested the less than auspicious environment that marked the beginning of this phase of discussions about where the problem lay. Let us now examine some of the main features which build up the affiliation arrived at over the course of this extract.

A series of overlapping pairs of turns occur across the sequence. These produce a collaborative completion of the participants' reaction to the social worker's report (see Nofsinger, 1991: 122-124). We can note that these follow the social worker's enquiry 'have you noticed that' at line 632. This occasions responses by both parents produced in overlap with each other to present a series of assessments. Lucy's initial response - (he does ) several times yeh' - though partly indecipherable, clearly ratifies the scripted formulation of the noticing. Her later turns then adumbrate and project an emotional response which is taken up in the social worker's utterances.
The final turns are particularly interesting in connection with the alignments of the speakers and the reportings of their reactions to this pattern. In order to analyse these versions, it is useful first to remind ourselves briefly of the study by Wooffitt (1992) which has examined people's reports of paranormal experiences. Building on Sacks' work, he noted the normative linkeage between descriptions of events and the speaker's subsequent report of their reaction to these. Speakers who claimed to have encountered such out-of-the-ordinary phenomena were shown to orientate to ensuring that they showed in their talk a consistency between what they had experienced and how they reacted. This may be a rhetorical concern for someone who, in attempting to convince others of the facts of her experience must ensure that her own behaviour and ability to be rational are not open to doubt. So, for example, a person describing a pattern of events in which they would hear a tune coming from a particular place in a house may need to do further expositional work to show the unusual nature of her experience. Only then might an extreme reaction - such as the speaker describing her 'tearing my room apart' as one of Wooffitt's speakers does - be hearable as a normal reaction.

Such a concern with displaying Lucy and Mark as being ordinary parents was considered in Chapter Five, but it also provides a focus for worker-client affiliation here as well. This is displayed in the way the speakers achieve a consistency between the extreme description provided by the social worker and their responses to it. In our datum, we have in fact two other examples which use this same item 'tearing' as Wooffitt's speaker did. But here they occur as part of separate idiomatic
expressions which come one after the other. Their sequential placement follows a very strongly worked up extreme case formulation of the children's behaviour which is continued in the social worker's descriptions of his reactions to it: he has 'never seen' this 'amazing' pattern 'to that extreme'. He then further warrants his complaint in a way which occasions further displays of alignment:

643 Sw: and it's something that (.) you know I can see
644 that if you were left if I was left ha
645 if any(h)ybody [w(h)as le(h)ft alone .hh in a situation=
646 Lucy: ['ashhh'
647 Sw: =where those [two children
648 Lucy: [you would tear your hair out huhuhuhu=
649 Sw: =were tearing round in that never ending circle.
650 (0.8)
651 Sw: I I think I'd get (.) sort of very he- het up an
652 very upset

The three-part list - here culminating in how would react - forges the linkeage between the social worker, these parents and any ordinary parent placed in the situation of dealing with the children. The social worker then goes on to further emphasise the extremeness of the children's behaviour and provides a reaction that is consistent with this. We can note that both of these objects - the description of the 'never ending circle' of the children's behaviour and the social worker's 'het up' reaction to it - are constructed with idiomatic expressions. By saying 'you would tear your hair out', Lucy's interjected turn here displays an alignment with this description, notably through the way she too projects an extreme reaction. The idiomatic construction which upgrades her earlier milder expressions of annoyance are also preceded and followed by laughter tokens which further display alignment with the social worker's adjacent laughter projections as he completes the listing. We discussed earlier Jefferson's work (for example, 1984a) on how such particles may
be taken up in subsequent displays of alignment.

COMPLAINT AND CO-OPERATION

Let us return finally to the notions raised by Drew and Holt about the way that making a complaint publicises that something is wrong and how it formulates this in a form designed to shape the sort of help that is needed. Their paper showed how idioms are well suited to summarising the complainant's general experience in a way which effectively rounds off the topic. We can see displayed in the final turns of our extract the features of our three-element sequence identified in the previous chapter.

Element 1, was described as a personal position being taken up by the social worker in relation to a certain puzzling feature which is initially posed in a way which provides a footing which 'externalises' the problem.

In the current example, this is provided in the following fragment which follows the adumbration of the pattern of child behaviour. Arrow 1 indicates the external footing; arrow 2, the personal one:

636 Sw: it's=
637 Lucy: =it's [(more annoying]
638 Sw: [amazing.
639 (0.2)
640 Sw: ye I I've never seen it to that extreme
641 Lucy: [>(I mean it's annoying<)
Element 2 involves the pursuit of acknowledgement of this puzzle:

643 Sw: a:nd it's something that (. ) you know I can see
644 that if you were left if I was le(h)ft ha
645 an(h)ybo(h)dy [w(h)as le(h)ft alone .h in a situation=
646 Lucy: ["ashhh"
647 Sw: =where those [two children
648 Lucy: [you would tear your hair out huhuhuhu=

And by the end of Element 2, the social worker speaks for them all and
the participants achieve an alignment through which, in this case, one of
the clients delivers a series of items of information.

654 Sw: so I do think that this y'know these combinations
655 (0.6)
656 Sw: of things
657 (0.6)
658 Sw: are actually
659 (0.4)
660 Sw: things that we can work on
661 (0.6)
662 Sw: an help the family through this cri[sis period
663 Lucy: [mhm
664 (1.6)
665 Lucy: (yes)
666 (0.4)
667 Lucy: I mean a good example for all of this I mean yesterday
(( turn continues: see Appendix III))

Note here how Lucy's final turn initiates a new phase of the description,
which follows an extended delay and the explicit distinguishing of what
is to come as an 'example' of the pattern they have just noticed and
co-operatively terminated their reactions to it.

We might consider here how our candidate three-element sequence has the
makings of an institutional device for incorporating some of the
potential affiliative benefits associated with some complaint sequences.
participants the speaker gets an opportunity to formulate her personal orientation to the problem raised. A shared complaint is then a potential result of producing a description to which participants can link their 'understandable' reaction, produced as consistent with the description produced. This sort of complaint sequence then seems to project an affiliative outcome as the by-product of a search for a solution to a difficulty. But the difficulty must first be achieved as one that is mutually experienced when confronted with a 'puzzle' 'noticed' as arising when dealing with other persons or agencies.

Notes

1. Evidence for this is highlighted in note 3 of the Introduction (see page 9).

2. There is an interesting symmetry between the social worker's maximal formulation and Lucy's earlier 'all he knows how to do is smack' of lines 572-4. Both versions retain the idea that the children ignore their parents and work up versions of what Lucy and Mark do in connection with this difficult behaviour. The implication of Lucy's earlier account is that Mark lacks a range of disciplinary skills as a result of his background, rather than 'all he knows' conveying that smacking is the most he does. However, it is quite possible for 'all he knows how to do is smack' to be hearable as the maximal outcome of a description. An example would be if the preceding trajectory had been geared towards denying the abusive nature of the corporal punishments used as in 'He's
never abused the children, all he knows how to do is smack' or suchlike.

3. I have described Mark's next turn as a 'sniff' in the transcription. One meaning of this item provided in Chambers English Dictionary (1990) is 'to express disapproval with reticence by a slight sound in the nose'. If we look at the way the sequence develops, it is noteworthy that Lucy's next turn (line 637), which follows very closely, conveys a potentially similar reaction when she says 'it's (more annoying)'.

- 279 -
The aim of this study has been to describe some of the interactional skills and practices involved in social work and child protection talk. I have not been concerned with the effectiveness of the communicative devices and patterns identified, nor with how often they occurred in the transcripts of social work meetings. Rather, the purpose has been to identify what resources were available to participants and how these were orientated to within particular sequences of interaction.

The rationale for this approach came from a consideration of the research literature on social work which has examined interactional factors which might influence the relationship between the professional and client. Two particular issues have informed the subsequent approach which was adopted. One of these I suggested was the importance of paying empirical attention to the tension generated between the twin poles of 'care' and 'control' which were highlighted across much of the published research literature which has examined the practice of social work.

Forming a relationship based upon co-operation and partnership has been designated as a central task when social workers undertaking a 'risk assessment' with parents (D.o.H., 1988, 1995). Given the situation in which this work is undertaken - and I documented some of the legal and societal components of this context - an important aim of the project has been to consider how participants proceed to work together. Throughout
the chapters, we have returned regularly to the question of what social workers and parents do to co-operate with each other, or to resist the actions of the other party.

The second issue was concerned with the nature of the research venture to be undertaken. I argued that it was important to incorporate the reflexive dimensions which pervade interpersonal interactions (Garfinkel, 1963, 1967). Much of the research we examined worked with the accounts of social work participants in ways which treated their versions of social work relationships and events as unproblematic. In short, the way that talk-in-interaction constitutes as well as describes what went on was not considered in much of the relevant literature. This feature became even more relevant for me after my own experience of interacting with social work participants when I was trying to obtain material for research analysis.

