

**SOCIAL WORK AND POVERTY:  
ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS**

**by**

**MONICA S DOWLING B.A. C.Q.S.W. Cert Ed (FE)**

**Department of Sociological Studies**

**Thesis Submitted to the University of Sheffield**

**for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**October 1993**

**PAGINATED BLANK PAGES  
ARE SCANNED AS FOUND  
IN ORIGINAL THESIS**

**NO INFORMATION IS  
MISSING**

# **SOCIAL WORK AND POVERTY: ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS**

## **Summary**

This study has investigated to what extent social workers' attitudes to poverty have been translated into actions. Factors which have affected social workers' ability to turn attitudes into actions have included: the restructuring of welfare, which has involved social service cutbacks and financially restrictive social security policies; and social workers' subjective norms and behavioural controls.

The study also includes a consideration of the ways in which social workers aid social service users with financial difficulties - through welfare rights advice and/or advocacy or direct cash payments. It is suggested that social workers are increasingly being expected to collude with the DSS' functions of income maintenance and therefore their role as welfare rights advocates/advisers can be compromised. However social service users' increasing poverty indicate that social work help with financial and material needs may be an important part of the social work task from a consumer's perspective, both in training and in work.

Social work students had more positive attitudes than social workers towards dealing with poverty in practice, and were critical of the social control functions of social workers in relation to income maintenance. However, they were not similarly subject to the controls and norms of social work institutions. The poverty awareness programme created as a result of the fieldwork findings, allows social workers and social work students to be more aware of conflicts between attitudes and actions, and fulfils students' needs for an understanding of poverty that integrates theory and practice.

Some social service users constructed their financial problems differently from the way social workers perceived them. However users were generally grateful for any financial help or advice they received, but tended to find such help stigmatising. Some users had turned to welfare rights agencies for further financial advice where such agencies were available.

Further research would need to evaluate: the effectiveness of poverty awareness programmes; the changing role of the social worker in relation to poverty in a developing social care market; and whether social security policies continue to put additional financial pressure on social service users and hence affect the role of the social worker in relation to financial need.

**MONICA DOWLING**

## **Acknowledgements**

Heartfelt thanks must first of all go to my supervisor Professor Alan Walker for seeing me through the trials and tribulations of the last five years. The Doctoral Programme Board have been generous in organising a comfortable working environment, and the Department of Sociological Studies staff have been supportive and cheerful at times when I needed it. The ESRC provided a grant for the first taught year of the Doctoral Programme and the second and third years of the research, for which I am grateful.

Secondly I wish to thank all the social service users, social workers, students, and social services staff who have participated in the research. Without their support and co-operation in dealing with difficult and sometimes emotional issues, this thesis would not have been possible.

Finally I wish to thank all my colleagues, family and friends for standing by me during the times of trauma and stress that completing this work has involved.



## Preface

In 1975 I was asked by someone not connected with social work, whether I thought the families with financial difficulties I was visiting for the Housing Department were different from other families. Had they not got these enormous debts because they were lazy, bad, or more stupid than other people? I could honestly answer that from my observations I did not see them as different from other families I knew. I was surprised because I had not up to then linked the social work placement I was undertaking to peoples' attitudes to "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, despite this being the fourth year of my social work course. The theory and practice of social work were not integrated.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate social workers' attitudes and actions towards poverty and to question whether learning about poverty is an integrated part of social work students' training and social workers' in-service training.

The investigation is influenced not only by my own experiences of being a social work student and social worker, but also by being a social work teacher and researcher and an unemployed income support claimant.

From December 1984 to September 1987, I conducted M.Phil research on social work students' attitudes to supplementary benefits in relation to their roles as social worker and student. The research was completed in my own time as it coincided with my five year post teaching residential social workers at Ware College. Although I had to give up the M.Phil research when I started the Doctoral Programme in October 1987, I had by then piloted, reviewed and completed questionnaires with nearly a hundred and fifty social work students from eight different social work courses on their knowledge and attitudes to the supplementary benefit system. Many of the students on the social work course at the university of Surrey, (one of the social work courses surveyed) were from Asia, particularly Hong Kong. They felt they could not answer adequately some of the questions on the benefits system in Britain, as they were here for the course and going back to their own countries to practice social work. I therefore became interested in broadening the research area so that all aspects of social workers' attitudes and actions in relation to poverty could be investigated not merely attitudes to supplementary benefits. Despite the changes in benefits after April 1988, the survey information proved extremely useful when discussing poverty issues with social work students at Sheffield Polytechnic and University.

The research and writing up for the Ph.D thesis was conducted between 1988-1992 as the Doctoral Programme consisted of a full time taught first year (1987) on British Policy Studies. This year included being required to submit and pass for entry onto the Ph.D, three papers of 10,000 words, and oral examination, and a statistics examination. From 1990-1993 while writing up the thesis on a part-time basis I have gained some idea of what it is like to live on unemployment and social security benefits in between periods of teaching. I believe all these experiences have been positive in contributing to this thesis on poverty and social work.

## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Summary</b>	i
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	ii
<b>Preface</b>	iii
<b>Contents</b>	v
<b>List of tables and diagrams</b>	viii
<b>Appendices</b>	viii
<b>Glossary</b>	ix
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter one - The relationship between social work and poverty</b>	
1.1 Introduction	7
1.2 A definition of poverty	7
1.3 Poverty and stigma	9
1.4 A subjective interpretation of poverty	10
1.5 A definition of social work	11
1.6 A definition of welfare rights	12
1.7 The origins of the relationship between poverty and social work	13
1.8 The philosophy and practises of the COS	14
1.9 Social work and psychiatry	15
1.10 The casework model	16
1.11 The objective relationship between social work and poverty.	17
1.12 The subjective relationship between social workers and poor social service users	20
1.13 The relationship between social work education, poverty and welfare rights	24
1.14 The relationship between the income maintenance system and the functions of social service departments	27
1.15 Social workers as providers of income maintenance and/or as advocates/advisers on income maintenance	31
1.16 The Future Relationship between Social Work and Poverty	34
1.17 Summary and conclusions	35
<b>Chapter two - The restructuring of welfare</b>	
2.1 Introduction	37
2.2 What is the restructuring of welfare?	37
2.3 Social service users and the restructuring of social security	38
2.4 Social service users and the restructuring of the housing market	43
2.5 Summary and conclusions	51
<b>Chapter three - Methodological perspectives</b>	

3.1	Introduction	55
3.2	Relating theory and method	55
3.3	A Critique	55
3.4	A discussion on the nature of subjectivity	59
3.5	A feminist methodology	62
3.6	Group discussion and interviews	65
3.7	Participant observation - an example of the reflexive nature of research	67
3.8	A Reflexive account of this research	69
3.9	Access	70
3.10	Becoming a participant observer	73
3.11	The effectiveness of the research in terms of policy and practice	75
3.12	Summary and Conclusions	78

#### **Chapter four - Social work students and social work education**

4.1	Introduction	81
4.2	How do social work students come to know and learn?	81
4.3	Research on social work education	83
4.4	Summarising the discussion on social work education	85
4.5	What is professional knowledge?	87
4.6	The relationship between theory and practice	91
4.7	The student culture	97
4.8	Informal repertoires	98
4.9	Summary and conclusions	99

#### **Chapter five - Social work students' attitudes to poverty**

5.1	Introduction	101
5.2	Students' views on the present relationship between poverty and social work	101
5.3	Students' views on the future relationship between social work and poverty	109
5.4	Students' views on how placements handled the relationship between poverty and social work	110
5.5	Summary and conclusions	116

#### **Chapter six - Social workers' attitudes and actions in relation to poor social service users**

6.1	Introduction	117
6.2	Social workers' attitudes and actions	117
6.3	Theoretical models for understanding attitudes and actions	118
6.4	Previous research on social workers' attitudes to poverty	124
6.5	Research Findings - Section 1 monies, food and food vouchers	127
6.6	Research findings - deserving and undeserving poor	136
6.7	Research findings - welfare benefits	140

6.8	Summary and conclusions	144
<b>Chapter seven - Social service users with financial difficulties - their responses to social workers</b>		
7.1	Introduction	145
7.2	Dependency	145
7.3	Methodology	147
7.4	Characteristics of social service users interviewed	149
7.5	Expectations of Social Service Users	150
7.6	Satisfactions of social service users	155
7.7	Dissatisfactions of social service users	157
7.8	How users would have liked social services to respond differently	165
7.9	Social workers' attitudes and actions in comparison to users' views	168
7.10	Summary and Conclusions	170
<b>Chapter eight - Social work and poverty - the present and the future</b>		
8.1	Introduction	173
8.2	Who are the users of social services who have financial difficulties?	173
8.3	How do social work students and social workers interact with social service users?	175
8.4	The way forward - guidelines, accountability, access and participation	176
8.5	Were 1988 and 1989 significant in terms of social services departments and social service users?	178
8.6	A defence of the thesis	179
8.7	A poverty awareness programme	181
8.8	Summary and conclusions	186
8.9	Recommendations for future research	189
<b>Appendices</b>		191
<b>Bibliography</b>		205

## LIST OF TABLES AND DIAGRAMS

	page
Table One (Chapter One)	<i>facing</i> 32
Table Two (Chapter One)	<i>facing</i> 32
Table Three (Chapter Three)	<i>facing</i> 56
Table Four (Chapter Three)	<i>facing</i> 56
Diagram One (Chapter One)	<i>facing</i> 30
Diagram Two (Chapter Six)	<i>facing</i> 122
Diagram Three (Chapter Six)	<i>facing</i> 126

## APPENDICES

<b>Appendix 1 - The social workers and other professionals involved in the study</b>	
Appendix 1A - Silverton Team	191
Appendix 1B - City Team	192
<b>Appendix 2 - Social service users involved in the study</b>	
Appendix 2A - Social service users interviewed and/or observed in the Silverton area	193
Appendix 2B - Social service users interviewed and/or observed in the City area	194
<b>Appendix 3 - Research brief</b>	195
<b>Appendix 4 - Feedback papers</b>	
Appendix 4A - Silverton Team	198
Appendix 4B - City Team	201
<b>Appendix 5 - Comments on the research by Brian Lunt, welfare rights officer, Silverton</b>	203

## GLOSSARY

<b>BSA</b>	-	British Sociological Association
<b>BASW</b>	-	British Association of Social Workers
<b>CAB</b>	-	Citizens Advice Bureau
<b>CCETSW</b>	-	Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work
<b>CCG</b>	-	Community Care Grant
<b>CDP</b>	-	Community Development Projects
<b>COS</b>	-	Charity Organisation Society
<b>CPAG</b>	-	Child Poverty Action Group
<b>DHSS</b>	-	Department of Health & Social Security
<b>DipSW</b>	-	Diploma in Social Work
<b>DOH</b>	-	Department of Health
<b>DSS</b>	-	Department of Social Security (The DHSS was reorganised during 1988 and the part which is concerned with benefits is now called the DSS)
<b>EEC</b>	-	European Economic Community
<b>ESRC</b>	-	Economic and Social Research Council
<b>FSU</b>	-	Family Service Unit
<b>FWA</b>	-	Family Welfare Association
<b>HBAI</b>	-	Households below Average Income statistics
<b>HMSO</b>	-	Her Majesty's Stationary Office
<b>LIF</b>	-	Low income families statistics
<b>NALGO</b>	-	National Association of Local Government Officers
<b>NFA</b>	-	No Further Action (abbreviation used on social service referral forms and in discussion in meetings to indicate that social workers would be taking no further action concerning the family or individual under discussion)
<b>NHS</b>	-	National Health Service
<b>PSI</b>	-	Policy Studies Institute
<b>RKP</b>	-	Routledge & Kegan Paul
<b>SSD</b>	-	Social Services Department

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the interaction of social workers with poor users of social services departments. It asks: who are the users of social services who have financial difficulties and why are they poor; how social workers and social work students negotiate with such users and why are they dealt with in the ways described and analysed; and whether 1988 and 1989, the years when the fieldwork was conducted, were significant in terms of ideological, legal, financial and social pressures for social services departments, social workers, and social service users. The aim of the study is to present a qualitative account of how social service users, social workers and social work students function in relation to issues of poverty and inequality. It is unique in that although there have been participant and non-participant studies of social work teams (Satyamurti, 1981; Smith, 1980; Pithouse, 1988; Johnson, 1975; Mattinson and Sinclair, 1979), they have not addressed in detail the concerns of poor users. Social work research that has focused on poverty (Becker, 1987; Taylor, 1990) has concentrated on social workers' attitudes to poverty, whereas this research examines the relationship between attitudes and actions of social workers and social service users and suggests that there is no necessary logical progression from attitudes to actions. Although issues of welfare rights and income maintenance are addressed as ways in which social workers may tackle poverty among social service users, the thesis has the wider perspective of investigating how social worker's "cash" and "care" roles are integrated in their everyday attitudes and actions.

The study also examines the role of social work education in preparing social workers for their future occupation, in relation to the hardship of social service users. Studies of social work students (Parsloe, 1978; CCETSW, 1988) have tended unlike this research, to be quantitative rather than qualitative. Although such research has considered social work students as consumers of social work education, it has not tackled the attitudes of social work students to the problem of financial need of users, nor how the policy and personal issues of the relationship between poverty and social work could be addressed in the new DipSW courses.

The investigation has involved interviews with social service users to discover their views on the interactions observed in the fieldwork setting, which is a novel methodological approach in that it involves triangulation of attitudes and actions. However users' actions have not been observed as exhaustively as social workers' actions because the fieldwork settings were two social services departments where social workers play the dominant role. An interesting consolidating study which was not possible in the two research years of a Doctoral Programme Ph.D, would be to conduct a participant observation study of social service users and thus observe their actions in their own environment as well as



when they came to the social services department. Nevertheless the fieldwork conducted for this study has been extensive and is worth considering in some detail, as the amount of data collected has had implications for the writing up and analysis of findings presented in chapters four, five, six and seven.

The survey information collected between 1984-1987 on social work students' knowledge and understanding of the supplementary benefits system from eight different social work institutions has been included in chapters four and five where appropriate. Four group discussions on social work and poverty were conducted with post graduate and non graduate social work students at Sheffield University and Polytechnic respectively (additional to the information collected from the eight previous institutions), during July 1988. A thirteen month participant observation study of two social work teams from different local authorities took place between January 1989 and February 1990. And finally eighteen in depth interviews with social service users were recorded and analysed, taken from social services referrals of users with financial problems in the two social work teams studied. Some of these social service users were also involved in the observation research. The observation and interview findings compose the main part of the fieldwork while the group discussions and survey information are important for chapters four and five and the poverty awareness programme. The large amount of data collected using a number of different research methods has meant that not all the findings are written up in the thesis in the detail they deserve. Bearing in mind the 80,000 word limit of the Ph.D and the fact that a Doctoral Programme thesis was intended to be "less ambitious" than those where students have three years rather than two years grant aided to complete their studies, the fieldwork chapters are necessarily condensed. Examples from the participation observation study quoted in Chapter Six are based on thirteen months fieldwork and are generally representative of a number of other examples which there has not been the time and space to include.

The observation study was conducted in two areas within different local authorities - Carshire (with the Silverton social work team) and City (with the City social work team). "Carshire" is a small, rural, former mining area in Yorkshire while "City" is the nearby large metropolis where most of the population used to work in a single heavy industry. With the loss of this industry, "City" is attempting to develop its service sector. In both areas there is high unemployment and poverty.

Throughout the thesis, names of students, social workers and social service users have been changed to protect their privacy. It was a condition of access to the social work teams that their local authority and place of work were also confidential. The team observed for nine months, three days a week are 'Silverton' and the team observed for

two days a week for four months, are called the 'City' team. It was agreed prior to interviewing all social service users, that information received from them, would not be passed back to social workers without the user's consent. Fictitious names for the social workers and students tend to be first names, because this was how they introduced themselves to me in the group and fieldwork setting. Users were generally addressed by social workers using their surnames and this was how they were introduced to me. It was also how social service users' details were recorded on case files and in the referral book, and how they generally expected to be addressed during interviews. On some occasions, interviews with users became informal enough for first names to be exchanged, but generally the whole process was illustrative of where students, social workers and social service users "fitted in", in terms of a professional and bureaucratic organisation, and the power structure within society. The researcher had an elite position in that structure because middle class individuals had more knowledge and understanding of the academic role, while social service users tended to be working class, and had less knowledge. Users at least initially, regarded me as some sort of official, however the female to female approach (Social Service user/researcher), described in more detail in Chapter Three mediated the hierarchical approach of social services.

The majority of social workers and social service users interviewed and observed in the Silverton area were white, female and from working class backgrounds. Apart from two of the three male social workers in the Silverton team, social workers were local to the area and thus they had in one sense more rapport with local users, although there was also more opportunity for local knowledge of individuals to be employed which did not come through official channels.

City team had a wider mix of clients in terms of race and gender but few who were middle class. The social workers in the City team were mostly University educated and generally "progressive" in their attitudes and outlooks. There were no black social workers employed with either team during the field observation period, although one of the female social work students in City team, (present for part of the time) was black.

The social work students interviewed at the University appeared mostly middle class in their attitudes, approximately two-thirds were female and all were white. At Sheffield Polytechnic as it was then called, approximately one-third of the students were black and two-thirds were female and the students appeared more working class in their attitudes. The University course was a two year post-graduate CQSW with the possibility of gaining an M.A. whereas the Polytechnic course was a non-graduate two year CQSW course.

## **Chapter themes**

Each chapter also addresses a specific topic, which is briefly described here. The abstracts at the beginning of each chapter give fuller information.

Chapter One defines the concepts of poverty, welfare rights and social work as they will be used throughout the thesis. This is followed by a consideration of stigma as applied to poverty in order to give meaning to attitudes and actions observed during the fieldwork. The chapter then examines what sort of relationship has existed between social work, welfare rights and poverty; how this compares with the reality of the relationship today; and what the relationship could involve in the future.

Chapter Two examines the wider context in which this study has taken place. It argues that a restructuring of welfare is occurring in relation to social services. Two areas of restructuring are investigated with examples from the fieldwork. These show how and in what ways social service users and social workers have suffered as a result of Conservative policies.

Chapter Three assesses in what ways the research has incorporated theory and method, subjectivity and objectivity, qualitative and quantitative methods and feminist methodology. It suggests that: subjectivity and its implications for qualitative methods; feedback to research respondents; suggested policy initiatives from research, and gender interactions, are areas of methodological interest that need further exploration.

Chapter Four concentrates on social work education and the social work students' responses to the group discussion interviews. How we come to know, and how students come to know about social work are evaluated from a hermeneutic framework.

Chapter Five discusses social work students' evaluation of the present and future relationship between social work and poverty. Survey findings plus results from the group discussions show how students' previous and placement experiences affect their attitudes; and how they account for their actions.

Chapter Six analyses previous research on social workers' attitudes and actions in relation to poverty. Social-psychological and social constructionist theories are employed to understand the fieldwork findings and the relationship between attitudes and behaviour.

Chapter Seven is concerned with the interviews of social service users with financial difficulties. It explores their responses to individual social workers in helping with their

problems and users' expectations, satisfactions, dissatisfactions and suggestions for change within social services. The findings are discussed in relation to relevant participant observation data from the fieldwork.

Chapter Eight proposes a poverty awareness programme that is educational and practical, and that could alleviate the difficulties and crises for social work students, social workers and social service users that have been highlighted in this thesis. The conclusion draws together the main themes that have been focused on throughout the thesis; points out where further research would be valuable; defends the need for policies on poverty and social work; and argues that poverty awareness programmes are one way forward.

Because the thesis is aiming for an integration of theory with social work practice, the fieldwork findings are not concentrated in one or two chapters but referred to in most chapters with more in depth analysis in chapters four to seven.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL WORK AND POVERTY

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter defines the concepts of poverty and social work as they will be used throughout the thesis and traces the connections between poverty and social work in the past, present and future.

It is suggested that although there is a historical, factual, objective relationship between poverty and social work, there is also a subjective interactive relationship between social workers and those in poverty which is based on professional traditions; the casework model; and social workers' own attitudes and actions which are influenced by their training, personal backgrounds and the larger political environment.

Relevant to the relationship between poverty and social work and therefore also included in this chapter are: an analysis of the relationship between the income maintenance system and the functions of social services departments; and a summary of the issues concerning social workers as *providers* of income maintenance and as *advocates/advisers* on income maintenance matters.

#### 1.2 A definition of poverty

A "poverty line" which divides those who are poor from those who are not poor would be useful from a social science perspective in defining qualitatively what percentage of the population are poor. However there is a continuing debate about where such a "poverty line" should be set and to what extent poverty is relative to the society in which it exists (Oppenheim, 1990; Townsend, 1979).

There is no official UK government "poverty line" but two sources of government information are *Low Income Families* statistics and *Households below Average Income* statistics, both derived from the *Family Expenditure Survey*. Half average income (HBAI statistics) are the most recent government measure of low income and are used by CPAG and the Poverty lobby and also by the European Community. However households are the unit of definition rather than the family or individual and such a statistic does not relate income to the minimum rates of benefit specified by Parliament. Other methods of measuring poverty and some would say inequality include: the level at which 40% of the population receive less than 15% of the income of the country (Todaro - World Bank,

1991); those spending less than half of the country's national average expenditure (EEC, 1991); or the real income of the poorest fifth (Townsend, 1991); or tenth of the population (Johnson and Webb, 1991).

Where poverty is defined as below 50% of average income, Northern Ireland ranks as the poorest area in Britain with 27% of its population living in poverty in 1983-5, while Yorkshire - where the fieldwork was conducted - along with Humberside and the North follows with between 15-18% of their population living in poverty. By contrast the South East has only 7% (Oppenheim, 1990, p.107). There are no up-to-date poverty statistics broken down by region (Oppenheim, 1993) although a number of deprivation indicators show that Northern Ireland still ranks as one of the poorest areas in terms of unemployment, income and reliance on income support and that the "North" - "South" divide has grown over the 1980s and appears remarkably stable (Oppenheim, 1993). However Pond (1989) and Townsend (1987) and Oppenheim (1991) point out that even greater divisions in terms of income and wealth can exist within regions.

Information on women and poverty was particularly relevant to the research as most social service users with financial difficulties interviewed and observed were female. In 1988 using the lower "poverty line" of income support rates, 62% of adults supported by income support were women and 96% of single parents on income support were female. Two thirds of all single parents were reliant on income support (Oppenheim, 1990, p.93 & 96).

Poverty statistics although extremely useful in giving a wider perspective, do not reveal the intricacies of poor peoples' lives. They do not show how poverty can be of a temporary or long term nature (Walker, 1991); that those who feel themselves to be poor are not accepted as such; that those who are part of the poverty statistics may be earning unofficially (Jordan, James, Kay and Redley, 1992); and that poverty involves feelings of despair and depression which may exacerbate any financial difficulties.

Initially the definition of poverty for the purposes of this thesis was based on income support levels, but this and other qualitative research has shown that this is such a low level of income that few people can manage to survive on it alone (Jordan, James, Kay and Redley, 1992). During the fieldwork, those who were interviewed or observed as managing on income support alone were often female single parents with children. They had little help with childcare and therefore were unable to take even part time work. From the fieldwork findings they were the most likely group to be asking social services for financial help or support.

The approach to poverty used throughout the thesis will suggest firstly that there is no objective measure of poverty that is consistent for all times and places:

Measuring poverty must always be relative, since what it is measuring is a social product which changes both over time and from one society to another. The point at issue simply becomes what it is relative to (Novak, 1988, p.21).

Secondly that the poor are now poorer in relation to the wealthy, than they were in 1979 (see Chapter Two). Thirdly, a "poverty line" may be a necessary quantitative means for measuring poverty in the population as a whole but does not allow for the individual needs of people like Mrs Dixon (see Chapter two) who are on the margins of poverty but do not necessarily see themselves in that way.

As Oppenheim (1990) notes on behalf of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG),

We also take account of those people living just above each of these poverty lines - those living on the margins of poverty. It is important to hold on to the idea of such a margin, since people living on low incomes usually find that their income fluctuates, slipping between poverty and an income close to poverty. We describe anyone living between 100% and 140% of supplementary benefit or between 50% and 60% of average income as living on the margins of poverty.

Balloch & Jones' (1990, p.2) study Poverty and Anti-Poverty strategy defines poverty as lack of money, lack of resources and lack of control and quotes The Archbishop of Canterbury Faith in the City (1986):

Poor people ...are at the mercy of fragmented and apparently unresponsive public authorities. They are trapped in housing and in environments over which they have little control. They lack the means and opportunity - which so many of us take for granted - of making choices in their lives.

This certainly describes the situation of many social service users who sometimes appeared aggressive to social workers, but were more often passive when faced with their own powerlessness in relation to increasing their income.

### **1.3 Poverty and stigma**

While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind - in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted and discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma (Goffman, 1963, p.2).



Poverty falls within the realm of "stigma". It is not being poor per se that is a stigma, but the social perception of the attribute which deems it a stigma. Goffman, (1963, p.4), suggests three types of stigma: physical "stigma-deformities", "tribal stigma of race, nation and religion" and "blemishes of individual character". Thus the poor are perceived by the non-poor as having more character defects than the rich. Hence the "culture of poverty" thesis. Stigmatising the poor has cultural, political and historical traditions which cannot be easily avoided by the individual (Novak, 1988; Waxman, 1988; Dean, 1991). Instead of blaming the poor, which could be said to be a conscience soothing method of doing nothing towards solving the problem, poverty awareness, like race awareness could be used as a way of allowing social workers for example, to be more aware of their attitudes and actions in relation to poor people - a point returned to in later chapters.

Poverty can be understood as a special type of stigma which attributes to the poor a status of being less than human. It has taken various forms at different historical stages: branding in the fourteenth century (De Schweinitz, 1961; Pound, 1973); being driven into workhouses in the nineteenth century (Novak, 1988; Waxman, 1988) ; and being labelled as part of "the underclass" and treated accordingly in the late twentieth century (Murray, 1990; Holman, 1990; Williams, 1989; Lister, 1990).

#### **1.4 A subjective interpretation of poverty**

One of the difficulties of defining objectively what poverty is, is that there is as much prejudice about poverty as there is about race and gender. Individuals make pre - judgements about what they observe as signs of wealth. People who say they are poor are not always accepted as such and others who may be materially poorer do not accept this definition of themselves.

The sociological study of poverty and the poor should include, it is argued, not only the behaviour of the poor themselves, but also the nature of the relationship between the poor and the non poor, specifically the perceptions and the definitions the non poor have of the poor... (Waxman, 1983, p.69).

This thesis specifically sets out to understand the subjective nature of the relationship between the poor and the non poor. For the purposes of this research, the non poor are professional social workers and the poor are social service users with financial problems.

At any particular time in any society, each individual will have their own preconceptions of what constitutes poverty. Most people have an unthought out emotional response to

whether an individual measures up to their own internal view of what a poor person is. In the same way we might have an immediate feeling of "inappropriateness" if we see a black/female/older/ disabled person in a situation where we are not expecting to see such a person, so a person we define as poor who has a good standard of decoration in their house, a computer or a car may evoke a similar response. Prejudging takes place continuously - which helps us to make sense of the world in some situations - for example if someone is coming towards us holding a knife in a threatening manner. However the ease with which prejudgements are made about the poor (Murray, 1990; Cooper, 1985), is why poverty awareness is just as important as disability, gender, race or age awareness.

**Lister:** Even those (like social workers) who don't have the time to get involved in active groups (CPAG) can do some things. Next time they are in a pub and someone goes on about social security scroungers they can turn round and say, "Do you know that ....." This is very slow, painstaking, work at the individual level. (Hepinstall in Community Care, 23/10/80, p.21.)

In drawing attention to the subjective nature of poverty and suggesting that objective measures only partially tell the story, the field work findings contribute to ethnographic studies of poverty and add a further dimension to studies of poverty and social work.

### **1.5 A definition of social work**

Some social workers in the fieldwork defined social work as the casework relationship, some students saw social work as "sticking plaster - we act as sticking plaster without actually tackling and doing something". Social service users talked about caring people or busybodies. Generally there was confusion and uncertainty among all three researched groups about what social work was, whether social workers were actually doing social work and if not, what they should be doing instead.

Quantitative responses to the first national opinion survey (Gallup, 1981) into attitudes towards social workers appeared to show the public as less muddled than those more intimately involved with social work. Forty three per cent of 994 respondents replied (broadly) that they helped people in need of help, 37 per cent that they advised on and sorted out people's problems, and 3 per cent saw them as "busybodies" or "interfering people". However only 8 per cent of the sample had ever discussed a problem with a social worker.

When people were asked what social workers should do as part of their job, they put practical needs first. About three quarters said that social workers should investigate the needs of disabled people and 64 per cent that they should help poor people get their rights. Helping people with their emotional needs ranked third (54 per cent) and statutory tasks a poor fourth (32.5 per cent). As Weir (1981, p.218) comments:

Social workers have a confusing range of duties, and are often themselves confused about their role. The public might have been expected to be a great deal more confused. But people, in fact, seem to have a reasonably rounded grasp of what social workers do and what they should do and to value them for it.

There are many competing textbook definitions of what social work is. Some authors (Pearson, 1973; Brewer and Lait, 1980) have argued that social work is a particularly subjective and individualistic type of work which is prone to different interpretations. Pincus and Minahan (1977, p.43) define the purpose of social work as:

(1) to enhance the problem solving and coping capacities of people; (2) to link people with systems that provide them with resources, services and opportunities; (3) to promote the effective and human operation of these systems; and (4) to contribute to the development and improvement of social policy.

Such a definition would appear to allow ample opportunities for social workers to be supportive of individuals with financial difficulties and systems that are supposed to promote an individual's economic well being. However there is a long-standing debate concerning how much of the professional role of the social worker should be concerned with alleviating poverty (Wooton, 1959; Seebohm, 1969; Hill and Laing, 1979; Barclay, 1982; Becker, Macpherson and Silburn, 1983; Stewart and Stewart, 1986; Fimister, 1986). So although Pincus and Minahan's definition of social work could be employed for the purposes of the thesis, the variable way in which the term social work is used makes any absolute definition impossible.

Considering the difficulty in defining both poverty and social work, it is not surprising that this chapter will go on to argue that although there is evidence to link poverty and social work traditionally and theoretically, the connections between poverty and social work are ambiguous and complex.

## **1.6 A definition of Welfare Rights**

"Welfare rights" has been used to describe a wide range of activities as well as a set of ideas. Holman (1973a, p.358) defines the concept quite narrowly as being "the

entitlement of low income persons to statutory financial or material provision of services", whereas Cohen and Rushton (1982, p.1) want to widen it to include the action of advocacy which they define as "acting on a client's behalf and representing her interests to outside organisations". For the purpose of this study, I wish to borrow Fimister's (1986, p.1) definition of welfare rights as being:

"... rights to income, with particular reference to social security and other cash welfare benefits, and to directly related issues such as fuel disconnections".

Within this definition Fimister (1986, p.1) includes advocating for people's rights, being concerned with the relief of poverty and also the prevention of poverty through campaigning for "clear, adequate and enforceable non-means-tested entitlements".

In relation to social work, the CCETSW Curriculum Development Group on "Welfare Rights in Social Work Education" notes (1989, p.8) "Welfare rights for social workers is regarded as an orientation to helping and a practice skill rather than a body of knowledge." However, welfare rights is an important skill that appears neglected in social work training (Becker, MacPherson, Silburn, 1983; Stewart, 1989; McGrail, 1983) and in practice (Wilson, 1988; Evason et al, 1989; Hill and Laing, 1979).

## **1.7 The origins of the relationship between poverty and social work**

The relationship between social work and poverty appears to have been influenced by three main factors: the philosophy and practises of the COS; the need for an emerging profession to identify with other more powerful professions - in this case psychiatry; and the administrative and bureaucratic development of the casework model. The history and origins of social work are crucial in understanding the training, attitudes and actions of social workers today, in relation to poverty issues.

The roots of social work lie in a nineteenth century world of philanthropy and discretion. This was a society in which caseworkers and Poor Law officials investigated the circumstances of poor people in order to decide whether they deserved access to welfare goods and services provided by the state and charitable organisations. However, these activities were not just directed at separating the deserving from the undeserving, they were also concerned with moral regeneration. When help was provided it was on condition that recipients improved themselves. As Stewart (1989, p.9) notes, "Increased thrift, sobriety, personal and family discipline, were the price demanded of the recipients of Victorian welfare".

## **1.8 The philosophy and practises of the COS**

Waxman (1983) describes in some detail the Charity Organisation Society established in 1869, as the acknowledged forerunner of the social work profession. By emphasizing their expertise in the "science" of helping, they were able to impose their ideology on middle class charitable individuals and the government of the day. They were concerned with the deserving poor who could be reformed, rather than the undeserving who were consigned to the workhouses, begging or thieving.

The society (Charity Organisation Society) operated under the assumption there were deserving and undeserving poor, and though it couldn't arrive at any steadfast formula for distinguishing between the two categories and finally left it at "not likely to benefit" in place of "undeserving". The COS stressed the value of treating each case separately and keeping a record and raising funds for each case individually. It is from these beginnings that the casework approach to social work with its stress on the interview, home visit, investigation etc., evolved (Waxman, 1983, p.85).

This ideology of poverty was not new or held only by the COS. Novak (1988) cites the Fabian society as also having reforming or punitive views of the poor at that time and Dean (1991, p.219), suggests that this was a common view which extended to public health and factory inspectors as well as the COS.

Each intervention from the field of philanthropy to the public health measures, would be conceived as a moralizing one, monitoring and attempting to transform the minute details of the domestic lives of the poor. If the first circle of liberal governance drew upon the workhouse to enforce wage-labour, and the older semio-technique of less-eligibility, its second turn would increasingly find the need for a network of measures which sought actively to encourage the ethic of personal responsibility and to target women as agents.

The individualising of poverty and the stigmatising of the "undeserving" poor was to find its most consistent champion however in the COS. Their attempt to transform charity from its semi-feudal connotations to an effective and efficient means of social control was not wholly successful in that its procedures of investigation and moral classification met with profound hostility within the working class. As a school of social reformers, its influence on social policy extended to the domination of the 1909 Poor Law Commission whose Distress Committees were given strict instructions of procedure to follow to test the character of applicants. According to Beveridge (1909, p.24):

The original "Record Paper" drawn up by the Local Government Board contained eighteen paragraphs including at least fifty different questions to be asked of and answered by every applicant, together with six or more paragraphs for information to be answered after subsequent inquiry...The

answers to the most important questions were directed to be verified by reference to independent sources of information.

In the words of Keir Hardie, "every line had COS stamped across its face" (cited Harris, 1972, p.174). The distress committees procedures alienated the "deserving poor" they had intended to reach. Although the COS attempted to solve unemployment and poverty through individual example and voluntary effort they were overtaken by the more direct intervention of the state (Beveridge, 1942). However Novak (1988, p.99) points out that their influence, "... established a tradition, philosophy and practice that was subsequently to form the basis for the contemporary practice of social work". In this context, some social workers' practices in the fieldwork - such as giving out cash, food parcels, food vouchers, second hand clothes, shoes and furniture, have barely changed since COS times.