A DISCURSIVE APPROACH TO STUDYING CO-OPERATION IN CHILD PROTECTION

Arising out of such theoretical and methodological considerations, the analytic chapters were based upon principles derived from ethnomethodology and discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992; see also Harre and Gillett, 1994). I set out to examine such notions as 'resistance' and 'engagement' from an interactional viewpoint in which the aim was to show how the relationship between participants was made visible through the actions which were performed: it was these negotiations which achieved and constituted the institutional context of social work. The site upon which a child protection partnership might,
or might not, be built was in the sequences of interaction that took place between participants. Resistance and engagement were therefore conceptualised not as general rules governing particular individuals' behaviours but as sequential products of specific pieces of interaction (cf. Wieder, 1974).

The analyses of social work talk were based on a particular theme which I explored across the empirical chapters of the thesis. This was concerned with how the pursuit of 'co-operation' and 'control' in such interaction generated a series of local interactional problems and the way these problems were managed and resolved in discussion. We can summarise the various dimensions to this approach with a brief resume of the findings of the various analytic chapters.

Chapter Five was concerned with the production and delivery of a warning. The analysis drew on Sacks' ideas about activities involved when a speaker is trying to get other participants to do something. We considered how in trying to elicit a shared perspective, the clients' identities were first worked up over a series of conversational turns as individuals with the attributes of normal, caring parents, just like those of the social worker himself. This again was part of a general concern with issues of co-operation. However, it posed an interactional difficulty when the professional moved into an activity sequence where these same individuals were warned that the consequences of their actions might be child abuse. The sort of shift that was being achieved here was similar to some of the published work on identity as an occasioned phenomenon in situations where people tease each other (Drew,
In the Chapter Six and Seven, we discussed the role of footing in mundane talk and its potential significance for institutional settings. One feature of these shifts was how they figured in the reports of relationships and activities which the social worker had got involved in. I considered such versions as reflexive formulations to be analysed for their rhetorical work. Chapter Six was mainly concerned with some of the potential difficulties in discussing co-operative relationships with parents. Whilst needing to build up an intimate and trusting relationship, social workers have been made aware of the dangers of becoming overly involved with parents to the detriment of their role as protectors of children. We saw how this was not just a background issue for social workers and parents but was something that was to be dealt with in their negotiations.

In looking at how this issue was managed over particular sequences, it was apparent that the 'care/control' dilemma produced another sort of tension within the discourse. As with Chapter Five's analysis of the occasioning of identities deployed as an interactional resource, I illustrated a process of resolving an interactional difficulty displayed within actual spoken exchanges. For example, we took a series of extracts in which the social worker's relationships with other parties, not present in the current discussion with the parent(s) were described. These included relatives, and children of the parent(s) being assessed as well as professionals and agencies with whom the social worker was liaising. The sequences contained descriptions which appeared to attend
to an institutionally-related approach to distinguish close working relationships from collusion in the activities which the social workers reported on. As with 'identity' being occasioned and modified over the course of a sequence, we saw some examples where talk about intimate professional-client relationships was subsequently qualified and managed. Whilst conducting such analytic work we were able to illustrate something of the underlying activity focus of such descriptive practices in this child protection setting (see, for example, Drew, 1990; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996).

One important feature of Chapter Seven, was the way I set out to develop there our inquiry into the possible institutional specificities of social work and child protection. Some of the research literature (for example, Baldock and Prior, 1982), has highlighted the permeability of social work talk suggesting that it is not clear to participants where the boundaries lie between 'social work talk' and phatic and non-consequential exchanges that are seemingly incidental to the purpose of the meeting. Again, my aim here was to investigate the question of what constitutes 'social work talk' from the perspective of the participants themselves. Earlier in the study (Chapter Two), I had raised the participants' orientation to the achievement of a non-institutional texture as an important possible dimension to consider in the study. This was another dimension to the project where we considered how the pursuit of co-operation informed the analysis.

A helpful resource which was employed was Goffman's conceptualisation of the laminated nature of talk. He argued that shifts of footing are often
deployed and embedded within various facets of people's relationships that are being attended to and enacted across a sequence of talk. The question of what is the 'real' business when social work participants tease each other, show that they are puzzled, or mark what they say as being honest with each other are further examples of reflexive features which my analyses began to unravel to show their potential contribution to the institutional features of the discourse.

I presented some extracts which illustrated one way in which this lamination of talk might operate in social work settings. In these sequences, social workers (and other professionals) could be said to 'invite' a co-operative response by displaying an aspect of their work about which they were unsure or confused. These were displayed as difficulties, often formulated in personal terms, which could be seen to position the social worker in relation to the views or expectations of other parties. The latter could be the contrasting opinions of other professionals or incumbencies of the role of the social worker provided, say, in terms of what 'the Department' or 'the (Children) Act' required the worker to do. Based upon these analyses, I discussed a possible three-element sequence by which a mutual responsibility for working together between the professional and clients was built up.

Chapter Eight focussed on the participants' treatment of an extract from a parental account which was first discussed in the Introduction. In this final analytic chapter, we looked at the activity orientation of the version, and I set out to show how its sequential placement as a rejection of advice could be used to make sense of the way the version
had been constructed. Once again this interactional view of how context both renews and shapes the trajectory of the discussion (Heritage, 1984) was used as an analytic lever. We went on to consider in detail how the social worker's response dealt with a rejection of the advice he had proffered. As in Chapter Five, we saw that the construction of the parents as having a shared set of experiences with the social worker was an important device for working towards a display of affiliation. However, in Chapter Eight, the sequence provided a way of detailing some of the ways that descriptions of children and parents can perform attributional work relating to the achievement of an exonerative account.

To summarise, then, I have described some of the procedures adopted by participants in an 'informal' institutional setting. In social work meetings of the sort we have investigated, there are unlikely to be particular conversational arrangements - such as the restricted turn-taking procedures of the court or classroom (see Drew and Heritage, 1992b). Indeed, I have refrained from describing the meetings as interviews because extended question and answer sequences were uncommon within the exchanges between professional and parents. As Schegloff (1992) has argued, the pairing of such actions is a minimal requirement for the 'interview' to be so described.

I have, however, provided a series of analyses of the patterning of the interactions in child protection settings. I have argued that the orientations of participants to the organisation of these sequences has been towards institutionally specific goals. For example, we have seen examples of this in the construction of a 'warning', the avoidance of
'collusion' and the building of sequences towards a shared responsibility for institutionally relevant tasks. Throughout, I have emphasised the orientation of the participants to achieving these tasks through forming a relationship arising out of doing social work. As well as supporting my analytic conclusions by building on the demonstrable activities of the actors in this setting, there are some further ways in which we might consider how the validity of the project might be warranted. We can do this by considering the coherence and fruitfulness of the analyses I have performed on the conversational data, and, in particular their relationship with other published analyses and research findings (see Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 170-172).

VALIDITY: COHERENCE

The notion of coherence is meant to capture the ways that a study links up the various analytic claims that have been made, how this makes sense of the patterning of the activities under examination, and how these, in turn, mesh with previous findings in the literature. I have suggested that there is an 'ideological dilemma' for the participants with respect to the tension between control/care (Billig et al., 1988; see also Edwards and Mercer, 1987; Pomerantz et al., 1995). The stress has been on how the working through of this dilemma constitutes social work. In a sense then, this is an issue that is omnipresent for participants in child protection talk. The tracks left as they shuttle back and forth through the logic of the dilemma are what makes up this form of institutional interaction.
Chapter Four provided a detailed consideration of several similar kinds of institutional talk and we were able to draw out some threads from the weave of related activity sequences which occur in these settings. Over the course of the analytic chapters, we regularly considered how the patterns of interaction in social work resembled, and were different from interactions which characterise health visiting, courtroom examination, psychiatric and medical assessments, news interviews and others.

However, in the main, I have avoided attempting to push the linkeages too far when considering the relationship between social work talk and other related institutional forms. I did not aim to attempt the sort of analyses undertaken in papers by Heritage and Sefi (1992), Maynard (1992) and Bergmann (1987, 1992) for example. The sorts of sequences which these authors identify tend to be based upon a more closely delineated type of activity such as giving advice (Heritage and Sefi) or sharing diagnostic information (Maynard). In contrast, there was a greater heterogeneity in the material which I have examined. I wanted to ensure that the diversity of activities and tasks which characterise social work interaction, were incorporated into my analyses. For example, some of the tacit purposes for the meetings included the 'warnings' of the 'Lucy and Mark' data (see Appendix III), attempts to get historical information about the family, informing the parent about plans to interview their child separately, and finding out how a parent was feeling about an imminent court appearance.

Another reason for avoiding attempting a detailed comparative study was because of the analytic interests which I developed across the lifespan
of the project. These arose partly out of my experiences of getting social workers to co-operate with me, some details of which are provided in Appendix I. The thesis was also begun soon after the Children Act (1989) came into force and this influenced my research project in two main ways.

An important underpinning for this piece of legislation was the study by Dingwall et al. (1983; 1995) and particularly the framework which their research developed for explaining professional, and especially social worker led decision-making in the field of child protection. As we saw in Chapter Two, this ethnographic project sought to explain from an organisational perspective why social workers tended to avoid judging parents as being dangerous to their children. Only under certain circumstances, which the study defined as departures from 'the rule of optimism', were parents likely to be considered a risk to their offspring. It became apparent that there was considerable overlap between the findings of their study and the issues raised by my own analysis of social work talk, and in particular, the 'Lucy and Mark' data which I had chosen to focus on before becoming aware of the linkages to be made with Dingwall et al.'s work.