### **1.9 Social work and psychiatry**

Conceptions of counselling taught in social work training have emphasised that the individual should not be stigmatised, blamed or even given directive help (Biesteck, 1957) when coming to social services, and this is a major counterstrand to the COS view of deserving and undeserving poor.

Theories of psychiatry - which increased social work's status as akin to medicine and were therefore seen as valuable - have however tended to stigmatise poor users of social services.

Together with the political and social climate of individualism...the psychiatric approach to casework gave further substance to the stigma theory which perceived poverty as a "blemish of individual character" because it gave "scientific" validation to the perception of poverty as being totally rooted in the individual to the exclusion of any possibility of environmental influences (Waxman, 1983, p.89).

There is confirmation from the fieldwork, particularly in the Carshire authority, that psychiatric theories continue to be justifications for not helping people with money problems. The need for money it is argued is merely a "presenting" problem and hides feelings of dependence on the social worker. To give clients money is to increase that dependence. As a social work student wrote in response to a question on the role of supplementary benefits in social work:

I feel basically it's the ethos of professional social work that refuses to recognize that inadequate income is the power-house of many social

problems, that social work translates into personal, cultural deficiencies (Dowling, 1986, p.23).

And as the CCETSW Curriculum Development Group on Welfare Rights stress:

Dismissal of clients' material problems and automatic reinterpretation of the "presenting" problem (about money, work, housing) in terms of a "real" problem, is paternalistic. It is contrary to the principles about respecting clients' views and rights to self-determination which social workers have come to hold important (Stewart (ed.) 1989, p.7).

However in group discussions with social work students in Sheffield, there was evidence from only one of four groups of a psychodynamic approach which appeared to stigmatise poor social service users.

### **1.10 The casework model**

To recognize poverty as a character fault rather than the fault of God, cultural and/or biological inheritance or a capitalist society, meant there was room for individual improvement. Personal reform was the primary aim of COS workers and to some extent, still is for social workers using the casework model.

By the turn of the twentieth century, while it has moved from the narrow confines of charity to a whole set of principles and techniques accompanying a social philosophy, social casework still retained many of the individualistic principles from which it was born - that is, "a set of assumptions about the nature of human society and its organisation which belonged to the nineteenth century rather than the twentieth" (Woodroffe, 1966, p.55 - cited in Waxman, 1983, p.87).

Social work was organised nationally and locally to combat poverty. It was in this area that members of COS professed expertise and from this area of work that the casework model developed. If poverty had been understood as having structural causes, then individual casework which is practised in most social work teams today, would not have been appropriate. As it was, individual counselling to reform the person who had unfortunate personality defects was thought the best way to "cure" poverty.

The organisation of social work, inherited from COS but developed by social reformers, academics, administrators and legislators does not allow a structural understanding of poverty to be followed through by working with groups of users - for example setting up self help groups such as claimants unions. In the Silverton team, two social workers had to give up their welfare rights work with older people in a local health clinic because of the demands of their casework. There was a commitment to a local "patch" way of

working in the City team - which is a step away from casework and towards community work, but this was not supported by other social work teams or given status in the authority's reorganisation policies towards specialisms. Although there are legal, statistical, and bureaucratic reasons for social work using a casework construction - this thesis argues that tradition has been and still is, the strongest influence, in maintaining a system that purports to respond to emotional and material *individual* need.

### **1.11 The objective relationship between social work and poverty.**

The post war policies which developed the welfare state (Beveridge, 1942, Cmnd. 6404) provided no explicit place for social work. Beveridge supposed that once people were provided with a minimum income through insurance, they would be prepared to care for themselves, and spend and live as they wish "free from supervision" (Harris, 1977, p.416).

Although the Seebohm Committee (Cmnd. 3703, 1968, para 2) intended the social services to be universal and comprehensive, and comparable to the health and education services, the personal social services spent only £65 per head of the population per year compared to £315 spent by the NHS. The social services departments are the newest and smallest part of the government funded welfare state. In 1988/9 total expenditure on personal social services was approximately 2.8% of total public expenditure compared to 32% for social security, 16.3% for health, and 14% for education, (cited in Biggs, 1991, p.24). Poor resourcing implies that practically social services cannot be a universal service but is in fact a financially stricken service available for those who have little power to complain. Neither do the public tend to see social services as a universal service. Only 8 per cent had discussed a problem with a social worker compared to CAB workers (12 per cent) and doctors who were top with 29 per cent (Gallup, 1981).

Minimum definitions of need and a failure to redistribute resources to the poor have contributed to poor state benefits that are not claimed as of right. There is a continuing need for social workers to support those in poverty (Becker, 1987; Fimister, 1986; Stewart and Stewart, 1986), as a result of users not being able to manage on state benefits:

...the failure of the income maintenance system, the most expensive part of the welfare state and one that is certainly in crisis, to prevent poverty at all stages of the lifecycle, particularly amongst the old and families with children, has pushed social workers into the front line of the state's response to deprivation (Baldock, 1989, p.25).



The population that social workers are concerned with are poor (Becker, 1987) and their poverty is increasing (Walker, 1987; Townsend, 1991). Women and black people are over represented in the population that is in poverty (Oppenheim, 1990) and are similarly over represented in the social service user population.

It is no coincidence that the vast majority of "heavy end" clients are poor, and that the poor areas produce higher rates of all social problems than wealthier ones. Nor is it a coincidence that black people are over - represented in the proportions of people in prisons and children in care, and under - represented among people using resources which clients see as desirable and helpful. Nor yet is it a coincidence that women provide disproportionate numbers of social workers' most needy clients - especially single parents and people with mental health problems. All these facts reflect the way in which power is held and used by better - off white males, and the advantages and disadvantages that accrue from unequal holdings of assets in British society. (Jordan, 1990, p.5).

Becker, Macpherson and Silburn (1987, 1988, 1991) maintain that nine out of ten users of social work services in Britain are claimants of social security and that nearly two thirds of all referrals to social workers are for benefit, DSS or housing problems. In 1982 one fifth of all supplementary benefit claimants were in contact with social workers, one third for benefit advice. In 1987 this was more than two million claimants and their dependants (Becker, 1987).

Stewart and Stewart (1986) found, as did this research, that requests at social services departments for financial advice were sometimes not written up on a referral form so the proportion of consumers of social work services in poverty and requiring financial help, may be even higher. Factually and by observation in any social services department waiting room, there is no doubt that the majority of people social workers deal with are poor, and in this sense there is an objective relationship between social work and poverty.

Successive governments have been keen to develop the relationship between poverty and social work. Joint DHSS and Social Services Departments liaison documents Assistance in Cash (1971), Relations with Social Services (1979), and Liaison in Practice (1980) show that the corporate DHSS were concerned to develop policy initiatives between the DHSS's "cash" role and the social services' "care" role. Government policy in all aspects of welfare spending have been concerned with: cutting costs; and more recently value for money. It is difficult to prove social work is cost effective and there appear to be increasing policy moves towards merging the "cash" roles of DSS with the "care" roles of Social Services Departments. The above publications indicate a history of not merely developing better communication and liaison between social workers and social security staff but creating a case for combining their roles and functions (Stewart and Stewart, 1986). Some of these policy initiatives are incorporated in the Social Security Act 1986,

so that social workers are expected to liaise with DSS staff to decide whether a claimant who may or may not be a social services client is deserving of a community care grant. For claimants this has meant being sent from social security offices to social services departments and back again, (Evason et al, 1989) or from these fieldwork findings being denied community care grants altogether. Alcock et al (1991, p.56) suggest that in the future, community care grants may be paid only to social service users:

In order to get the community care grants from the social fund, however, it may be that traditional social work support is likely to be more important than welfare rights advocacy. The Griffiths Report (1988) on community care suggested that administration of CGGs might even be passed over to local social services departments (SSDs) themselves. This report has now been accepted by government, and welcomed by many SSDs.

The government department responsible for the alleviation of poverty is clear that there is a relationship between social work and poverty, but is that a positive relationship for the social worker and the person with financial difficulties? If community care grants are transferred to the local authorities, they will become part of the authorities broader resources on community care and will not be independently available for the individual claimant who is not a social service user. The return to discretion rather than rights in benefits payments would thus be further enhanced. Does the social work profession accept the Government and local authority view of the relationship between social work and poverty? The Social Security Consortium, (1987, p.23) suggests not:

Local authority social work services can anticipate additional requests for assistance with mediation and advocacy, (the Social Fund's reliance on discretion will increase the distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" poor - how better to establish ones credentials as "deserving" than with the help of a social worker?).... the Government has stated that it would wish to see closer liaison between DHSS and social services departments in the assessment of need for Social Fund Payments, especially in connection with the "Community Care" element. Any such move by social services could bring them closer to an income maintenance role and would give social workers the conflicting and incompatible roles of mediator, advocate and provider and would compromise the advocacy role not only of social workers but also local authority welfare rights officers.

Thus the relationship between social work and poverty is not based merely on objective fact but is surrounded by differing ideologies on the role of the social worker in a state welfare system.

## **1.12 The subjective relationship between social workers and poor social service users**

I give most of my clients money. I give it because it is the one thing they all accept joyfully; it makes them feel valuable; it breaks down, if only for a moment, their sense of isolation. It makes them believe that I may solve their problems, it buys their co-operation and their friendship which invariably they would not sell for any other price. It shows my concern in the only way they understand. I give money with all the difficulties and dangers of dependence it can produce because I feel I have precious little choice within the context of the situations my clients offer me (Parkinson, 1970, p.131).

As a probation officer, Geoffrey Parkinson feels that relief of poverty is usually what his clients want, even if it is just enough for some cigarettes or a drink. He pours scorn on those psychoanalytic theories that have no reality for the client. "Clients tried to talk about the gas bill, workers tried to talk about the client's mother. Perceptive clients got the gas bill paid by talking about mother," (1970, p.132). Parkinson accepts the relationship between poverty and social work in practice in terms that most social workers would not wish to do. He admits that giving money, although positive for the user, is also a way of gaining friendship and hence control over the individual concerned. Probation officers may be trained to expect social control to be part of their job, while for social workers, it is a covert unspoken about part of the work.

Fimister (1986) suggests social workers give practical help as a way of alleviating their role as social control agents and that this is what social service users want. However users have also seen social workers as an emotional support, while not always understanding their methods of counselling (Timms, 1977, p.70). Not all social workers feel that users of the service should get what they want. In McKay's study (1973), the majority of social workers thought that clients expected most of all to be able to discuss personal problems and to receive advice and sympathy, whereas less than 10% of users expected that kind of help. Noel and Rita Timms (1977, p.70) comment, "This kind of finding says nothing of course, about what help clients should receive." The "insights" of psychodynamic theory can make social workers feel morally superior. The "client" is marked out as being in need of treatment yet put in a relationship which fails to remove her problem. This conveys the message that there is something wrong with the person's character, motivation, child-rearing practices and so on. Stewart and Stewart (1986, p.34) note in a discussion on research based on interviews with social workers in eight social services departments from 1975 to 1977:

Willingness to engage with clients' material problems was said to be "dependent very much on individual ideologies.....importantly influenced by political views about the welfare state and the role of social work within it" (Stevenson and Parsloe, 1978, p.248,262). These conclusions

were not tested against the social workers' practice in dealing with individual cases. If they are true, it seems rather unjust that a client's prospects of getting effective help with a financial or any other sort of problem should depend on whether her social worker believes that social work should be concerned with remedying social inequality.

If social workers were at one time concerned "chiefly with the relief of poverty" and at another with "posing as miniature psychoanalysts" (Wooton, 1967, p.268 and 269), perhaps there was at least some degree of uniformity to their practice. What these and other research findings (Wilson, 1989; Hill, 1990; Stewart and Stewart, 1986) in the area of poverty, social work and welfare rights suggest is that contemporary social workers vary markedly in their practice and that this is affected by their views on the "real" nature of social work. If social workers see poverty and welfare rights as a peripheral rather than essential part of the social work task, they can feel negative about their practice in this area of work. It has been suggested that social workers feel valuable when they give emotional support whereas with the limited financial advice they are able to give, the sense of a satisfactory job well done is missing. As "professionals", they may be expecting personal or environmental change as a result of their intervention whereas advising on welfare rights or organising or giving cash may not result in any change in the individual or her environment. Some social workers in the fieldwork commented that they did not want to allocate or to ration, that this was the role of social security, that they were powerless in relation to poverty and found financial issues frustrating and time consuming. They appeared to feel that giving or withholding money was more socially controlling than other areas of their work, and was demeaning for social service users. However, advising/representing users on welfare rights issues could be seen as more empowering for the individual and less controlling for the social worker. Cohen and Tarpey (1982, p.14) suggest social workers do not give sufficient help with welfare rights, because they have insufficient information and do not spend enough time on such cases.

Social workers' frustrations in dealing with welfare rights could be reduced if they were given adequate welfare rights training and information. Without this training their main experience of welfare rights is its most infuriating aspect, endless telephone calls, chasing up lost or late DHSS payments, or sorting out other problems caused by DHSS maladministration. They often do not have the knowledge to go beyond the immediate problem of the lost giro and, for example, to check someone's benefit in detail to ensure that they are getting everything they can. This kind of welfare rights work provides much more job satisfaction, for example working out that DHSS owes someone arrears of benefit and helping them claim it or encouraging someone through a successful attendance allowance claim. If social workers were more often involved with the more detailed kind of welfare rights work they would find it more satisfying and feel they were achieving more concrete results.

Whatever the reason for social workers' antipathy to dealing with money issues, it appears to be an area that users of social work services regard as particularly important.

**Mrs X:** Even the Social Services have messed me about. One social worker ....said "I've been in touch with the electricity, if they don't get £250 by Wednesday, they'll cut you off and the council will have to take your kids away." I said "What about the baby I'm carrying?" She said "we'll have to take the baby when it's born." At Christmas time...I had a big tree, she said, "What have you got a tree for when you owe all that money?" She said, "Don't let me come in here and see these kids have got any toys for Xmas, a tin with marbles in it is good enough".....It's easy to tell someone what to do. But no-one tells me what to do with my life, unless they're offering to make my life better." (Harrison, 1983, p.250).

Harrison's interviews were all conducted in Hackney, London, between May 1981- July 1982. He interviewed more than 500 individuals from five minutes to five hours, and observed many more. As he comments:

There is no shortage of surveys and academic studies of the field covered here. This book tries rather to convey the human side of the situation, the private consequences of public policies and institutions (Harrison, 1983, p.11).

Certainly social service users such as Mrs X are likely to feel there is a subjective relationship between herself and the social worker based on power and inequality of resources. She does not as in the Parkinson quote see such help as "friendly".

Baldock (1989, p.30) suggests that as there are still many structural differences between income maintenance provision and social service provision and because social workers do not on the whole, wish to be involved in the financial affairs of poor users, there is a limited objective relationship and an unwilling subjective relationship between social work and poverty.

They work for local government and play no part at all in the provision of cash assistance, which is a central government responsibility. The only substantial form of material support that a local authority social worker can offer is a place in a residential home. They cannot supply money, except under one very limiting statute concerning children, and they have no control over access to public housing. The separation of the money - giving function from the provision of social work help is a fundamental and distinctive feature of the modern British welfare state. It is also a feature that social workers wish to protect. Most prefer not to be involved in decisions by social security officials as to whether the poor should receive money and how much.

Do social workers give practical or emotional help rather than be involved with cash help, because they doubt the inherent goodness of the poor to spend money wisely ? Or because giving money from one individual to another is more demeaning than receiving

it from the state? Is dealing with money somehow distasteful to social workers who would rather be putting into practice their skills in counselling, childcare and other specialisms? Is poverty seen as a structural phenomena outside the remit of social work? Do social workers want to move away from the "Lady Bountiful" image of the COS?

Becker's (1987) study of 450 field social workers' attitudes to poverty and Chapter Six of this thesis, would suggest that the answers to all these questions is yes in varying degrees.

Few (social workers) have insight into how their attitudes affect the help that is given and, ultimately, the help that is requested by poor people - the main users of social work services...they "define - out" approaches that whilst consistent with their positive attitudes generally, are seen as incompatible with their status as state employed workers.....There appears to be no such thing as a social worker's "attitude" to poverty: rather social workers have a matrix of opinions, beliefs and values about a number of poverty related issues, varying from the general to the specific, the real to the abstract and so on. (Becker, 1987, p.500).

Social workers have an uneasy relationship with poverty. While recognizing structural inequality, they often feel powerless to help, constrained by the state or voluntary organization they work for, and unsure whether giving money or advice on benefits is really their job. The majority emphasise "casework for individual change" (Becker, 1987, p.476).

I see a social work role as really a kind of counselling role, having identified particular problems that we feel it's appropriate for us to get involved in. I accept that poverty might be a contributing factor to some people's problems . I would argue that it is not the root cause, the bottom line (senior social worker, late 30's).

The bread and butter is casework, relationships and so on....I think we would have a lot fewer clients, though, if we weren't dealing with the benefit bit (social worker, early 30's).

Similar comments were made in the taped group discussion with the Silverton team rather than the City team. Social workers' observed actions were often uneasy too in that they were not always sure of their role in relation to financial difficulties, as compared to other areas of their work where they were more confident.

There is undoubtedly a subjective relationship between social workers and poor social service users - social workers interact on a daily basis with social service users with financial difficulties (Becker, 1987). However, the meaning of those interactions are interpreted differently by social workers and social service users. Social workers are often unwilling participants in dealing with financial issues (Wilson, 1989; Baldock, 1989; Becker, 1987; Hill and Laing, 1979) whereas social service users see practical aid

and financial help as extremely important (Mayer and Timms, 1970; Lishman, 1978; Brewer and Lait, 1980).

### **1.13 The relationship between social work education, poverty and welfare rights**

Rather the politics of the social work recruit mixes together humanism, pluralism, Christianity, the Fabian tradition of social reform, and snatches of Marx in a sort of political "soup"; his ambitions fly between a revolutionary utopia and a careful case - by - case appraisal of distress. Fundamentally he wants desperately to "do good". (Pearson, 1973, p.31).

A major problem for the social work student in defining her attitudes to poverty is that the concepts of poverty and social work are equally problematic. A narrow and over-professionalized view of social work hides the fact that no one definition is likely to achieve consensus.

Smith and Harris (1979) suggest social workers use one of three ideologies about the cause of social need: material, psychodynamic, or moral which are reinforced or not depending on the institution in which they work. They suggest the psychodynamic ideology is that which many social workers derive from their professional training, and the material ideology as in line with a "common sense" view of need and supported by some of the demands of the clients. Both psychodynamic and material ideologies lead to problems in the management of a social work department because of the way in which they constantly generate perceptions of scarce resources. A moral ideology provides mechanisms for the resolution of such tensions.

Social work students as discussed in Chapters Four and Five did not uniformly have a psychodynamic ideology. They were far more likely to have a material ideology. Only one group of students at the university tended to see poverty as personal deficiencies in the individuals they had worked with. The fieldwork with social workers however would back up to some extent the idea that a moral ideology resolved the tensions created by scarce resources. In both teams "letting off steam" about a social service user or users, - labelling them as "scroungers" or "con artists" would sometimes be linked to a period of pressure from poor users which the social worker found impossible to deal with because of limited time and resources.

If one assumes that ideology can be defined as a set of ideas about in this case poverty and social work, there was no indication from students on placement in the teams observed or a newly appointed social worker who had just finished her training, that their

ideas were about to change as they were socialised into the work setting. It seems likely that other factors are also involved such as: family background, class, race and gender.

Alternatively as Pearson (1973) suggests, social work students, educators and practitioners may construct their own individual moral world, which varies from time to time and place to place. Previous knowledge and experience of poverty will affect students' attitudes and individual learning processes. Becker's (1987) analysis of 451 questionnaires completed by practising social workers found that four fifths came from backgrounds where financial problems were not a characteristic of everyday life. This sample included qualified and unqualified social workers, so it is probable that for social work students who have the motivation and/or resources to train, the proportion experiencing childhood poverty may be lower.

Stevenson and Parsloe (1978, p.97) suggest that the attitudes students internalize in college are more important than their background, and what they learn varies significantly from course to course.

It seems that in almost in every case considered, the most marked variations in scores were those between courses. The other factors, age, sex, qualifications, and experience rarely affected the scores to any degree.

Different educational institutions will have differing educational ideologies in relation to social work training. These ideologies will affect the students perceived knowledge, understanding and attitudes to the role of poverty in social work. However in this qualitative and quantitative study, the four group discussions and the pilot study survey suggested there were as many variations within the groups as between them.

A knowledge of welfare rights as a practical outcome of teaching an understanding of poverty has only recently been included in those subject areas regarded by C.C.E.T.S.W. as requiring to be taught on social work courses. Barclay (1982) was unclear about how much understanding of poverty and its practical outcomes would be inevitable in a "social care network" typology of social work. McGrail (1983, p.7) notes that welfare rights teaching:

...is a late comer obliged to jostle for space amongst older established subject areas such as psychology and social work theory... is concerned with a field which changes rapidly, leading to certain difficulties in the way in which it is presented... and may also be relatively expensive teaching to mount as well if it is going to be taught by outside specialists rather than by internal staff.



His survey of welfare rights teaching on social work courses suggested that the ideology of some social work teachers and institutions was predominantly psychodynamic, such that one social work tutor's response was, "We really shouldn't be teaching this sort of thing" (McGrail, 1983, p.1). One hundred and forty ex-students on Davies' (1984) survey ranked welfare rights as the fourth most important task in practice and bottom of six tasks for which they had been adequately prepared in training. Sixty two per cent of thirty nine students on my pilot study (1986) made negative comments about the teaching of supplementary benefits on social work courses. Nevertheless teaching an understanding of poverty does not necessarily mean that students would be able to advise social service users on welfare rights, and teaching welfare rights without an awareness of how poverty affects social service users may be equally unsatisfactory for social work practice.

Poverty and welfare rights are only mentioned in the original CCETSW document briefly in relation to income maintenance.

Minimum expectations of a social worker at the point of qualification include a knowledge of the overall social services, including health, housing, income maintenance, legal, penal and education services and how they relate to each other in service to clients (C.C.E.T.S.W. Paper 20.7, 1987).

However, in 1989 Rachel Pierce, the Assistant Director of CCETSW, Education and Training noted in the forward to the Curriculum Development Group's Report:

However teaching is defined, knowledge and skills should be assessed in practice. CCETSW's new award, the Diploma in Social Work, emphasises demonstrable outcome through assessment. To achieve this, courses will have to incorporate a welfare rights element into placements (Welfare Rights in Social Work Education, CCETSW paper 28.1, 1989, p.4).

Social work students' conceptions of the place of poverty and welfare rights in social work is influenced by: personal background; the ideologies of tutors; social work placements and social work professional organizations; and the knowledge that definitions of social work are many and varied. It may be, taking these influences into account, that the students' choice of work and working practices will be, as Smith and Harris (1979) point out, the result of a subjective moral choice.

Wasserman's (1970) research showed how social work students in the first twelve months of their professional lives soon learnt to adapt to their environment - whatever their previous attitudes and ideologies. Further research would be needed to establish whether attitudes and actions in relation to poverty altered as the student social worker role is replaced by the role of experienced social worker. Certainly attitudes of social work

students in Chapters Four and Five are markedly different from those of social workers in Chapter Six - despite the research area for both students and social workers being within a thirty mile radius - so one would expect students to be employed by one of the two authorities in which the fieldwork was conducted.

The question of what social work students need to learn and experience in terms of attitudes, knowledge and skills relevant to poverty as part of the role and tasks of a social worker, is important and cannot be ignored. There would be no point in organising, resourcing and teaching concepts on social work courses if they were of no influence in comparison to practical experience. What is essential is that such teaching and learning has meaning, relevance and positive practical outcomes for those training to become social workers (see Chapters Four and Five).

#### **1.14 The relationship between the income maintenance system and the functions of social services departments**

The abolition of the Poor Law, while leaving some income related problems with local authorities, freed the embryonic social work profession from responsibilities for income maintenance administration. This was not the case in other countries as noted earlier by Baldock (1989). The separation of "cash" from "care" duties did however involve difficulties for social service departments (SSDs). They were concerned with help for families but had to distinguish between material and non-material problems when there was no clear dividing line between them. The same issue presented itself to social security officers who were charged with only meeting material needs. Stevenson (1973, p.29-30) describes this dilemma in terms of "the interaction of the different aspects of human need - material, social and psychological." She continues:

Social work is, by definition, concerned with these interactions and this concern gives it its distinctive character. To concentrate on any one to the exclusion of any other is to do violence to the person in need and collude with those processes of fragmentation that are increasingly recognized as constituting a serious problem in complex urban societies.

In the 1950's and 60's social work in what were then the Children's Departments increasingly focussed on preventative work designed to support children in their own homes. Social workers became more and more dissatisfied that they could not make cash payments themselves.

They experienced the frustration of recognizing many family situations where cash or help in kind would greatly assist their preventive and rehabilitative efforts, yet there were no funds available for them to use. Some one-parent families would manage more comfortably if money could be given to them to make good day-care arrangements for their

children while they worked. . . . There was no sanction for such direct help to families under the Children's Act so departments had to exercise their ingenuity by indirect means. They could act as persuasive go-between to the National Assistance Board for families where the parent was not in work (Packman 1975: 60-1).

In 1963 the Children and Young Persons Act was passed which altered this situation (slightly different later legislation had a similar impact in Scotland) by enabling local authorities to provide "advice, guidance and assistance" to promote the welfare of children by diminishing the need to put them in care. The assistance could be "in kind, or in exceptional circumstances, in cash". When the Children's Department were integrated into the more comprehensive social services departments in 1970 they took this power with them. Subsequent Children's Acts of 1980 and 1989 carried the power forward in the legislation.

Although these money giving powers were intended to give help where central government was explicitly unable to provide benefits, a number of research studies (Hill and Laing, 1979; Lister and Emmett, 1976; Valencia and Jackson, 1979; Stewart and Stewart, 1986) have indicated that these powers have taken some of the pressure off the central means-tested scheme by making payments in situations in which the DSS could have been considered responsible. Furthermore the 1986 Social Security Act has created a much more rigid Income Support system so that responses to exceptional and emergency situations are generally in the form of a loan through the cash limited Social Fund. This puts extra pressure on the small Section 18 (formerly Section 1) budgets provided by social services departments who do not want to find that budgets have to grow rapidly to meet needs the DSS is now unprepared to meet (Jones, 1989).

The position of social service departments is further complicated by assumptions made by the DSS (and embodied in the Social Fund guidelines for their staff) that social workers will cooperate in the assessment of need for Social Fund help, particularly in sorting out cases where community care grants will help people to leave, or remain out of, institutional care. Initially the local authority associations, the main social workers' organisation (BASW) and the principal local government trade union (NALGO) all refused to accept the role the DSS had identified for social services departments. A complicated policy of "determined advocacy" was adopted which involved agreeing to help clients fight the Social Fund for the best possible deal (Community Care Grants being the ideal) whilst not cooperating with the Social Fund to vet claims, sort out budgeting problems or weed out "undeserving" claimants. Some social services departments such as one out of the two departments studied in the fieldwork, adopted a policy of "non-cooperation" to show their antipathy to being involved in the income

maintenance functions of the DSS at all (see Silverton team in Chapter Two). However as Hill (1990, p.133) notes:

The official non-cooperation stance does offer a way to deal with the new situation, but it also provides an encouragement to the view that social workers must treat the material circumstances of their clients as something they can do nothing about. While some would call that getting back to 'real social work', others would view it as the ultimate encouragement to 'cop out' and disregard poverty's causal role in other social problems.

Within social services departments and providing an acknowledgement that clients' problems are complicated and exacerbated by poverty has developed a group of workers dealing with welfare rights. They are often social workers who have wanted to concentrate on the financial problems of social service users which other social workers have felt "gets in the way of real social work" (Hill and Laing, 1979; Wilson, 1988). The first welfare rights worker to be formally appointed within the state system was employed by Manchester social services department in 1972 (Alcock et al 1991b). The appointment marked the beginning of an alternative advocacy approach by social services to the problems caused by their clients' poverty and was championed as a weapon in the new armoury of the 1970's "radical" social worker (Cannan, 1975).

According to the study of welfare rights workers carried out by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) in 1986, more than two-thirds of current welfare rights posts did not exist in 1981 (Berthoud et al 1986). Not all were a development from social services work, in fact Alcock et al (1991b) and Stewart (1989) describe welfare rights work as an expansion of the neighbourhood-based work of the Community Development Projects (CDP) initially in the US and later in Britain in the 60's and early 70's. Local welfare rights officers often provided an alternative less stigmatising source of support for social service users with financial problems than the social worker at the duty desk. They have however been criticized firstly for adopting the same kind of individual casework-based approach for which mainstream social work had been criticized, and secondly for in general developing outside of social work teams and away from social services departments (Alcock et al, 1991).

In the two social services departments studied, welfare rights services did not appear well integrated into the social work task. Welfare rights officers seemed to have limited day to day contact with social workers in Silverton and City teams. There also appeared to have been little discussion and consensus between these two groups of workers as to their policies regarding social security changes such as the Social Fund (see Chapter Two).

Alcock et al (1991b, p.320) suggest that given the growth of welfare rights workers and the new limitations on their more radical welfare rights work because of the changes in

social security legislation, welfare rights workers within social services departments may be pressured to move back towards helping individuals to cope with financial problems - a stance many welfare rights workers were previously critical of social work for adopting.

If, as seems likely, Community Care Grants are transferred from the DSS to the local authorities, these will become merely part of authorities broader resources of community care, rather than an independent source of resources for claimants; and rights are likely to play little part in their distribution. This will leave benefit claimants with their basic weekly benefit, plus (or rather minus) any loans which they have received from the social fund. As we have already suggested, it is debt, rather than rights, which is likely to loom largest amongst these claimants' problems; and, as there will be no way in which their resources can be increased, then advice workers will have to get involved in counselling them on how to survive on what they have got. Debt counselling is likely to become an increasingly important focus for advice work, although for some welfare rights workers it may be experienced rather like a case of back to the future.

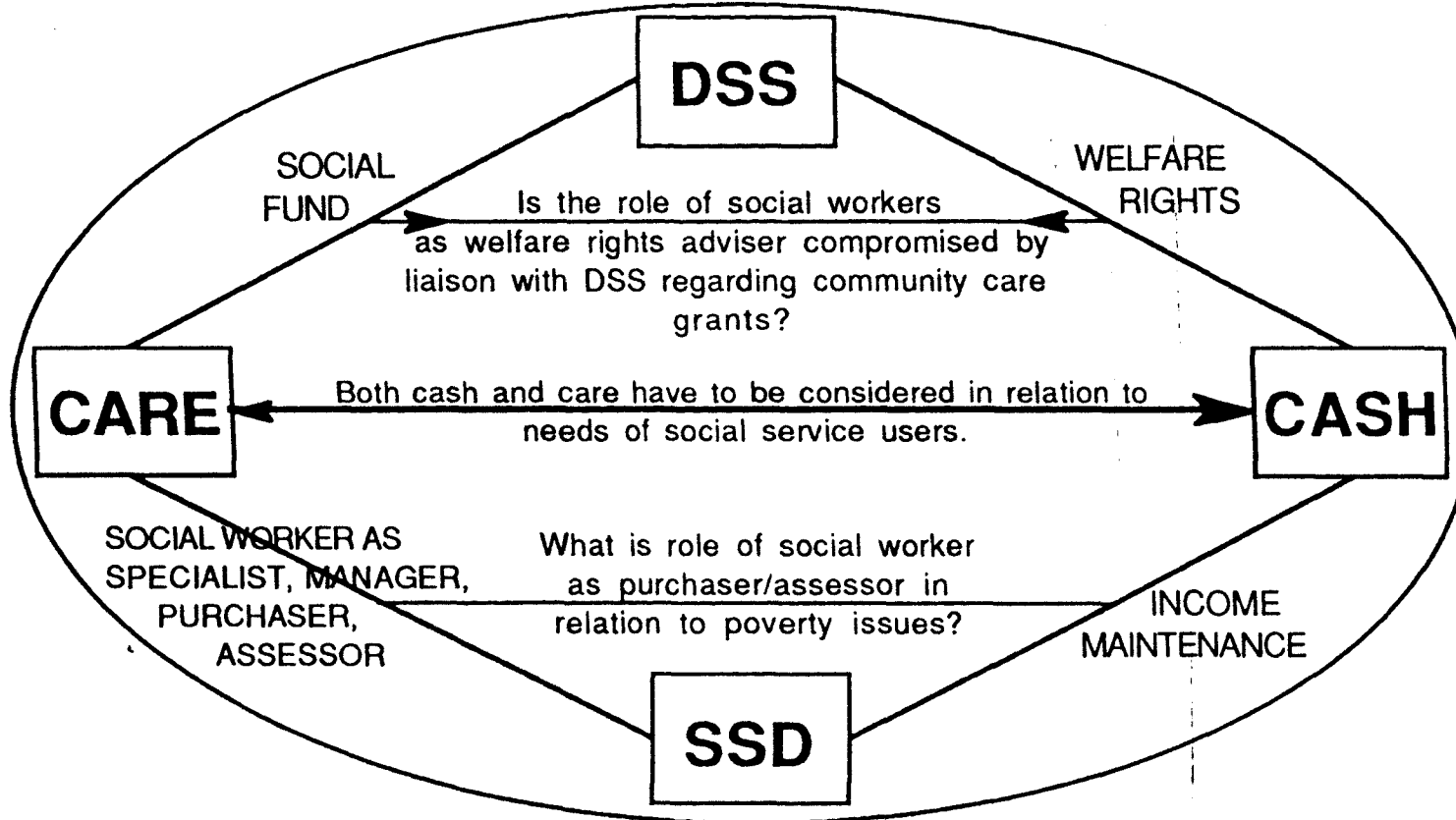
There have been three major changes in the relationship between SSDs and the DSS in recent years. The first concerns the relationship between the statutory social worker and the local social security office. As social security policies have eliminated what claimants used to be able to claim from the DSS as of right, many claimants are now approaching social services for income maintenance under section 18 of the Childrens Act (1989). Secondly welfare rights workers also employed within social services departments are less likely with the more rigid social security system to be able to encourage benefit take up campaigns as they did with the now defunct DSS single payments for clothing and essential items such as a cooker or washing machine. This may mean they have to move back towards counselling social service users with financial problems and therefore become more integrated members of social work teams. Thirdly and probably most importantly social services departments are expected to cooperate in exercising discretion about which social security claimants receive additional payments from the DSS. Social workers are not yet expected to decide how much claimants will receive from the Social Fund and for how long but if community care grants monies are transferred to local authorities, there are implications for an even closer relationship between social work and the DSS's role of income maintenance.

Diagram One shows how the cash and care roles of SSD and DSS may interact in the 1990's. Influences in the wider environment which will affect these interactions include: further restructuring of welfare; increasing poverty and unemployment (Oppenheim, 1993) and no minimum income level (Leaper, 1988); and that the majority of social service users will continue to be poor (Becker and MacPherson, 1988).

Langan (1993) points out that the Childrens Act (1989) favours statutory work and increasing control over users rather than preventive work with them. This is in contrast to

# THE SOCIAL WORK TASK IN THE 1990's - CASH AND/OR CARE?

## DIAGRAM ONE



## THE WIDER ENVIRONMENT

the Social Security Act (1986) where statutory entitlement to some benefits has been replaced by discretion and the involvement of social workers with community care grants. Community care was originally understood as a preventative concept that reduced the likelihood of institutional care. Child care legislation is thus expecting more of social workers in terms of punitive control while social security legislation and community care legislation are expecting social workers to become more involved in the organisation and finances of preventive care.

The functions of Social Services Departments are not solely concerned with material aid. However in discussing the relationship between the income maintenance system (DSS) and the functions of social services (SSD), what has been considered is where and in what ways the two departments' responsibilities were originally separated (Hill, 1990), but have increasingly overlapped (Stewart and Stewart, 1986), and how "cash" functions of DSS may be combined with the "care" functions of SSD in the future (Alcock et al, 1991b; Leaper, 1988; Fimister, 1988). Comparative examples from other countries suggest that the cash and care roles of social workers are more integrated (Leaper, 1988; Hasenfield and Hoefler, 1989; Brauns and Kramer, 1989).

### **1.15 Social workers as providers of income maintenance and/or advocates/advisers on income maintenance matters**

There has been a continuing debate within and outside social work as to how social workers should aid those with financial difficulties (Wilson, 1988; Stewart and Stewart, 1986). Although such discussion is part of a larger debate on the place of "cash" and "care" help within social work (see Table One) it is worth considering the arguments surrounding welfare rights and income maintenance in more depth (see Table Two).

The radical social worker theorists of the 70's (Bailey and Brake, 1975) were against the idea of social workers giving social service users money, food or clothing because despite the legislation that allowed them to do so to prevent children coming into care, cash was often given instead of helping the client to claim their full entitlement from DHSS. Giving Section 1 money was seen as a short term measure which often did not help the family or individual in the long term but tided them over a temporary crisis. Conducting basic benefits checks and tackling the DHSS on overdue/underpayment of benefits was thought a preferable way of helping those with benefits problems, in that in the latter case anyway, there was the likelihood of a more long term effect for the user. Encouraging the user to negotiate for a successful benefits claim was also seen as a positive outcome. Dealing with users' benefits entitlements was a "rights" approach and thus a way out of

having to decide who was "deserving" and who was "undeserving" which maybe necessary with a strictly rationed cash approach. Radical social workers tended to prefer fighting another part of the state apparatus which had specific rules and regulations - 'in and against the state' - rather than deciding themselves on money matters where there were no rules and regulations (Langan, 1989). The element of social control which is apparent in having the power to hand out money was seen as demeaning and stigmatising for the user and uncomfortable for the social worker.

Income maintenance through social services has been termed, social workers as "providers" (Stewart and Stewart, 1986) or as "adaptors" (Pearson, 1975), while advising/advocating on welfare rights has been termed, social workers as "advisers" (Stewart and Stewart, 1986) or "fighters" (Pearson, 1975). The two ways of helping users with financial difficulties were often opposed in an "either" "or" situation. Income maintenance was seen as short term, haphazard, idiosyncratic and subjective whereas advising/advocating on welfare rights was objective, empowering, principled and long term (see Table Two).

However in the present economic and political climate (see Chapter 2) it is doubtful whether the clear distinction between the two types of material help can be maintained. The 1986 Social Security Act has left less room for manoeuvring on benefit rules, and what were extra entitlements such as single payments which social workers but mainly welfare rights workers have helped users apply for, have been replaced by the Social Fund. Social workers are expected to cooperate with the DSS in deciding who is "deserving" of a grant rather than a loan. Advising/advocating on welfare rights for social service users appears to be compromised by social worker's role in relation to DSS. At the same time continuing high unemployment and increases in poverty amongst the unemployed, one parent families, disabled and older people (Oppenheim, 1993) have meant more and more individuals are turning to social services for financial help. There is often nowhere for social workers to go for financial aid apart from Section 18 monies or charities. A sign of the times is that in 1988 DSS officers themselves were issued with the Charities Digest (Alcock et al, 1991b). Furthermore many client studies have shown that social service users appreciate the material and practical aid that social workers are able to give (Hannan, 1988) even if it is short term and crisis orientated. It may mean more in users' terms than endless negotiation with DSS for little reward. Leaper (1988) discusses how French and Belgian social security /social work organisations are combined and that Britain is abnormal rather than the norm in Europe, although Ireland has an apparently more chaotic system.

In both these countries (France and Belgium) we see a close integration of cash and social care, contrary to the stance adopted in Britain of keeping the two quite separate. But the framework of the French and Belgian



TABLE ONE

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST DEALING WITH POVERTY BEING PART OF THE SOCIAL WORK TASK

FOR	AGAINST
<p>1. Establishes rapport between social worker and user because users see material aid as important. (Harrison, 1973; Parkinson, 1977; Timms, 1977; Hannam, 1988).</p>	<p>1. Social workers cannot respond on an individual casework basis to the structural problems of poverty. (Meyer, 1970; Rein, 1970; Butrym, 1976; Pinker, 1979; Pearson, 1989).</p>
<p>2. Recent studies have clarified the link between mental and physical health and poverty (Whitehead, 1986), and therefore dealing with users' financial problems can be preventative in terms of further casework or community care (Hannam, 1988).</p>	<p>2. For the link between cash and care to be effective, there must be a commonly accepted minimum income for all, subject to clear and simple conditions of entitlement (Leaper, 1988). To establish a basic income entitlement is beyond the remit of social workers.</p>
<p>3. It is not possible to separate out completely emotional from material need (Stevenson, 1973; Leaper, 1988).</p>	<p>3. Social workers cannot be expected to respond to users' increasing financial need when the government, chief officers and team managers expect social workers to cope with increasing statutory work (Hannam, 1988; Langan, 1993). "Too much is generally expected of social workers" (Barclay, 1982) - are they "Jill of all trades, mistresses of none?" (Wilson, 1988).</p>
<p>4. People are forced to social services because of material need and practical problems, social workers should therefore build up and mobilise a practical expertise (Donnison, 1955; Wooton, 1967; Sinfield, 1969).</p>	<p>4. Social workers are not encouraged to deal with issues of poverty and welfare rights in their training (Stewart, 1989; McGrail, 1983) nor are they encouraged by their managers and teamleaders to update their knowledge when in practice (Wilson, 1988).</p>

**TABLE TWO ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST "CASH" ROLE BEING PART OF THE SOCIAL WORK TASK**

DIRECT CASH PAYMENTS - S18 1989 Children's Act (INCOME MAINTENANCE)		ADVICE/ADVOCACY ON INCOME MAINTENANCE (WELFARE RIGHTS)	
FOR	AGAINST	FOR	AGAINST
<p>1. Use of social workers' professional judgement necessary due to restriction of social security budget (i.e.. "better than nothing" for claimants/clients) (Fimister, 1988)</p> <p>2. Community Care grants from the Social Fund may be transferred to local authorities from DSS (Leaper, 1988; Alcock, 1991). Social workers need to work out an entitlement system/rule book that is fair for social service users and supports individual social workers (Fimister, 1988).</p> <p>3. Crises help mainly available as a loan from DSS (Fimister, 1988).</p> <p>4. Response to clients' material needs which they see as important - consumer led response (Beresford and Croft, 1991).</p> <p>5. Social work is necessarily selective. When the scale rate and operation of the benefits system are clearly not adequate, it seems unreasonable for social workers to withhold extra payments if they are able to give them (Stewart and Stewart, 1986).</p>	<p>1. Subjective and stigmatising way of maintaining users' income - back to COS origins of social work - moralistic socially controlling decisions on who is "deserving" of cash payments and who is not.</p> <p>2. Dependent on individual social worker or team leader's view of material need - idiosyncratic.</p> <p>3. Haphazard - dependent on priorities of differing social services' budgets and local authority resources.</p> <p>4. Short term relief of poverty.</p> <p>5. Encourages claimants who are not clients to become involved with SSD.</p>	<p>1. Welfare rights based on DSS entitlement and citizens rights, (Hannam, 1988; Stewart, 1989) - social worker in a purely advisory role.</p> <p>2. Long term benefit for user if entitlement can be challenged or is calculated incorrectly (Hannam, 1988).</p> <p>3. Where social worker skilled and knowledgeable in welfare rights, can be satisfying part of work.</p> <p>4. Social services useful base for welfare rights provision because departments are in touch with at least one-fifth of all supplementary benefit claimants through provision of services such as Home Help, day nurseries, registration of people with a handicap for Car Badges, Aids and Adaptions or additional Housing Benefit (Becker and MacPherson, 1986, cited in Hannam, 1988).</p> <p>5. Even the most progressive local authorities are unlikely to employ more than one Welfare rights officer for every 50 social services fieldworks (Hannam, 1988).</p>	<p>1. Officially the job of DSS or welfare rights workers within the SSD.</p> <p>2. When DSS benefits are restricted, little in terms of advocacy can be achieved, (Alcock, 1991; Fimister, 1988) apart from basic benefits check.</p> <p>3. Social workers have variable content in their CQSW/DipSW courses on poverty awareness and welfare rights and very little in service training (Stewart, 1989), therefore no confidence to practice welfare rights.</p> <p>4. Welfare rights is not part of the counselling casework tradition or the new style professional social worker as a manager/purchaser of care (Clarke, 1993; Munday, 1989).</p> <p>5. Welfare rights time consuming and needs expert knowledge. Social workers may advise incorrectly therefore creating more work for welfare rights advisers and inconvenience and loss of money for social service user (Fimister, 1988).</p>

operations are markedly different from Britain: higher social security contributions, higher replacement income generally speaking, a national minimum for all who can prove lack of income from other sources, greater family responsibility for maintenance, greater local discretion over income-related benefits, and the employment of social workers by a wide variety of agencies instead of having only two agencies as in Britain with the virtual monopoly of social work and related services (Leaper 1988 p.91).

Leaper (1988) also argues that dealing with money is no more a form of social control than taking children into care and although this may be for the protection of the child - so would giving money be for the protection of the family.

The issue of whether to give welfare rights advice or cash is no longer the issue it was. Many studies (Hill, 1990; Wilson, 1988; Evason, 1989) however still show that social workers are not motivated to do welfare rights work. They resent the bureaucratic time it takes, the dealing with figures, and in the present policy climate that they are unlikely to achieve the positive results they might have achieved in the past. However Hannam (1988), Fimister (1988) still regard basic benefit checks as an important part of the everyday work of a social worker which is neglected in practice and training. As Hannam (1988, p.311) notes:

Services designed exclusively for the poor are usually poor services; the error rate in high-street bank accounts is relatively low whereas approximately half of all supplementary benefit claimants are not receiving their correct weekly entitlement and three-quarters of claimants are not receiving their full entitlement (Berthoud, 1984). Claimants and clients have a clear need for independent advice and assistance in fighting their way through the jungle of potential welfare benefit entitlements. There are currently over 1,000 different combinations of welfare benefits available to different claimants.

However if Alcock et al (1991b) can propose three different ways forward for welfare rights workers in relation to poverty and welfare rights, what are the ways forward for social workers?

There no longer seems a principled stand that social workers can take on either welfare rights (preferable for radical social workers) or income maintenance. Social workers are expected to do both in a policy climate that has involved the restructuring of welfare, particularly social security (Hill, 1990), and where social workers are expected to be part of the income maintenance system in relation to community care grants. Their position on welfare rights may become compromised as they can no longer be independent experts outside the DSS system - 'in and against the state'. If local authorities do take on responsibilities for community care grants, social workers will have a more concrete role

in relation to income maintenance with a policy position of "determined advocacy" or "non cooperation" becoming unlikely.

Bearing in mind these wider social policy influences, it cannot be said that social workers have adequate motivation, knowledge or skill to deal with issues of poverty, welfare rights and income maintenance (Hannan, 1988; Hill, 1990; Wilson, 1988). Alcock et al (1991b) ask the question, "Which way for welfare rights?" and this is also a question that needs to be asked of social work in relation to poverty issues. How will the new privatised agendas for community care for example affect working with poor social service users?

### **1.16 The Future Relationship between Social Work and Poverty**

Policy developments in the 1980's and 90's have changed the idea of social workers reforming or supervising individuals. The new view is of social workers catering to the needs of consumers, organising an army of volunteers and private contractors of care. Social workers will become managers of care, rather than professionals with expertise in psychology and psychiatry.

The real significance of privatisation is the challenge it offers to traditional management and professional practices in the state welfare system.....In both the health and social services after 1983, after Griffiths and the setting up of the Audit Commission, the emphasis was on objectives. New systems of management may fail to be implemented in a coherent manner yet they carry important signals to all staff and especially to those seeking to gain access to controlling positions (Kelly, 1991, p.132 & 135).

The pluralist approach to social services with its emphasis on: internal markets; rationing resources by effectiveness criteria; "performance" indicators; purchasing, planning and quality control; and providing only essential services that cannot be contracted out; does not appear to offer much in terms of dealing with the growing problem of poverty.

The one positive possibility is that social workers and their managers will be encouraged to view users as consumers and therefore take users' opinions of the social services offered to them more seriously (Lloyd, 1990; Collins, 1990). Kelly (1991, p.139) suggests that if under the new model, the purchasing and provision of welfare are separate, those responsible for meeting need will be able to make clearer choices, while the following scenario - which was evident in the fieldwork - can be avoided.

Welfare managers have responsibilities for the professional staff they manage and the local population whose needs they are required to meet (Liddell, 1989, p.58). A consequence of this is that those who control and

manage services are thus faced with conflicting loyalties/ expectations and may resolve these by allying themselves with the providers against the state's interest in reducing expenditure and against the consumer's demand for more and better services.

Caring for People (DOH, 1989) may restructure social services, but it will not solve the problems of poverty and inequality. In fact if it is a smoke-screen for spending less on social services, or for redistributing resources from users to managers and management training (Kelly, 1991), social service users may find they have even less help with financial problems.

### **1.17 Summary and conclusions**

The agency processes by which clients are evaluated in moral terms and subsequently condemned to inferior treatment must be eradicated. Only when such persons are protected against poverty discrimination (just as black people need protection against racial discrimination) can the tendency of social services to promote social deprivation be said to be in check (Holman, 1973, p.31).

If social workers are not to contribute to the deepening inequalities that the Social Security Act 1986 creates (see Chapter Two), they need to be aware of selection, delivery and rationing systems that can operate against the poor (Becker, 1991). They need to enable the poor to learn for themselves how to handle the DSS in the same way that higher income groups have advisers to help them deal with the tax system (Cook, 1989). They also need to encourage poor people to perceive their condition as the result of societal forces rather than individual inadequacies. Otherwise social workers will be contributing to the re-emergence of stigma as a deterrent in claiming benefits, which some commentators on the Social Fund see as a deliberate social policy initiative (Timmins, 1988; Lister, 1988).

Social workers seem to have different perspectives on social work and poverty to users of social services, who have more in common with government policy on the relationship between social work and poverty. Furthermore the general public also appears to value the practical income maintenance role of social workers. It would be easy to conclude in negative "angst," with so many perspectives at odds with one another, what is the way forward? Social work and social work training need to change in response to consumers' demands and government directives. This can be a positive force if change is organised from within social services in partnership with social service users (Lister and Beresford, 1991; International movement ATD Fourth world, 1991). Changes from without - imposed by government policies, with no consultation or liaison with social workers or users - are less likely to be successful.

The relationship between poverty and social work is complicated, ambiguous, and tortuous. It is not merely a relationship based on objective facts, but is concerned with ideologies, attitudes and practices relevant to social work and separately relevant to poverty. It is a subjective, interactive and dynamic relationship that will change from time to time and place to place. It is similar to any subjective relationship, the dynamics are often contradictory, conflict ridden and changeable, and are influenced by many external factors not obviously relevant to the relationship. It is not a relationship based solely on money, nor a relationship based solely on emotional support. It is assumed that many social problems social workers deal with, could be solved if social service users had an adequate income. If everyone had enough money to live on, would we still need social workers? For the handicapped, survivors of disasters, children affected by divorce, or incest, violence or drug abuse, social workers may still be an important resource - but only if social services are defined as the fifth social service (Townsend, 1970, p.21) to which everyone in the community could turn, not just the poor.

To reverse the earlier question, if no-one had enough to live on, would we still need social workers? Probably yes, but the structural nature of poverty and the reforms or revolution needed to eradicate it would become clearer (Hoogvelt, 1987). Welfare rights, community work and countries where there is no "casework" model (Munday, 1989), suggest social work is preventative, and relieves the stress which financial deprivation can cause. A marxist approach would indicate that relieving this stress in capitalist societies maintains poverty, and that the welfare state is only transitory on the road to equality of income (Mishra, 1991).

The relationship between poverty and social work is not a causal relationship, poverty does not "cause" social work or vice versa, but a contingent one. How contingent is the question. As poverty increases, does the need for social workers? If there were more social workers, would problems associated with poverty decrease?

The rest of this thesis explores the social construction of the relationship between social work and poverty not in an abstract society, but by understanding: the reality of working in a busy social services department; the reality of being a social work student; and the reality of being a social service user.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE RESTRUCTURING OF WELFARE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter sets thirteen months participant observation of two social work teams and eighteen independent interviews with social service users in the wider context of government policies towards public welfare and those in poverty. It examines how welfare restructuring affects social services departments; social service users; and the interactions between social service users and social workers.

The questions addressed are, in what ways has:

- a) the restriction of universal benefits in favour of means tested loans and grants;  
and
- b) the subsidising of private mortgages rather than council housing, exacerbated the difficulties faced by poor social service users and social workers.

The research employed an ethnographic methodology to examine the policy outcomes of these forms of welfare restructuring given that the "meaning" of government policies for the individual cannot be understood just by looking at statistics on welfare spending, changes in income tax for the wealthy, or even the increasing numbers in poverty.

#### **2.2 What is the restructuring of welfare?**

Government policies which have brought about a restructuring of welfare include: limiting public spending whilst simultaneously encouraging the private sector to respond to the unmet need; increasing the gap between rich and poor by shifting away from progressive taxation; allowing rises in market incomes whilst cutting the value of benefits in real terms; subsidising private pensions and mortgages; and limiting universal benefits in favour of means tested grants and loans. Walker, (1990a) and Shirley, (1990) note that welfare state restructuring has taken place alongside rising need and inflation and has involved:

the substitution of voluntary and private welfare for public provision; increasing the role of the informal sector in care; ..... and centralisation of resource control coupled with the decentralisation of operational responsibility, thereby neutralizing any potential power of welfare state

users to increase the share of public expenditure devoted to them (Walker, 1990a, p.21 & p.33).

Regardless of policies pursued prior to 1979, (Mishra, 1984; Alcock, 1991a) the Thatcher Government explicitly set out to restructure welfare because it had very clear ideas about the sort of society it wanted to create - one based on enterprise rather than welfare. Successive conservative governments have assumed that if welfare aims are sacrificed for the goals of economic growth, entrepreneurs' profits will "trickle down" to benefit the poor. After fourteen years of conservative policies, much evidence, (Bradshaw and Holmes 1989; Bryson, 1989a, 1989b; Mack and Lansley, 1985; Piachaud, 1987; Oppenheim, 1993) including this study, indicate that not only have profits not trickled down to the poor, but the poor are now poorer and the rich richer (Walker and Walker 1987).

### **2.3 Social service users and the restructuring of social security**

What has the restructuring of social security since 1979 meant for the majority of social service users - those who are claiming benefits? Social service users may be aware that they do not have enough to live on but are unlikely to realize that they are managing on significantly less than people in a similar situation prior to 1979. For example supplementary benefit rates for a couple with two children aged six and eight in 1965 was £75.87p - 51% of gross weekly earnings of male manual employees whereas in 1990 the income support rates for a similar couple were £84.82p only 38.3% of gross weekly earnings of male manual employees (Walker, 1990b). Such a calculation ignores the fact that tax and national insurance have taken an increasing share of earnings, so net earnings have not risen as much, but it does not include figures for dual earning families. If their incomes were included, income support levels would have fallen relatively more. The two Social Security Acts passed in 1980 by the incoming Conservative government explicitly severed the link between benefits upratings and wages, thus keeping uprating amounts to a minimum by linking them to the movement in prices. The Government also made it clear that they were happy to see the value of Child benefit as a universal benefit eroded and between 1987 and 1990 it was frozen at £7.25 a week. The increase of £1 for the first or oldest child in April 1991 still meant a loss in real terms of 15% since 1979 for those children and 26% for all other children (Walker, 1990b).

Furthermore social service users are less likely to benefit from tax cuts and tax reforms (Taylor Gooby and Papadakis 1985; Pond, 1989) than the wealthier members of the population. Bennett and Oppenheim (1991, p.7) develop a "welfare for the rich and welfare for the poor" example, where a married couple with a single earner on £40,000



per year would gain £127.45 a week in mortgage and pensions tax relief whereas an unemployed married couple with two children aged four and six would be given £128.61 a week in welfare benefits. Because the former couple are net contributors and the latter couple net beneficiaries, their financial benefits from the fiscal or public welfare system are not normally compared. Furthermore the couple who are at present unemployed are likely to have been net contributors in the past and may be in the future. Yet they are still unlikely to gain the fiscal benefits of the middle class couple.

The economic situation of most people on a low income (which includes most social service users) has worsened considerably compared to the rich and compared to those living on benefit previous to 1979. (Walker and Walker, 1987; Townsend, 1991; Bennett and Oppenheim, 1991)

Social service users' increasing financial need, due to government social security policies were either not recognized by social workers because they took it for granted that social service users were poor or users' financial plight was overlooked because social workers felt powerless to help. Both of these points can be illustrated by examining how the social workers in Carshire and City teams dealt with the issue of the Social Fund.

Under the previous Social Security Act (1980), single payments for essential items such as cookers or beds had been reorganised to limit demand. However single payments continued to increase from one million in 1981/2 to five and a half million in 1985/6. So the Social Fund which was introduced under the 1986 Social security Act and implemented in April 1988, replaced single payments with a loan scheme (70% of Social Fund finance) with a small number of grants (30% of Social Fund finance) for those re-establishing themselves or wanting to stay in the community. The participant observation part of this study commenced in January 1989 and was able to monitor the progress of policies in relation to the Social Fund ten months after its initial implementation.

In the summer of 1988, Vernon (the Silverton teamleader) senior welfare rights officers and other team leaders decided to pursue a policy of non co-operation with the DSS regarding Community Care grants and Social Fund loans. This was a principled stand. It reflected unease, first, about the difficulty social security claimants would have in paying back loans, (thereby creating extra financial need) which would result in more pressure on social services departments. Secondly, non cooperation with DSS was an assertion on the part of social workers that they were not part of the income maintenance system. Social work involvement (which could have resulted in social service users gaining priority over the grant claims of non-users) might well have encouraged claimants to use social services as a second benefit agency. However not all social

workers in the participating teams were aware of these issues and it appeared that social service users rather than DSS staff or the government suffered as a result of the non cooperation policy.

By February 1989, both Edward Dent (the principle welfare rights officer) and Vernon (the Silverton teamleader) assured me that all Silverton social workers had received a copy of the non-cooperation policy document, (although Vernon subsequently admitted that he was unsure whether the copies had been circulated). However when I endeavoured to discuss the policy with individual social workers, none remembered reading the document. They were relieved they did not have to take on more work in relation to the DSS, and were grateful that such a decision had been taken for them by the teamleader and had become departmental policy. Copies of the policy report were finally discovered in a filing cabinet by the Divisional Officer.

The local DSS office invited Silverton social workers to a meeting in March 1989 to discuss the Social Fund. The teamleader's response to the invitation was, *"I'm not interested in the Social Fund at the moment. We have a non cooperation policy - I don't want anything to do with it"*. It was agreed that Brian Lunt, the welfare rights officer, his assistant Malcolm and myself would go to the meeting. The meeting also included probation officers, CAB workers and representatives from voluntary agencies for the Silverton area. Up to March 1989 - the first year of the Social Fund's operation - Silverton DSS had only spent 35.2% of their budget for grants compared to 85.43% for loans. The DSS manager hoped that care organisations would encourage individuals to apply for grants by April 1989, so that their budget was not reduced in subsequent years. The manager explained the shortfall in the allocation of community care grants was due to: a shortage of Social Fund officers - a turnover rate of four out of five officers in the first year; minimal visiting - DSS were less of a "care" agency and that *"home helps may see more"*; and that they could not get the information from social services when they wanted to provide a grant. He concluded, *"like it or not we are stuck with it (the Social Fund) and so we have to make the best of it for the client."*

For social workers and home help organisers in the Silverton team (who knew very little about the Social Fund due to the departmental policy of non cooperation), it proved difficult to discover social service users who were eligible for community care grants within a month. However a meeting was arranged by Karen the deputy teamleader after pressure from the welfare rights officer. Older people in the two neighbourhoods observed, were excluded from claiming a community care grant because their savings exceeded £500. Lorna, (a home help organiser from the Silverton team) commented at the meeting, *"I can't think of one elderly person who would get the community care"*

*grant, a lot of people have savings of over £500 for their funeral, some people have up to a £1000."*

The meeting with social workers and home help organisers thus appeared unsuccessful although Brian the welfare rights officer commented that since the meeting with the local DSS he had had no community care grant applications turned down and actually secured one award of £500. Social workers in both teams (who were aware of the implications of the Social Security Act) were in the unenviable position of realising that punitive social security policies were affecting the individuals with whom they worked, whilst being unable to do anything about it. The policy of non cooperation with DSS carried out by the Silverton team had little effect on local or national policy though it had restricted the grants paid out to claimants. A non cooperation policy did provide some respite for social workers from dealing with users in increasingly desperate financial straits, although City team (who had a policy of determined advocacy regarding the Social Fund) had written to all their users prior to the implementation of the Act stating that they would not be able to receive extra funding from social services, once single payments were withdrawn. On the one hand some social workers (especially in the Silverton team), wished to show their disapproval of the new social security policies which had disadvantaged all claimants and gave social workers unwelcomed power in relation to social security finance and social services users. On the other hand social workers (especially in the City team) were aware that if grant monies available under the Social Fund were not utilized, the government might interpret this outcome as evidence of insufficient demand.

Mrs Dixon is representative of other social service users interviewed and observed, who have found themselves in increasingly desperate financial straits, which had an adverse effect on their mental and physical health. She had experienced financial difficulties since her partner - a miner - had died suddenly on his first week back to work after the miner's strike. She had been disconnected due to an administrative error for non payment of a £0.72 gas bill. Her budget plan application and normal gas bill had come through a week after she was disconnected. She had been without gas for nine to ten months. The gas reconnection charge was £80 - a figure in excess of the gas charges. Moreover, she had bought a gas cooker because *"it was cheaper than electric - I had no gas but a gas cooker. I couldn't feed Mary (her daughter) - she was six years old then."*

Although Brian, (the welfare rights officer), John (one of the Silverton social workers), the CAB and a solicitor argued on her behalf, the Gas Board refused to reconnect without the charge being paid. These problems coupled with her sudden bereavement, sent Mrs Dixon "over the top". She had a breakdown and was in hospital for three months. While

in hospital, her son managed to "blow up" the electric meter - so that when she came out of hospital she was faced with the prospect of using her deceased partner's back pension award to pay for the damaged meter and the reconnection charge. She refused to pay for the gas reconnection.

**Mrs Dixon:** *It's the principle of the thing - I got settled without it. At that time I was fed up with being pushed about. ...the time in hospital hardened me ....Why should I pay the gas board? ...I got an electric cooker and everything, though I hadn't finished paying for the gas cooker.*

Mrs Dixon had to take out a Social Fund loan to pay for an electric cooker at £7 a week, (out of a weekly income of £37) but, as a result had been unable to pay the rates. (Claimants were expected to pay 20% of rates/poll tax after the implementation of the Social Security Act in April, 1988). She had received a letter to say the bailiffs were coming to repossess her furniture, because of non payment of her rates. Although she had appeared lively and cheerful when I had interviewed her three months previously, she now had an expressionless face and voice. *"I've spent five to six years of my life facing authorities and getting into trouble - it's not funny you know"*. John (her social worker of three years standing) had left, so Tony (who was the duty social worker when she approached social services on this occasion), phoned the rates department who said it was "in the bailiffs hands". Tony phoned the bailiffs who had a pre recorded message on their answer machine. I suggested hiding the furniture with the neighbours, but Mrs Dixon felt this would mean telling the neighbours her troubles which she did not want to do. She eventually decided she would have to sell her furniture to her children because they would give it back to her. Tony suggested firstly that she should ask for the bailiffs' identification; secondly that she should ask them to leave the form (suggesting that she pay £20 a week to clear the debt, an amount she could not afford), which she would then take to her solicitor's. Finally Tony advised her not to sign anything if she could not afford the repayments.

He said to me afterwards that *"there was nothing we could do"* and this was *"another one for Beverley"* - the new social worker. Mrs Dixon had been referred to three different social workers over a number of years. If she was dealing with an urgent financial crisis she would come to see the Duty social worker. Users such as Mrs Dixon were seen as having intractable financial problems and few of the social workers wanted to take them on as an ongoing "case".

As a single parent, Mrs Dixon is likely to have lost £2.52 a week with the change from the 1987/88 supplementary benefit rates to 1988/89 income support rates. The House of Commons Social Security Committee included in these calculations an element for

inflation and the extra Income Support allowances which were intended to cover the general rate contributions which claimants had to make prior to the poll tax.

In terms of a market approach to welfare, users coming to social services with financial problems are not the type of "customer" that could be easily contracted out to the private or voluntary sector - certainly not for profit.

#### **2.4 Social service users and the restructuring of the housing market**

We have become a nation of homeowners, gaining our "benefits" from the fiscal system of tax relief, rather than through council housing, where individuals are allocated housing on the basis of need.

The value of mortgage interest tax relief had risen to £4,500 million by 1986/7, more than twice its real level of eight years before, despite the cut in the basic rate of tax. The increase in the real cost of mortgage interest tax relief over the period - £2.4 billion at 1986/7 prices - was the same size as the real fall in net public capital spending on housing (Hills, 1987, pp.88-100).

The transfer of housing subsidies from the public sector has resulted in increasing homelessness for those who cannot afford the market price for housing and who thus have years to wait on the council housing list before they would be offered accommodation. It has also meant that council housing like social services, has acquired the stigmatised status of being available only for the poor. Public housing has thus become an unattainable as well as low status housing option for most working class people. Consequently many people who cannot really afford to buy their own property, are being seduced by building societies, banks and the media into taking out mortgages for which they cannot meet payments.

Some commentators stress the easy availability of credit, coupled with aggressive advertising, "creates" a demand, and encourages people to take on commitments to a greater extent than they might if left to their own devices" (Ford, 1991, p.20).

Until recently mortgages have largely been a middle class preserve. Institutions who lend money do not provide education on how the system works, nor do they have the time or the skills to explain to the predominantly working class people in the areas where the fieldwork was conducted, how and in what ways the market system differs from the public housing system. Brian, the welfare rights officer for the area, commented that some building societies were particularly punitive with customers who could not afford their mortgage repayments during the 1986 miners' strike. It was assumed they would not be able to clear their debts and their houses were therefore repossessed.

**Brian:** *...they couldn't clear them...the type of property that was repossessed were the little terraced ones where they had nothing to sell to get into a smaller property...individual (Building Society) managers have their quotas....the ends justifies the means.*

One family interviewed could not keep up the mortgage payments during the miners' strike and eventually posted the keys to the house through the letterbox of the Building Society. They and their six children moved to a two bedroomed housing association house. Mr Hallam gave the impression that he had not discussed his decision with personnel at the Building Society, he just became fed up with the worry of not being able to make the repayments. When he found out that a small house near to where he had grown up was empty and available from a Housing Association, he and his family moved. The living conditions in this house (in which they were interviewed) were extremely cramped, especially for the younger children. During the interview, one of the toddlers became entangled in the kettle flex, whilst another ran out of the back door into the road when Mr and Mrs Hallam were saying goodbye to me at the front. Fortunately the car approaching the toddler was able to stop. Linda, the social worker who visited them was keen for them to move. Mr Hallam was working again, but seemed unwilling to repeat his previous experience of buying a house, even though the Housing Association had offered to let him buy the house in which he and his family were living. Mrs Hallam, according to Linda was not so keen to stay where they were, but expressed no opposition to Mr Hallam during the interview. They both talked about extending their living accommodation by converting the empty almost derelict shop next door. However Mrs Hallam had apparently said privately to Linda, *"Where would I go with six kids?"*

It seems that the Thatcher government's housing and economic policies have increased individual wealth (Stark, 1986) at the expense of: local authorities; those who cannot afford to buy their council house and therefore have to put up with deteriorating standards as resources for public housing dwindle; those who are forced out of the housing market into privately rented and housing association accommodation, bed and breakfast or hostels and those who have nowhere to live at all.

Furthermore eighty per cent of outstanding credit is associated with borrowing for housing, and with credit hand in hand goes debt, and in some cases repossession, particularly for low income mortgagees. Janet Ford, (1991, p.32) describes this process:

Until the late 1970's home ownership was largely the preserve of the secure professional white collar employee, and skilled craftsworker. In 1979 there were approximately 6 million mortgage loans held. In 1990 there were 9.3 million mortgage loans in force (House of Commons, Hansard, 1990). This expansion is the outcome of several factors, including the increase in the number of households (particularly single

person households); the impact of the right to buy legislation (with discounted prices and supportive financial arrangements); the decline in the quality and quantity of local authority rental property (with associated lengthening waiting lists); the move towards market rents; the deregulation of financial processes and increasingly competitive markets; and the clear desire of many people to own a property.

In the 1980's, the number of home owners grew as mortgage institutions increased their "down market" lending to compensate for their problems in lending to the third world and domestic industries. Between 1982 and 1986, amongst all households headed by a manual worker, the percentage with mortgages grew from 42.9% to 52.6% (thus exceeding the growth among non manual households). Most were in employment when they entered the tenure (Office of Fair Trading, 1989). In this study too, social workers and users are now tackling problems (although in comparatively small numbers), of low income, debt, and building societies, rather than difficulties with council housing departments. As private institutions are concerned with value for money for their shareholders, they are not necessarily as understanding as a housing department might be if people on low wages or in unstable jobs have a problem meeting their repayments. Public money is effectively being spent on social workers attempting to solve privatised financial problems. In a contracting out culture, perhaps social services departments should bill these private institutions for the cost of sorting out their problems?