A second influence on my study arising out of the implementation of the Children Act was the series of guidelines for social work practice which this new legislation engendered (see, for example Department of Health, 1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1995). As we found in Chapter Two, many of these publications recognised the sort of difficulties facing social workers which have been documented across my study. However, their
recommendations are based upon categorisation of the sorts of task that social workers should undertake together with general advice about the approach to take. The potential shortcoming here is that without a detailed knowledge of how social work interactions actually proceed, it is difficult to be clear about how these recommendations might be incorporated into face-to-face work with clients. I have drawn attention to the consistent finding that activities such as advice, offers to help, warning, and sharing information are often attempted in indirect ways. There appears to be considerable potential for the disruption of delicate conversational patterns if professional activities are carried out without regard to the unintended consequences of the advice provided in such manuals and guides. My study has been geared towards considering the interactionally specific features of child protection meetings. As I shall now consider, my claim is that this can be a productive avenue for exploration with potential future benefits for practitioners.

VALIDITY: FRUITFULNESS

The new explanations which an analytic scheme develops can lead to an appraisal of the fruitfulness of the research enquiry which has been undertaken (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). One way in which we can consider this aspect of the validation of my study is to discuss the potential it might hold for making sense of professional activity in social work in the light of the fine-grained analyses of the details of interactional patterns. It is worth first reminding ourselves of the criticisms made of many forms of sociologically-derived enquiry in terms of their lack of relevance to applied settings. Davies (1991) notes the
lack of impact of mainstream sociology on social work practice in child protection:

Macro-perspectives, by their very nature, exclude the interests of individuals; indeed the very idea of 'individualism' is often presented as methodologically unsound. But the world of social work - like the intimate world of ordinary men and women - is almost wholly taken up with the lives and fortunes of individuals. (Davies, 1991: 6, quoted in Cooper, 1993).

There is not the space here for a general discussion of the relationships between social science theories and their application. However, I want to dispute that the only alternative to a macro-perspective is to focus on the individual as Davies implies. There is a debate here to be held with direct relevance to the relationship between Dingwall et al.'s work and the approach which I have adopted in my focus on talk-in-interaction. In a postscript to the second edition (Dingwall et. al, 1995: 245-247ff), the authors detail how their original study was prone to be interpreted as providing a description of the psychological attributes of individual social workers (see, for example, Dingwall, 1986, 1994). They point out that this sort of interpretation is a misapprehension. Their explanatory framework was designed to uncover the institutionalized preferences which framed decision-making. For example, they say

[t]he rule of optimism is a dimension of the organizational culture of child protection services which is founded on the deep ambivalence that we feel in a liberal society about state
intervention in families. Although the rule is, of course, operated by individuals, they do so as members of organizations whose structures, incentives and sanctions are designed to sustain the preference which it embodies. (Dingwall et al., 1995: 247).

What I would claim that my project has attempted to do is to take an interactional, rather than individualistic or organisational perspective (cf. Clayman, 1992; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991). Rather than considering the motives and behaviours of individuals, or context as an external macro-structure the aim has been to suggest the ways that agencies and activities are built up discursively in social work. Indeed, one of the central themes of the project has concerned the role of footing practices in managing the accountability of the actors involved.

My argument, developed across the thesis has been that this sets up an interesting dialogue with the work of Dingwall et al. as well as some of the other social work literature. I have tried to demonstrate how the features of their 'rule of optimism' in particular are attended to by participants in their discussions. I will not rehearse the detailed linkeages between the various components of the 'rule' and the ways that these are brought into play within the various sequences we have examined. This is covered within various sections across the analytic chapters. However, it is important to consider in a little more detail some general questions concerning how a discursive enquiry might articulate with Dingwall et al.'s framework.
Co-operation in conversation and the rule of optimism

In Chapter Three, we examined some of the basic principles of Conversation Analysis. Underlying the interpretive procedures of everyday interpersonal communication is an orientation to what Heritage (1984: 265) has called 'social solidarity'. The preference structure of intersubjectivity has been shown to be a strongly institutionalised feature of conversation. As we have considered, participants tend to build the 'architecture' of conversation on affiliative procedures in their interactions and work towards minimising the opportunities for disagreement and argument.

This may contribute to understanding what Dingwall et al. advance as an institutional pressure to expect the best of parents in child abuse investigations. One dimension of the rule of optimism they put forward is that it is relatively rare for professional agencies to judge parents as wholly unfit as carers and to have failed to co-operate in an assessment of risk. This explanation is perhaps supported by the findings concerning the conversational patterns which predominated in my social work transcripts. As we have analysed, the talk in my corpus of data was organised along 'mundane' conversational lines. So we might expect that opportunities for disagreement and controversy in such social work talk might be kept to a minimum because of the affiliative orientation typically pervading conversation.
For example, I have described and illustrated a three-element patterning of social work sequences which works towards a shared display of responsibility for child protection. This might be considered a further candidate for acceptance as an institutional device based upon the co-operative principles of conversational exchanges. The provision in such sequences of a problem or puzzle experienced by the social worker resembles the indirect ways that 'my side tellings' elicit explanations (Pomerantz, 1980; see also Bergmann, 1992). What is more, we have seen the formulation of the puzzle tends to be described as being individually experienced by the professional as a personal difficulty. Such a formatting perhaps emphasises the interpersonal, rather than role-orientated facets of the social worker-client relationship at that point in the exchange.

Jefferson's Troubles Telling sequences which we have also examined (see Chapter Four) distinguished the underlying concerns for the person and their problems displayed in such extracts; these were contrasted with institutional 'service encounters' where the aim was to deal with the problem details rather than with the person experiencing it. Put simply, packaging something in personal terms creates a trajectory which may be more likely to elicit an affiliative response. This is because, just as with first pair parts in a range of conversational actions, people tend to orientate to normative conversational patterns in the way they respond. These conversational rules may well determine what is said rather than their response being determined by what may be claimed to be their 'real' (i.e. psychological) preference.
Affiliative devices based on mundane patterns are often adopted in institutional settings where conversational activity predominates (viz. Maynard, for example, 1991; 1992; Bergmann, 1987; 1992). We might add that many of the institutional settings where confrontational sequences are a regular feature of the interaction have quite specific procedures for managing them and displaying the institutional rather than personal nature of the disaffiliation. Two examples we have noted are the footings adopted by interviewers in staying neutral when contesting opinions in television interviews (Clayman, 1992) and the contrast devices used in courtroom inquisition of witnesses (Drew, 1990, 1992).

Another feature of conversational organisation is relevant to Dingwall et al.'s scheme and the additional perspective which my interactional account suggests. This concerns the way that the adjacency pairings which characterise many sequences of interaction may recur throughout a sequence. The importance of this is that as I shall presently illustrate, complex activities such as blamings and justifications tend to get built up and ratified incrementally over a series of exchanges rather than in one single turn (cf Atkinson and Drew, 1979).

This conversational feature is important when considering other features of Dingwall et al.'s scheme such as their notions of 'cultural relativism' and 'natural love'. The reader will recall that the concept of 'natural love' provided further explanation for professional unwillingness to exclude parents from being accepted as primary carers. Parental and professional accounts of child rearing practices tended to be treated as exonerative of the speakers where they worked up versions...
which implied that the parents continued to show and experience feelings of nurturance towards their children. The presence of such natural caring attributes provided a moral platform upon which attributions of the essential worthiness of the parents could be supported. Such accounts tended to feature where agencies planned to keep the family together.

Additionally, a consistent form of 'agency justification' was noted. Professionals, and particularly social workers, tended to account for what were sometimes questionable child rearing practices by attributing these to acceptable variation in the culturally-derived ways in which parents would bring up youngsters. The study provided a range of examples where debatable treatments of children were justified in this way.

We discussed earlier the authors' argument that the reason for the effectiveness of such devices lies in the elasticity of their potential use. They can be brought into play across a range of assessment situations. As Dingwall et al. argue:

One of the most important points to grasp seems to be the weakness of surveillance agencies, especially those which penetrate private spheres of action. Indeed, strong agencies are often regarded as a mark of an illiberal state. The liberal compromise, that the family will be laid open for inspection provided that the state undertakes to make the best of what its agents find, is enshrined in these two devices. State
agencies will not find proven deviance, as opposed to questionable diversity, unless presented with quite overwhelming evidence. (1983: 91).

What I think our discursive analyses add to this understanding of professional activity is an emphasis on the rhetorical dimension of passages of social work talk. This can help to explain the prevalence and effectiveness of the sort of accounts that Dingwall et al. highlight. It is not just that the rule of optimism serves to support a liberal professional ideology by imposing limits on, and weakening, the potential for family interventions involving control and surveillance social work. It is also that the interactional patterns of talk themselves tend to maximise the opportunities for the interactional repair of disagreements and misunderstandings and for the pursuit of a shared display of understanding and empathy.