On the first day of the fieldwork at Silverton, I listened to a telephone request from Mrs Bagthorpe, a social service user who was in tears and asking for social work help because the Abbey National Building Society was threatening to evict her and her family (a working husband and four children) over debts of £121.85. As a postgraduate student, presumably regarded as middle class with good earning potential, I had been allowed to continue with my mortgage debt of over £900 for eighteen months without any threat of eviction from the Woolwich Building Society. Mrs Bagthorpe had already paid £400 off her arrears and could afford £20 that day. However the building society said if the outstanding amount was not paid within forty eight hours the family would be evicted.

Karen, the social worker who had responded to the telephone call from Mrs Bagthorpe said "*I would have to go to charities... to use Section 1 money , you would have to go to committee to get that sort of money*". She was not able to convince the building society manager that Mrs Bagthorpe would be able to pay the debt off by the following Monday from her child allowance and disability allowance (one of her children was handicapped). The building society manager said, "*This has happened a number of times in the last few years*". - referring to Mrs Bagthorpe getting behind with her payments. Karen then rang the Homeless Families Officer who "twisted the arm" of the building society and arranged with them that the money "*would be paid one way or another*" by the following

Monday. He commented to Karen that Mrs Bagthorpe had "*got up someone's nose*". Karen then rang Mrs Bagthorpe back and said, "*You must pay the money by the following Monday otherwise it destroys social services' credibility*". Mrs Bagthorpe told Karen that she had learned her lesson. Mrs Bagthorpe's request for help had come on the same day that her handicapped daughter Marilyn (whose life expectancy was not more than five years) had had two fits at school.

I interviewed Mrs Bagthorpe later on in the fieldwork and she maintained that she had had no trouble with the mortgage repayments since, that she had "*learned her lesson*" and "*it wouldn't happen again*".

**Interviewer:** *If you ever did get in the same situation again, would you go back to social services?*

**Mrs Bagthorpe:** *I don't know, I don't think it would work this time with the building society. If they tried that approach again from (with) the building society, I think they'd say "Oh no you did it before and she didn't keep her side of the bargain". They wouldn't be able to persuade the building society again I don't think."*

**Interviewer:** *So it wouldn't be worth you going back to social services ?*

**Mrs Bagthorpe:** *No it'd have to be a moneylender I suppose which would probably make it worse all round wouldn't it - because its silly borrowing money to pay off arrears isn't it?*

**Interviewer:** *I wouldn't be as definite as that about not going back to social services, because you've got your three children. (Marilyn, her handicapped daughter had died since the original crisis). It's up to you but I wouldn't be too definite about it.*

**Mrs Bagthorpe:** *Alright flower, I won't get in that situation again (laughs).*

Mrs Bagthorpe had no idea of the differing policies that were pursued as far as repayments of mortgage debts were concerned with people of different backgrounds, living in different parts of the country and being of the wrong sex or race. Although Mrs Bagthorpe was at home with her children, she seemed to be responsible for the mortgage repayments. She complained that although her husband was good company when he was in, he was out a lot and did not help with the children. Her use of the word "I" throughout the interview when talking about the mortgage and her plan to use money she had access to - child benefit and disability allowance - implied that she held herself responsible for the debt. This was her second mortgage (she had been responsible for the mortgage and two other children in a previous marriage). She had none of her own kin family living locally to help her financially or in other ways.



Parker (1987) has argued that the roots of debt may lie in the pattern of financial allocation adopted, and the inadequate allocation to women for day to day budgeting may push them to miss payments due. A number of studies have indicated that the internal allocation of resources is informed by a cultural acceptance by both men and women that a portion of the household's money is "protected" as "the man's money" (Morris, 1984). Parker has shown how even when debts are incurred the "man's money" remains protected. Ford's (1990) study of owner occupiers in default reported that the majority of households effected some reorganisation and reallocation of finances when the mortgage crisis became sufficiently serious. The reallocations were not equitable but the inequalities were reduced.

Even where commitments have been the man's responsibility, women may manage them when they become debts because of their role as day to day financial managers. Here the assumption is that it is they who can re-jig the budgets and make economies, an assumption women often confirm, but only by personally bearing the brunt of any economies...debt involves negotiating with creditors, visiting their offices, undertaking to make certain payments. Women are also often seen as "free" to undertake this work, either because their own employment is part time, or regarded as less significant than the man's, or because they are "at home" all day involved with tasks that are accorded little priority or prestige (Ford, 1991, p.81).

Brady's (1987) in depth study of seven families in debt reported that women had a higher incidence of self- assessed mental health problems than men. Stress factors he associated with debt included: the stigma of debt; financial adversity; attempts to cope financially; the guilt and blame associated with failure and the isolation of women. Lone mothers according to the PSI survey of credit and debt, had "exceptional" level of risk. "More than four out of ten lone parents had one or more problem debt; almost one in seven were in serious debt, owing money on three or more commitments" (Berthoud and Kempson, 1990).

Debt was a common difficulty for the social service users observed and interviewed during the fieldwork. Mrs Crale - a lone parent - had been told she could no longer use her Visa and Access cards because of her debts and she had had to tear them up. Mrs Bagthorpe and Mrs Crale are representative of other users with similar problems.

Mrs Crale came to social services as a one parent family with two children dependent on income support whose husband was claiming tax relief for the mortgaged house that his wife and children were living in. He was working in Saudi Arabia and was having an affair with a nurse. This had eventually split up the marriage, and while the husband and his mistress were apparently having expensive holidays, his wife was claiming social security and food vouchers from social services because she did not have enough to live on. Because the couple were not legally separated or divorced - Mrs Crale still seemed to

be hoping that he would come back to her - no adequate financial provision had been made for her or the children.

**Mrs Crale:** *I came (to social services) to see if anyone could help me 'cos my house was actually up for sale at the time and I was going to be homeless....nothing really happened (as a result of the first visit to social services), because my husband decided he was quite happy for the house not to be sold - "it's not fair" he said, "because of the boys".*

**Interviewer:** *So what happened the second time you came in?*

**Mrs Crale:** *I came down because I had no money for food and owed £26 for the gas bill and I owed £11, two weeks electric that was, ...so it left me with virtually nothing to live on..I know I bought ten cigarettes but I have to..... .But I was just really upset because I'd nothing for the children and I can't stand to see kids go hungry.*

Mr Crale was not helping with the bills but had agreed to a voluntary payment of £20 per week for the children which was taken off Mrs Crale's income support which went down from £74 a week to £54 a week.

**Mrs Crale:** *It's a lot of money I know (the £80 a month maintenance), but when you've got bills to pay and clothes for the children and when it's school I've got to give them money for dinners and get them tea, and because its the holidays they want to go to the swimming baths and cinema....it's a hell of a struggle, it's terrible....I just wish he'd come back.*

They had no problems with money when they were married:

**Mrs Crale:** *He was great, he was fabulous, he helped me in every way possible, he's given me a lovely home and we always had food in ...brilliant with the kids..he's just a womanizer.*

**Interviewer:** *You didn't have any problems with housekeeping before he left?*

**Mrs Crale:** *No it's only since he left I got myself into a mess with money...because with his job I was getting £350 a week for a wage. He paid all his wages home into a bank account ..he said to me "that's for the mortgage and everything else" ...it was great you can understand it.*

**Interviewer:** *So you dropped from £350 a week to £74 a week apart from the mortgage. That's a big drop!*

**Mrs Crale:** *It's terrible I've always been used to having that money.*

Mrs Crale had received advice from social services regarding council housing and on her second visit a £10 food voucher to feed the children. Mrs Crale unlike Mrs Bagthorpe had financial problems because of a sudden drop in income rather than persistent low income. Her house and its furnishings and her clothes, were of a higher standard than most social

service users I visited. However she and her sons may have to get used to different accommodation and a lower standard of living.

Sullivan (1986) and Tunnard (1973) indicate that divorced and separated women face considerable housing difficulties. They may initially remain in the matrimonial home, but the costs prove prohibitive and debts result. They may experience "forced" moves out of single owner occupancy into public renting, sharing or even homelessness. Owner occupation for women on their own with children may figure in the rise in mortgage statistics - from 18,956 million in 1973 to 255,811 million in 1989 (BSA Bulletin and Financial Statistics 1974-1989). However female lone parents inclusion in these statistics may be a temporary phenomenon to be replaced by others in a similar situation. As Ford (1991 p.60) notes,

"..where the lone parent who remains in the matrimonial home following the dissolution of a relationship is a woman, the available income is, in many cases, low and there is a high risk of mortgage default."

More lucrative employment opportunities, better childcare facilities, and fairer maintenance and access arrangements could change this scenario in the future. However the restructuring of the housing market has meant that women who cannot afford to maintain a mortgage are marginalised like all the other non owner occupiers, in some cases having to rely on bed and breakfast accommodation.

It was fairly unusual, in the City team, for social services to be asked for help with mortgage problems. They were seen as middle class problems, not the problems of the poor. For example, Keith in the City team could get no free legal help for June's mortgage problem, because the Law Centres would not deal with the buying of council houses - "*they were against it in principle*". However as Ford (1991, p.27) comments, ".in many cases they (mortgagees) do have household earnings that are below the low pay threshold as defined by the Low Pay Unit or the Council of Europe."

June had been discharged from Rampton mental hospital on appeal. She had been there since she was 13 and she was now 22. Loan sharks had told her she could buy her City council flat at £5 a week, the total cost being £1000 and the deposit being £25. She would not agree to sign anything until she had talked to Keith. He was taking her to a solicitors for half an hour's legal advice for £5, as she had already paid the deposit.

We are all dependent on government organisations, only some of them are labelled welfare organisations (Titmuss, 1956). It is these organisations that the government expects us to secure our independence from. In June's case it seems clear that becoming independent from her social worker, and dependent on a private financial organisation in order to secure her 'emancipation' from institutional care and from council housing

would have resulted in exploitation. She would also of course have benefited from tax relief if the arrangement had been genuine. All individuals gain from the state in different ways depending on their income, despite the differing terminologies that are used to describe our indebtedness to the state. Benefits are regarded as an example of government generosity whilst tax relief on mortgages and pensions are seen as relieving the burden of government taxation. As Cook (1989, p.26) notes:

...recent evidence suggests that the gap between rich and poor has widened since 1979 (Byrne, 1987; CPAG, 1988). Yet the myth of the redistributive 'Robin Hood' state remains ideologically powerful, and buttresses the allied myth of the over-taxed or 'harassed' tax-payer.

Those on benefit are net beneficiaries for the time they are claiming, which may be preceded by years of being net contributors, however they are still seen as "scroungers". Those claiming tax relief are seen as net contributors, despite the fact that they may have for example inherited capital, without working to contribute to the tax system. Tax relief on mortgages did not commence in 1979, but as Johnson (1990, p.156) comments:

The ideology of the three Thatcher governments is more clearly demonstrated in housing than in any other area of social policy....Between 1978/79 and 1989/90 government expenditure on housing in real terms declined by 79 per cent.

Tax relief to the individual home owner has taken the resources that were previously allocated for the whole community. This individualistic concept of redistribution does not account for those who cannot get onto the first rung of the owner-occupier ladder or who get onto it and then slip off, due to redundancy, low wages, loss of pay or marital breakdown.

Many of the social service users with financial and housing problems were female lone parents with young or school age children. As it is mostly women who take the main caring role when marriages split up, it is they who are most likely to suffer from the effects of social security and housing restructuring. Social services are involved in the privatisation of the housing market because they are dealing with the casualties of it. There has been an increase in money advice centres, but there is a current imbalance between the supply (limited), and the demand (great). Moreover the stability of such centres is extremely fragile given the current squeeze on local authority resources. It has been suggested that creditors have some responsibility to support the casualties of the credit system. Social workers would probably prefer to see the government and/or creditors supporting money advice centres rather than social work departments, thereby reducing the services expected of social workers. They are clearly not just dealing with the casualties of mortgage repossessions, but also the immense shortage of council

housing. Social service users with marital and/or poverty problems cannot be rehoused satisfactorily when in need.

Compulsory mechanisms to fund money advice - for example, a levy on creditors - are discussed from time to time and may yet be necessary.....The underlying problems that give rise to much of the debt, particularly in low income households, have been influenced and structured not only by the policies of some creditors, but centrally by the economic and welfare policies pursued by successive governments in the 1980's (Ford, 1991, p.103).

## **2.5 Summary and conclusions**

This chapter has demonstrated how the restructuring of the social security system and the housing market has created additional pressures for social service users and social workers. The restructuring of welfare creates more hardship for the poor, and more work for those who deal with them.

One of the fundamental disputes in discussions about the restructuring of welfare is whether the welfare state should provide for all citizens or only the poor. In terms of value for money and cost effectiveness, further research could demonstrate that increasing benefits by say £20 per person per week might prove more economical than paying for the professional time of the staff in DSS, welfare rights offices, voluntary agencies and social services departments who are obliged to sort out the financial difficulties and debts of claimants and social service users. Although cost effectiveness is a consideration in evaluating the relative merits of means tested and universal benefits, what is important is the political philosophy that lies behind restructuring. Conservatives who believe in a New Right ideology would be unlikely to increase basic income support even if it were less expensive, because of their fear that individuals would become dependant on the state.

Conservative policy makers suggest the welfare state should be a residual service that does not drain the economy whereas theorists on the left such as Titmuss (1974), Cook (1990) and Le Grand (1982) suggest that the middle and upper classes have benefited the most from universal services, as well as their own fiscal "welfare state".

The logical outcome of both these sets of ideas is that the poor should be targeted or treated more generously. In this sense perhaps social services should develop as a service for the poor and work at negating the public's attitude of these people as undeserving (Caring for Quality Conference, 1990). However other studies (Titmuss 1970; Taylor Gooby and Papadakis 1985) have shown that services that are developed only for a

powerless group of users (recipients of social security and public housing) are marginalised, whereas universal welfare provision (such as health services) are more likely to be retained. Social services departments with few middle class users, lead conservative policy makers to propose that this part of the welfare state is not necessary. Social services do not represent value for money for those who do not use it. As Chris Patten argues:

Is it really necessary for some of our big cities to have approaching 10,000 or so social workers and related staff on their pay-rolls? Are such large groups of people appropriate, any more than it is appropriate for one local authority to own vast holdings of council houses and flats....? (The Times, 3.1.91).

Council housing has been successfully restructured, social security less so as yet, while health and education have proved less rewarding to restructure in terms of public opinion, because of the large numbers of middle class people who use these services or who work in them.

With the attempts to create a market in health and social services, it is difficult to imagine how those who have suffered as a result of the restructuring of social security and housing will cope. Packages of care which do not involve financial support may not prove very useful. How for example, will the provision of Section 1 money (replaced by Section 18 under the Children's Act), continue to be part of a social worker's role as a manager of resources? Will social workers be able to "buy in" welfare rights on a private basis or will all financial work be passed over to social workers as a continuing public service? Will welfare rights as part of a social services department continue to exist? The reason social workers were not willing to co-operate with the Social Fund was partially because they did not want to be closely associated with the social security system. But do they want to be completely divorced from it, so that social service users become increasingly destitute and social workers have no power or funds to support them? For example the Child Support Act (1992) offers little in the way of conciliatory services for parents so that social workers may well have to pick up the emotional as well as financial problems that result. It is likely that lone parents who are already clients of social services will be the 'parent with care' claiming income support. If they refuse to name the father of their children because of fears of violence for example, 20% of their benefit can be stopped - for six months initially. Social workers have few policies or guidelines for dealing with financial problems associated with the restructuring of welfare.

This fieldwork commenced as the restructuring of social security and social welfare began. It seems more research needs to be conducted as social workers become managers of care under the Community Care Act (1990), if we are to understand what effect this

may have on social service users. Social workers like health professionals, have had very little training on how to manage both finance and individuals. The two social work teams I observed may find it difficult to manage the sort of community care changes being expected for practical rather than ideological reasons. Resistance to internal markets and privatisation should not be seen as resistance to change. The need to discover better ways of working with social service users is accepted by those engaged in the caring professions. After all the community social worker was an invention of the progressive 1960's and 1970's and many arguments were put forward then for social workers to work with groups rather than individuals on a casework basis. Research on the restructured caring roles would be one way of identifying mismatches between the public and private sectors, as would a greater dialogue between all professionals in the caring field. Such discussion which could take place through trade unions, professional organisations, and social service user organisations could lead to the development of constructive policy initiatives for the future, taking into account the financial, practical and emotional needs of users.

The way forward for social workers and social service users involves: pointing out how and in what ways a market ideology cannot practically fit with caring for people; being aware of how the restructuring of social security and housing has reduced the incomes and choices of those coming to social services for help and the power of social workers to aid users; developing policies in liaison with welfare rights agencies that empower users by giving them what most well off people have - an income with which to choose; and applying other philosophies and social policies that have proved to be successful in other countries (Munday, 1989).





## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores a number of methodological issues and practices that proved to be important in organising, conducting and evaluating the Ph.D thesis. The chapter begins by analysing theoretical concepts and their relationship to the methods used in the research, and proceeds to consider issues such as: employing group discussions and interviews; conducting a participant observation study; action research; and the policy implications of the study for the two teams involved. Finally, the research methods are evaluated in terms of what developed as the best integration of theory and method, and what method was most appropriate in terms of the key topic of the research.

#### **3.2 Relating theory and method**

Tables Three and Four show how theory and method are connected within the study. They provide a philosophical foundation from which to explain the perspectives employed, and suggest that although different methods can be used to examine one perspective, to describe a method in isolation from its theoretical root is sterile and promotes a "cookbook" approach to methodology (Smith, 1988; Bell and Encell, 1976). Having described and analysed the research in terms of interests (Table Three), and methodological concerns (Table Four), the Chapter then goes on to present a critique of these ways of understanding the relationship between method and theory. By using examples from the fieldwork, it is suggested that the boundaries dividing the various interests and methodological concerns are too rigid when compared to the reality of the research setting.

#### **3.3 A Critique**

Research is too often dominated by a theoretical structure which fails to take account of those aspects of practice which conflict with the structure. Practice is not allowed to influence theory and this can mean that the practice itself remains undeveloped. An integrative approach is therefore adopted, which uses the Tables as a methodological foundation, but does not limit interests and ontological and epistemological concerns into separate compartments.

The impossibility of defining rigid boundaries within and between the categories described on the tables became evident during the field observation of social workers. For example, I came to the conclusion that social workers' attitudes and actions in relation to poverty are partly determined by the meanings they continue to develop as individuals in interaction with others, and partly are a result of the structures and institutions that surround them. Thus the mode of analysis for the research has both emancipatory and practical interests (see Table Three).

The idea of emancipatory interests is of itself problematic. In interviewing users of the social services, the methodological aim was to give them some recorded, independent time and space to put their view of the service offered them. In practice the role of a researcher may be considered by social service users to be not particularly liberating. Would they want to reveal their concerns in a way that they might to a family member or friend when my interactions with them were mediated by social services? The issue of social control is one that does not just apply to social workers' relationships with social service users, but also to researchers (Bell and Encell, 1976; Becker, 1967; Hyde White, 1974).

The idea of feminist research is that it is emancipatory - it tries to understand the mechanisms of oppression and its objective is "opening channels for change" (B.S.A. Women and Research, 1987; Smith, 1988). This is not to imply that only feminist research is emancipatory, nor that it is necessarily only emancipatory of and for women (Morgan, 1981). Bringing women's values, interests and social position into the limelight through methodologies that value gender differences questions the traditional approach to social research which ignores gender as a crucial variable (Goldthorpe, 1983). Although the research perspective is feminist, how does this operate in a study of social work and poverty? Emancipation can be defined as "setting free from some form of restraint" (Oxford Dictionary, 1988), but enabling one group of individuals to have their say can hinder other groups from feeling free to express themselves. By giving a voice to for example male working class users in the research, female middle class social workers may feel oppressed and criticised from below as well as from the male social work hierarchy above them. Some of the social workers in the fieldwork talked about how they felt unsupported at home, because their male partners were not interested in and did not want to talk about social work. One unqualified social worker told me she was a "different person" at home. "Emancipatory interests" cover a number of different issues which cannot necessarily be reconciled.

Technical interests and concerns also did not appear as straightforward in practice as the initial theoretical diagrams suggested. Gathering primary data from referral books on the

## TABLE THREE

**RESEARCH TOPIC** - social workers' understanding in theory and practice while in training and in work

**CORE THEORY AND METHOD** - using the following theoretical model, the research is committed to primarily practical and emancipatory interests

### INTERESTS

PRACTICAL	TECHNICAL	EMANCIPATORY
<p><u>Disclose world of common sense meaning</u> How social workers, students and users come to "know" in training and in work.</p>	<p><u>Prediction Control</u> What do social work tutors, students, users, CCETSW, social work managers, think about the relationship between poverty and social work.</p>	<p><u>Self Reflective. move to more rational society</u> Examine power structure in which social workers, students and users operate. Social control.</p>
<p><u>Communication - interaction</u> Can awareness of poverty (like awareness of sexism and racism) be taught? How?</p>	<p><u>Labour - How systems work.</u> Where social workers/students/users are located within systems. Cost/Benefit analysis.</p>	<p><u>Domination/Liberation</u> Change in power structure necessary for social service users to reveal their true interests.</p>
<p><u>Historical Hermeneutic Science.</u> Objective body of social work knowledge - built up over time. Meanings attached to knowledge.</p>	<p><u>Empirical. Analytic Science. Quantitative Analysis.</u> Secondary and primary source material on 1) Claimants who are social work clients 2) Attitudes to social work and poverty.</p>	<p><u>Critical Theory</u> The influence of the State, its laws, ideologies, social control. Social workers, users and the welfare state. The restructuring of welfare.</p>
<p><u>Interpretive</u> What is meant by awareness of poverty? Does this knowledge/awareness change when roles from student to worker change?</p>	<p><u>Causal</u> Why do users, social work tutors, CCETSW social service managers, students and social workers have particular attitudes and beliefs on the relationship between poverty and social work?</p>	<p><u>Explanatory Understanding</u> Explaining the relationship between social work and poverty within a structural base?</p>

Model Source - Sue Smith, University of Glasgow

# TABLE FOUR

RESEARCH TOPIC - social workers' understanding in theory and practice while in training and in work

## METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

ONTOLOGICAL CONCERNS		
PRACTICAL	TECHNICAL	EMANCIPATORY
Humanistic philosophies (excluding idealism). Realities contingent on human encounter. Reality present in appearance.	Objective positivism. Reality is independent of observers and actors. Reality present in appearance.	Structuralism, reality hidden. Objective positivism. Reality is independent of observers and actors.
METHOD		
Subjective meanings investigated and interactions with others in important roles. Crucial link between attitudes to poverty and actions. Field observation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evidence on percentage of claimants who are clients.</li> <li>2. Survey results on social workers' attitudes to poverty (Becker 1988).</li> <li>3. Survey results on social work students.</li> <li>4. Social survey results on responses to social work and poverty.</li> </ol>	Results of empirical research highlighted for structural change.
EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCERNS		
Empirical Research ↓                    ↑                    Interactive Theory (integrative) Social Workers' trajectories through time and space - attitudes and actions in relation to poverty.	Empirical Research ↓                    Evidence led theory Theory Theories on social workers', students' and users' attitudes to poverty and social work.	Theory ↓                    Theory led research Empirical Research Social Workers' attitudes and actions in relation to poverty reinforce conflict theory.

Model Source - Sue Smith, University of Glasgow

number of financial inquiries from people coming to social services, was in this case, mediated by practical and hermeneutic concerns. For example after four out of eight months of field observation with the Silverton social work team, the receptionist told me that if she received a straightforward financial query from a social service user/s, she sent them to the welfare rights adviser in the Enterprise Centre without recording them in the referral book. All referrals were supposed to be reported and such a practice would significantly affect the numbers of individuals recorded by social services as having financial problems. It is also worth investigating the meaning behind such an action. Does the ideology of the social work team give the impression to the receptionist that they are not interested in social service users who have financial problems? Or is she aware that users prefer the service they get from the welfare rights advisers?

The problem of defining and quantifying technical data in relation to this research was also apparent during the field observations when some visits and interviews with social service users were not written up as being concerned with financial problems, when to the researcher - also a qualified social worker - they appeared to be intimately connected with material deprivation.

The Silverton area in which the social work team was based had more referrals of all kinds than other areas in the authority. The divisional officer thought this was because the social workers were based in the Town Hall next to the housing department and so people could deal with two departments at once. In the Carley area where individual users were apparently equally poor, they found it difficult in terms of time and finances to travel to the social work offices because they were more isolated.

That reality is not present in the superficial presentation of statistics is confirmed by observations of one of the social services welfare rights offices. One of the welfare rights officers admitted that she sometimes made up welfare rights referral figures because "*I know what people want*" - she appeared to be referring to her immediate boss and social services management rather than users.

So it seems that statistics on poverty related referrals to social workers or welfare rights workers may not be reliable - their occurrence and meaning depends on the individuals who direct, record and analyse referrals, and furthermore there are a number of reasons why users may go to one social work office but not another. These examples illustrate the blurring of boundaries between methods and theory and differing ontological and epistemological concerns (see Table Four).

Boundaries can also be blurred because one method leads on to another - it was only by following my interest in the technical aspects of the research - what social workers think about poverty, using primary and secondary quantitative data, that I realized that actions may contradict attitudes. Thus I became more interested in the interpretative domain of inquiry and qualitative data (see Table Four).

Technical, practical and emancipatory interests are often interdependent and rightly so, because it is only by considering them in this way that a three dimensional model of the relationship between social work and poverty can be achieved. As Lakatos (1978, p.179) suggests: "one research programme supersedes another if it has excess truth content over its rival, in the sense that it predicts progressively all that its rival truly predicts and more besides."

So although Becker (1987) has completed a large quantitative survey and in depth interviews with social workers on their attitudes to poverty, this ethnographic work follows his conclusions through, with the added dimension of a discussion on how attitudes are related to actions. P.K. Edwards (1983, p.7) suggests that "progressive problem shifts" are in fact aiming towards truth as a goal .."even though absolute truth is impossible." This however assumes moving from one idea and method to another is cumulatively "progressive".

Within the research, overlapping, shifting and different realities implied there was no one real truth. However, in order to build up a body of knowledge about social work and poverty it seems essential that research on the subject is a cooperative if constructively critical effort, despite post modernism and its attendant theories favouring competing perspectives. On the other hand, external to the subject of this research there are ideologies that see no real link between social work and poverty and others that question the extent to which poverty exists at all. The approach applied to this study could be described as a continuum where differing theoretical perspectives complement the methods used. Both emancipatory and realist perspectives and all methodologies have been important and I would not want to see the world only from one perspective, as Harvey (1988) suggests, if this means defining out particular theoretical concerns or methodologies.

The Tables then, are a general analysis of the main theoretical and practical areas that this study has covered. They are not intended to suggest rigid boundaries between the theoretical areas of interest and the methodologies that have been used to investigate them. My aim is to highlight the connections rather than the divisions between emancipatory, technical and practical perspectives and quantitative and qualitative

research, in order to give a fuller picture of what is occurring in the relationships between social workers, social service users and social work students.

### **3.4 A Discussion on the nature of subjectivity**

A subjective approach to research methodology implies that social enquiry takes place in a particular context, that it is a social and political activity, not just a set of techniques to be applied to the world "out there" (Burgess, 1988; Riley, 1988). The number of descriptions, rules, methods, and theories militates against there being one right objective way to collect quantitative information, conduct group discussion and in depth interviews, and be a participant, sometimes a non participant observer.

The argument in this section is that much of the research methods literature is sterile in that it does not link the immediate or large scale environment, or the topic of the research, to the methods to be used. Methods "cookbooks" tend to "...take a handful of sand from the endless landscape of awareness and call that handful of sand the world" (Pirsig, 1974, p.82). There are exceptions, Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory being one and Murray Levine's (1974) "adversary method" which involves weighing evidence rather than counting or comparing responses, while recognizing that the subjectivity of the researcher mediates that weighing all the time.

Denzin's concept of triangulation is worth considering in more detail. He argues that "sociology's empirical reality is a reality of competing definitions, attitudes and personal values" (Denzin, 1970, p.300), and therefore multiple methods and theoretical approaches must be used. He proposes four basic triangulations:

- 1 Data with respect to time, place, person and level. Group discussions with students and social workers and observations of various types of social work meetings have provided rich data where the topic is the same but the time and place have varied, or where individuals of different rankings or occupations are observed in the same time and place, for example case conference meetings.
- 2 Between multiple observers of the same phenomenon. Social workers' and users' views of the same situation have been compared, as have students' views of their social work courses and social workers' of a team issue, for example long term sickness.
- 3 Between multiple theoretical perspectives with respect to the same set of objects (see tables).
- 4 Methodological triangulation which involves between method triangulation using dissimilar methods to measure the same unit; and within method triangulation which would employ variations within the same basic methodology. Between

method triangulation has been achieved by conducting a survey with social work students and interviewing them singly and in group discussion. Field observation of social workers included an understanding of policy documents and a quantitative study of referral rates. Variations within the same basic methodology have included: field observations which analyse social workers' attitudes and actions were compared with the results from interviewing users and observing users in the social services waiting room; interviewing social workers individually was compared with their comments and participation in feedback group discussions on social work and poverty. However in some cases the results have been different and cannot be integrated (Trend, 1978). For example social workers' attitudes in group discussion or interviews have not always been congruent with their actions during field observation.

Even when the same method is used throughout a research project, the data can be interpreted in different ways. If a variety of methods are used, the problems could be compounded. Robert Walker (1985,p.16) is reassuring when he says:

....research findings are constantly being evaluated and interpreted by the writers, readers and users of research in the light of their information needs. ....An understanding of the methodological heritage of a particular technique is a necessary element in the interpretive process but in the end each person makes his (sic) own evaluation.

Walker suggests choosing to use qualitative methods "...may reflect limitations in the state of the quantitative art or a philosophical stance that quantification is inappropriate." (p.21). It was important to conduct a qualitative study with the City social work team. They operated on a community work "patch" model. They knew many of the people asking for help and therefore did not write each request on a referral sheet. It was therefore difficult to quantify objectively how many requests for financial help they had had.

The Market Research Society R and D subcommittee on Qualitative Research (1979, p.13) describes the qualitative researcher as more like the artist "...part of her stock-in-trade is her personal capacity for empathy, sensitivity, imagination and creativity, as well as her capacity for logical analysis". Certainly group discussion, interviews, and particularly participant and non participant observation required these qualities, but the researcher's experience of administering surveys and negotiating access to other quantitative information, suggests this also requires sensitivity and tact.

Prescriptive, normative statements about how research should or should not be done deny the reality of the complex, haphazard and subjective process which make up the world of the practising social researcher. Bell and Encell (1976) call this process the



"soft underbelly of social science" and document ten "real" accounts of personal research. One account did not appear in print because the government researcher who wrote it believed that future research could be harmed if he revealed the internal workings and political context within which government research units operated.

Research methods involve unavoidable interaction with others and their different social worlds. The process of interaction in my own research started from the moment in 1984 when in consultation with my original supervisors, I chose to investigate poverty and social work as the subject for my part time M.Phil rather than a number of other ideas. By targeting one area of research, I have avoided other areas. Each person who has responded to the research interest, (including over one hundred and fifty social work students who filled in questionnaires) have taken part in a research process that has been an interaction rather than merely an information gathering exercise. Bill Bottomly (1976, p.221) refers to the importance of interaction in his account of the process of postgraduate research:

Throughout my field experiences, I was constantly struck by the fact that social existence is disordered, ambiguous and humanly messy (and this applies to the researchers as well as to the researched); yet we try to make sense of the social world with methods that are conspicuously unable to take account of this messiness, and which appear stainless, sanitised and hopelessly inappropriate in comparison to the subject matter.

The conventions of scientific exposition where the steps involved in proving or disproving a hypothesis are presented in logical order protects the researcher from queries about her motives, methods and assumptions and confirms professional detachment and rigour. Take for example time - it is a crucial variable and cannot be held constant - thus violating one of the basic precepts underlying the hypothetico/ deductive method. How do I know that a person participating in group discussion at Time A is the same person at a later Time B? How do I know that I as the researcher, have responded in the same way to an individual I interviewed at Time A as at Time B?

Bell and Encell (1976, p.9) suggest research is always subjective:

Just as we believe that the development of social research has been seriously distorted by underemphasizing or ignoring its social and political context, so also has the pretence that social researchers are disinterested value - neutral automatons.

Subjective value laden research disrupts the conventional distinction between theory and method and suggests they should not be separated as they often are when taught. The failure of the sociological imagination as C. Wright Mills (1970, p.246, 248) demonstrated, is to **not** understand that personal research accounts whether sociological

or scientific usually show that the personal is the political, and that sociological imagination can construct a bridge between private issues and public concerns.

Above all, seek to develop and to use the sociological imagination. Avoid the fetishism of method and technique.....Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles - and to the problems of the individual life. Know that the problems of social science when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations (Wright Mills, 1970, p.248).

### **3.5 A feminist methodology**

This research is not on women alone or for and with women only. However, as a female researcher I have been aware that my view of the world in relation to the interactions I have observed and noted are likely to be different to that of a man doing the same research. Most social work students, social workers and users I have worked with have been female, while tutors, teamleaders, social work management and my own supervisors have been male. The subject of the research - social work - is traditionally a "caring" area which has in the past and is in the future in terms of community care, seen as part of woman's role (Finch and Groves,1983; Williams,1990; Dominelli,1991). Social work can be defined as women's work within a hierarchical, patriarchal management and training structure (Walton,1975; Howe,1986; Hudson,1989).

It is the nature of the subject of the investigation, and how that investigation is carried out, that determines whether research can be said to be concerned with feminist issues. The paradigm shift that feminism contributes to methodology is not classifying qualitative research as particularly female but creating the thinking whereby all good research has to take into account womens' views and actions as having equal importance with those of men's', with a theoretical questioning of any differences in male and female perspectives (Roberts, 1990).

Sue Kingsley (1985) suggests that a feminist method would be one which validates the perceptions of the people at the focus of the study - that is one which challenges the barriers between researcher and researched and takes explicit account of subjectivity. She suggests that action research, embodying concepts of change, dialogue and a two way relationship between theory and practice, could offer a way out of the methodological impasse in which feminist researchers feel trapped - how is research for women as well as by them and on them?

This chapter proposes that feminists can use a variety of methods to explain their theoretical understanding of the world, and male researchers (Hatch and Legg, 1977;

Davies, 1978) have also used action research effectively for individuals rather than merely on them. However Kingsley's (1985, p.25) description of how action research could be conducted from a feminist perspective, was what this research was aiming towards.

..research is clearly situated as a precursor to action, it is not information merely for its own sake; the whole context of the problem is recognized as being relevant - thus the context is not stripped away to leave a meaningless academic exercise;..the traditional distance established between the researcher and the researched is abandoned with the intent of developing methods which make use of interpersonal understanding and empathy ("inter - subjectivity") rather than subject - object relations.