Once again I want to illustrate my argument with a brief example which is relevant to this explanation of social work practice. In Chapter Eight, I provided a sequence where in an exonerative account a parent (Lucy) gave details of her own and her partner's upbringing. Such an account was, to use Dingwall et al.'s framework, a version in which a justification based upon the 'cultural relativism' of the family's child rearing approaches was made available: the parents did what they did because this was how they had been brought up. It will be recalled that this account occasioned the making of a 'complaint' by the social worker on the parents' behalf. In doing so, he suggested that the children were extremely hard to fathom out as well as to manage. This was taken up by
the participants as a justification of the parents' feelings of frustration. By this means, the social worker was able to affiliate with them by showing that they shared a common range of natural emotions.

What is relevant here is how the complaint about the children was actually achieved across an activity sequence involving the parent's excuse followed by the professional's justification; we spent some time analysing the details of the interactions in the previous chapter. CA studies have demonstrated how complaint sequences in everyday interaction can be built up around this sort of search for a common ground over which participants can display alignment across their turns of talk (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1988b). For example, Schegloff (1988b; see also Antaki, 1994: 71-74) illustrates how the ratification of an excuse can be pursued over a series of turns by someone criticised for forgetting to bring their friends some ice cream. When one attempt at dealing with their complaint fails, another one is produced, and so on. Schegloff shows how such chains of activity can get paired together over the course of an extended sequence.

Importantly then, the elasticity of social work justifications and complaints might arise not solely from an external agency ideology which somehow gets included into various professional activities. Negotiation towards agreement is also a potential feature of the structure of many conversational interchanges. The pursuit of ratification can be undertaken in various ways and, as Sacks shows, is often built up of the architecture of the previous speaker's turns rather than some extrinsically-derived pattern of justification. It is, then, through
the analysis of the interactive accomplishment of such activities, as well as through operation of the belief structures of external organisations that we can get to understand why certain forms of justification and excuse become adopted by many social work participants. The sorts of analysis I have undertaken of child protection discussions are, I believe, suggestive of this process and hence provide a new and fruitful line of enquiry for addressing the practice of social work.

Some thoughts on research and application

I want to conclude with some final and inevitably rather tentative comments about future possibilities for research and practice which arise from my research. The priority within the present exploratory study has been to render the fine detail of what goes on in child protection discussions. I have been keen to do this in a way which begins to make visible the delicacy of those interactional procedures, and also to explicate the 'common sense' knowledge that goes into the conversational management of such potentially confrontational situations. Jordan writes:

>Social workers' potential strength lies in their ability to be effective in situations where other officials would struggle. Precisely because they do not possess the characteristics of the higher-status professions (exclusive knowledge, awesome professional territory, exclusive decision-making power) they have to learn to work in unpromising situations - in often chaotic environments, making decisions over which they can be challenged by lay people or a number of other officials. (1987: 207).
In similar vein, the starting point for my recommendations begins not from any normative standards of what social workers ought to be doing, but by beginning to document the skills that they already employ to manage the difficult interactional and institutional demands made on them (Silverman, 1993). As Sacks notes, the machinery of ordinary conversation - the stuff out of which these institutional interactions are made - is also 'awesome' in its power and pattern (1992, I: 113). It is in adapting and making use of the potential inherent within conversational activity that social work participants achieve the social organisation of social work. In considering the details of how participants do this, my discourse-based analysis paves the way for a conceptualisation of social work that develops out of this recognition of their ability to build on the patterns of 'mundane' talk.

This leads to a different source of explanation for the source of some of the problems in social work. I would suggest that a current and pressing difficulty concerns the language that is used to discuss child protection and its practice. The conceptual schemes that are available are sometimes inadequate for the functions for which they are employed. As we have seen across a number of the chapters, activities associated with notions such as 'resistance and engagement', 'partnership and negotiation' and the 'unwilling client' contain elements of ambiguity and potential confusion. Furthermore, training materials based almost entirely upon the development of such notions decontextualised from the social work task run the risk of being hampered by their inability to handle how these notions are manifested in actual interactional settings.
For example, many current training packages and guides are based upon materials which aim to improve participants' understanding of, and attitudes to, professional activity without the benefit of the details of face-to-face meetings with clients (see, for example, D.o.H., 1994, 1995; Family Rights Group, 1991). Whilst such programmes contain role plays, vignettes and other materials which simulate professional-client interaction, their relationship to the rhetorical and accountable activities of worker-client interviews cannot be assumed to be a straightforward one as I have demonstrated across this study.

Let me illustrate briefly the potential of a discursive perspective for social work training by selecting an example from the various conversational features we have considered. We have investigated at some length the interactional details of forming relationships with parents under investigation. A problematic we examined was the question of how collusion might be variously dealt with by the participants in discussion. The latter term has been used as a device in the Media and also in some official enquiries (for example, D.o.H., 1991a: 68ff.) to explain professional failures to act appropriately to protect children at risk. But how do social workers (and their managers) recognise this phenomenon? And when/if they have, what help can be given, either individually, or on training courses, to avoid becoming so embroiled with carers and other family members? I suggest that it is important to look at how collusion is actually dealt with in professional-client talk.
I have shown in some detail how social workers were able, in their conversations, to convey intimacy with the parents whilst also keeping a professional distance from their clients, and other family members. They did so for example when forming their opinions, planning their activities and writing their reports. In order to understand the way that this was actually achieved, we incorporated Goffman's extension of 'the speaker' and 'the listener' in the notion of footing and its associated concepts. Only by using this framework were we able to consider the specific positioning of the participants in relation to what was said. Importantly here, we saw that these footings were constantly shifting to accommodate what was going on in the local exchanges. In this sense, avoidance of collusion was shown to be an essentially interactional achievement. Without the turn-by-turn detail of the transcripts to work with, it is hard to see how the subtleties of the negotiation could have been incorporated into an analysis - either in my study, or for workers reflecting on their practice.

The implications for social work practitioners of my analyses are quite fundamental. First, there is a need to recognise that, as the quote from Jordan above suggests, the sensitive and complex discussions they are involved in when talking about child protection, as, no doubt, when working with other client groups, should not be interpreted as a lack of purpose or professionalism. My project suggests that there is a rich diversity of orientation and expertise being manifested in such meetings. We can speculate that part of the problem has been that the research approaches to such practice has not always been able to do justice to the interactional detail of what is going on when social worker and
involuntary client meet. It is perhaps with the development of context-sensitive methods such as CA and DA approaches that the heterogeneity present in the working through of such interpersonal contacts can be more sensitively researched.

It is not surprising therefore that social work has been criticised as unstructured and inexpert when compared with situations associated with a voluntary and more focused associated sets of activities such as the doctor-patient consultation or counselling. It took Sacks and his colleagues' development of Conversation Analysis to promote the understanding that mundane conversations are themselves constructed and patterned in great detail and skilfully achieved by participants. Perhaps it is only on the back of such a theoretical and methodological innovations that the status of social work as a profession can be significantly increased.

Who, then, should undertake the study of social work talk? We need to remember that another reason for professional reticence towards the direct researching of such practice may be because of what I have called the 'personal' orientation in pursuing co-operation with their clients. I have drawn attention to this particularly in the three-element sequence described in Chapters Seven and Eight. This feature may contrast social workers' practice with that of other caring professionals, such as psychiatrists and therapists. It may be that workers have an awareness of this interpersonal dimension to their work and feel that displaying such reactions in the course of their discussions with clients is somehow less 'professional' than the activities of other professionals. This may
be another potential cause of the difficulties in engaging practitioners which I encountered in my project (see Appendix I).

Given the reasons outlined above, the sense of criticism and self doubt in such an arena of practice may well run deep and affect what practitioners expect of any research of what they do, however well meaningly this is framed. I would therefore suggest that the recognition and delineation of the professional organisation of social work will need to be based, at least in part, upon what participants themselves can achieve with their clients. Models of the practitioner as researcher have been adopted recently in many of the various helping disciplines (see Schon, 1983), and lately this movement has begun to spread into social work (Everitt et al., 1992). Much of this thinking is also in keeping with moves, such as those instigated by feminism, to locate subjective dimensions as central within social science methodology (Hollway, 1989).

The topics and processes for possible investigation are clearly, at this early stage, wide and varied and I believe that it would be counter productive to set limits on what sort of discursive features could be usefully investigated. However, as we reach the end of the thesis, I would recall three themes that have arisen over the course of my research enquiry which remain candidates for development. First, the retention of a comparative approach to social work talk-in-interaction is a central and inevitable component of study. Much current work on interaction in institutions is based upon describing such forms of talk as adaptations to mundane conversation (see Drew and Heritage, 1992a,b). Additionally,
as I have set out to show, the links between social work and other groups working in the caring professions are particularly revealing of the different tensions and dilemmas which are produced in patterns of talk that potentially distinguish these institutional settings.

Associated with this theme is a second dimension concerning the nature of the relationships which are achieved between professional and 'client' in these settings. I have suggested that child protection practices may potentially be distinguished by participants' orientation to co-operation and how this is promoted or disrupted. Particular activity sequences, such as those associated with advising or delivering information, appear to be very easily disrupted in other institutional settings. Systematic examination of such sequences has begun to lead to specific prescriptions for organisational changes in some contexts, as well as to understanding more about the processes in question (Silverman, 1993). Work based upon larger collections of such types of activity in social work could be usefully embarked upon (cf. Heritage and Sefi, 1992).

But finally, it is important to recognise in any research undertaken that social work participants may have to deal with a wide and heterogenous set of activities over the course of their interactions. Research must work with the complexity of the relationships that are instantiated and, as I have tried to do, to follow the ways that the workers and clients, talking together, deal with this. Social work presents a rich and varied menu of relationships in action. My hope is that this study has at least given a flavour of the potential taste of things to come in the analysis of the social organisation of social work.
Notes

1. Billig (1991) disputes just how pervasive the orientation to affiliation in fact is in some ordinary forms of talk and argument. How far his disputation can be taken to undermine Conversation Analysis is discussed in Antaki (1994: 159-162).

2. The construction of an 'excuse' in response to a complaint is discussed in Sacks (1992, II: 263-264). He analyses the 'magnificent delicacy' of the following sequence between a radio presenter (A) and a caller (B) during a phone-in programme. Sacks emphasises how the explanation to the (blind) caller is fashioned out of resources provided in the original complaint rather than building an exogenous justification, or producing some other response (such as agreeing with her). For example, the presenter argues that the caller's fellow travellers have failed to 'see' her problem, are 'preoccupied' with their own problems and hence don't 'notice' her disability (arrowed below).

B: I hev a gurripe. hhhnh!
A: What's the gr//ipe dear.
B: And oh boy hhhnhh heh heh heh hhh!
A: Well, eh-eh The trai::ns, Yuh know Theh-the-the people.hh Uh-why:::, eh dizzat- do not. They. hh respec'. The so called white ca:ne (bohk). In other words, if they see me with the ca:ne, trav'ling the city essetra, hh why do they not give me, the so called right of way. Etcetera.
A: \(\rightarrow\) Well they probably // do, once they see it.
B: Wah dintenehhh
A: Uh, The // trouble is-
B: No they don't Brad.
A: Ha' d'yih know.
B: Becuz I've been on th' trai:n before en they don't care whether I live 'r die hh hh

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There are some close parallels here with the social worker's explanation of how the children 'don't notice' Lucy and Mark's attempts to control their behaviour which we discussed in Chapter Eight. The reader will recall how this was constructed in a sequence where the worker began his explanation by trying to get the parents to 'notice' the things he had 'noticed' about the children's unusual responses. This is similar to the way the radio presenter uses what the caller doesn't 'see' - literally in this case - to guide the sort of explanation he puts together for the people she is complaining about.
Appendix 1
NOTES ON METHOD: RECORDING, RESISTANCE AND REFLEXIVITY

The data used in this thesis comes mainly from a set of six audio tape recordings of social worker meetings with their clients. These were obtained over a period of about a year extending from the Spring of 1993 through to early 1994. The main corpus was augmented by certain other items - some video clips, and letters and reports written by social workers - although, in the main, this project deals with the social work conversations collected on the tapes themselves. The 'history' of attempts to get such materials is a potentially interesting aspect of my project in its own right. This is because of the major difficulties which I experienced in gathering such materials. As such it highlights a further reflexive dimension to the study.

From the outset, my interest had been in obtaining records of the spoken interactions of social work participants where their difficulty of negotiating a working relationship was one of the factors at issue. I wanted to obtain material which displayed what participants actually did when they were confronted with the practical problem of how to form, or avoid forming, a 'partnership'. From my own experience of working in such situations, discussed briefly in the Introduction, I was aware of what appeared to me to be the subtle ways in which trust and suspicion, blame and exoneration arose and were dealt with in such meetings.

I also predicted that recordings of such sensitive interactions would be difficult for me to obtain. It is easy to imagine just how daunting much of this child protection related work is for workers and parents alike without the added pressure of getting agreement to record it for an unknown person claiming an interest in research. The approach I adopted to try and get round this was based upon the notion that I needed to consider the problem of my engagement with social workers and their clients. The strength which I tried to play to was that in contrast to the interpersonal situations which I wanted to research, I already had a series of trusting and long-standing relationships with a number of social workers. These were colleagues with whom I had personally collaborated in the past.
Data gathering - phase one

In early 1992, I approached three social work teams whose responsibilities included a regular commitment to child protection. I knew many of the workers in these teams and the manager in charge of each of them. In the first part of the year, I provided all the team members with a written description of my research plans, and was given the opportunity to talk to each team separately at one of their regular meetings. Here, I presented a summary of the Baldock and Prior (1981) paper on social work talk which is discussed in Chapter Two. We also discussed the problems of using official guideline (e.g. D.o.H, 1988) when trying to negotiate with parents and carers who were being assessed under child protection procedures. The dearth of research based on recorded interactions in this area was something which was highlighted although I provided some examples of theoretical papers which have focussed on deconstructing such procedural manuals (see McBeath and Webb, 1990-1; Webb, 1990-1). The meetings also enabled me to illustrate some of the basic findings of Discourse and Conversation Analysis and to draw attention to the descriptive, rather than judgemental nature of much of the research deriving from this theoretical base. I placed a particular stress upon my research aim to uncover patterns in social work interactions, rather than to judge practitioners' effectiveness.

These three meetings, attended by over thirty fieldworkers in total, seemed to confirm that my area of research was of considerable interest. The consensus seemed to be that the study was an important and relevant area for investigation. The teams agreed that they would collaborate further with me over research plans. Social workers at each of the sessions also suggested that the difficulties of obtaining tape recordings with their clients might well be surmountable. One idea which was raised a number of times was that as long as appropriate confidentiality was assured for the client (see below), it might indeed be empowering for all participants to have an 'objective' record of the meeting taken. It was further suggested that providing audio tape recordings for both worker and client would actively demonstrate a commitment to getting an accurate and fair record of what had been discussed.
The upshot of the three discussion sessions was that more than half of the participants at the meetings agreed, without my further solicitation, that they would attempt to supply me with a recording of at least one relevant interview which they would obtain over the coming weeks. The understanding was that the social worker would be best placed to decide which of their clients to approach and at what point in a series of child protection meetings they would feel confident enough to introduce the idea of recording a meeting to them. My expectation was that it would be relatively easy for me to obtain quite a number of relevant recordings of such social worker-client interactions. This impression proved to have been mistaken.

Data gathering - phase 2

In the six months or so following these meetings, no tape recordings were forthcoming. This was despite my regular follow-up letters and telephone calls to individual workers. The pattern that seemed to recur as I chased up these volunteers was one in which I was would be re-assured by the worker that it was just a matter of time before a recording would be made. In retrospect, I think it was particularly noteworthy that no worker ever refused outright my request to make a tape or said that they would have to withdraw. As discussed in Chapter Four, covert and indirect 'resistance' is a documented feature of interactions in a number of institutional settings. I continued to get agreements to collaborate with me over the research whenever I approached a worker, and received confirmations of commitment from members of this original group extending well beyond a year from my original presentation to their team.

Whatever the cause of this mismatch and the processes of engagement and resistance which my intervention initiated - and as this thesis documents, I conceptualise such processes as being interactional ones rather than arising from the behaviours of individuals - I began upon a different strategy for data collection towards the middle of 1992. This was based on the conjecture that recorded interviews of such meetings might be made as a matter of course by some social work teams or individuals whom I had not come across. My hypothesis was that the main
source of my previous problem arose from social workers encountering unpredicted difficulties in negotiating successfully with clients to make a recording of the meeting. I guessed that it was this factor rather than a concealed unwillingness or inability to refuse my request that had got in the way so consistently. I hoped that if recordings were made as a routine part of a social work team's way of working, then it might be possible for me to obtain my material retrospectively from such sources.

As a result, I advertised both locally and nationally for social workers to approach me if they had relevant material. In the summer of 1992, I circulated approximately ten social work teams in the large city where I work with brief written details about my project. I also placed an advertisement in 'Community Care' magazine. This is a well-known social work publication available in most social work offices across the country.

The results of this extension of my search were disappointing. No local social workers approached me and there was only one response to my national advert. Interestingly, in the context of the earlier encouraging response during phase one, the social worker who replied seemed extremely confident that she and the colleagues in her team would be able to obtain recorded material without great difficulty. However, despite my visit to her office (a round trip of over 150 miles), and a number of subsequent follow-up contacts, no one ever managed to produce any tape recordings.

Data gathering - phase 3

By the end of 1992, I had no recordings of professional-client interaction upon which I could base my project. Until this point, it had not seemed crucial partly because of the misplaced sense of security which my regular phone calls rekindled whenever I contacted a potential participant. At the time, these enquiries tended to leave me reassured that it would not be long before recordings would start arriving on my desk.

In what at last proved to be a more successful strategy, I contacted the manager of a local social work team working with children and families and met with him over the Christmas holidays. This was someone
whom I knew quite well but was not one of the original three teams I had contacted earlier. The gist of his reaction to my difficulties was that social workers were, in his words, "experts at doing co-operation" in face-to-face settings. He was not surprised that my endeavours had failed to secure the production of some recordings. Social workers, he said, also had to be experts in resistance to manage the pressures on them in their working lives. He believed that a more accountable strategy was needed to increase workers' motivation to prioritise my request in their busy, often crisis-led daily work.

This manager subsequently agreed to raise my problem with his team of fifteen or so social workers in a team meeting. Importantly, he suggested that he would also personally raise the practicalities of getting recording with members of the team who had indicated they were willing to become involved. He suggested that he should do this during the regular supervisory sessions he held with each team member. He agreed to ask any volunteer to set a deadline of three months by which to make a tape recording with a client.