Getting close to members of the teams I was observing was not so easy in practice. Karen, one of the social workers I had come to know well, began to ask me to go to aerobics classes and tea at her house afterwards. I had to decline because other members of the team with whom she was not so popular, would have been less likely to feel they could talk to me if I was identified as her friend. The reasons I gave to her, were that as a researcher I had to treat all members of the team similarly. The discussions between myself and many of the women in both teams tended to be more personal than the discussions I had with the males. These discussions could be defined as "women's talk" in that they were about their life experiences, relationships and children. The conversations with the male members of the team were more likely to be about politics, films, television or sport. "Women's talk" was an effective, mutually supportive way of gaining rapport and went some way to achieving Kingsley's ideal of "inter- subjective" methods.

Johnson (1975, p.136-7), despite conducting a participant observation study of American social work teams with high numbers of female staff, concludes:

In an interview conducted during the final week of the observations at Metro, I asked one female CWS worker if she thought my sex made a difference in her actions throughout the research. I asked if she thought she might have done anything differently if I had been a woman. ...She advanced the supposition that she engaged in more "woman-talk" when in the company of other women. She observed she had done less of this on the days we had been together.....In retrospect I've developed a sense that the ambiguous differences hinted at by this social worker are indeed real ones. With an admittedly limited understanding of "woman-talk" however, my conclusion is that the kind of information one gets from engaging in it is not directly related to the knowledge I sought during the research.

Participating in "women's talk" is important in this research in the way participating in "men's talk" might be essential in conducting a participant observation study of the police force (Holdaway, 1982). One example of how valuable these discussions proved to be was in relation to Mary in the Silverton team who for her own reasons had as little

contact with me as possible. She had been off work because her father had died and while offering my condolences, we became involved in a discussion about family relationships which we both found useful and supportive. Not long after this discussion when I was still in her office, she confided in me for the first time - about a young girl, an incest survivor she was working with, whose (male) therapist had said "*the family wants you out of its hair*". She was hurt by this remark and discussed the efforts she had made with the family. The father was in prison and the mother and children were dependant on income support - so the social worker was questioning the practicality of a teenage girl making her own way to see the therapist, in a large city 50 miles away without Mary's financial and emotional support. Up until this point, Mary had had little time for discussing the relationship between poverty and social work. As she only worked part-time, Mary took the girl in her own time and in her own car to see the therapist.

Female members of both teams, as well as some of the male members, did not respond well to the research feedback that was an attempt to combine academic research with action. They appeared to feel that as they had trusted me and allowed me to share their personal and professional world, that it was unfair to criticize their attitudes and actions. On the other hand, a critical approach to a study of social workers legitimates the study from an academic perspective. The only compromise that it was possible to make to encourage "subject- subject relationships" between researcher and researched was to suggest policy initiatives that would be constructive for the team as a whole.

One of the major disadvantages of developing methods which make use of interpersonal understanding is that academic research (especially that which involves living on an ESRC grant) does not allow enough financial resources to continue the process of inter-subjectivity into the feedback, evaluation and writing up stages of the research. Successful attempts at closing the gap between researcher and researched included assertiveness training with the Silverton team. It was agreed that the training was provided in the last month of the observation period, and was extremely useful in encouraging communication between myself, the team, and between team members and the team leader.

This research is concerned with examining subjective relationships between researcher and researched, women and men, social workers and social service users and social work students and social service departments, however difficult that may be in practice. As discussed in the previous section, the subjective nature of social research is generally not adequately documented. Nor has feminist methodology recognized how and in what ways inter-subjectivity is practically possible between female researchers and their subjects.

### 3.6 Group discussion and interviews

Because many interviews with social service users, social workers and social work students were conducted within a group setting, this section will concentrate on group discussion as a research method.

De Almeida (1980, p.117) suggests that participants in a group discussion cannot be considered as individuals in a sample:

One can visualize an ideal universe of cognitive behaviour (or values, attitudes, motivations) and say that each group discussion is one single observation of such a universe.

In the groups there were ones who did not communicate well and roles such as "Competing Moderator", "The Choir", "The Superego", "The Complier", "The Conscience", "The Rebel", "The Rationalizer", had been well established (De Almeida, 1980, p.115). People can also feel nervous about uttering views opposed to the rest of the group or will feel inhibited about expressing views about their department or social work course or placements in front of the researcher and/or other members of the group (Hedges, 1985; De Almeida, 1980).

Robson (1988) proposes that people tend to be more open and creative in groups because they are **more** likely to confide their personal views and opinions when they are part of a group with whom they feel familiar and relaxed. Whether or not individuals or a group feel relaxed may depend on the extent of the actual or perceived power relationship between interviewer and interviewees.

Social service users, who as a group were less powerful than social work students or social workers, appeared more confident and open when interviewed with family and/or friends present, than those who were interviewed alone. Approximately a third of the interviews with social service users took place when friends, relatives or both partners were present, and in these circumstances users were more likely to express negative feelings towards social workers and sometimes towards the researcher. There were situations where empathy did develop between the researcher and the usually female respondent and "women's talk" as discussed earlier in this chapter, was often an important factor.

Social workers where the power balance was towards the professionals rather than the sole researcher tended to present views that were far more uniform in the group than when interviewed or observed individually.

Social work students demonstrated a wider range of views in the group discussions than the social workers and were not intimidated by the researcher as social service users tended to be - they had spent over a year training together and were used to expressing their views articulately in an academic environment.

Power relationships within the social worker and social work student groups were also evident in that women in the groups tended to defer to men, although black male students did not appear less assertive than white male students in expressing their opinions. In the social service user groups, males tended to defer to female respondents because women appeared to take the lead in dealing with personal, domestic and financial issues within the family (Parker, 1987) and in dealing with social services (Davis and Brook 1985).

There are however a number of other factors which affect what is revealed in group discussion apart from the power relationship between the researcher and the researched and within the researched group. The circumstances under which individuals will reveal their innermost thoughts may also depend on: the personalities of the group and the moderator; various external factors such as the time and place when a particular issue is discussed; and what is going on for everybody in their own lives which will affect their feelings and the dynamics of the group on the day.

Group discussion as a research method is regarded as useful by many commentators because: it explores the force with which people express their opinions in relation to others; gives a broad range of comparative and contrasting experiences; is creative and stimulating in that people bounce ideas off each other, come up with new ones and sometimes change their attitudes and behaviour. It also provides actors with a unique opportunity to negotiate their competing definitions of reality and to learn from their experience with the research process. Theoretical models for group discussion include: the "forming, storming, norming, performing and mourning" model; group feedback analysis; action research; transactional analysis; group "language"; and the psychodynamics of groups. In practical terms, there are conflicting "agreed rules" on organizing and conducting group discussions on issues such as: recruiting, the size of groups, reconvened groups, pre-existing groups, focussed groups, delphi groups, projective techniques, the moderator, incentives and the time needed for group discussion (De Almeida, 1980; Hedges, 1985; Robson, 1988). So much for objectivity!

These group discussion theories and techniques did not always "fit" the research groups studied, the thesis topic, the resources I as a researcher possessed, or the power dynamics inherent in the research process. These issues have been discussed in relation to the divide

between theory and practice and the nature of subjectivity, but also led me to construct some thoughts on the subjective nature of social research in relation to participant observation.

### **3.7 Participant observation - an example of the reflexive nature of research**

The status of social science as critique has to be elucidated through relating normative implications of social research and theory to reflexivity as the rational basis for freedom. Rejection of the dogma of the absolute logical separation of statements of fact and judgement of value does not compromise the possibility of sustaining such critique objectively: on the contrary, it is the very condition of its realization (Giddens, 1977, p28).

Detailing the reflexive nature of research has its critics. Gouldner (1973, p.54) suggests it is a common escape to deny objectivity, claiming that it is sufficient for the writer to state his or her own biases so that the reader may take them into account.

A bland confession of partisanship merely betrays smugness and naivete. It is smug because it assumes the values we have are good enough; it is naive because it assumes we know the values we have.

What can the reader do with such a confession, and how is it to be counted or discounted when assessing research material? Bourdieu's (1986) warning is that in order to understand an autobiographical account, it is necessary to construct the successive states of the field in which it has unfolded, that is, the set of objective relations that link the subject under consideration to all other subjects facing a similar set of possibilities. This provides a theoretical basis for conclusions that are made, and is a requisite for any rigorous assessment of the particular choices an individual makes, considering the space of possibilities he or she confronts. It also reduces the tendency to select, identify or interpret certain significant events in accordance with an ideology that the autobiographer happens to hold at a given moment. This study has situated individual interactions within the more general framework of the restructuring of welfare (Chapter Two) and discusses how these objective relations influence all social workers and social service users dealing with financial hardship. Furthermore, the theoretical discussions on how attitudes are related to actions are not confined to the social work field and are an additional set of objective relations that link the subject under consideration to all other subjects facing a similar set of possibilities.

With reference to Gouldner's (1973) comments, the researcher was aware that her subjective view of the social world resulted in the selection of particular events for discussion. This does not necessarily mean the themes and connections proposed are invalid. It merely alerts the reader to possible selective attention to events that were

thought significant in the research. Nor is this the same as a confession that the researcher's personal or political agenda has dominated the research. There is however no complete answer as to how the reader integrates the researcher's perspective into the research findings, apart from having a thorough understanding of what perspectives are being used.

Field observation of a social services team has been an important method used in the research, because it explores a new way of understanding the relationship between social workers' attitudes and actions in relation to poverty. However this method is particularly prone to questions about how the researcher's interactions with the field affected the nature of the findings (Johnson, 1975; Bastin, 1985; Bulmer, 1982; Cooper, 1984; Coser, 1959; Holdaway, 1979; Mattinson and Sinclair, 1979; Parker, 1974; Burgess, 1982).

Participant and non participant observation are difficult to define as different and separate - the social workers' responses to having a researcher in their midst as well as my responses to them have sometimes meant participating in the work of the team and sometimes taking a more detached role. The fact that the Silverton teamleader offered me a job with the team, and the team organised a special meal and leaving present on my last day, suggests that the process of the researcher becoming integrated into the team can be successful. However it is an emotionally difficult balancing act, where one wants to become close enough to the team to discover useful information but not too close so they feel betrayed when they see informal comments they made in an academic paper! As part of the integrative process, boundaries between participating and not participating in the team's work also become blurred. As a qualified social worker when did my views for example become part of the participant rather than non participant process?

There is a similar debate about the artificiality of a rigid distinction between covert and overt observation. I was more overt than some advisers thought I should be in explaining the aims of the research, giving feedback at the end of the observation period, and sending papers on the research before the final writing up stage. I believed it was important that social workers knew what I was doing beforehand and had an opportunity to debate the findings afterwards. However when one of the team asked me what exactly I was writing in my field notebook, I could not give her a totally straight answer. I wrote down what I thought the team were doing and saying at the time. Do I want to be overt about that? As an observer, what I said and did changed from overt to covert on a day to day almost minute to minute basis.

Johnson (1975), Burgess (1988), Parker (1974), and Foot Whyte (1984) and many other writers have discussed in detail the ethics of participant observation. The complexity of



the issue relates to one of the main themes of this chapter - subjectivity - the observer is the lens through which all actions and attitudes of the subjects are reflected.

### **3.8 A Reflexive account of this research**

Reflexivity is defined as the subjective nature of research being integrated into the whole, and is one aspect of methodology that has been credited to women's view of the world (Barry, 1989). Certainly a feminist account of research that reads like a story (Briggs, 1970; Mukai, 1989) while weaving complicated ideas into the narrative is a new development, but is it sufficiently well accepted or recognized for it to be used for a Ph.D. thesis?

With subjectivity being a key area of theoretical debate in this Chapter, it seems appropriate to include some biographical detail to illuminate my perspective on the research. Further sections also document the personal process of doing ethnographic research.

Coming from a middle class background, with working class origins on my father's side and a social work tradition on my mother's, I commenced training as a social worker at nineteen. Over the subsequent twenty years, throughout various social work courses, social work practice and social work teaching, I have been aware that discussions on poverty were merely the academic framework within which social work took place. Social work is organised so that it treats "clients" as individual cases or "specialisms" without full cognizance of how poverty affects users of social services every day. Poverty awareness is not integrated into social workers' training and practice. This then is my perspective on social work and poverty. It persuaded me to give up a full time social work lecturing job in London, move to Sheffield and live on an E.S.R.C. grant.

My interest in ethnographic research has been a gradual stepping - down process, a curiosity as to whether the tales written on questionnaires by the one hundred and fifty social work students I surveyed, and discussed on tapes by students in group discussions, were really going on in social services teams. I was also aware from personal experience, that surveys and interviews on social workers' attitudes to poverty (Becker, 1987) were not necessarily the same as the reality "on the job".

Being a detached youth worker working mainly with girls in Liverpool and supervised by Howard Parker, gave me insights into how to observe/work in an extremely loose structure as he had done (see "View from the Boys", 1974) and the determination to write

it up this time. Being a qualified and experienced social worker gave me the confidence to feel I could become a socialised stranger in a social work team. It has meant easier access, difficult as it was at first, to senior management and a common professional language with all of the social work teams visited. For example what does "*Well I've done locum, so I know how to fit in quickly as far as duty's concerned*" mean to the outsider? Comparing working tales with social workers in the Silverton and City teams, thus gaining their trust to the extent that I was often asked for advice or support, made me wonder how previous observers of social services teams who were not qualified social workers, nor had previous experience of social work, (Johnson, 1975; Smith, 1980; Satyamurti, 1981; and Pithouse, 1987; rather than Mattinson and Sinclair, 1979), managed.

### 3.9 Access

For the researcher, access is controlled by the locally powerful and can determine the nature of the research findings. "...to get into the whale in the first place may need their permission and sponsorship..." (Bell and Encel, 1976, p.33).

My experience as a research student both full and part time is of being relatively powerless, despite my other skills and status as a social worker and lecturer. I have sometimes not been able to gain access to people important to the research or occasionally been asked to "tone down" the results to fit in with the needs of the institution from which I was working, or the institution being researched. This form of social control can have negative effects on the aims and outcomes of the research and can also provoke negative responses from the subjects being studied (Bell and Encell, 1976; Foot Whyte, 1984).

Research with social work students, social service users and to some extent social workers, confirms the idea that most social research is done on the relatively powerless for the relatively powerful. Bell and Encell (1976) suggest studying up rather than studying down to understand how systems and structures create events and knowledge for the powerless. The field observation in two social work teams was the "studying up" development in this study. However, only one of the two teamleaders was willing to be observed at work, and none of the social services hierarchy above those in social work teams was involved to any great extent.

Giddens talks of social science standing in an inherently critical relation to human social conduct and institutions "...as a potential instrument of emancipation - or of domination "

(Giddens, 1977, p.28). I was aware of this issue when I found myself apologizing to the British Sociological Association Conference where I was giving a paper on the research, for criticising social workers. I suggested that as sociologists, we were much more likely to be critically investigating agents of the public welfare system rather than agents of fiscal or occupational welfare (Titmuss, 1958) who often had more social control over poor peoples' lives, especially in relation to poverty.

While wishing to "emancipate" social workers in relation to their attitudes and actions to poor people, I am also aware that as a rather downtrodden middle class elite, they are often studied when the higher or private echelons of hierarchies are not so accessible. As a social worker and teacher myself, was I not part of this elite which I was analyzing, and were the academics who were listening at the conference, not part of a higher elite, not so subject to social science investigations ?

We have, for example, used deception, unobtrusive measures, and power relationships to obtain data for many years. The difference is that we have used these measures, with the knowledge and approval of higher elites, against the less powerful participants in organisations. With the complicity of higher elites, we have become participant observers in mental hospitals or work groups, stood behind one way mirrors.....I am suggesting not so much new techniques, but the application of existing ones at the elite level of bureaucratic structures (Spencer, 1982, p.134).

In researching social work teams, there were not quite as many problems as Gary Spencer's in gaining access to West Point Military Academy. However there were Kafkaesque moments. For example one social services research officer was very dubious about giving me the work telephone number of a teamleader whose team had expressed an interest in my research and wanted to meet me. He seemed to want everything to be arranged through him, so three telephone calls became necessary not one. There were few problems obtaining access to social service users or social work students which implies that to some extent social workers are an elite who have professional and bureaucratic power that other groups do not have.

I started negotiations with City Social Services Research Department in June 1988. Three research papers (each revised from the one before), and two meetings later, they suddenly said I could not do the research with them and I should look for another authority. By then it was October 1988. The research officer had taken my proposal to a meeting of Divisional Field Officers, to which we had previously agreed I should go too, and they had said their social work teams were too stretched to take on any more research. They were already participating in research on the Social Fund.

The fieldwork was to commence in January 1989 and I had assumed the good relations I thought I had built up with the research department would take me through the bureaucratic hierarchy. Both my supervisors are well thought of by the department and this increased my sense of security. I suspect the research officer who was handling the negotiations was feeling overworked and mine was the easiest piece of work to unload.

I immediately approached seven social service departments that were within travelling distance, in order to develop contacts with them that would lead to access for conducting the research. Meanwhile City Research department had climbed down somewhat, after pressure from one of my supervisors, and agreed I could send my research proposal (redrafted again) around the teams. The research officer said I should not hold out any hope.

I eventually got to put my proposals to two social work teams in Carshire - another local authority, who handled the business quickly compared to City Social Services. I had the choice of two teams to work with, Wellton and Silverton. Silverton had the highest incidence of child battering and poverty, Wellton had the highest number of owner occupiers in Carshire authority. I decided to start working with Silverton, although both teams agreed to the research proposal, for a number of reasons. Firstly I visited Silverton and they agreed to me working with them before the date had arrived to meet the Wellton team. Secondly I thought it would be interesting to work with a team that had a more radical reputation, and was situated in a particularly poor area compared to other teams in the authority. It seemed likely that they would be more aware of poverty in their work and that their attitudes and actions to social work and poverty would be likely to be more positive. Thirdly although both teams were friendly and welcoming in a personal sense, Wellton seemed more hostile to my own attitudes on social work and poverty. A cynical reader would say at this point that I had carefully selected a social work team that would concur with my own views on poverty. The social work team I did choose has not proved this in practice. What is suggested in previous sections is that researchers are often not entirely honest about their subjective motivations in choosing to work with one group of people and not another. (Bell and Encell, 1976; Foot Whyte, 1986). A pseudo-scientific approach to methodology denies the practical realities of having to work with a social work team three days a week for eight months. The Wellton team appeared to have fairly rigid views about the role of giving money in social work, and were not convinced that research could be of any use to them in their everyday practice. The role of feedback and evaluation of the research by social service practitioners was an important theoretical consideration in the planning of the project. It was envisaged that the Silverton team would be more interested in participating in the research process and would be more likely to find the policy implications from the research useful.

The City research officer then got in touch to say that a City Team were interested in the research proposal and wanted to arrange a meeting. This team was smaller than the other two and seemed delighted that my research would not involve any extra paperwork for them. They proceeded to tell the research officer, who felt he too should be present at the meeting, what was wrong with the (quantitative) Social Fund research that he and they were involved with. Despite the warning from the research officer that departmental research would take priority and that he would not expect me to start before March 1989 when the Social Fund research would be finished, they agreed that I could work with them.

### **3.10 Becoming a participant observer**

To illustrate the settling in process, I will describe how members of the Silverton team offered their help with the research. The Teamleader provided me with telephone numbers of local contacts at a meeting in December 1988. He was keen that I should arrange interviews for when I started in January. He thought they would be useful. I suspect he was not sure that I would have enough to do hanging round the office. I did follow up some of the contacts. I also had plenty to do hanging round the office and in a way that he was relieved to find did not interfere with his or other people's work too much.

Brian, the local welfare rights officer suggested I get in touch with John, a social worker in the team who would be leaving shortly, about a woman who they had helped together. John agreed we could go and see her. I suddenly realised when John suggested we go in separate cars that this was no longer an on-going case for him and I was to be left there to interview her. After a slight panic, as I had no questions ready as I thought I was going to observe a social work visit, I spent a productive two hours talking to Mrs Dixon. I was concerned that other social workers had misunderstood what I wanted to do, thinking I just wanted to interview their clients who had money problems, rather than observing all the clients they dealt with on a day to day basis. I decided to write a memo explaining this again to the team.

Tony, one of the part time social workers based in the same room, was willing to take me to different sorts of cases, but apologised that this first one was not really to do with poverty and I might find it quite boring. Mr Farmer was on his own with five children in an area where the small council houses were boarded up across the road, and there were no cars apart from one Reliant Robin. Mr Farmer's house was poorly decorated and

cramped. We could just about squeeze in the kitchen to talk to him, although only two out of the three of us could sit down as there was not room for more than two chairs. His eldest stepson Neil had been stealing money from him so the father, who was on income support, did not have enough for the other children. Neil also used to run away and the father could not afford the fares to keep getting him back. Neil was admitted to residential care but continued to run away. Social workers had to go and pick him up. Tony was under pressure to find somewhere else for Neil as social services officers were saying they could not afford to keep him in care after he was sixteen. The interview between Tony and Mr Farmer was interesting in that Mr Farmer was concerned about his financial situation and moving from the council house the family were living in, but not being able to because he was in arrears with the rent, while Tony was concerned about Neil and what was going to happen to him when he reached sixteen. Financial difficulties were the main agenda item for both social service user and social worker, but in Tony's case the agenda was covert. Consequently the interaction seemed to have crossed purposes with neither individual responding to what the other was saying. Discussing the situation afterwards Tony agreed that if the father was in different financial circumstances Neil may not have behaved in the same way and his father may not have asked the social services to help. If Social Services were not in financial difficulties, Tony would not have been faced with the difficulty of where Neil goes next - probably back home for the same problems to recur. However he thought the boy's problems were psychological rather than financial as he had another boy from a middle class home with a similar problem of continuously running away from wherever he was placed. However at the initial meeting with the Silverton team, where they accepted my working with them, they agreed they took poverty for granted. Mary said she had only one client from a "nice" home in nine years.

Despite both teams' interest in the research, they were in fact nervous about being observed in practice - hence John's case that has been more or less successfully resolved, and Tony's apology that his case might not be relevant. Only Linda, one of the social work assistants, volunteered to take me out with her without further prompting on my part. She needed some help transporting some puppies to the RSPCA because the owners could not afford to keep them. As I got to know the social workers, it was easier to accompany and observe them in their day to day work without them feeling they had to make a special effort, or that they had to have different attitudes and actions in relation to poverty because a researcher was present. However despite the length of time spent with each team - eight months with Silverton and five months with City, there were occasions when I noticed social workers appearing to make comments for my benefit.

The Silverton team had decided they did not want help with routine social work duties, because management might then be less likely to recognize the degree of understaffing and overwork there was in the team. Even so this study is defined as participant rather than non participant because there were many ways in which I did participate in both the Silverton and City teams - handling puppies being one straightforward example. Other examples included: giving and taking telephone messages; helping to transport furniture and clothes to social service users; supporting social workers who were dealing with child abuse problems and talking to them generally about their work which they appeared to find useful; being asked for opinions in team meetings and by individual social workers; putting up welfare rights information in the Silverton waiting room and supporting Brian the local welfare rights officer and Vernon the team leader, in organising social work meetings on welfare rights. The question that this level of interaction raises is that although in most cases I have responded rather than initiated such activities, when (if at all), do these activities become interference in my role as an "objective" participant observer?

However in terms of action research, my presence as an observer prompted social workers to discuss how aware they were of the link between their attitudes and actions in relation to poverty. Furthermore in City Social Services a positive awareness of the poverty of social work users is supported by their policy documents.

### **3.11 The effectiveness of the research in terms of policy and practice**

Social workers in a social services team will not necessarily want to wait one or two years or longer to see the results of research on paper. They may have left social work, or moved on to specialise or promotion. Policy recommendations often involve resources which social services departments do not have so how can they be implemented in practice?

It is extremely difficult for an individual researcher at Ph.D level to have any lasting effect on policies on social work and poverty at the institutional level. I was the one asking for access, to do research on a topic of my choice. The social services departments concerned had no motivation to carry out policy initiatives suggested, although they might find the results interesting. Furthermore the two social work teams concerned were structured in a particular way as a result of individual management and social services department policies developed over the last sixteen years since the 1974 reorganisation. One student researcher cannot be expected to have much of an impact.

However I believe my presence in the social work teams questioning their attitudes and actions in relation to poverty and social work, had a positive "emancipatory" effect in terms of practice which was of immediate use to the teams. Vernon the Silverton teamleader arranged three meetings with welfare rights officers and the team. He checked that I would be there for the meetings, and he and Brian, the local welfare rights officer both admitted that prior to my arrival, there had not been a meeting for over six months. The meetings were concerning fuel debts, liaison with the welfare rights officers, and monies still available under community care grants. The Team leader also became aware that the local welfare rights officer wanted more support from social workers for the training he organises.

Both teams discussed feedback papers on the fieldwork which included policy initiatives that could be implemented by the team. From these taped debates, it appears that the initiatives that were accepted were ones that members of the team or the teamleader had already thought about, but needed prompting into putting into practice. The policy suggestions that were not accepted were ones that seemed too radically different from the individual or team's way of working. The Silverton team were keen to have a monthly problem session where they could bring up issues connected with poverty and welfare rights that were causing them problems. The welfare rights officers were to be invited, but the format suggested was task orientated and was more dependent on self help and the team working as a group, rather than the more formal welfare rights presentations I had observed during the fieldwork. This proposal was developing the concept of a poverty awareness programme with an informal structure where any issues connected with poverty could be discussed (Fimister, 1988; Stewart, 1989). Vernon however, was not keen on this policy initiative because he felt more meetings would take the social workers away from their work, when everyone was very stressed by the amount of work there was to do already.

The idea of having a permanent duty officer who had extra training on welfare rights, and a caseload that saw poverty issues as an area for detailed knowledge like other specialisms in social work, was not so well received because nobody wanted the job.

*Carol: ... and then the idea that there should be a suggestion that maybe somebody should remain on duty to deal with poverty related or finance related queries (pause) um you know urgh!... the idea of doing that, that's not what I trained to do. I just wouldn't like the idea of doing that. What I thought was good though, would be to have an on-going training session or seminar or whatever (mmm from other social workers), where people could bring their own stuff (mmm from others). I think that was good ..... around welfare rights issues.*



Since Carol's arrival in the team, during the last two months of the observation, she had been placed on the duty desk by the team leader, nearly every day, in order to get to know the type of problems that occurred in Silverton, and because social workers in both teams were not keen to take their turn on the duty desk. Carol may have felt some pressure to do other people's "dirty work" and therefore reacted strongly to a suggestion from the research, that she might have felt would influence her future role in the team.

The City team were defensive about feedback comments that I had not observed much welfare rights work in their practice and denied that the welfare rights officers rather than social workers were dealing with these issues. They did not see the need for joint meetings with welfare rights officers from social services, nor did they think they were unaware of poverty issues. However a social work student who was on placement with the team whom I interviewed at her college, felt that the team were not always up to date with their welfare rights knowledge. She quoted an example of one of the social workers not realizing the benefit situation of a sixteen year old he was working with. The teamleader who was not at the team meeting, but who I interviewed separately about the policy initiatives, wanted to initiate welfare rights sessions with the welfare rights officers. He said he had been thinking of doing this for some time but "*had not got round to it*".

The City team already had on their agenda from their staff training day, the proposal that they should make representations to management concerning how their work output as a patch team was evaluated, and therefore this policy initiative from the research was accepted.

The two teams had somewhat different attitudes to the feedback sessions, which may reflect the different pressures they felt from the social services structure they were part of and the different areas they were working in.

City team could be said to be working in a "Gesellschaft" - impersonal, large, city neighbourhood (Tonnie, 1957), whereas the Silverton area was more of a "Gemeinschaft" community, where individuals were less likely to move away from where they were born and the community was relatively homogeneous (Bell and Newby, 1971). The City team were situated in one of the poorest areas of the city, where there was high demand in terms of helping users with their financial problems. At the same time they were "under siege" as their feedback paper was entitled, because their way of working under the patch system was not given the status they felt it deserved by the social services hierarchy. Consequently they tended to view the feedback paper as yet more criticism of their way of working when they had hoped it would show management how effective the patch system was. They also tended to be individuals who considered themselves

"progressive" and therefore felt they were already aware of the issues raised by the research.

The Silverton team on the other hand, worked in a rural area which also was statistically one of the poorest areas of that authority. However people applying to social services for financial help were limited because: there were fewer numbers living in the Silverton area - there were no huge high-rise tower blocks as there were next door to the City offices; the settled rural nature of the community meant friends and relatives sometimes lived nearby and were more able to help; the Silverton team policy was one of non cooperation with the Social Fund, and therefore they were not involved in these negotiations with social security.

Many of the social workers in the Silverton team were local women who tended to see a researcher as an "expert". They were therefore more likely to accept the suggested policy initiatives on paper if not in practice. They also seemed more upset by the suggestions that their attitudes and actions were not always consistent. These feelings were not expressed in the debate on the feedback paper, but to the teamleader after I had left.

Both social work teams and local authorities with whom I worked will receive further feedback on the research and its findings. However with the present squeeze on resources, it is doubtful that either will be particularly receptive to policy initiatives, unless they go some way to relieving the pressure on individual workers.

### **3.12 Summary and Conclusions**

What methods have been most useful in fulfilling the initial theoretical interests outlined in the two tables, and what methods most suited the research topic? My experiences of quantitative and qualitative methodology have led to a critique of the rigid ways in which theory and method are linked, and the idea of purely objective methodology.

Having conducted a survey and organised group discussions and interviews, the thirteen month participant observation study led to the richest most meaningful data for a number of reasons. Theoretically emancipatory and practical interests have been to a great extent fulfilled using this method. From Table Four, it appears that the methodological concerns best served have been in the practical sphere - however the critique later employed would argue that the boundaries between methodologies is unrealistic, and that within the participant observation methodology there have been examples previously discussed of how emancipatory and technical concerns have also been highlighted.

Participant observation has the advantage of being longitudinal rather than "snapshot" so there is the opportunity to reinforce some findings and conclusions while correlating or contrasting others. William Foot Whyte's (1984, p.63) comment below on this issue could now be said to be ageist as more and more postgraduates including myself are "mature". However I do feel privileged to have been able to immerse myself in the fieldwork in a way that is unlikely to be repeatable in terms of time and resources in a more established academic career.

Full-time participant observation over an extended period of time tends to be an age-graded phenomenon. Such studies are most likely to be done by young people, in our student years. When we are established professionals, with teaching or other professional responsibilities, we are unlikely to have the time and the motivation to make such a full commitment. Nevertheless the techniques we learn in full-time participant observation can be adapted to later studies where such immersion in the field is not possible.

Furthermore field observation is interactive and dynamic, so that theory and method became integrated as new and interesting data promotes exciting new ideas (see Table Four). For example it would not have been possible to have feedback periods at the end of the observation period where policy initiatives were suggested by the researcher, but were actively discussed and criticized by the participants rather than "objects" of the research. Participant observation proved an effective method in which to gain "subject" to "subject" interaction. The fieldwork methodology also "fitted" the research question. I was interested in establishing how social workers' attitudes to poverty could be understood in relation to their actions. Very few other methods allow the researcher to record and observe attitudes and also observe actions. Without a familiarity with the subjects of the study and the environment over time, it would be impossible to assess whether such attitudes and actions were contrived for the researcher. Writers such as Willis (1980) and Burgess (1988) have argued that the capacity of the ethnographic project 'to surprise us' is its greatest strength. Certainly the fieldwork findings have been in some cases not what I expected, nor from the reactions of academic and professional audiences have the findings necessarily been what they were expecting either.

Ethnographic research can be provocative in that it examines the "real" world, "warts and all" which may be unpleasant and shocking. Nevertheless in Chapters Two and Six, I have endeavoured to situate social workers' attitudes and actions in context, using theoretical models that explain rather than judge their behaviour.

Bastin (1985) suggests observation is a method that is greatly underutilized as a contribution to policy planning and is particularly applicable where changes (such as the Social Fund) are likely to have a direct influence on peoples' lives.

Although there have been fieldwork studies of professional groups such as the police (Rubinstein, 1974; Holdaway, 1977, 1979, 1982; Smith & Gray, 1981), the military (Coser, Lewis et al, 1959; Sullivan, Mortimer et al, 1958) and many with teachers (Hargreaves, 1967, 1975; Lacey, 1970; Keddie, 1971; Hammersley and Woods, 1976; Willis, 1979), there have been surprisingly few with social workers (Johnson, 1975; Mattinson and Sinclair, 1979; Satyamurti, 1981; Pithouse, 1988), and none to my knowledge that are solely concerned with attitudes and actions in relation to poverty. Cooper's (1985) study of DSS officers does investigate how attitudes to poverty are translated into practice.

As someone whose background and experience as a social worker are congruent with my research interest, my role as a fieldwork observer fits in with Bulmer's (1982) classification of the overt "insider" who is a "socialised" stranger. I would suggest I have been accepted and trusted by social services staff in a shorter space of time than it may have taken other researchers because of my understanding of the tasks and processes involved in being a social worker. Overt observational methods have been used because studies such as Caudill et al (1952) have shown that the overt approach provides data equal in richness to that yielded by the covert approach and gives access to a wider range of data over which it is possible to exercise a greater degree of control.

Becker (1987 ,p.549) suggests further qualitative research on social work and poverty is needed:

Until social work, their managers and agencies understand how poverty impacts upon clients and how attitudes, structures and contradictions affect the nature and delivery of social work services, then it is unlikely that the poor will receive a service that is appropriate to their needs.

Participant observation offered a surprising, realistic and valuable method with which to understand how poverty impacts on clients, and what role social workers play in this process. Field observation may be equally useful for similar studies which seek to discover how individuals translate attitudes into actions and appears relatively unacknowledged as a research methodology that can lead to action research and the development of policy initiatives (Burgess, 1982, 1988).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter asks how do social work students come to know and to attach meaning to the theory and practice they learn on their courses. It is suggested that social work students do assimilate theory, but do not integrate theory with practice sufficiently on their social work courses, and that a user's perspective on social work education can provide some ways forward in developing a thorough integration of theory and practice.

A further argument proposes that the institutional and student culture is not so strong that the research findings from different educational establishments and student groups cannot be compared. Data from four group discussions with social work students from Sheffield University and Polytechnic on the relationship between social work and poverty - conducted in June 1988 - are presented. Additional quantitative information from an M.Phil. pilot study survey of thirty nine social work students - conducted in 1986 - is also included where appropriate, as back up to the qualitative findings. The pilot study of students at North East London, Middlesex, and Hatfield polytechnics was concerned with the teaching of supplementary benefits on social work courses and the role of supplementary benefits in social work. The fuller survey from eight institutions where data on 150 social work students was collected is not included, as the research topic was assessed by the University of Sheffield to be too close to the thesis topic and the M.Phil. had to be abandoned.

A poverty awareness programme which develops the students' ideas on how social work and poverty can be more effectively taught and understood, is explored in more detail in Chapter Eight.

#### 4.2 How do social work students come to know and learn?

Sorcerers say that we are inside a bubble. It is a bubble into which we are placed at the moment of our birth. At first the bubble is open, but then it begins to close until it has sealed us in. That bubble is our perception. We live inside that bubble all of our lives. And what we witness on its round walls is our own reflection (Castaneda, 1973, p.43).

What social work students come to know on a social work course will be a product of their individual perception, influenced by: their background and past experiences, the

institutional and teaching ideology of the educational establishment, their course and their practice placements, and the peer group with whom they are training. What they think they have learnt may change again once they are practising social work (O'Conner and Dalgleish, 1986; Wasserman, 1970, 1971). Educationalists and philosophers have explored different kinds of "knowing". They distinguish between objective, analytic, verifiable external knowledge and inner knowledge based on subjective, holistic, divergent or intuitive perceptions.

While evidence can usually be produced for external knowledge, inner knowledge can merge so well with the beliefs of "the person who knows", that it is difficult to verify. "I know that I am aware of poverty in my work, and my attitudes and actions reflect this awareness", is harder to evaluate than "I know what benefits are available from the DSS for a one parent family".

Yet social workers do need to exercise right brain functioning - concerned with non verbal, intuitive holistic modes of mental functioning as well as left brain functioning - concerned with verbal, analytic thinking. As Richards (1985, p.34) comments:

Despite the research on how the brain processes information...our universities persist in addressing and rewarding "left brain functioning". For social work and indeed many other professions, this is increasingly problematic.

In these terms, the evidence from the fieldwork suggests that students may understand theories on poverty as related to "left brain functioning", while viewing inter personal social work theory as related to "right brain functioning". Certainly they felt academic teaching and practical knowledge were not sufficiently integrated.

*Martin: I think also in the lectures and things we've examined things like the structural causes of poverty, we've sort of done that which I think is really good. But I mean that's something that's never been related to actual social work practice..obviously if you're interested in it you'll do that anyway and for me that's what I think all my social work practice was about. But I think it's very easy not..to see that those structural causes are somewhere in academia..which has not got much to do with social work. And maybe seeing family therapy and counselling and all this sort of thing as something that's really social work. And it's sort of been split, ..there hasn't been that much integration of how the structural causes of poverty should affect social work practice (Polytechnic - Group One).*

University students had a similar perspective.

*Mary:..there's very little opportunity in the course itself to bring the experience and the theory together in any kind of meaningful way....*

**Gina:** *I think we've had opportunities as well to do sort of individual pieces of work haven't we that can touch on poverty? But again that's from a very theoretical perspective, there hasn't been a chance to really touch on that sense of personal hopelessness that you have in some situations when you feel that you can do almost nothing, how do you cope with that? (University - Group One).*

"Right brain /left brain" thinking is only one of a number of explanations for what and how students come to know. There is the problem of how students attach meaning to their learning (Jordan, 1987), what they need to know (Pearson, 1975), and whether there is sufficient time on the overloaded social work curriculum for students to know about anything in depth (Howe, 1989). It is suggested that the poverty awareness programme, developed in Chapter Eight may help students to learn about poverty using personal and academic ways of knowing. However, such a programme would apply to only one part of the social work syllabus, albeit an important part. Further research would need to evaluate the place of poverty awareness training in a social work course, and the efficacy of the training programme advanced.

### 4.3 Research on social work education

Gardiner (1988, p.4) is critical of much research on social work education:

It is of enduring curiosity to me that social work educators frequently talk about learning, but go on to describe the content of teaching or the content of assessment - without giving much attention to **how** students learn.

How social work students see and construe their world and the way this influences learning is the perspective adopted in this Chapter. This outlook is interactionist in that it approaches the students as a group who have influence on and learn from each other and uses phenomenological insights by attempting to understand the reality for the consumer of social work education. The study is also comparative in that responses from five educational establishments have been included in this chapter and a further five establishments have co-operated in the research.

Understanding how students learn is not a particularly new approach in that studies from Sweden in the mid 1970's (cited in Gardiner and Matthias, 1988) refocused educational research by looking at learning from the consumer's perspective. What is learned and how that learning occurs is investigated, rather than measuring how much is learned, or what it will cost, as in behavioural and evaluation research on education.

The major finding of this approach to educational research is that students learn in different ways (Marton and Saljo, 1976; Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983; Biggs, 1979). Howe (1989, p.11) suggests that the crowded nature of the knowledge base, means that students and social workers will have a superficial understanding of all aspects of social work, "It now seems well established that the more overloaded is the curriculum, the more likely it is that students will resort to surface reproductive learning". Social work students in the university groups felt that the pressure of coursework was hindering them from exploring the nature and meaning of social work generally, but also specifically in relation to the relationship between poverty and social work.

**Margaret:** *..you're too busy writing the essays to make sure it'll pass to think the issue through, so you've read a couple of chapters from the book, but you haven't read it and you don't know and you don't have the time to think it through. (Mmm from others).....there's so much pressure on this course to write essays, to do this, to do the other but there isn't time to integrate that kind of learning, and it isn't done and I think its a big lack (University - Group One).*

Criticisms of this deep/surface approach to learning would suggest that the student's own interests, attitudes and ideology will affect what she studies in depth and understands the meaning of, and what she strategically applies a surface approach to.

**Fiona:** *..I think you could have actually got through the course and still do that if you weren't interested in poverty. You could get through this course and not have any idea about it, it could wash over you (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

Students may, for personal reasons unconnected with education, adopt a deep approach in one particular time and place but not in another. However it has been suggested (Howe, 1989; Entwistle, 1987; Gardiner, 1988) that a deep approach can increase understanding and use of the concepts learned after a course has been completed. It is therefore particularly relevant for social work students who must use what they have learnt in their future work, unlike a non professional course, where for example, students may not need the knowledge gained in a zoology degree in their future role as a management trainee.

Gardiner (1988) has evaluated social work supervision using the learner perspective. He examined: the patterns of interaction between practice teacher and student; and how the teachers and students conceived the teaching process and the needs of the learner. He found that the concept of learning was understood at three levels.

At level one, supervision (and the sense the participants made of it) was seen to be primarily about the content of learning, and involved much direct teaching and instruction by the supervisor.



At level two there was a recognition that learning required the active involvement of the student. This level was about students also being able to actively construe meanings for themselves, rather than simply to reproduce what others had told them. It included a recognition of diversity in approaches to teaching and learning, and in practice.

Level three reflected a demonstrated ability to teach, learn and practise in different ways, depending on perceptions of the demands of different learning situations. It also involved the capacity to reflect on experience, and to evaluate the relevance of different approaches it required the ability to transfer both the content and process of learning to new and different situations (Gardiner, 1988, p.7-8).

Gardiner does point out that level one and surface learning can be appropriate - for example in this study in relation to some aspects of welfare rights teaching. More importantly the above extract has implications for how social work students learn, and how they learn about social work and poverty. It suggests that students learn most effectively and permanently by an interactive process - and certainly this would be the aim of a poverty awareness programme. However the extract also suggests that the "best" form of learning is that which integrates different perspectives on social work. Not all practitioners or theorists would agree that an integrated approach to social work is possible considering the nature of social work, and further that to understand and consider the world from one main perspective is preferable. This polytechnic student for example, seems to have adopted an approach that is not integrated, but deliberately concentrates on a definition of social work that is concerned with material need.

**Interviewer:** *Do you feel very confident that you understand the relationship between poverty and social work, do you feel that's been an area you're fairly to grips with in terms of what you've been taught on the course? Is it something you see as important or not important?*

**Martin:** *For me I feel it's quite high but ...nearly every essay I've done I've managed to sort of choose essays which concentrate on it. When it comes to it that's my interest anyway and I have got a lot out of the course on that, because that's probably the only area where I've actually done any reading. I have become more knowledgeable - yes.*

#### **4.4 Summarising the discussion on social work education**

Educational research can evaluate teaching and learning in: ideological, moral and normative terms, quantitative, behavioural and economic terms, and qualitative, experiential and subjective terms (Howe, 1989). This part of the chapter has been concerned with setting the agenda for the social work students' discussions, primarily in the third set of terms. However neither ideological nor quantitative issues will be ignored as the debate progresses.

Social work is an occupation that requires a multitude of personal qualities (Davies and Wright, 1989) as well as specific knowledge. This study adds to the research on what and how social work students learn best, and what they feel will stick with them in a future career. There is a danger that only that which can be measured will be taught, so that the tools of the behavioural researcher define the curriculum and ultimately the practice of social work. In such a situation welfare rights - or parts of it that could be superficially tested - would be taught, but not poverty awareness.

Social workers may be aware they have not been trained adequately in welfare rights (Davies, 1984) but they may not be aware of the prejudices they have towards people who are poor. What social work students or social workers feel they need to know may not be what CCETSW, local authorities or social service users feel they need to know or what research commissioned by any number of interested groups, suggests they need to know. The problem is often ideological - who is evaluating the educational process and what their interests are. For example students may be very appreciative of a poverty awareness programme, but researchers or social work managers may claim that this did not lead to effective practice. Users of social services on the other hand may be pleased with what the students have to offer. Reversing the scenario, students may not be satisfied with course content or teaching style, and yet employers and users are satisfied. Who controls social work education is a key question. Howe (1989) suggests social service users as consumers, should evaluate student social workers. However the institutional and hierarchical nature of social work makes this proposition seem unlikely. Education and training and the evaluation of education and training, involve competing ideologies, resources and power bases. As a postgraduate student writing up a Ph.D thesis, I have more power in evaluating social work training than social service users, social work students and possibly some social workers, but less power than university or polytechnic lecturers, practice teachers, social service officers, researchers and team leaders, and social work validating organisations. A poverty awareness programme as a way forward in teaching and learning about poverty, and as a response to the fieldwork findings may only be accepted by some individuals in some of the above groups.

Howe (1989, p.17) is more positive in his conclusion about social work education, and suggests the following future for the research debate on what and how social work students learn:

Combining the recommendations of practice evaluators and training evaluators, we can pick out a number of common, and therefore key words - small scale, collaborative, participative, learner's perspective, client's view, exploratory. Weave these together and we begin to have some useful ideas about how to move forward on both educational and practical fronts.

#### **4.5 What is professional knowledge?**

In order to explore what students need to know in social work, professional knowledge is examined: firstly from a sociology of knowledge perspective, and then from the perspective of social work researchers, and finally from the perspective of social work students who participated in the fieldwork for this chapter.

In the course of the division of labour a body of knowledge is developed that refers to the particular activities defined as social work. In its linguistic base, this knowledge is already indispensable to the institutional "programming" of these activities. There will further be a collection of recipes that must be learned if the student is to perform social work "correctly". This knowledge serves as a channelling controlling force in itself and an essential ingredient of the institutionalization of this area of work. A whole segment of the social world is objectified by this knowledge. There will be an objective "science" of social work, corresponding to the objective "reality" of practice. This body of knowledge is transmitted to the next generation. It is learned as "objective truth" in the course of socialization and thus internalized as subjective reality. This reality in turn has power to shape the individual. It will produce a specific type of person, namely the social worker, whose identity and biography as a social worker have meaning only in a universe which includes the above body of knowledge. No part of the institutionalization of social work can exist without the particular knowledge that has been socially produced and objectivated. To "do" social work and be a social worker imply existence in a social world defined and controlled by this body of knowledge.

Thus a student practice teacher who wanted to supervise social work students in her community work setting found that the language and terms used on the practice teacher course were alien to her and her background of community work education - even though one would have assumed they had similar professional roots. Similarly an English language graduate proficient in transcribing tapes, could not make sense of terms such as "Section 1", "assessment" and "supplementary benefit" within the context of the social work students' discussion. The sociology of knowledge leads us to the conclusion that every profession has a body of professional knowledge. Such knowledge may be wide ranging and open to discussion, it is unlikely to be static or fixed.

The origins of social work as a profession, suggest that initially, social workers' knowledge was assumed to be concerned with the deserving and undeserving poor. This knowledge was assimilated within a knowledge of psychodynamics and psychology in

order to establish the connection between psychiatry, medicine and social work (see Chapter One). Today as Howe (1989, p.16) notes there is a trend towards management techniques as the knowledge base for social work:

The penchant of trainers and employers for practices which are task centred, time specific and target-orientated may say more about accountability and measurement in the welfare services than the practice of good social work.

Jordan (1987) argues that integrating personal and professional experiences of social work and understanding what is important for users of social work services are important bodies of knowledge for social workers in practice.

...social workers should be taught as much about how to understand what is personally meaningful to their clients, as what is generally acceptable in various spheres of society. It makes a case for critical and interactionist perspectives on social work (Statham, 1978; Parton, 1985) and for a study of the ways in which social workers' own personal experiences and values should be part of learning to be a social worker (England, 1986). It suggests that creativity and imagination may be as important for good social work as thoroughness and order (Jordan, 1987, p.144).

What is considered social work knowledge has changed over time, though such knowledge is institutionalised in the sense that "new" knowledge - such as welfare rights - has difficulty becoming an accepted part of the social work curriculum (Mcgrail, 1983).

**Joanne:** *Don't you think there's been quite a good input on welfare rights?...I think its actually down to one person that fought very hard at getting a big chunk of our second year on welfare rights (Polytechnic - Group One).*

Later on in the same discussion, one student admitted he had difficulty getting his tutors to accept a welfare rights advice centre as his final placement:

**Interviewer:** *Do you think that college tutors have a particular attitude toward poverty, welfare rights...?*

**Michael:** *I think one of the things which probably sums up their attitude is the fact that for me doing a final placement at a welfare rights and advice place, there was a hell of a lot of people, a hell of a lot of tutors here who felt that wasn't appropriate for a social worker, that they didn't feel that welfare rights or campaign work was part of social work. Now obviously the people who did this welfare rights course wouldn't have thought that, but I mean that sort of runs through, and people had to fight, well I had to fight quite hard to get that placement.*

**Interviewer:** *Is that particular tutors or ..a general feeling that you met?*

**Michael:** *.I'd say there was a split, probably half or more would say that that wasn't a social work experience.*

Of the thirty nine students in the 1986 pilot study survey, 62% made negative comments about teaching on supplementary benefits compared to 18% who made positive comments. Students suggested the area of welfare rights was not given a high priority in the syllabi of the institutions, was not taught effectively, and too little time was allocated to it too late. Students in the survey made no direct references to tutors' attitudes although some students noted "*tutors at college are very far divorced from actual supplementary benefits knowledge*" **Student, Middlesex Polytechnic.**

Is there one "body" of social work knowledge? Gardiner's (1988 & 1989) research on learning suggests there is no one perspective on social work which encompasses all that students need to know. He expects and views as praiseworthy, students who integrate various bodies of knowledge and use them in practice where they think appropriate. Integration of the different parts of what is considered social work knowledge is crucial to learning according to most of the social work students:

**Mary:** *I think it's really difficult because in a lot of ways on our course we've had it in different compartments, so we've had our social policy lectures and we've tackled poverty from that point of view. We've had our social work lectures and we've tackled emotional deprivation on that perspective, but there's been very little opportunity to bring those two things together and to see it in any overall sense. And that's a sort of rolling problem because as we experience this kind of stuff first hand which we're still doing obviously at the moment, then there's no opportunity to integrate those experiences into the stuff we had in the first year. So in a way if we are integrating them, we're doing it in our own heads, and personally I feel I'm lagging behind and I'm struggling with it to sort of bring it altogether. There's very little opportunity in the course itself to bring the experience and the theory together in any kind of meaningful way (University - Group One).*

The student who is trying to personally understand her social work knowledge may instead be dealing with the contradictory and confusing nature of that knowledge. The problem is not necessarily hers but the dilemma of whether conflicting theories can be reconciled into a recognisable body of social work knowledge. The difficulty of integrating different aspects of social work knowledge for many social work students in their group discussions and questionnaires could be a symptom of the complicated task of defining social work and social work knowledge, and hence social work as a profession (Pearson, 1973; Smith and Harris, 1979; and Wasserman, 1971, cited in Chapter One).

The concept of a core base of social work knowledge plus options that social work students can choose, was a strategy employed by both the polytechnic and university

courses. The issue of what is core knowledge and what is optional knowledge is debatable, and again emphasises the difficulty of defining social work knowledge. Students were concerned that by choosing one option instead of another, they were missing out vital information. As social work students' curriculum is inundated with more and more "knowledge", anxiety is felt by students and presumably tutors (Richards, 1985; Haines, 1985).

**Mary:** *I think it (poverty and social work) shouldn't have been optional (agreement from others). I mean I didn't go on it because of what there was to do last term..and so I'm in a position now, starting and having to work the system, and I know nothing about it at all, whereas I knew the old system forwards and backwards. I mean I didn't go on it, it's my own fault..*

**Lorna:** *It's not your own fault. They were all important in their own right weren't they? There were about eight options ..we were told to do one or two out of them all..it's a case of welfare rights or child abuse ..I mean how do you choose? (laughs)*

**Mary:** *It's very frustrating because we had a lot of pressure to get on with dissertations..and doing job applications...there were two law essays to do..and they left all these really interesting vital options to choose between ..and I know there was stuff going on that I really needed and wanted to do, but I just didn't have time.*

**Lorna:** *Some people put themselves in about four or five options because they didn't want to miss them and I think they sort of wore themselves out in the term really (laughs) (University - Group One).*

When these students were asked what they would have liked differently about their situation, they said less courses to be optional, specifically courses on the social fund and child abuse.

Students at the polytechnic had similar views, although they did not mention being overloaded academically.

**Interviewer:** *Do you think the subject of poverty has been tackled on your social work course, do you think it's been an important part of your course?*

**Mark:** *The only time it's been looked at directly I think has been on the elective..when we did the poverty and social work elective which is run by Sheffield Centre for Action against Unemployment....that's an optional course basic, so people had lots of other choices to make obviously.... (Polytechnic - Group One).*

Although Gardiner's (1989) and Howe's (1989) approach to learning on social work courses appears to be a consensus approach as opposed to a conflict perspective, their

research could have a positive outcome for social work education. If a teaching programme can be devised that achieves a more interactive style, so that students learn in a way that continues and is developed in practice, then such an approach is worth considering.

The poverty awareness programme for example, devised in Chapter Eight would have to be tested and evaluated to determine how far students felt their understanding and knowledge of different approaches to poverty and social work were integrated. One would then have to decide to what extent the degree of integration was related to: the efficacy of the programme; the individuals taking part in the programme; the environment and structure of which the programme was a part; or the ambivalent nature of social work knowledge itself.

It appears from the debate so far, that social work theories, methods and practice are not objective "professional" knowledge, but contingent on: time, social and political ideologies, settings, structures and individual behaviour at any given moment (Garfinkel, 1967; Schutz, 1962; Berger and Luckman, 1967).

#### **4.6 The relationship between theory and practice**

The realisation that social work as an activity has problems attached to the linking of theory with practice which are in some respects different from learning for many other professions, insofar as the learner's **identity** is intimately involved and under scrutiny. Constant attempts have been made over the past thirty years to understand and facilitate this process (Richards, 1985, p.2).

This is a complex relationship in a number of ways. Firstly students may assimilate and understand theory more clearly when they have completed their course and are working. Secondly it is part of the nature of academic enquiry to encourage students to be critical. Comments from students at the end of their course, where they complain about the non integration of theory to practice, may change when they evaluate the course at a later date. Thirdly although one would want to foster a deep approach to learning and to encourage the integration of theory with practice, whatever the theory, it may be that such an approach leads to irreconcilable differences between for example psychodynamic and sociological theories on poverty. So although this thesis favours a deep approach to learning (Entwistle, 1987; Howe, 1989; Gardiner et al,1988) - as reflected in the idea of a poverty awareness programme - the concept of this necessarily also being an integrated approach between different theoretical perspectives is not the understanding of "deep" used in this chapter.

Gardiner (1989, p.88-89) however, suggests that the following quotations from thirty nine social work students' questionnaires, show from level one to level three, a deep rather than a surface approach to learning. He does not appear to subscribe to the view (Paley, 1987; Ernstbrunner, 1987; Barbour, 1984; Carew, 1979), that social workers and students do not integrate theory with practice.

**Level One** "the two are related when theory is put into practice"....."impossible to practice, unless I understand the theories"... "Theory - the ground rules or methods to indicate how things **should** be done. Practice - the way things **are** done."

**Level Two** "It often seems practice is forced from theory rather than theories developing from practice"....."All practice entails some means of making sense, attributing cause, or motivation. Theory is the systematic distillation of this process of making sense and is as a consequence inseparable from practice".

**Level Three** "I think it is vital that social workers have a good background knowledge of theory, but it is equally important to have experience of practice. I should imagine that the relationship between the two is constantly changing and for a lot of the time, people are unaware of the way they make decisions. As we will learn there are no "correct" theories and no one "correct" way of working. Hopefully there is a balance but I should imagine that it will take experience and judgement to know when this balance is right".

The number of students' questionnaires used to support this hypothesis are in fact the same number as the pilot study of social work students knowledge and understanding of supplementary benefit (Dowling, 1986). Although Gardiner's (1989) results are based on a limited sample, they support the findings from the group discussions that students do integrate theory with practice to some extent. The levels of theory/ practice integration Gardiner proposes from open ended answers on a questionnaire at the beginning of the students' course, seem debatable. Students' ideas and attitudes may change during their course, and may change again, once they take on the role of a social worker (Smith and Harris, 1979; Wasserman, 1970).

Paley (1987) suggests that qualified and experienced social workers do not usually account for their decisions in terms which draw explicitly on theory. He cynically calls this "the subconscious assimilation of theory" (p.170), because when asked by researchers to explain the apparent absence of theoretical considerations in their everyday work, social workers tend to say things like: "It's absorbed theory", and "We use it without thinking about it" (Carew, 1979, p.360); or "I use it subconsciously", and "I suppose I



assimilate things and they affect my attitudes" (Barbour, 1984, p.571). Alternatively social workers feel guilty about the subjective judgements for which they can offer no theoretical justification (Ernstbrunner, 1987).

Barbour's (1984) study implies social work students have a surface approach to all theory and only use it to explain their practice when forced to do so. Students were required to produce a "situational study" based on practice placements and "could be overheard discussing..... what 'names' they could give to their methods of working with clients" (p.569). One student, who was unconvinced as to the role of theory, admitted he would make the right noises if directly challenged by his tutor: "I'd say to her, well...O.K. I'd say", "I was applying behaviour modification all the time". Another student commented: "I suppose I did (apply theory)...but not as much as I did retrospectively" (Barbour, 1984, p.570). What this limited evidence suggests is that theoretical accounting - or some types of theory - may not be generally employed by social work students or practitioners, but are reserved for particular situations such as writing course work essays.

From the discussion groups in this study, it appeared that some students had a thorough understanding of the relationship between theories on poverty, welfare rights knowledge, and social work practice. While they may have had such knowledge before embarking on their course, it seems likely that they **have** assimilated knowledge from academic teaching and placement experience. For example on inequality and the social division of welfare:

**Mary:** *..because that's what we're there for, that's what a large part of our work is to do with..*

**Interviewer:** *To do with money?*

**Mary:** *Yes, it's to do with implementing the resources decisions that society has made for itself.*

**Interviewer:** *So do you find that frustrating in your work?*

**Mary:** *It angers me enormously. The incapacity to actually get that across to people, because they hide the decision. I mean as a society we hide those kind of decisions ...all that stuff gets deflected,...one bit of the public sector is fighting another, and the global way of looking is missed altogether. Because you fight down here and nobody notices what's going on as a whole and how all the bits fit together. And I'm not saying that money isn't important I think it is but its just like the whole, the way in which vulnerable people are actually dealt with as a whole, it can't be looked at except in relation to those who aren't vulnerable and who can stand up for themselves and fight and talk and have the economic clout to get what they want (University - Group One).*

Some students felt their perspective on poverty as being a crucial part of social work had been with them before they came on the course,

**Sue:** *...when we were talking about the way our own perception of poverty had changed..it was very personalized wasn't it? ...those of us who were saying that the course has affected the way we see poverty..it's mainly confirmed what we believed before we came on the course, so I don't think it's particularly challenged us as a group, it's been very individual.. (Polytechnic - Group One).*

Only two references were made to specific authors - Brown and Harris's (1978) work on depression by the university students, and the Barclay (1982) report by the polytechnic students. However students did not give the impression that they did not value theory or that they would not find it useful in their work. All four groups stressed the need for theory and practice to be more integrated, thus suggesting that theory is equally important to practice.

**Interviewer:** *How would you say that poverty and social work have been tackled on the course?*

**Alan:** *A link has been made implicit but I don't think it's been made explicit enough, especially in the work we've done in relation to benefits. I think benefits which are seen largely in isolation as a topic to be tackled separately....*

**Andrew:** *I think this course is perceived by a lot of people in social work around the country as being more of a radical course than lots of places. I think we have had an element, and links between poverty and social work. If this is the level on this course, it frightens me what goes on on other courses (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

The first polytechnic group had similar comments to make:

**Interviewer:** *How would you have liked the content or the way it's taught to be different?*

**Sharon:** *I think it started off well, with a historical base..I think it's really important running through the poor law to the Charity Organisation Society, the origins of social work, ...the whole political arena that social work came about in. And so that was really important, certainly very important for me, and ..I think it lost it's way after that. We seemed to go onto psychology and split off, didn't we?*

**Theresa:** *I think Martin hit it on the head when he said about the integration bit because personally I think there's still that sort of mismatch.*

**Interviewer:** *Are you thinking particularly with poverty and social work or are you thinking that's a general problem?*

**Theresa:** *I think it's a general problem as well but in particular for poverty and social work I think.. we had quite a lot about poverty and*

*social work in various guises on the course over the two years ...but it seems to suddenly come to a dead end really, and we went out on final practice and there were all these issues going on and all these things going through parliament and there was a divide that needed to be filled by something.*

**Sarah:** *There was also an expectation that that would be provided on our practice placement without that being enabled to happen,... the responsibility for that integration doesn't happen here, ... its left as being out there..we're missing out because it's so hit and miss. (Polytechnic - Group One).*

Students at the university made the same sort of comments, but Lorna in one of the groups, contributed to a more personal discussion.

**Interviewer:** *So it's having some support in a personal sense as well as being able to integrate theory with practice, it's having a sort of feeling of...?*

**Lorna:** *Not exactly support because that to me suggests something external but there's something in our future working lives that we're going to have to cope with on a day to day basis, so it's learning those coping mechanisms really and how you deal with that personally, I think. ... the personal position you take on board.. All those sorts of issues which we may have dealt with in the first year a bit like in social policy, but actually for me anyway they are coming up all the time and as my experience changes then my perspective on it changes too. (University - Group One).*

The Survey of students' knowledge and understanding of the Supplementary Benefits system was not specifically concerned with assessing the integration of theory with practice, but rather the integration of Supplementary Benefits knowledge with practice. In collecting responses, the Survey approach was similar to that employed in collecting qualitative data for this Chapter, - that students as consumers have an important voice in assessing what they need to know. Although factual information regarding students courses was obtained through the questionnaire, the Survey did not aim to investigate objective knowledge of supplementary benefits, but rather social work students' attitudes to their knowledge, how important they thought that knowledge was, and their evaluation of its teaching and practice in their academic institutions and social work placements. Students at Hatfield and Middlesex were given supplementary benefits information during social policy lectures in their second year and law lectures in their fourth year. Students at NE London said they had a six week series of lectures and seminars by an outside speaker in their fourth year. 95% of students felt they had had information on supplementary benefits as part of their degree course in social work which compares well with the survey of Nottinghamshire social workers - 13.5% of whom said they had not had any welfare rights material in their professional training courses (Becker, MacPherson, Silburn, 1983). In terms of the efficacy of the supplementary benefits

training they did receive, 72% of the student group surveyed saw their training as either "below average" (26%), or "unsatisfactory" (15%) or "poor" (15%) or "extremely poor" (15%). Only 7% of the students felt it was "fair", "Satisfactory" (3%) or "good" (3%). In spite of the negative views students had of their supplementary benefits training 67% offered positive comments regarding the role of supplementary benefit advice, assistance and advocacy in social work.

Students also had many positive comments to offer as to how such courses could be organized to offer maximum enjoyment and learning. These comments formed the basis for a poverty awareness programme which could motivate students rather than merely give them information (see Chapter Eight). As Fimister (1986, p.34) notes:

*To rely on a few hours (welfare rights) training on a professional course already disappearing into the mists of memory is unlikely to sustain confidence for very long in the future.*

Students who completed questionnaires were not specifically asked about the integration of theory and practice. However comments received on the open ended questions about the teaching of supplementary benefits on their courses included:

*We had very little teaching, only a lecture within social policy - but this was really inadequate, though it can be a difficult subject to teach without the students' experience (Middlesex polytechnic).*

*Could be more combined into the course and before the beginning of the first placement. More time could be spent on welfare rights (North east London Polytechnic).*

*Supplementary benefit was covered fairly intensively on the course, especially in law and social policy, but the teaching confused me...perhaps more on issues and philosophies behind supplementary benefit, rather than strict adherence to the legislation (Hatfield Polytechnic).*

As well as criticising the lack of integration between theory and practice, students participating in the group discussion also expressed positive feelings. Knowledge of poverty and welfare rights had increased their confidence in their practice and beliefs about social work and society.

**Interviewer:** *So you feel more competent than you did before you came?*

**Maurice:** *I've got more sort of basis to what I felt before I came.*

**Interviewer:** *What about other people?*

**Sheila:** *I think I would echo that as well, I think I've been more able to argue in a more constructive way and not from what you feel about the relationship between race, class, gender, and poverty and social work in particular. ... I think I've used the course to search out and follow up bits*

*of reading as well and incorporate things in my essays and I think, I've now got a much sounder base on which I can base arguments or go out and find other things.*

**Janet:** *I think its done that for me really, before I came on the course I knew poverty was always a major issue because of the kind of work I've done before, but yes it's done that for me given me a bit more confidence really, sounder knowledge and more of a base from which to argue.*

**Interviewer:** *Is that fairly general?*

*Mmmm (general agreement)*

**Helen:** *I think as far as the exercising of regulations etc, I felt more confident before because of practice, but now I have a greater confidence I think on the understanding of the underlying stuff, the implications strategies, etc than I did before the course (Polytechnic - Group One).*

To return to the debate in this section concerning the relationship between theory and practice, this research suggests like that of Parsloe (1977) and Gardiner (1989) that social work students will have assimilated theoretical knowledge - but to what extent and for how long, is not clear.

#### **4.7 The student culture**

Parsloe (1978) suggests that the attitudes and knowledge social work students learn in college varies significantly from course to course, while Smith and Harris (1979) propose that social work students will have differing ideologies, depending on their educational environment which will change when they become immersed in a work setting. These findings confirm Paley's (1987) description of an institutional student or social work culture, where the same ideas may be translated differently in different contexts.

With reference to this research and the idea of a student culture, students in the small (four students) all female university group appeared to have a more individual, personal, and in some cases patronizing approach to social work and poverty than the other larger university group (eleven students) or the two large polytechnic groups (approximately twenty students). University students had chosen the group in which they participated whereas the polytechnic groups had not. Students in both the university groups tended to have less social work experience previous to training than the polytechnic students. Thus the culture and composition of the group is likely to be affected by various factors, including external influences such as admissions policies to differing social work courses in different institutions.

From a methodological perspective, students in different sized groups, interviewed at different times will respond differently to the theme of the sessions. All students could be telling "moral tales" (Schutz, 1981) - either what they thought I wanted to hear or stories that presented them in a particular light - positive or negative, the "joker" or the "sage" of the group among other possible positions. Students may well not have wished to discuss individual informal opinions in a group and may have wanted to impress the researcher - only a participant observation study similar to that conducted for Chapter Six would be able to uncover such agendas. However it is proposed that what the students have to say is relevant and valid even if a "snapshot" technique has been employed in this chapter.

In the questionnaires from the three polytechnic groups, there were few significant differences in the way questions on supplementary benefits were answered, despite all students being on the fourth year of the course, and therefore having time to build up a student culture. However it may be difficult to assess individual and group ideologies using a quantitative method as Parsloe (1978) and Gardiner (1989) have done.

#### **4.8 Informal repertoires**

Paley (1987) proposes that more research on students' and social workers' use of informal repertoires will explain: what and how students are learning; and the meaning of social work practice for professionals in the field. He compares students' and social workers' unofficial style with their formal "theoretical" repertoires as demonstrated in social enquiry reports, reviews, fostering and adoption assessments, case conferences - for social workers, and essays, exams, projects, and formal evaluations - for students. Questionnaires and possibly group discussions may well be part of students' formal repertoires.

An understanding of the meaning social work students and social workers attach to their knowledge in different situations and with different individuals has been a useful concept in this research - although meaning has to be part of an individual's actions as well as verbal explanations. Transcripts of three of the four group discussions and the results from the pilot study show that the polytechnic and university responses are comparable and not only representative of their own group and institution. The next chapter continues the comparative analysis of the fieldwork.

Giving out questionnaires and group discussion with students I had not met previously, did not elicit the same level of informal information as nine months participant observation in the Silverton social work team. However students recognized that I was

not formally connected to their courses and that they could be honest, with the understanding that their contributions would not be attributable to them as individuals. Further research would need to validate these findings on social work and poverty, in relation to: formal/informal repertoires; attitudes and actions of social work students; and whether students' attitudes and actions in relation to poverty continue into practice.

#### 4.9 Summary and conclusions

What has been established about what social work students know, how they know and what meaning is attached to what they know?

It has been suggested that: students "make sense" of their knowledge, give it meaning, according to the location, structures, situations, and actors that are present at the time; that a body of "professional" knowledge develops as a way of legitimating the social work profession in society, but that knowledge will change with time, ideologies, and individual circumstances. It has also been suggested that students learn in different ways, which will be mediated by their: attitudes, actions and educational and personal environment.

Students who participated in the group discussions and completed questionnaires felt that poverty and welfare rights and their relationship to social work were important issues and were not sufficiently well addressed on their courses or in their placements. They were particularly concerned that theory was not sufficiently integrated with practice.

Although students in group discussions and on the questionnaires were critical of teaching on poverty, welfare rights and social work, they also had many constructive comments to make about how their learning and knowledge could be improved in relation to these subjects. As consumers of the education service and as observers of a social work service of which they can temporarily afford to stand back from and evaluate, their comments and suggestions need to be taken seriously.

Students' expectations of their courses may be unrealistic. As one student said, "*the course is too short to fit everything in you need to*". CCETSW's long list of requirements for those completing a social work course would support this statement. Courses have enormous pressure on them to deliver social work knowledge in terms of: depth, competing subject areas, and course structures and modules. Teaching staff may find it difficult to adapt to a different way of teaching or new knowledge, and/or there may not

be resources to buy in guest speakers, or other teaching aids that may be necessary, if a poverty awareness programme for example, was developed.