The approach quickly resulted in a commitment from eight team members. Following one of their supervisory meeting with their manager, I visited each social worker individually at their office and explained more about my research interests. I was thus able to negotiate with each participant separately about their plans to make a recording. My main requirement by this time was that they recorded an interaction with parent(s) or primary carer where the worker predicted that sensitive material connected with child protection might be discussed; but I also wanted them to decide that there was a good likelihood that they could obtain agreement to make a recording. In most cases, I was able to obtain a date on which the planned meeting would go ahead. I negotiated an arrangement whereby I would call on the worker earlier on the day of the planned recording, hand them the tape recorder and microphone and check that they could deal with the technology of making an audio recording (see below).
Data gathering phase four

By May 1993, I had obtained six recordings of different meetings although a number of other attempts failed at the final hurdle. For example, one worker lost the tape cassette but was successfully able to record another session within a week or so. At two sessions, the microphone was not switched on and at one session, the new batteries went flat within about ten minutes of the start of the recording. On only one occasion did a worker report that the parent refused to allow recording to take place. Two of the eight workers were unable to produce a recording within three months.

Details of recording technology

I provided the worker with a "Walkman" style portable cassette recorder. I had already attached this to a small condenser microphone on a short lead (Sony Model ECM-F9). These can be placed anywhere in an average-sized living room without losing quality of recording. The clarity is in fact much better than with a built-in microphone. This provided an unobtrusive and simple method of taping, the only potential problem being the need to remember to switch on the microphone as well as the tape recorder.

Individuals present during recordings

Of the tapes gathered in this way, four were made in the clients' home and two were obtained during interviews held in a private interview room at the social services offices. Five of the meetings were conducted by the social worker on their own. In the other meeting, the worker's manager was also part of the discussion. Two of the meetings involved only two people: the social worker and one of the parents. In three of the recordings, both father and mother were present. At the other meeting, the mother was accompanied by her aunt. Black, Irish and mixed ethnicity participants were represented within both the groups of workers and clients. There were about equal numbers of women and men.
Confidentiality

At my meeting with individual social workers on the day of the recording session, I provided a letter describing for them and their clients how confidentiality would be maintained. It explained the exploratory purpose of the research and noted that tapes that I received would only be listened to by myself and my tutor. I also drew attention to the need to quote, in anonymised form, short passages in my thesis. A consent form was provided for participants who were prepared to allow wider access to the recording to include its use for training to professional groups.

Conclusion

In my pursuit of data, we see how some of the problems of engagement and resistance in social work, the conceptual background to which is discussed in Chapters Two and Three, also became a practical problem for myself as a researcher to overcome. Resistance was not simply something which I was able to sit back and analyse as a features of other people's interactions, but was a very real difficulty with which I had to deal as part of my interaction with social work participants. I have no doubt that a worthwhile study could have been undertaken of the discursive features of my own discussions about my problem (see Woolgar, 1988). The processes by which the 'facts' of this difficulty became solidified in my talks with potential social worker participants and later reports of such interactions to my research supervisor and academic colleagues remain to be investigated (although I do have a series of audio recordings of some of these meetings which remain, as yet, unanalysed).
Appendix II
Transcription conventions

The system developed by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson and Heritage, 1984: ix-xvi) has been used for notation throughout the thesis. A transcription invariably reflects the transcriber's selection of what to include and exclude; as such it is an analytic version of the text (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Ochs, 1979). Different transcription emphases can be noted across various sources which are based on Jefferson's scheme (cf., for example, Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; Nofsinger, 1991; Psathas, 1995; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).

Based upon these sources, I have used the following notation:

. A full stop indicates a fall in tone. This is not necessarily at the end of a sentence.

, A comma indicates a continuing intonation.

? A question mark indicates a rising inflection. This is not necessarily a question.

(0.6) The number in brackets indicates a pause timed in tenths of a second. I have preferred to allocate a separate line for each such pause. This is because gaps may be considered to be an interactional phenomenon rather than 'belonging' to a particular speaker at that point, even where the same speaker continues after the pause.

( . ) A stop within a bracket indicates a micro pause of less than about one tenth of a second. I have tended to retain these within the lines of talk of the current speaker.

( ( ) ) Transcriber descriptions are enclosed in double brackets. For example: ( ( ? yawning ) )

: Colons indicate the stretching of previous sounds. The more colons, the greater the elongation.

( ) Empty brackets indicate unclear fragments of talk. On some occasions, I have attempted a guess where the words were partly decipherable. For example: ( he does ) several times yeh

( h ) This represents a laughter token within a word. For example: if an ( h ) ybody w ( h ) as le ( h ) ft alone

. hhh A stop before an 'h' indicates a speaker in-breath. The more 'h' symbols, the longer the in-breath.
An 'h' symbol indicates an out-breath. The more 'h' symbols, the longer the out-breath.

Underlining indicates speaker emphasis.

The use of capital letters indicates an utterance which is louder than the surrounding speech. An exclamation mark indicates an animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation.

Degree signs are used to indicate that the talk they surround is spoken more quietly than the surrounding talk.

'gh' indicates that the word in which it is placed had a guttural pronunciation.

The letters 'pt' by themselves indicate a lip smack which sometimes occurs as a speaker begins to talk.

'More than' and 'less than' signs indicate that the talk they encompass was produced noticeably quicker than the surrounding talk.

'Less than' and 'more than' signs indicate the opposite phenomenon where the surrounding talk is quicker.

An 'equals' sign indicates where the next segment of talk breaks into the rhythm of the conversation by latching on to the previous utterance without any hesitation.

Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and ending of overlapping talk. For example:

1 Sw: a lot of people do managed despite not
2 being very comfortably off [I mean] I totally=
3 Mo: [ye::h]
4 Sw: =agree with the income support

Because it is possibly consequential for the way the interaction proceeds, I have included a further piece of notation in Appendix III. The following is an addition to the standard set of symbols:

[+] onset of vocalisations and other noises from baby
[-] end of these baby sounds

Louder noises are indicated by [++] and very loud screams and yells by [+++].

These extra symbols are usually omitted from the extracts in the main body of the thesis to aid readability.
Appendix III

Lucy and Mark: the first fifteen minutes of a child protection discussion

The following is an extended transcript, sections from which are analysed across the various chapters of the thesis. The Introduction uses a short sequence from lines 538 to 582. Chapter Five examines lines 323 to 392. Chapter Eight deals mainly with lines 480 to 681. Other fragments are also analysed at various points across the study.

'Lucy' and 'Mark' are the pseudonyms given to the mother and father of three young children. Their youngest child sat on Mark's lap during the section of the meeting transcribed below. 'Jason' (age 4 years) and 'Susanna' (age 3 years) were at nursery when the meeting took place but are referred to at various points in the discussion. 'Sw' ('Andy') denotes the social worker. Names of all individuals and locations mentioned have also been changed to increase anonymity.

The session, which lasted in total a little over an hour, took place in the family's flat and was arranged by the social worker. This followed a report received by him from relatives of the couple that the children were being left alone for extended periods with Mark. Both parents had previous convictions for causing injuries to children. Some weeks earlier, they had agreed to a contract with the Social Services Department that they would not leave the children with Mark on his own for long periods.

Transcription conventions are based upon Jefferson's well known system described in Atkinson and Heritage (1984: ix-xvi). Further details and additions to this are provided in Appendix II.
ALM:I:1-13

1 Sw: [++] "(well)"
2 (0.4)
3 Sw: what I'd like to talk to you about first
4 (0.4)
5 Sw: [-] yes thank you very much!
6 .hhh (''smiley voice'') what I'd like to talk
7 to you first (. ) is is about erm
8 (1.4)
9 Sw: wha(.) tuh (. ) uh Alexis
10 (0.6)
11 and Simon were telling me last time
12 I (went) to see them
13 (0.8)
14 Sw: which is that Lucy had gone away [+]
15 (0.4)
16 Sw: and left Mark alone with the children "again"
17 Lucy: "right" was that volunteered information
18 or did you ask her
19 (0.4)
20 Sw: [++] I was asking "her"
21 (0.6)
22 Lucy: "r::ight::"
23 (0.2)
24 Sw: how things w- (. ) you know sort [-] of how .hhh
25 if they'd seen you an [ stuff like that=
26 Mark:
27 (when?
28 Sw: =basically I was fishing. (. ) I'll let you know
29 I wanted to see what was [(happening)
30 Lucy:
31 [(that d-)
32 Mark:
33 =that day Alexis saw us we all went out together
34 di'n't we cos we wen- (. ) we they turned up
35 on la- on the Sat'd'y on the a fortnight ago
36 (0.4)
37 Sw [[no this
38 Mark: [[an then the taxi (have) turned up (. ) pulled up
39 behind 'em and we all went down to (. ) Dee's
40 didn't we?
41 (0.4)
42 Mark: you've never [left me alone on at alone (.)
43 Sw: [(this)
44 Mark: with the kids did you
45 Sw: this was [last
46 Lucy: [I did last Saturday=
47 Sw: =last Saturday [yeh
48 Mark:
49 (not not last Sat'd'y the Sat'd'y before
50 Lucy
51 the Sat'd'y before (just for an hour) when I went
52 down Dee's
53 (0.2)
54 Sw: mm
55 (0.2)

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Lucy: to do a bit of shopping
(1.2)
Mark: we went to the park can't remember
(1.4)
Sw: now I do have to emphasise
(0.2)
Sw: as I was saying to Lucy you know
Mark: *yeh*
Sw: *hh tha' if
(0.6)
Sw: you know if anything had appened
(2.2)
Sw: y'know the troops will be going over the hill basically=
Mark: =which they didn't
(0.8)
Sw: *yeh* it'll be
(1.2)
Sw: this is (. ) represents like a last chance yeh?
(2.2)
Sw: there's bin lots of times when (. ) you know
the children 'ave got injured
(1.8)
Sw: an' we're tryin' to work with you okay Mark?
(0.4)
Mark: s'only one child got injured
(1.6)
Sw: well
(0.2)
Sw: there was Sandra an' then there was Jason
(. ) yeh wha- that's what I meant by over the time
(0.6)
Mark: ((sniffs))
(0.4)
Sw: a::nd
(0.8)
Sw: I want (. ) to try an work with you yeh?
I mean my idea is to *hh keep the chi:-
keep the children protected,
(0.6)
Sw: whilst (. ) trying to work with the stresses an strains
that're in the family
(0.4)
Sw: an that includes the housing situation
*hh that includes trying to help you
with your money worries .hh
Lucy: right:
Sw: the difficult behaviour of [the children,
Mark: [wha- what money
Mark: what money worries=.hhhh[hhh
Sw: [ahah[ahahaha
Lucy: [ahahahaha
Lucy: skint [all the time
Mark: [no
Mark: no it only becomes Christmas time really
when you get skint in it

(0.2)

Sw: "yeh" (. ) well you know like yo- li- like you
had to phone me up an ask for a fiver=

Lucy: =ye:::h=

Sw: there's obvious difficulties going on
(0.6)

Sw: .hh but you know you (. ) a lot of people
do manage despite (if not) being very comfortably
off [I (mean) .hhh totally agree=

Lucy: [ye:::h]

Sw: =with the income support but .hh you know a lot
of people do manage (. ) er and (. ) it seems
that you can't quite manage .hh (an) I think
you know if we could help in that way as well
that'll re- (. ) further reduce the stress,
(0.4)

Sw: that the family's under.
(0.4)

Lucy: mm [+]
(1.0)

Sw: u::m
(0.6)

Sw: that's:
(0.4)

Sw: >how I'm seeing it< but to be able to do that.
(0.2)

Sw: an also >to be able to persuade a court that
I'm going to be able to do [that<

Lucy: [ye:[:h

Sw: I'm gonna have to .hh prove to them and to myself.
(1.2)

Sw: that the chi-=children are safe while that goes on.
(2.6)

Sw: okay?
(1.2)

so if the children are left alone
(2.4)

Sw: then we would consider that a very risky situation
an' one which we would have to consider removing
the children on
(0.6)

Sw: at the present moment because
that seems to be the pattern.
(0.6)