There is also little evidence to suggest which forms of social work teaching and what social work knowledge is most useful in practice, and as discussed earlier, from what perspective? (Davies, 1984; Smith & Harris, 1979; Wasserman, 1970),

What is clear is that there has been a long standing neglect of poverty issues and welfare rights on social work courses, (Hill & Laing, 1979; Fimister, 1986; Davies, 1984; MacGrail, 1983) and that a greater percentage of users are poor than they are female, disabled, black, young or old. This is not to suggest that these groupings are not important, but that poverty is likely to be an overall difficulty that affects all user groups (Becker, 1987). Social workers need to be aware of poverty in the same way that they are expected to be aware of race, sex and class discrimination. Social work is a profession of the poor.

The next chapter presents the evidence from the social work students on: what they think of the relationship between social work and poverty, both now and in the future; and how practice placements have handled the relationship between poverty and social work.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TO POVERTY

#### 5.1 Introduction

This Chapter examines in detail social work students' attitudes to the relationship between poverty and social work, and to the role of supplementary benefits in social work. It continues the themes of Chapter Four, but looks in more depth at what social work students - as consumers of their social work courses, but also as observers of social work practice - have to say.

The research findings suggest that because the main tool in the production and skill of social work is the individual, there is a compelling need for students' subjective as well as objective learning needs to be met. Furthermore the students' accounts of social work practice in relation to the relationship between social work and poverty corroborate the evidence gained from thirteen months participant observation in two social work teams. These research findings are presented in later Chapters.

#### 5.2 Students' views on the present relationship between poverty and social work

As this was the topic for the group discussion, one could expect that the students would be able to give examples of how poverty impinged on their work. However the sort of examples quoted could not have been used merely to please the researcher.

*Martin: I'm thinking of one client I had ...I remember going in to see him, and came out almost in tears because I went in to see a man whose wife was due to have a baby in about six weeks and all they had was just a broken down radiogram in the corner and they both just sat there in the freezing cold and you know trying to keep themselves together and at that time it made me wonder what ever we were about. There was very little I could do for these people, they'd had a grant about a year previously so they couldn't get another one and they were in a pretty bad state and I tried to raise them up with the agency and it was impossible, they don't have money for that kind of thing. I then had to go to several charities to try and get money and things. And it seems that social work hasn't got away from that over the years, its very beginning was to turn to charities and they still remain to an extent handing out things to people ...and we perpetuate it by the fact that I was able to go out and beg and got stuff for this couple. When they eventually got another visit from the DHSS, they'd got new carpets in, they'd got the fridge and they'd got various things so they were not in need, they didn't need these things so they didn't get. You can look at it in a way I think with DHSS, when we're doing things like going begging .....rather than saying to the state, "look you know this*

*isn't on, we can't have some people living in squalor like this and have to rely on what other people don't want really" (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

There was a sense in which students in all of the groups were competing to tell the most horrendous story, but as one student commented:

**Jan:** *You asked the question of thinking of specific examples of people in poverty and the problems they faced...it's actually hard to think of specific examples, because you just come across it all the time..if you start to think of specific examples, my mind goes into things like the needy, the really, really needy and I don't think you should go into that. It's like it's just there (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

All of the students in the group discussions could give examples of problems they had to deal with in relation to poverty. All thirty nine of the social work students in the pilot study had experience of supplementary benefits problems in their placements.

Some students, especially those in the polytechnic groups, remembered previous experiences of how they had coped with poverty problems, to explain their definition of the relationship between poverty and social work. Fran had a subjective understanding of poverty which was unusual among the students.

**Fran:** *I think as well when you experience it ..because before I came on the course I was a homemaker which meant that I had to actually go and live in the home with exactly the same amount of money in exactly the same circumstances and I think that brings it home to you very much so because you know its temporary and that...I think it brings home to you very much in practice (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

Marilyn was pessimistic about the relationship between poor people and social workers.

**Marilyn:** *I worked in a social services department as a social work assistant for three years and to try and keep the leaflets up to date, to try to keep people even slightly interested or even want to look at the CPAG handbooks was quite a major achievement really. ... and consistently on duty you would get social workers give out really bad welfare rights advice.. they had a training course about three years earlier and they'd say "oh you've got four hundred quid savings oh well you can't apply for a single payment" (for single parents).. even though the cut off level had gone up to five hundred. They just weren't keeping up to date with the changes basically, giving people bad advice and those were the people who actually wanted to do welfare rights work, quite a lot of people just didn't see it as their role, quite a lot of social workers don't see welfare rights work or the issue of poverty as their work at all, which is very worrying to say the least (Polytechnic - Group One).*

There were also interesting variations between individual definitions of the relationship between poverty and social work. Some of the students in one of the university groups by

their tone of voice as well as their words, implied poor users were being "rescued" by the social worker, and had no power to help themselves.

**Margaret:** *I had never before been into a house quite as bad as this one. I had been into many that were very rough but they had nearly nothing in their house - I mean the smell of urine was all the way through it, with the kids who even at ten and twelve were wetting the bed every night. The woman I met was somebody who didn't even have the ability to cross the road by herself and that was how down she was when I met her. She didn't have things in a financial or material sense which was important to her but she also didn't have any of the... I can't think of any other way of putting it - a sort of spiritual - she didn't have something in herself to overcome some of these things that were just dragging them all down. And they were part of a very large extended family, several of whom were known to the FSU (Family Service Unit) in fact the matriarch of the whole family had been a client of theirs going back to the early days when they first started. It was quite an experience meeting her. I'll never forget the day she actually came to me, to the FSU which is across the dual carriageway from the other side of town and that she'd actually walked across roads to do this - admittedly she'd kept one of her children with her to do it but that she'd done it and ... it's just something about the people themselves as to what they'd got in themselves to overcome....whether they'd ever been given anything to do that with (University - Group One).*

In one sense Margaret felt her client from FSU was "deserving" in that she had made the effort to cross the road to come and see her, but she still really labelled her as "undeserving".

**Interviewer:** *If she'd been OK financially do you think that emotional deprivation would still have been there?*

**Margaret:** *Yes from what I know of her background. Financial or material things were important to her but ....I mean her boyfriend one Christmas he won something gambling, he won the races - he won a lot of money - the kids got some very expensive presents, an expensive bike, but they didn't really care for them and in a sense it meant nothing. The things got damaged very quickly, one of the bikes got lost. Eventually it got returned but it was something to do with emotional poverty that said that you could have poured financial stuff in from here to kingdom come but unless you did something about some of the other side of things it wasn't going to end. I mean, that's not to say that the financial or material poverty wasn't important, but they were only part of the picture.*

It is not suggested that the people Margaret was working with were not depressed or lacking in confidence, but that her philosophy as a social worker seems to be that it is a "subcultural" problem or a "cycle of deprivation" that only individual counselling can resolve. What Townsend (1979, p.70) says about Oscar Lewis' (1966) work could equally be applied to this way of thinking:

He may have helped even if unwittingly to divert interest ..in solutions to poverty away from economic and social reconstruction to individual

training and character reform, from costly redistributive policies to low cost social work and community psychiatry.

There was a tendency in this particular student group to identify poverty as "emotional deprivation" from which there was no escape.

*Mary: Something that strikes me is the sort of general state of mind of a lot of the clients that have been oppressed by poverty, in that they don't really have any hope of getting out of where they are...All of us from our sort of privileged backgrounds, we can all kind of see various alternatives and lifestyles and we can actually choose those, but the people that we're actually dealing with in our work are sort of stuck at a level and they don't really see any options. And I feel that it would be much easier to deal with people who had more options available to them, they could actually see there were these things so that there was more sort of potential for personal change (University - Group One).*

It seems that poor people are either stereotyped as "passive" and not able to help themselves, or "aggressive" during riots on council estates or the inner cities. In reality, all individuals have a range of feelings which can be negative for themselves or other people when they are faced with intolerable situations. In the second university group, a student described how hopelessness and depression can turn to frustration and anger. He recounted how a couple who were living in bed and breakfast with their child, needed money for disposable nappies - they had nowhere to wash ordinary ones. They were told by DSS that they could have no more money. They broke a window at the offices and were prosecuted for criminal damage. This involved paying more fines. Parts of Sheffield could be defined as "high stress" areas where relationships between DSS, social workers, and claimants are poor (Hill and Laing, 1979). Areas that could be categorised in this way have grown since 1979 (Lister, 1987; Walker, 1990).

The polytechnic groups were particularly concerned that the relationship between poverty and social work was one of social control of users.

*Interviewer: What about the relationship between poverty and social work what is the relationship at the moment do you think?*

*Janet: Sticking plaster, we act as sticking plasters without actually tackling and doing something.*

*Michael: In a sense social work helps people cope better with a really bad situation and will not change that situation in any real way.*

*Janet: And will not challenge that.*

*Interviewer: Do you think social work could do that or do you think its impossible anyway?*

*Janet: I think you've got to actually to look at the fact of social work as an institution and see where social work as an institution lies politically*

*and in society and the structure of society and we are there specifically for that purpose to keep the lid on things. So you can look on it in a larger philosophical basis then social work in some ways is quite unacceptable to me - but then you've then got to actually balance that off with the individual work that you do and you get caught in that and that's how the cog continues. But I suppose you've just got to look at the fact that the biggie at the moment is sexual abuse, the fact that we're busy round council houses rushing in all their kids but we're not knocking on doors in Dore and Totley - the whole thing about that is the dysfunctional family, the working class family that can't cope and ..we're busy policing there but we're not actually doing anything to middle class abuse of their children. We don't get to them, we don't get to the judges that have been so lethal. ..it's specifically geared toward control (Polytechnic - Group One).*

Giving and withholding money was seen as part of the state's and the individual social worker's system of social control.

**Malcolm:** *The thing is we all know that poverty is a major part of our work. But what frightens me is the way it's used in social work, in that often the way we work with people, giving money from Section 1, or for people to pursue their claim..it does make you feel as though you're helping the person whose coming. But it's used as a tool to almost get them on your side, to work in other sorts of ways with people... (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

Not being needed and not having power was a problem too.

**Sylvia:** *You can't get away from the fact that when you do provide, get extra money for somebody like if you get them attendance allowance that's been refused ..you do put twenty or thirty quid a week in that household and you disappear. You're not really in, you're not as important, you can't get away from like wanting to do that really. And also that continues to trap you in working with individuals - God help us (Polytechnic - Group One).*

One student suggested that social workers should refuse to give social service users money, as a way of pressurising the state to take on this responsibility, and to avoid the danger of perhaps enjoying that personal power - other students disagreed.

**Interviewer:** *If you had a chance to reorganise social work, you know everything else is the same, still got the Social Fund, still got the Social Security Act, what ideally would you like social workers to be doing in relation to poverty?*

**Michael:** *I think social workers ought ...to effectively fight poverty and that would mean taking on their own bosses. I think community workers for example are ..encouraged to take on their own bosses whereas social workers are not encouraged to do so. And I think it's because you have to pay attention to your caseload and it's essentially about casework so the will would have to be there for all social workers to want to change the way in which they work. I think the most effective thing I can see is what's been mentioned as radical non- intervention, don't do anything...to*

*me the primary role of social work is social control, and therefore if you're not doing social control then the state will have to take perhaps notice of people and of their plight.*

**Interviewer:** *When you say radical non-intervention, what do you mean?*

**Michael:** *Don't do anything.*

**Interviewer:** *So if somebody comes to you and says they've got no money, you don't do anything.*

**Michael:** *You don't do anything.*

**Interviewer:** *Does everybody agree with that?*

**Ruth:** *No, I agree with the idea but just to sit there and say to somebody whose sat in front of me "OK I can't do anything about ....."*

**Michael:** *Say, "go to your MP go and hassle your MP".*

**Ruth:** *Say that as well don't you? I mean if you just say "I can't help you" a lot of people will just be accepting that and go away and not do anything else.*

**Jane:** *That's the dilemma that you're in all the time isn't it? How can you change things whilst not letting those people coming to you at the moment suffer more than they need to? Does a whole generation or whatever it is, of individuals have to suffer for what will eventually be the common good, I don't know.*

By the end of the group discussion, Michael appeared to have changed his mind about a policy of radical non intervention. Instead he appeared to be advocating welfare benefits advice and advocacy rather than income maintenance.

**Interviewer:** *..So one alternative would be to not do anything, and the other alternative would be to get as much as possible? Any other views on that?*

**Michael:** *I think that's what social workers are doing and what probation people have done is to seek to get as much for the client simply because the next time round the government might be encouraged then to provide more money... I think if we don't make full use of what is available, then the government might take the view that the need is not as great ..and provide even less money but that goes against all that I've been saying before about propping up the system, but when you're actually faced with the reality. I mean one is about what happens in an ideal world and one is about what happens in reality and the reality when somebody says "My giro hasn't come" or whatever it is, then that's what you respond to (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

Many of the examples of poverty given concerned women. Joanne had an awareness, unlike Margaret of why this mother was generally depressed and apathetic.

**Joanne:** *My example was a twenty two year old, single mother left on her own,..the father of the children had basically taken the money and used it,*

*taken the furniture, flogged it, so leaving her in a very depressed state, but also materially with very little and a number of debts etc. The stage where I became involved, she'd been placed on probation with this whole situation hanging over her and the inclusion of things like deductions that had been made at source and stopped for one reason or another, like the gas, so most of it at the time was being organised for her.....The difficulties of continual negotiation with different agencies, departments, electricity, gasboard, those sorts of people, each of those all putting off as it were, their responsibility or the way to deal with it to somebody else, and trying to find an avenue through all of that with this person sat in the middle of it, with things mounting up everywhere and not a way out for her as she could see it. ..They left her in a position of very little money in her hand or not enough. I mean there wasn't enough to clothe the kids, for her to look after herself properly, resulting in her denying herself sufficient food to feed the kids properly, which with great sentiment on her part, but leaving her who was already low and demoralised even more so, by not getting the basic nutrition that she needed.*

**Interviewer:** *This was a probation case was it?*

**Joanne:** *Yes*

**Interviewer:** *How were you involved in it?*

**Joanne:** *She was placed on probation for having stolen a bottle of bacardi around Christmas time. I think she was principally put on probation because of the welfare considerations rather than an offence... (Polytechnic - Group One).*

The probation students in this group did not comment directly on the gendered nature of sentencing policies for men and women (Smart and Smart, 1978). However Janet and Sandra suggested stealing a bottle of bacardi would be likely to be looked on unfavourably by the courts and would label the individual as "undeserving" poor. It was not clear if they were also proposing that for a man, stealing a bottle of bacardi would not be seen as so stigmatising. Their alternative - of stealing for children - seems to be a more socially acceptable criminal role for females than for males.

**Janet:** *If she'd stolen two pairs of knickers for her daughters, she'd probably be looked on alright by the court..I think a lot of them have got this attitude..they're full of pity for the poor and everything else, and that's not the magistrates, that's some probation officers..*

**Sandra:** *There's a bit of a danger to think of these people doing social work and probation as part of social work history...because I think the courses around produce people with those attitudes as well... (Polytechnic - Group One).*

The second example continues the theme of responsibility for children. It highlights the problems this mother had in bringing her children with her to the social services department every day. There is little awareness by social services in this account, of the practical problems of bringing up children as well as the financial issues involved. This is

not to assume that all childcare is performed by women, but this mother, like many who come to social services was a lone parent (Gregory, 1991). It also highlights how maintaining an individual's income through Section 1 payments can certainly be seen as controlling by the individual social service user.

**Jan:** *There was a woman in recently, single parent again, having problems with a cooker and all sorts of things, it's like the usual tale. She was wanting a Section 1 payment over the difficult period, and because she'd had previous Section 1 payments and therefore deemed less needy or less worthy, you know - she'd been a bit of a regular at the door, Division X said that she would have to come in everyday for her two pounds for five days. Because she came in on a Monday, so two pounds per day per child so that was four pounds per day she was coming in for, because she had two children. But her busfares including her children, were coming up to something like eighty pence so she was actually going away with a pittance and having to come back everyday. By the Friday she was absolutely at the end of her tether and her kids were driving her barmy and there were a couple of Principals on the Division who had a very punitive attitude to people who wanted Section 1 relief and she threw a wobbler on the Division and was thrown out of the building. You know, it's just like the frustration had just transferred into a load of anger and violence, ....not actually physical violence against the social workers but it was put it in the violence at work book and we all talked about it and she was labelled even further, that woman was just treated badly by everybody. I mean of the sixteen last incidents, this is of violence on Division X social services, something like thirteen of them were in the office, and nine of those were refusals of Section 1 money, that's a direct link with poverty (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

What is most troubling about this account is that the social services personnel involved do not seem aware of the process by which the single parent concerned feels she has to earn her right to be seen as "deserving" poor. By losing her temper she is then labelled "undeserving". From the violence at work book it appears there were other individuals who already faced with the stigma of poverty and having to ask for money were further rejected by not feeling they were "deserving enough" to receive Section 1 monies. The anger that they felt resulted in violence in some cases and being individually labelled as difficult and demanding. When faced with allocating small amounts of money to large numbers of people, it appears that a rationing system is bound to emerge. Although it may appear more effective to advise social service users on their benefit rights so giving users a feeling of entitlement rather than deprivation and stigma, in practice social workers appeared too pressurized and unskilled in welfare rights to be effective and responded (where possible) to the immediate financial need of individual users. Only one student who worked in a day centre out of approximately forty five students in the four groups discussed conducting basic benefits checks with users although some mentioned welfare rights or community work as a strategy to help users with financial difficulties. The reality of working or being on placement in a social services department seems in



general removed from the principal stand of those such as Firmister (1986) and Stewart (ed. 1989, p.24):

We have established the extent to which social work tasks concern people who are poor, homeless, ill housed or jobless. Whatever the setting, client group, or work method, these problems seem bound to increase in prominence within social work practice. We have argued that credibility with clients will be enhanced if social workers engage these problems, however bleak the prospects for significant material change. We have also argued that social work needs to adopt a rights approach. This is not because there are well established and defined rights to a basic minimum income, to a decent home or to a job, but rather because it can counter demoralisation and dependency by the assertion of dignity, human worth and citizenship.

### **5.3 Students' views on the future relationship between social work and poverty**

All students felt pessimistic about how social workers were going to cope with the financial difficulties of users in the future.

**Interviewer:** *Mary mentioned about the Social Security Act and the Social Fund...how do you think that's going to affect your future work?*

**Gina:** *I think it's just going to increase the frustration..there's going to be families at rock bottom. It's going to be those very ones that can't get help, and how we're going to handle that.*

**Interviewer:** *What's going to have to go, if you're spending more time on dealing with charities...?*

**Gina:** *Quite honestly the mind boggles as to what else can actually go, because in some authorities they've already got really high priority cases stacked, so what else can go is the question, not what else will go. I think the situation is ridiculous, you've got vacancy rates in some London boroughs of about 30% and they just can't recruit workers (University - Group One).*

Some had ideas about how social workers could deal with poverty more effectively:

**Gareth:** *I want to and I've already tried to move towards a more community approach and away from traditional casework..in seeking to tackle poverty because it can't be tackled as an individual and it can't be individualised and if you're going to do anything about it at the macro level then perhaps even starting at community level is perhaps where it needs to be, and I'd see all this leading to me wanting to do less and less of casework and more and more community type work.*

**John:** *I think the long-term future of social work is pretty bleak but I think that the only thing that can happen now is, there's got to be some change within social work - the way it operates and the type of work it does. I'm*

*unsure about long-term what goals it would have but I think there are short-term things to be got from it - working away from individualising things that present, to working with people, empowering people..working more with the groups within the community away from the other professionalising influences. But I don't think that's going to happen because as we can see now, social work's statutory and legal powers are going to be increased. We're going to be pulled further and further down that line (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

Malcolm felt that social workers would not want to be involved with poverty issues:

**Malcolm:** *I think social work is going to distance itself further from work with money, work with finances. I think one of the things about the Social Fund and most of us have got mixed feelings about it as well, is that it has made social work departments look closely at how they operate around that .. I think that's meant that social workers have tightened up how they spend money and I can see further constrictions on uses of money within social work, to the degree that social work will try and further distance itself from it (Polytechnic - Group One).*

None of the groups felt that the Social Security Act could be of positive benefit to social workers in drawing their attention to poverty issues, because it made the financial situation for social service users so much worse.

#### **5.4 Students' views on how placements handled the relationship between poverty and social work**

Question 16 of the pilot study Survey (Dowling, 1986), concerned students' estimates of what percentage of time was spent in placements dealing with supplementary benefits. Although there are many other ways in which social workers can help poor social service users - some of which are discussed by the students in their groups, the responses to this question are interesting, because they give an indication of students' actions rather than their attitudes. Some students in the Survey decided that some social work placements - examples given were a child guidance clinic and residential homes - were "not applicable" as far as this question was concerned because they did not see supplementary benefits as part of the agencies' remit. In their first placement 39% of students spent up to 10% of their time on supplementary benefits, while 33% spent between 10% and 50%. In their second placement 51% spent no time on supplementary benefits and 26% spent up to 10% of their time. However, the amount of time students think they spend on poverty related issues may be different from what is observed in practice. Overall students had a positive attitude towards the role of supplementary advice, assistance and advocacy in social work - 10% saw it as "irrelevant" or "not very useful" while 78% thought it was "useful", "positive", "very important" or "extremely important". So it is

curious that many estimated a comparatively small percentage of time, dealing with supplementary benefit problems on placement, especially when Strathclyde social services (1986) showed that at about the same time 1984/5, 48% of all referrals to social services were material/financial and 16% housing problems. Becker and Macpherson (1986, p.78) note, "The extent of financial or welfare rights based problems may exceed Seebohm's estimate of 60% of all referrals. Certainly increases in referrals of this nature go hand in hand with increases in unemployment".

It may be that students' actions are constrained by: political and social policies; the culture and structure of their placement agency; and the attitudes and actions of their placement supervisors and other social workers. The group discussion findings seem to support these hypotheses. This first extract shows the distress Mary felt because of the enforced contradiction between her attitude and her actions.

*Mary: Well I've just started on placement with FSU (Family Service Unit), she'd (Mrs Jones) told me this incredibly long complicated story about her family problems and then at the end of it I said, "Well do you want me to come and see you and what are we going to work on?" And she wasn't interested in working on any of these problems because she had no food for the week-end, because they'd given her double money at the post office two weeks before because it had been a bank holiday - she wasn't able to budget sufficiently, 'cos she'd got fines for this, that and the other and so now she hadn't got any food for the week-end right? I was there on a Thursday, she said "Can I get some money from Family and Community Services?" so I said, "Well I don't know" because they'd already refused her a few weeks before, 'cos they're cutting down on Section 1 money in that division and I knew that Family Service Unit didn't have any money to give out - but there was a possibility of food parcels...Because it was my first interview with her, I didn't know whether this was appropriate so I couldn't assure her that she was going to get some food for the week-end from me - she couldn't get money from her family, or friends or relations because they're all in exactly the same position. Now having had this experience of going into this house which was filthy, the clothes were poor and everything was run down about it, I walked into town I went to the building society because I just happened to have my grant and I was putting some of my money into the building society and I walked into the building society with a cheque for £500 of my money to put into the building society. And the contrast between that woman and the physical conditions of her life, the fact that she had no food for the week-end I walked through town and there was all these people walking around buying things, putting money into the building society, standing there well dressed with gold jewellery on - all the rest of it - and the next thing I had to do was go back to Family Service Unit and say "What am I supposed to do with this?" What I actually did with it was I actually made her a food parcel which I took back the next morning and I felt demeaned having to do it, and that it was demeaning to her that I chose what she was going to eat that week-end and that was all I could do and it was better than nothing because if I didn't do it she would have nothing to eat. But the sheer contrast between her life and the lives of everybody else, and like the contrast between her life and my life and I'm a student and I'm fairly poor but like the quantity of poverty that she's up*

*against is nothing - my poverty sorry - rather than hers.... (University - Group One).*

Between 1979 and 1987, the poorest 10% experienced virtually no rise in their real income after housing costs, while the average saw a rise of 23% (Oppenheim, 1990) (see Chapter Two). Many social work agencies have little money to give poor users, and it seems unlikely that Mrs Jones would be entitled to additional DSS payments, although Mary did not mention whether she carried out a benefits check with Mrs Jones.

Some students could give positive accounts of how their placement agency had prepared for the implementation of the 1986 Social Security Act:

*Sarah: I worked with an agency that deals with elderly people and they were very efficient in dealing with the system...They actually had a welfare rights adviser and a volunteer who was from the citizens advice bureau who was able to discuss with them all the rights and the changes in benefits. We had twenty five people in day care four days a week and they interviewed everyone individually before the new system came in, went over the benefits and filled the correct forms in...,so when it came in they were able to be fair and comfortable...it was well thought out and well planned and organised (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

A day centre may well have been the sort of agency that social work students on the pilot study questionnaire discussed earlier found "not applicable" in terms of handling supplementary benefits, which tends to indicate that most social work agencies could organize a "rights based" approach to financial issues if they were convinced that dealing with money was part of the agency's and/or social work's remit. Unfortunately more of the examples from students were of social work agencies who did not deal adequately with welfare rights issues in the first place, or were unprepared for the changes in social security.

*Fiona: My placement was at the hospital it was exactly the opposite really, because there was lots of confusion as to what was happening, social workers all had different ideas some of them had been trained, had some training, some hadn't had any at all and various situations would crop up with patients and often social workers would come back to the social work department to try and speak to other people who might know something about it or find out, there was just a lot of confusion going on (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

*John: I mean in the advice centre the number of people who came in who had social workers and they were not getting the right benefit, to me, that just seems ridiculous. I mean that's one of the first things you can do for somebody at least, sort out their benefits and make sure that they're getting what they're entitled to, but sort of time and time and again people came in who'd had social workers for ten years who never even touched on that sort of side of things (Polytechnic - Group One).*

Students were however concerned that advising users about the social fund meant that they were either helping people to get into debt if a loan was involved or depriving those claimants who were not social service users, but may be more in need, if it was a grant.

**Kate:** *The social fund sets its own agenda for families. One family gets a community care grant from social services - tells the neighbours and others come down to social services. It's an inappropriate referral. Why should they have to go to a social worker to help them get a community care grant? (University - Group Two).*

One polytechnic student said he would definitely not be happy about advising users on community care grants, but like the fieldwork findings on social workers in later Chapters, there seemed to be confusion and conflict about attitudes and actions because of the desperate need of some users. These social work students were interviewed in June 1988 as the Social Security Act began to have an effect. Further research could indicate whether these students' attitudes and/or actions have changed, (assuming they are practising social workers and probation officers).

Some students felt there was a "moral panic" by some social services and probation departments, in that they had further limited any cash help they could give users because of a fear of being overwhelmed, when users' financial needs were in fact greater. The field observations support this view in that the City team had cut back on their Section 1 funding, written to all users telling them they would not be able to get cash help from social services and social workers were limited to £30 a day for any emergencies on duty. Rather than a "moral panic" the Silverton team were more concerned with distancing themselves from social security policies, although their policy of non-cooperation with the Social Fund meant users were getting less advice at a time of increasing financial hardship (see Chapters Two and Six).

Students agreed that attitudes of placement supervisors and social workers were extremely variable, but made a crucial difference as to how issues of social work and poverty were handled in practice.

**Pete:** *It depends on the placement whether poverty is part of the job. If your practice teacher doesn't see it as part of your job, how can you?*

**Avril:** *My supervisor says, "You enjoy doing that, so you do it" (welfare rights). But I feel one person is being lumped with it because no-one else knows, especially the younger ones (University - Group Two).*

Students from the polytechnic had similar views, but were more critical of supervisors who had deserving / undeserving attitudes towards the poor.

**Interviewer:** *What about practice placements? What sort of attitudes do you think they had towards poverty? Don't necessarily link poverty and welfare rights they might have one attitude toward poverty and one attitude toward welfare rights. Were there different attitudes or were they mixed?*

**Fran :** *In South Yorkshire probation there were two probation officers, they started to bring out bulletins on poverty. Now it's early days yet ...but they're appointed full time to look into the issue of poverty, I don't know how that's going to go but at least they've made a start on at least acknowledging that it is an important issue.*

**Jean:** *But then last year my practice teacher in social services, I'd better not identify her in any way, said "Well I think there are two sorts of people", she actually said this on Friday, "the needy and the greedy" .....she's quite senior.*

**Mark:** *My practice teacher on my first placement was the sort of "Daily Express blame the victim" and that's the way her social work was. I mean "somebody else can survive on thirty pounds a week why can't this one - she's smoking too much a week" .....*

**Julie:** *There's loads of them in social services*

**Marie:** *It's going to be really varied isn't it because either you've had good practice teachers who are quite political in social work practice like Bill Smith at the mental health project - that looks very hard at the issue of poverty and everything else. My last placement, I was with a very good practice teacher ...you can draw a short straw with people. I mean I've heard of a woman who was on a course and her practice teacher was sort of saying "the social fund will stop all these young girls wanting to leave home and get pregnant" (Polytechnic - Group One).*

These sort of comments support Smith and Harris'(1979) assertion that some social workers do use a moral ideology to reduce their own tension and to divide up scarce resources.

Some students felt compromised in their placements because their attitudes and actions to poverty and social work were different from the agency in which they were placed. Martin faced the moral and emotional dilemmas that other students have discussed, by being consistent in his attitudes and actions, which may have been appreciated by the user concerned, but was not by his superiors. In this account, the student also makes the connections between poverty and crime in his work.

**Martin:** *I think there is a correlation between certain type of offending and poverty, shoplifting for example,.. some of them perhaps do it for greed but I think the majority of the people who shop-lift they do it out of need, people whose giro hasn't arrived and they've gone to the DHSS and they've been fobbed off. I had a man who had not had benefits for four weeks before he actually came to see me, and when I rang up the DHSS office and spoke to somebody there he said "Well tell him to go and eat out*

*of dustbins, people like that are quite used to eating out of dustbins" and I said "Give me your name", and he wouldn't give me his name and I wanted to hit him you know. It wasn't a professional thing between us anymore, it was a very personal thing and I wanted to just hit this guy and I marched this man down to the office (DHSS) and I said I spoke to this guy ...they sort of calmed me down and all the rest of it and got the manager. Course he couldn't produce a person, I had no name and nobody would own up to having said that and I sat with the manager, and said "Well we're not leaving this office until I get some money it's as simple as that". And they gave him some money. But he hadn't had any money because he'd been going down every day and he'd been fobbed off until he came to me. In fact my senior wasn't too happy with the course of action I took. I'd marched out of the building with a man down there, sat ourselves down and said "Right that's it". I mean I carried on just as much as he was carrying on,.. you don't go and tell somebody to go and eat out of a dustbin.*

**Interviewer:** *What would your senior have liked you to have done?*

**Martin:** *Well, he's actually written to the manager and complained and taken it up with the regional office or somebody like that and not made it into a personal issue. But at that stage I couldn't do anything else - I was so shocked by the guy on the other end of the phone who said, "Well go tell him to go and eat out of dustbins". I mean it's true, I live in Leeds and it's a big city and you do see people wandering around eating out of dustbins. It's terrible when people have to get to that. And unfortunately, some social workers I think perhaps are less crusading, perhaps we need to be more crusading in fighting poverty (Polytechnic - Group Two).*

In view of the research by Cooper (1985) on DSS offices, it is relevant to note that Martin and the user concerned were Afro-Caribbean. I found it difficult to separate out Martin's anger concerning the prejudiced comment about poor people, from any feelings that he may have had that he - and his voice is noticeably Afro-Caribbean on the tape - and/or the user were being discriminated against in terms of race. Certainly his actions are different from his supervisor's expectations. He tells the user what DSS have said on the phone, he marches to DSS with the man involved and not only makes it clear to DSS what his complaint is, but also succeeds in securing financial help for the user concerned. Most probation officers would see this way of working as too personal and controversial, but as an empowering device for a black user - standing up to a prejudiced authority and winning - it has its advantages.

As previously mentioned in the Introduction, none of the students in the university groups were black, while approximately a third were in the polytechnic groups. In terms of gender, University Group One consisted of only four women while the other three groups were approximately one third male and two thirds female. As is common in mixed groups, the men tended to be more vociferous than the women.

## **5.5 Summary and conclusions**

This Chapter on the attitudes of social work students to the relationship between social work and poverty is important for a number of reasons. Firstly although the last Chapter examined: how students learn; the need to integrate theory with practice; and the influence of a student culture, it did not address in detail what students learn, and whether an intensive study of poverty and welfare rights was necessary for students' future roles as social workers or probation officers. This Chapter suggests that students are concerned to understand both objectively and subjectively the relationship between poverty and social work, and supports previous research that advocates specific content in social work courses concerning financial deprivation (Donnison, 1955; Parsloe, 1977; MacGrail, 1983; Noble and Stewart, 1987; Davies and Wright, 1989; Davies, Grimwood and Stewart, 1987).

Secondly this Chapter highlights the complex emotional, intellectual and moral issues that students have to cope with outside the academic environment. It gives more weight to the argument that a poverty awareness programme would allow students to contribute and learn from each other and sort out their personal and political stand on poverty while in training. Their own attitudes and actions may thus be more consistent when they commence their professional work.



## CHAPTER SIX

### SOCIAL WORKERS' ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS IN RELATION TO POOR SOCIAL SERVICE USERS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This Chapter is concerned with understanding social workers' attitudes and actions in relation to the poverty of social service users. The findings are based on two participant observation studies - eight months with the Silverton social work team and five months with the City team. The first part of the Chapter introduces a social psychological and social constructionist model to understand the interactions in the fieldwork. The second part of the Chapter reviews previous research findings and compares them with this study. The third part of the Chapter analyses the research findings in three different areas concerned with the relationship between social work and poverty: section 1 money; food and food vouchers; "deserving" and "undeserving" poor; and finally welfare benefits. A comparatively small number of fieldwork examples are given and analysed which are representative of a much greater number. After thirteen months field observation the amount of data that could have been included was enormous and had to be restricted by: the word length for the Ph.D thesis; that other Chapters have included different but sometimes overlapping data and that time for analysis in relation to the theoretical models presented would have been further restricted if a larger number of fieldwork examples had been included.

#### 6.2 Social workers' attitudes and actions

*Carol: What I found quite interesting was that you expected to find that peoples' attitudes would relate to their own background and I would have expected that as well. But what was I think more interesting is the fact that attitudes and actions don't marry up. I think that's really interesting because if people are doing research and you come up with a piece of research and the findings are that the attitudes of social workers don't bear any relation to what then happens on the ground roots. The fact you related that to policy makers, I think that's quite important, so I think you need to do a lot more of it... (Silverton social worker, discussing a feedback paper on the research).*

Social workers' attitudes to poverty are influenced by: personal factors such as schooling and professional training, present and past family situations, interactions with social service users, the social services hierarchy, and team members; and institutional factors such as the policies and bureaucracies of the social services department and local and central government departments (Parsloe, 1978; Satyamurti, 1981; Becker, 1987). If

these attitudes have no direct effect on social workers' practice, not much can be said about what social workers **do** in relation to poverty or what they could do differently - nor whether poverty awareness programmes would be effective. Such attitudes and actions cannot be considered without examining the wider context in which social workers operate, understanding the pressure that is above or around social workers that they may pass on to users (see Chapter Two). Ethnography has traditionally been considered a qualitative method which understands rather than counts or proscribes. Therefore this Chapter will present the fieldwork findings from an individual interactive perspective, rather than the social, structural perspective explored in Chapter Two.