that the children are left alone

an then harm befalls them

Lucy: mmm[m

Sw: [now if we can stop that happening,

.hh and work both with yourselves
( . ) and the other issues of course around

.hhhh working with (. ) with you Mark individually,
Mark: good
Sw: I put in a referral to the psychology department for that, (0.8)
Sw: you know you- like you were asking for a male worker
Mark: mmmm
Sw: rather than a female worker .hhhh an what I'd like to introduce as well (. ) Lucy is for you
to go through a similar process as well (0.6)
Lucy: thank you Sandy!
Sw: [that's okay!
Lucy: [love] you not:
Sw: hahaha
Lucy: [ha
Mark: I just told him (before I went)
( ) money I (gonna drop) give him five grand [to by ( ]
Sw: [yeh to go away=
Lucy: =go away ye::h]hahahahaha
Sw: [hahahahahaha[ha
Mark: hahahahahaha[ha
Lucy: [worth it
Mark: [[ha
Sw: [[ahaha
Mark: wha[ha
Lucy: [what'd it entail with me then be the same as Marcus?
Sw: sorry?
Lucy: what would it entail with me (. ) seeing a psychiatrist or whatever you wanna call 'em
Sw: psychologist not psychiatrist.
Lucy: (all the) same haha[haha all shrinks hahaha
Sw: [oh well no no actually I feel they're very different actually (because um)
(0.8)
Sw: I'm much more pro psychologist than psychiatrist myself=
Lucy: =oh right
Sw: [but er .hhh um::
(1.2)
Sw: yes u-
(0.6)
Sw: it would entail much the same (. ) ideas I mean w-
(0.4)
Sw: going through the files which obviously I had to=
Lucy: ye::h=
Sw: =to to get the court thing together .hhh you know it was noticeable that you too had had difficulties around (. ) uncontrolled responses towards the children.
(0.2)
Lucy: yeh=
Sw: =I mean this is how I feel that it is=
= my assessment is .hh that you two .hhh
aren't systematically injuring the children
I mean some (. ) people do do that
some forms of child abuse entail [that
[mm
Sw: .hhh for you two it's like an uncontrolled response
you know the kids are too much the (. ) the world's
too much and so: .hh you lash out [at a moment
[mm
Lucy: [mhm
Sw: where you just can't control them .hhh
now it's ar- (. ) it's (. ) because of that
an because I feel that that's possibly
workable with
mhm
(0.4)
Sw: that
(0.4)
Sw: we want to place >as much support into the family<
to reduce the levels of stress you're experiencing
.hh and work with both you an Mark
mhm
(0.4)
Sw: okay .hh to alleviate
(0.4)
Sw: the internal pressures that perhaps you you have
psychologically
(0.2)
Lucy: ri:ght
Sw: (if you like) as I've (. ) .hh as I've said to you
before sometimes if people have (. ) stresses an
strains from their personal history
mm
Sw: .hhh that are in (. ) inside them already,
hhwhen you get the stuff laid on top (. )
it's like a volcano .hhh
Lucy: an it erupts [hahaha
Sw: [an an its you know the extra=
=you know it's like the straw that breaks the camel's
back whereas other people who 'aven't got those
(0.4)
Sw: stresses
Lucy: yehm=
Sw: =they've only got today's stresses if you like
[mm
Sw: [[an so .hhh you can actually (. ) y'know control those
if you've only got the today's stresses
Lucy: yeh
Sw: but if you've got all the other ones
(0.8)
Sw: and (. ) of course reading the files I know that
you (. ) two had a very difficult childhood
both of you
Lucy: yes mmm
Sw: .hh so [++]
(0.8)
Sw: it might be w-
(1.0)
Sw: I I think it's [-] well worth the while
to assess the situation (.). hhh an to see
if we can help you in that way.
Lucy: m[hm
Sw: [an I mean please take it as that it is a
hmm an attempt to help you,
(1.0)
Sw: ok[ay=
Lucy: [ye:h
Sw: it's n- it's not sort of us .hh (.) doing things
to you, it's (.). you know a- if you don't
enter
Sw: [(coughs)]
Sw: [+] the spirit of this if you like if you
Lucy: ye::h [-]
Sw: you can sabotage (.) [+] something like that
quite easily [-] really
Lucy: ye:h
Sw: .hmm an so [+] it is around the idea
that w- (.). I ha- I identify that the family
is in crisis.
(0.2)
Sw: which [you know because of the ab- the the [++] err
Lucy: [mm
Sw: injuries
(1.0)
Sw: it can be said to be in [-] .hmm but that those
are (.). due to a whole series of factors
Lucy: yeh
Sw: an that if we can reduce the stress levels
help you with your own individual .hmm
stresses and strains (.). then hopefully
we can get to a stage where (.).
the uncontrolled responses become much less=
Lucy: =less yeh
(0.8)
Sw: a::nd
(0.8)
Sw: and we can actually (.). think about you know
re- revoking care orders an the like
Lucy: ri::ght
(0.4)
Lucy: that's what I'd like to see but [hahahaha .hmm
Sw: [right
Sw: but <within that we always>
(0.4)
an I think that you know
(0.4)
Sw: if it wasn't (.)}
Sw: .hh if it was another family if you viewed it from outside, an sort of looked at another family
an [the] soc[ial worker going in there=
Lucy: [mm]
Mark: ["ooooo(gh)ooooohhhhhhhhhhhhh((stretching))
Sw: =an not bothering that the children were being
injured while he did the other work,
Lucy: yeh
Sw: you'd be sa:ying,(.) >hang on a minute that isn't right
they should be protecting the children as well.<
Lucy: ye:h
Sw: .hh an that's very much
(0.6)
Sw: where we're at=there's a
like a two pronged attack. I have to ensure.
(0.8)
Sw: an the Department has: to ensure, (. ) by law
an (. ) because that's the way we operate
Sw: .hh that the children are safe.
(0.4)
Lucy: mhm
Sw: that's the <first an foremost thing>
(1.0)
Sw: .hhh and if::
(0.6)
Sw: we can't ensure that
(0.6)
then we >have to ensure it another way.<
Lucy: right
Sw: okay it is on it is on that basis it's that big.
(1.2)
Sw: an
(0.2)
Sw: it isn't
(0.4)
Sw: you know I I remember
you saying last week Mark that you know if I took
yu kids away you'd never forgive me,
Mark: I wouldn't.
(0.6)
Sw: but (. ) I'm not going to take the children away
or the Department isn't I (. ) myself I don't
personally have that power but .hhh
the Department wouldn't consider that
(0.8)
Sw: unless you did something
(0.4)
Sw: to make it happen=do you see what I mean
(.
Lucy: mh[m
Sw: [it's like a >criminal blaming the policeman cos he
375 got arrested. < hhh "you know" if you don't leave the
376 children (. ) alone.
377 (0.4)
378 Sw: with one (. ) parent,
379 (0.4)
380 Sw: ptn if there's no injuries to the children=we're not
going to take the children.
382 (0.8)
383 Lucy: ri[lught
384 Sw: [into care (. ) y'know int'accommodation
385 Lucy: mhm
386 Sw: .hh that's not (. ) where we're at we're we're at the
387 situation where we would (. ) try (. ) to seek
to help you,
389 (0.4)
390 Lucy: mhm
391 Sw: >to ensure that< (. ) that wouldn't have to happen.
392 Lucy: "( [ ] )"
393 Sw: [BUT
394 (0.8)
395 Sw: y'know (. ) if:
396 (0.2)
397 you create the situation where I can't .hhh guarantee
398 the children are safe.
399 (0.2)
400 Lucy: mm
401 (0.4)
402 Sw: then I've got to
403 (0.2)
404 Sw: make (. ) > get the situation so
405 that I can guarantee it<=
406 Lucy: =mmm
407 Sw: an that would entail
408 (0.2)
409 almost >certainly in this case<
410 (0.4)
411 Sw: (er) the children being removed
412 Lucy: mhm
413 (1.0) [+]
414 Sw: (it's) the double difficulty you see when when you were
415 saying before ho:w Mark [was
416 Mark: [((sniffs))
417 (0.2)
418 Sw: willing
419 (0.4)
420 Sw: to actually leave rather than (. ) you know the children
421 going into accommodation
422 Lucy: ye::h
423 Sw: .hh but of course (. ) you yourself having the the
424 same cautions against you (. ) [physical,
425 Lucy: [ye::h
426 Sw: .hhh erm assault on your children, is gonna be exactly
427 the same difficulty (. ) y- y'know what I mean
428 (. )
Mark: (? to baby) "hhi!"
Sw: =an for me it would be (. ) just the same degree of
(0.8)
of problem because you wouldn't have Mark as the
mutual support
Lucy: mhmm
(0.2)
Sw: I mean that's very much how I'd like to sort of be (.)
talking to you as well. that .hhh (. ) > I as you know
are gonna come in an be doing snakes an
[all this sort of stuff with the kids tu< .hh tu tu tu=
Lucy: [snakes ye::h hahahahahahahaha .hhh
Sw: =help them get over their=some of their behavioural
difficult[ies
Lucy: [snakes ye:: h hahahahahahahaha hhh
Sw: I mean that's very much how I'd like to sort of be (.)
talking to you as well. that .hhh (. ) > I as you know
are gonna come in an be doing snakes an
[all this sort of stuff with the kids tu< .hh tu tu tu=
Lucy: [snakes ye::h hahahahahahahaha .hhh
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Sw: an that should reduce (. ) "th'" problems
hh but I hope that you'll both be sharing
very much the responsibility,
Sw: there is the idea that
(0.8)
Sw: that you au- need to make
a <very, united front.> towards the children
Lucy: mhm
Sw: it is something I've <notic: ed> if you l[ike
Mark: [((sniffs))]
(1.0) [++]
Sw: that
(0.2)
Sw: poor old Mark [-] here
(0.2) [++]
tends to get the blame.
(0.6)
Sw: for a lot of [-]
Mark ((?rocking baby))"shshshshshshshshshshshshshshshshsh"
"shshshsh"
Lucy: not really you know, >only when he do(h)es<
some(h)thing huhuwro(h)[ng >(the(h)n yes) he does=
[ahaha
Sw: =get the [blame]<
Lucy: =get the [blame]<
Sw: [*yeh*
(0.6)
Sw: a:n
Mark: (wish I'd had fucking) kids now
Sw: yeh=what I'd like (. ) what I'd [like tu happen
Mark: [( ) can you tek 'em
(.) put 'em=can you put 'em all back:.
Lucy: no
(0.6)
Sw: see u- u- it's like everything else with children if
if they see that they can
(0.8)
Sw: you know if you yell at them an an Lucy says aaah
(1.4)
Sw: they think aaah huhuha
Lucy: "m(h)mm"
Sw: this needn't necessarily be:;
Lucy: ye:::h=
Sw: =but if you're both there saying (. ) you know
(.) you shouldn't do this,
(0.6)
Lucy: >I mean we've< tried this
be[fore but ( )
Sw: [an then the other one just
(0.4)
Sw: yes=oh it'll take time this u- these
things are
(0.2)
Sw: believe me th- these things will
take weeks to take any effect at all.
(0.4)
Lucy: (it) took >months with us an (he) didn't get
anywhere=cos he was arguing with me<
Lucy: yeh cos erm the way we were brought up> (maybe sh-) goes with the way we were brought up> hh uu:mm
(0.4)
Lucy: not with me Dad that wasn't no bringing up hh but when but when I went to live with me Nanny.
(0.4)
Lucy: when I was four <she didn't> (. ) slap us or anything unless she really needed to=it's [a one off if she
Sw: ] [mm ] [yeh
Lucy: ever slapped us hhh but (. ) him he >sorto'like< (. ) belted it into him to do it right
Sw: "yeh"
Lucy: an with me I was spoken to
(0.2)
Sw: mm
(0.2)
Lucy: you know I actually got some (words) that I- you know (. ) Nanny used to speak to me an sit me down an s-
well look you can't get your own way on everything you want hhh but he sort o' like
Lucy: defies what I say hhh cos he thinks he's the man in the house an he thinks he's always right
(0.4)
Sw: "(y[eh])"
Lucy: [(whereas now) when I seein' things happening here an I think well Nanny would have done (it) that way,
(0.4)
Sw: yeh=
Lucy: =I'll do it Nanny's way.
(0.4)
Sw: an he's sitting (down an sayin') no: me Dad was right [+ I'LL DO IT MY WAY [++]
(0.2)
Sw: ye[eh
Lucy: [so all he (knows) [-] how to do is
(0.4)
Lucy: smack (. ) whereas I can sit down and talk to Jason
(0.4)
Sw: mm
(0.4)
Lucy: (>y'know<) when (. ) he's with Jason (. ) I get >no response out of Jason whatsoever<
(0.8)
Lucy: he's so cheeky when he's around [+ it's unbelievable
(0.6)
Sw: [-] I've noticed [+ ] actually that
(0.2)
Sw: it's as I say
[-] it's one of the things I've noticed about the children is that .hhhhh "i" it's almost it's not [+]
(0.4)
Sw: on [-] a defiance=cheeky level they don't even seem to
if you forgive me Mark hu they don't

[++] (even seem)

don't give a damn hahahaha=

=they don't [even] seem to notice=

[hey]

=it's pick on Mark day today [-] (is it)=

=no i- [it certainly .isn't no it's the other way=

[no:::

=i- in fact in a lot of ways

(0.4)

ummm

(0.8)

(what I:) (...) in this respect it's almost it's coming

from Jason isn't it I mean you shout at

him to try an stop him sa- doing something

(0.4)

an it's not like there's a defiance, is there=it's not

like he turns round an says

(0.6)

no! [ha hahahaha .ha hahaha .hhh

an thinks about it an thinks no to hell with you

I'm not going to do that (...) it's absolutely as if you

weren't in the room he just (...) keeps going. (...) I've

noticed this

[+ an in fact when both of you I mean that's both

of you actually

mm=

=both of you shout

(0.4)

and it's

(0.6)

him an

(0.6)

Susanna are [-] hurtling acr[oss the carpet

[ahahahahahahahahaha

a::nd (...) it's not as if they turn round an (...) as ev-

(0.2)

it's as if they've haven't even heard you

(0.8)

*did y'*=have you noticed that=

=(he does ) several times yeh

yeh (...) it's quite s- it's it'[s a-

Mark: (((sniffs))

it's=

=it's [(more annoying)

[amazing.

(0.2)

yeh I [I've I I've never seen it to that extreme

([>I mean it's annoying<)

(0.8)

and it's something that (...) you know I can see

that if you were left if I was le(h)ft ha
an(h)ybo(h)dy [w(h)as le(h)ft a.lone .h in a situation=

"ashhh"

where those [two children

[you would tear your hair out huhuhuhu=

were tearing round in that never ending circle.

I I think I'd get (. ) sort of very he- het up an

very upset

so I do think that this y'know these combinations

of things

are [+] actually

things that we can work on [++]

and help the family [-] through this cri[sis period

I mean a good example for all this I mean

yesterday

no it wasn't it was the day before, [-]

an I'm gonna say it cos you always keep saying

I'm wrong

wh(gh)a:::t!

and:::

he was saying he wanted to go pick the kids

up on his own,

an I was trying to say well
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