Consistency between attitudes and actions is a common problem for every individual, and social workers are not different. It is often expected that people in professional caring roles have superior moral standards. This is unrealistic. The Chapter does not intend to judge individual social workers by pointing out contradictions in their attitudes and actions, but to understand how these contradictions came about. A further development of this debate is to ask to what extent attitudes are discrete and different entities from actions.

### **6.3 Theoretical models for understanding attitudes and actions**

It would be simplistic to assume social workers have an all encompassing attitude to poverty which can be assessed by their practice with poor people, nor can an attitude be measured merely by observing consistencies in behaviour. Cook and Selltiz (1964, p.64) define attitude as:

an underlying disposition which enters, along with other influences, into the determination of a variety of behaviours toward an object or class of objects, including statements of beliefs and feelings about the object and approach-avoidance actions with respect to it.

While this definition may be mechanistic in not explaining what an "underlying disposition" is nor the interaction of "object" - social service user - with the subject - social worker, nor how interactions with other subjects may affect the "underlying disposition" of the social worker concerned, it does give the flavour of the complexity of describing an attitude.

Dollard (1949, p.624) suggests a high degree of consistency between words and acts is essential,

It enables men to participate in organised social life with good confidence that others will do what they say they will do, will be where they say they will be. Valid prediction of behaviour is not a mere luxury of morality, but a vital social necessity. Every man is under compulsion to keep his promises, to make his acts correspond with his verbal expressions. He constantly watches others to see that they do likewise.

It is interesting to consider Wicker's (1969) further hypothesis that we are trained from childhood to expect attitude - behaviour consistency, particularly among public officials. To suggest social workers' attitudes and actions are not as consistent as one would expect, is to cross a strong moral boundary. Furthermore as Fishbein (1967) suggests, if the behaviour is public rather than private, beliefs about the consequences of actions will be more marked. Recent psychological research on the relationship between attitudes and behaviour has centred around two related theories.

The first "theory of reasoned action" (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977, 1980; Manstead, Proffitt and Smart, 1983), suggests that the stronger a person's **intention**, the more the person is expected to try and the greater the likelihood that the behaviour will be performed. The determinants of intention are conceived as **attitude towards the behaviour** - a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour in question; and **subjective norm** - the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour. Attitude and subjective norm, weighted for their relative importance, are jointly assumed to determine behavioural intention and thus behaviour. There are three conditions attached to this theory. Firstly the measure of intention must correspond to the behavioural criterion. Predicting a specific action of social workers in relation to poor users must be compared with an equally specific intention. Secondly the intention must not have changed in the time between when it was assessed and the time when the behaviour is observed. The accuracy of prediction will usually vary inversely with the time interval between intention and observed behaviour. Thirdly the behaviour under consideration must be under volitional control.

..the more that performance of the behaviour is contingent on the presence of appropriate opportunities or on possession of adequate resources (time, money, skills, cooperation of other people, etc), the less the behaviour is under volitional control (Ajzen and Madden, 1985, p.455).

Thus the theory of reasoned action which relies on intention as the sole predictor of action will be insufficient whenever control over the behavioural goal is incomplete. Factors which interfere with control over intended behaviour include those internal to the individual - skills, abilities, knowledge and adequate planning; and external ones - time, opportunity, financial resources and dependence of the behaviour on the co-operation of other people.

Control over intended behaviour is a key issue in the understanding of social workers' and students' attitudes and actions towards those in poverty. Many social workers and students (see Chapters Two and Five) felt powerless to help and advise poor social service users because of lack of time, knowledge and financial resources, despite there being no lack of appropriate opportunities. Schifter and Ajzen (1985) have proposed a "theory of planned behaviour" which extends the theory of reasoned action by including the concept of behavioural control. According to this theory, among the beliefs that ultimately determine intention and action is a set that deals with the presence or absence of resources and opportunities. The more resources and opportunities individuals think they possess and the fewer obstacles they anticipate, the greater should be their perceived control over behaviour.

Both social work teams had plenty of opportunities to act on their attitudes to poverty. However, neither team had resources in terms of finances; time; staffing or training, to perform this part of their work adequately. Further, the subjective norm, i.e the perceived social pressure in the Silverton team was that handling users' financial queries particularly in relation to income maintenance was not "real" social work (Hill and Laing, 1979).

**Vernon (teamleader):** *I actually resent the fact that we have to give out food vouchers.... I mean we didn't train for this (No from other members of the team) .... we trained to be social workers not to give out food vouchers (No!), but to do casework whenever the casework may be (That's right!) and we shouldn't be doing this stuff on a Friday afternoon.*

He answered Beverly, a young social worker who queried this attitude,

**Vernon:** *I think there's a difference between giving welfare advice Beverly, and a specialised system of knowledge I've acquired over the last few years and using that knowledge. There's a difference between that and dealing with someone that everybody else has passed on and we'd better sort them out and it's the second situation I'm talking about....*

Vernon appears to be distinguishing between welfare rights advice and advocacy as discussed in Chapter One, and income maintenance which is what he terms "*doing this stuff on Friday afternoon.*" Field observation recordings noted that he saw himself and his staff as professionals trained to use systems of knowledge, whether the knowledge was psychodynamic and casework based or concerned with welfare rights. Income maintenance was in his view demeaning for both social workers and users (see Table Two, Chapter One). Food vouchers were part of the section 1 monies that the Silverton team had at their disposal. Studies of the distribution of Section 1 monies suggest that the level of intervention is superficial and "inappropriate" as Vernon suggests (Heywood and Allen, 1971; Hill and Laing, 1979; Lister and Emmett, 1976; Valencia and Jackson,

1979). Such a discussion is part of a larger debate on the place of "cash" and "care" within social work (see Chapter One). It has been established that direct financial help by social services can no longer be generally argued to be preventing reception of children into care as the statutory requirement states but is primarily a form of income maintenance (Stewart and Stewart, 1986; Hannam, 1988). Those in favour of direct financial help from social services departments (Parkinson, 1970; Stevenson, 1973; Leaper, 1988) would argue that: social workers need financial authority and discretion to be able to aid social service users whose emotional and practical difficulties are intertwined; that probation officers have less flexibility in terms of financial resources and have to rely on welfare rights checks and benefits which can make their job more difficult; that although emergency financial aid is maintaining incomes of individuals who should properly be claiming from DSS, the Social Fund has removed the likelihood of any extra topping up of basic benefits which are therefore often not sufficient to live on; that giving money can be an important way of establishing rapport with users and giving them what they say they need most - material aid.

Not all of the social work team members seemed clear about the distinction Vernon was making between welfare rights advice and advocacy and income maintenance. The deputy team leader in the same discussion was pessimistic about how welfare rights could help individuals.

**Karen:** *I mean y'know very well before you sort of pick the 'phone up, it's going to be a no go anyway. It's just an exercise isn't it?... go through the motions and it's so time consuming, as well and at the end of the day, he's not going to get anything is he?*

While most social workers are involved in income maintenance, despite their attitudes, welfare rights is an activity that most social workers do not do or want to do (Hill, 1990; Wilson, 1988).

Bandura and his associates (Bandura, Adams and Beyer, 1977; Bandura, Adams, Hardy and Howells, 1980) show that people's behaviour is strongly influenced by their confidence in their ability to perform the behaviour. Karen had very little confidence in her ability and knowledge of welfare rights issues and her behaviour towards: users with financial problems, and a lecture by the welfare rights officer, reflected this lack of confidence. She felt the subject area was too complex and during the eight months field observation I did not observe her conducting any basic benefits checks or giving welfare rights advice to users in the waiting room or out on visits. When the local welfare rights officer and his assistant came to talk to the team about fuel debts, her body posture and facial expression showed she had little interest and during the one and a half hour session, she "noded off" on a number of occasions. On the other hand, the amount of information

Brian Lunt gave at the meeting, and the level of complexity and the speed at which the lecture on fuel debts was delivered was such that even those social workers who were motivated to tackle welfare rights issues, found the session difficult to follow. It seems likely that Karen felt "de-skilled" after the session, as she complained it was "above her" and she had had little confidence in her own ability to tackle welfare rights problems before this meeting. Having observed this attempt by the team leader to introduce more welfare rights knowledge into the team, I was careful to suggest in the feedback papers (see Appendix 4A and 4B), that information on welfare rights could perhaps be introduced using a problem solving approach. This could involve team members bringing poverty or welfare rights problems to a forum for discussion where the welfare rights officer acts as an adviser.

Bandura et al (1980) further suggest that people who believe they have neither the resources nor the opportunities to perform a certain behaviour are unlikely to form strong behavioural intentions to engage in it, even if they hold favourable attitudes towards the behaviour and believe that important others would approve of their performing the behaviour. Most members of the City social work team and some members of the Silverton team had positive attitudes towards the role of welfare rights in social work, but felt overwhelmed by casework and statutory duties and therefore were frustrated in their actions, despite their attitudes.

The theoretical concepts described earlier have implications for the training of social workers and students in relation to poverty issues. In terms of a poverty awareness programme for example, the concept of perceived control, confidence, resources and opportunities would have to be addressed in relation to the busy working environment of social workers. So would subjective norms - the influence of family and friends and individuals in the work environment, both in the past and present. Training exercises which ask students to assess influences on their behaviour, and empower individuals in terms of their confidence and abilities to make a positive impact regarding poverty issues in the workplace, may be more important initially than the more objective teaching of welfare rights.

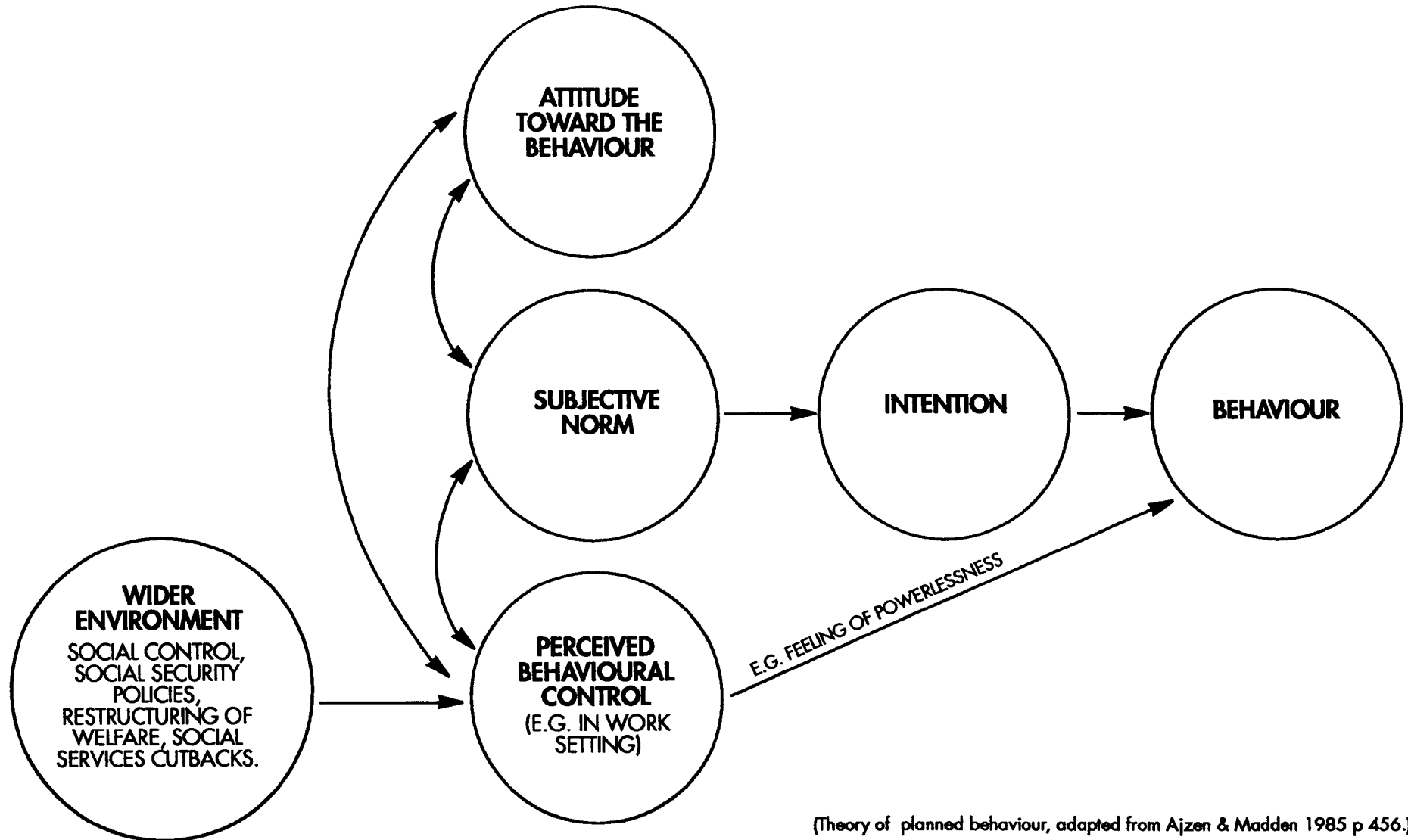
The psychological model of planned behaviour (see Diagram Two), will be employed where appropriate in this Chapter because it can to some extent highlight the complexities and interactions observed in the fieldwork setting. This model emphasises more strongly the effect of *perceived* control on behaviour rather than actual control.

A strong effect of perceived behavioural control is expected under only two conditions. Firstly that the behaviour being predicted must not be under complete volitional control. Social workers', students and users' actions are undoubtedly influenced by a number of

**CHAPTER 6 - DIAGRAM TWO**

**A SOCIAL / PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS.**

SOCIAL WORKERS' ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS TOWARDS POOR SOCIAL SERVICE USERS.



(Theory of planned behaviour, adapted from Ajzen & Madden 1985 p 456.)

factors outside their own control. Secondly the perceptions of behavioural control must accurately reflect actual control in the situation with some degree of accuracy. For example are Karen's comments about welfare rights being a waste of time fair? Is she as powerless as she thinks? Unrealistic perceived behavioural control could be assessed and discussed in training programmes on poverty awareness, for example - how much time will management actually allow for welfare rights training?. However as Ajzen and Madden (1985, p.460) note:

..the idea that both intention and control are necessary for performance of a behaviour ..suggests an interaction effect, such that the effect of intention on behaviour depends on perceived behavioural control.

Interaction in the fieldwork setting is often complex and ambiguous and cannot always be tested in a controlled experimental setting in the way that these psychological concepts appear to require. For example the theory of reasoned action described earlier has as one of its three conditions that intention must not have changed in the time between when it was assessed and the time when the behaviour was observed, and that accuracy of prediction will usually vary inversely with the time interval between intention and observed behaviour. This appears to be a condition that is more relevant to experimental situations than observed reality in a social services department. It is often not possible when conducting a participant observation study to capture a social worker's attitude or intention to for example giving out Section 1 payments immediately preceding an action where he/she is actually paying out such monies. There were occasions when social workers would discuss their intentions immediately prior to acting upon them but there were other occasions when a social worker would voice an intention in a team meeting - for example, to organise a meeting on welfare rights - and it would be some weeks later before that intention was acted upon. In these circumstances it seems unrealistic to suggest that accuracy of prediction regarding intention and behaviour will vary inversely with the length of the time interval. In thirteen months of field observation I was generally observing the day to day life of a social work team. I was not only wanting to know about how social workers responded in relation to poverty issues - but how these poverty issues fitted into their everyday working/practices. To isolate intentions, attitudes and actions in relation to poverty from all else that was occurring would have made for an artificial and impossible fieldwork situation.

A further theoretical framework that highlights the difficulties of defining set attitudes and actions in relation to poverty is that of the social constructionists (C. Wright Mills, 1940; Edwards and Potter, 1992). They are concerned with how accounts and actions construct reality and use participant observation data to produce accounts of motivation in naturally occurring situations - in this case social work practice.



However their theoretical framework differs from the previous psychological concepts described (Schifter and Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen and Madden, 1985) because they would not assume a fixed or objective reality where "real" attitudes exist. In relation to the fieldwork a perspective which examines behaviour and includes all attitudes and actions can provide insight into why social workers' attitudes and actions were not always consistent. Social constructionists would argue that social workers would account for their social work practice differently on different occasions depending on the purpose of the discussion and to whom they were talking. Both social/psychological and social constructionist theories can provide a useful understanding of social workers' attitudes and actions in the fieldwork setting.

#### **6.4 Previous research on social workers' attitudes to poverty**

....few social workers have any developed insight into how their ideologies and perceptions of poverty affect their daily practice with poor people  
....on an individual level attitudes are not always consistent, nor are they consistently supportive (Becker, 1987, p.243, 247).

The relationship between social workers' attitudes and actions in relation to poverty has been neglected in the literature. Craig and Coxall (1989) list 227 accounts of investigations into the Social Fund, 44 of which deal with the relationship between social workers and the Social Fund. However this one aspect of social workers' dealings with poor people is researched in terms of policy issues and attitudes but not actions.

Parsloe and Stevenson (1978), Becker (1987) and this research encountered social workers' attitudes at a particular time and place. A study that **only** researches attitudes fails to understand the complexity of working in a busy social services office. In Becker's 1986 survey of four hundred and fifty one social workers, it was found that the following characteristics were associated with a positive attitude towards the poor:

Youth (25-40); those with a degree and C.Q.S.W.; with some experience of claiming benefit; who had decided to become social workers early in their lives or while unemployed; lived in small cities in their childhood and now live in relatively deprived areas; with prior experience of social work related or voluntary work, and who are relatively new to social work practice..... They were more likely to view poverty in structural terms, support the Labour party and pressure groups such as C.P.A.G. and have strong supportive feelings towards the poor (Becker, 1987, p.497).

Denzin's (1970) theory of methodological triangulation (see Chapter Three), suggests Becker's quantitative findings should be reinforced by this study's qualitative findings.

The following example suggests that two pieces of research using different methodologies, may not be tackling the same issues. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that by possessing all of Becker's attributes, an individual will therefore have a positive attitude to the poor.

Vernon, the Silverton teamleader fulfilled nearly all of Becker's categories, apart from being 43 and not new to social work. He had a radicalising effect on other team members and tended to recruit social workers who had similar structural views of the world. He had a "positive" attitude to poverty, and had been the first team leader to pay out Section 1 money to miners' families in the miners' strike. However during the eight months field observation of the team, Vernon's attitudes to alleviating poverty through income maintenance could be characterised by...

**Vernon:** *I can't free myself of a sense of generalised resentment when some poor person comes in for food vouchers...*

Vernon explained his attitude in a research feedback meeting:

**Vernon:** *I resent anybody having to come into this office .... and have to give them financial help (Yes - from other members of the team), not because I would feel these people don't need it, but because it's a symptom of what society does. And at the end of the day every Friday afternoon, we have to give them a small bit of money, which bears no relation at all to where they are in the world or their problems. ...I mean the effectiveness of us as social workers. We're just caught in a symptomatic situation that's very very frustrating, and I often feel quite angry because I mean, people come and say "I haven't got any money", and "I haven't got ....." and I'll try and repress that and I'm sure that at times I don't succeed, because it's a generalised anger about what we do as social workers or what we're told we have to do, which is irrelevant within the broader spectrum, or what we were trained for or what we feel.*

The actions that resulted from these attitudes included dissuading other social work staff from being involved in community care grants and being reluctant to authorize Section 1 payments unless the money was used as part of on-going preventative casework. Both actions could be said to be consistent with Vernon's attitudes towards social workers not being involved with income maintenance issues. He had also been involved in drafting a social services paper advising social workers not to co-operate with the DSS. (see Chapter Two).

Regarding the relationship between attitudes and actions, two points from the previous section can be confirmed. Firstly social workers' attitudes may change over time, and depend on external factors.

*Vernon: The miners' strike was different...that was more to do with politics and that was a uniform response, but these dribs and drabs...*

Secondly "intense feelings towards the poor" (Becker, 1987, p.497) may result in the individual social worker feeling frustrated and angry at how little social work can affect poverty and therefore as in this example, attitudes and actions in relation to income maintenance becoming more negative than a social worker with less intense feelings towards the poor and the role of the government and the DSS. Vernon felt that he had no control over the poverty of most social service users. This perceived lack of control affected his attitudes, intentions and behaviour (see Diagram Two).

Questionnaires and in depth interviews have been used to discover social workers' attitudes but field observation would be the main method that could uncover actions in relation to poverty issues. Steven Cooper's observation study of ten DSS offices in 1981/2 researched attitudes and actions of DSS staff to claimants both when staff were on duty on the counter and out on visits. There is no similar study of social workers' attitudes **and actions** towards clients. Cooper (1985, p.51) found that:

...treatment of claimants could vary according to a judgement made about them by officers, on the basis of very little information and a brief acquaintance.

Cooper observes and assumes attitudes and actions are consistent (which may *not* be the case) where DSS officers act on what they see as their professional judgement.

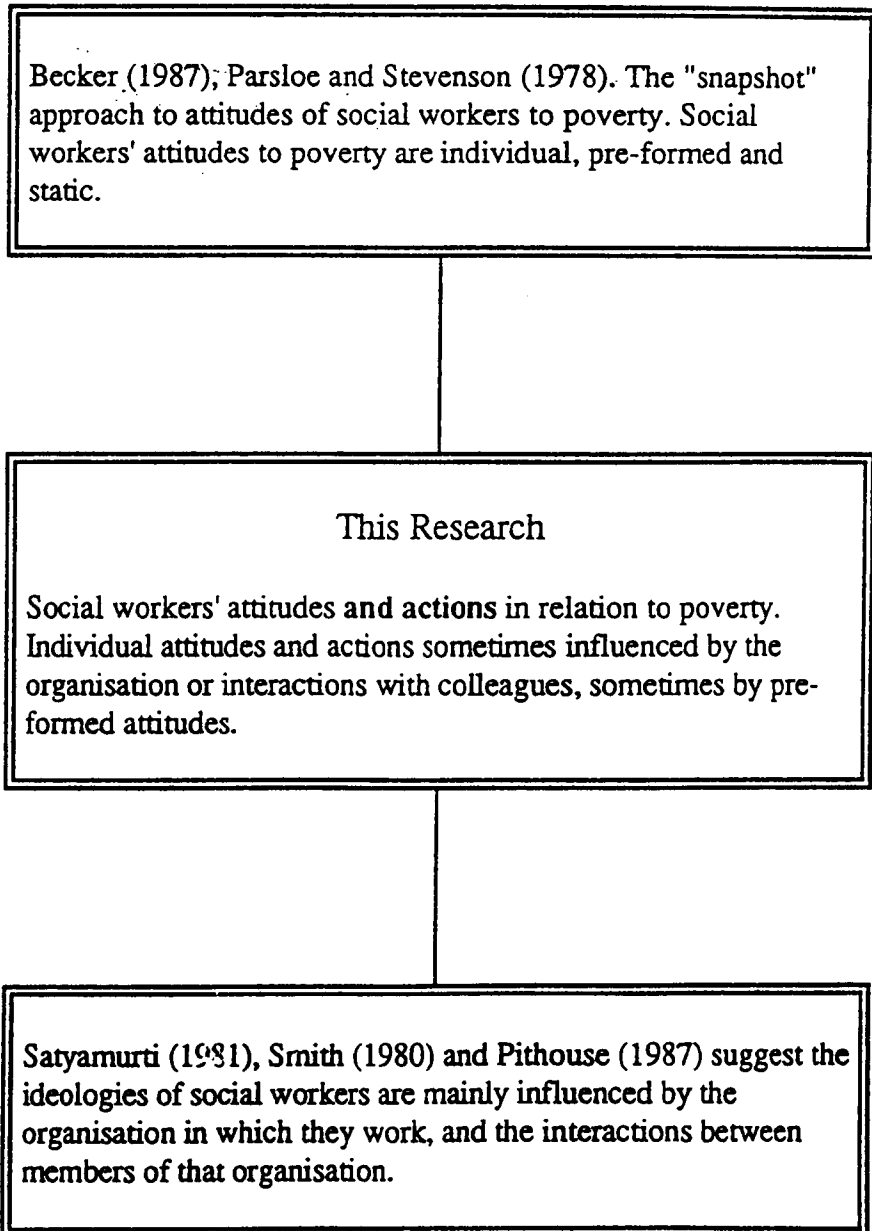
The difference between social workers and social security officers is that although they both exercise discretion in their dealings with people who have financial problems, DSS officers have rule books such as the Social Fund Manual to which they can refer. Social workers do not. Claimants can use the DSS rulebooks to appeal against decisions which they think are unfair. Users of social services cannot.

Pithouse's (1987, p.82) participant observation study of two social work teams specialising in child care, devotes three pages to **attitudes** to welfare rights.

There is little doubt that the child care workers operate with a clientele who are materially disadvantaged. Yet like workers elsewhere (Stevenson and Parsloe, 1978, p.324; Satyamurti, 1981, p.168-175) they view their involvement in welfare rights and financial matters as an undignified departure from their preferred style of practice.....There is also the view that "money" sullies the relationship between client and worker. Indeed requests by clients for financial help suggests they have incorrectly grasped the purpose of child care work and are attempting to impose their definition on a service that practitioners intend to manage and control.

## Diagram Three

### The Research Findings in Relation to Previous Research Findings on Social Workers' Attitudes to Poverty



Some, but not all of the generic social workers observed in this research found money matters demeaning, a nuisance, complicated or were irritated that they were sorting out the inefficiencies of the DSS and/or the government. As discussed in Chapter One, giving money or welfare rights advice does not induce behaviour change in social service users, thus control of the relationship between social worker and user is limited.

There were however significant differences in attitudes and actions between the two teams I observed, because they were based in different locations and they were employed by different local authorities. Pithouse's (1987) research is based in the same area office with two teams who both specialise in child care. His study does not include observations of interactions between social workers and users and Pithouse admits in his conclusion, "It could be argued that what actually happens between worker and client in the unobserved encounter is ultimately unknowable in the office setting" (Pithouse, 1987, p.123). Satyamurti (1981), Smith (1980) and Pithouse (1987) give the impression in their research that social workers' attitudes are constantly dynamic and changing, mainly affected by the institution in which they work and their interactions with the hierarchy and colleagues. However a social services department is not a total institution and social workers interact with family, friends and others outside the social services departments. They also have individual autonomy (see Diagram Three).

Becker (1987) and Parsloe and Stevenson (1978) have a more static view because their research shows a "snapshot" of social workers' attitudes at a particular time and place, suggesting a preformed attitude that does not change significantly. Diagram Three indicates how previous research has understood social workers' attitudes in relation to poverty and how this research has a different perspective. As a result of the fieldwork findings, it is suggested that some of the social workers' attitudes to poverty were determined by their environment, it is also suggested some of their responses to poverty were preformed and relatively unchanging. The next sections of this Chapter examine social workers' attitudes in relation to their actions. It suggests that social workers do not always reveal consistent attitudes, intentions or behaviours in relation to poverty issues.

## **6.5 Research Findings - Section 1 monies, food and food vouchers**

The Child Care Act 1980 Section 1 - replaced since the fieldwork by Section 18 of the Childrens Act(1989) - allows social workers to give cash help to parents to prevent their children coming into or continuing to be in care. Although Section 1 expenditure only accounted for 2.0% of the Social Services child care budget and only 3.9% of the value of the deceased single payments which families used to be able to claim from Social

Security, it averaged out at £92,000 per authority in 1984/5. Actual amounts spent ranged from £2,000 to over £1 million although this could include expenditure on preventive services such as day care (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, 1987). Section 1 monies were used by social workers in the field work to generally give cash payments or food or food vouchers to social service users with financial problems.

Giving out food or vouchers if it was away from the office was a menial task usually allocated to the social work assistants. Several times I was asked to deliver food vouchers or collect milk tokens from DSS. Although I was prepared to help the social workers in many small ways, this was not one of them. Food vouchers were not always appreciated by the people receiving them (see Chapter Seven). It appeared to users to be more degrading than receiving cash. Food is one of the basic necessities of life and it seems strange to discuss relative deprivation when some families do not have enough to eat. Food, whether in the form of food vouchers or food parcels was irregularly distributed by social workers. A monitoring of Section 1/12 payments found:

In 17 out of the 18 authorities studied, payments for food appear in the top 3 categories under which the greatest number of (Section 1) payments were made ..... Clearly Section 1/12 money is being used to supply the basic necessities of life, rather than to deal with crises or one off exceptional circumstances. (Baker, 1990, p.9).

Food, food vouchers and primarily direct cash help was the main form of income maintenance that social workers or teamleaders had the power to authorize (see Chapter One). There was high demand for Section 1 money, especially on duty, even though social workers were only allowed to give small amounts of money. Social workers in both teams disliked taking turns at duty - covering all the public enquiries that came in on a particular day or half day. There were a limited number of social workers at City who did this work because specialist social workers and those registered to work with the mentally ill were exempt. The Silverton team had been in dispute with management regarding staffing hours and the number of hours that the team were open to the public had been halved, so although most social workers in the Silverton team took their turn at the duty desk, there were less hours during the day when they were expected to be "on call".

Social workers' attitudes to Section 1 money in both teams were generally negative. They felt uncomfortable about being in the position of judging who should and who should not get cash help.

**Keith:** *The regulars come in after 3.30 on Friday when social security is closed. They know they can get Section 1 payments for the weekend. We're caught (City Team).*

Keith's actions were similar to his attitudes in that his intention was to dissuade people coming to the duty desk for money. From a social constructionist perspective both attitudes and actions are forms of behaviour and cannot easily be separated into discrete units. Individuals construct their behaviour which includes attitudes in order to accomplish social actions. Using this cognitive model (Potter and Edwards, 1992) it is not surprising that the following field observations confirmed that Keith's actions were congruent with his attitudes.

Mrs Grant was looking after her two grandchildren aged three and five years. Her daughter was in prison and she was living on £42 a week income support. She had come to social services because probation had sent her - they were helping her with furniture after her daughter's flat had been burgled. Welfare rights had suggested she come to social services when they could not get her child benefit sorted out with DSS - she had not had any child benefit for six weeks since her daughter had gone to prison. She admitted, *"I went to borrow money from a neighbour and she said to come here....It's really the bus fares I can't manage"*. Her daughter lived some distance from her, so it was two buses each way to the local school. What did the social worker do? Firstly he checked out her story. Secondly he said social services did not have any money. He then said abruptly without explanation, *"Well we could take the children into care."* Mrs Grant looked horrified and became quite aggressive, insisting that she knew people who had had a letter from social services to get toys from another place, *"I know it's true 'cos I've seen them"*. Keith said, *"I don't know anything about a letter"*. Mrs Grant was adamant so he went to check with the receptionist. He also offered to ring D.S.S. to sort out her child benefit but she said welfare rights was already doing this. She chatted to me while he was gone.

**Mrs Grant:** *I was really dreading coming here.*

**Interviewer:** *Is it as bad as you thought?*

**Mrs Grant:** *Don't know - what he said was.*

**Interviewer:** *You mean about going into care?*

**Mrs Grant:** *Yes.*

I explained it was a procedure so that social services could pay her as a foster mother. It did not mean she was a "bad" grandmother. She seemed reassured but said, *"No I wouldn't want to do it"*.

After a later discussion with Keith, I probably misinterpreted his attitude. He admitted that the statement about the children going into care was, "*partly as a deterrent to stop people keep coming back for money*". I had assumed he was thinking he could apply for social services to take responsibility for the children on paper and then apply to the fostering panel for the grandmother to become the foster mother. However he had asked no further questions of Mrs Grant regarding taking the children into care - for example how long was her daughter likely to be in prison. I had recently read a memo he had written to the divisional officer arguing strongly for a grandmother who was a client of his to be put forward to the fostering panel as a foster parent for her two grandchildren. The regular Section 1 money this grandmother had been receiving from the department had been withdrawn. Mrs Grant did receive £5 from Section 1 money though I suspect Keith would have preferred to give her nothing but felt constrained by the observation. Although Mrs Grant might not come back to social services as she seemed genuinely frightened, she could quite easily tell friends and neighbours that she had received £5, so the deterrent effect of threatening to take the children into care would be lost. Later that day Keith told me he had only got £15 left to spend on duty cases. Bernard, the teamleader had told him that the limit was £30 per day as the social services budget was overspent after the first six months of the year. Another social worker had spent £10 not knowing about the £30 limit, and Mrs Grant had £5. We were discussing a woman with twins who had rung him up to say DSS had not sent her milk tokens. He was worried she was going to come in and ask for money - "*If you try to spend more on duty, admin would stop you.*"

Maria, the administrative officer confirmed this when she said, "*I'm not supposed to keep a tally in the office but I do.*" She would also be checking that none of the four teams she was responsible for spent over £30 per month per family - another recent financial cutback in terms of Section 1 monies. I asked her, "*Do teams go over their limit?*" and she responded very definitely, "*Yes!*" Keith had management pressure to keep within a financial budget. The administrative officer was acting as the department's gatekeeper. As well as not wanting to be a second string DSS officer - and his actions concerning income maintenance put him in this category - he also wanted to be seen as a "good" social worker. In terms of Ajzen and Madden's model (see Diagram Two), Keith perceives behavioural control in the work setting - a limit on Section 1 payments monitored by the team leader and the administrative officer - affecting his attitude towards users with financial difficulties. Subjective norms of some colleagues and other staff in the workplace appear to support the notion that income maintenance is not the job of social workers, should be sorted out by DSS and is an inconvenience to social work and administrative staff. Some staff also made the distinction between "deserving" (mostly people who did not come to social services at all) and "undeserving" (those



people who knew about Section 1 money and were able to weave a credible "hard luck" story). Although Keith's own attitudes may not appear to make such clear distinctions, according to Ajzen and Madden's model he would be affected by the subjective norms of others. Even if Keith would generally feel more sympathetic to people in poverty, he experiences feelings of powerlessness, not only because of the perceived controls and subjective norms in the work setting but because of formal policies in the wider environment which have caused cutbacks in local authorities' funding and a more restrictive system for those claiming benefits (see Chapter Two). It is not surprising considering the pressures described and discussed that Keith's intention and behaviour was to restrict social service users from coming to the office with income maintenance problems (see Diagram Two).

There is a lack of consistency in social workers' discretion as far as Section 1 payments are concerned. Keith does not know how or why another social worker gave out £10 of the duty allocation for someone else - were they more or less "deserving" than Mrs Grant? The discretion of the D.S.S. rather than a rights approach to people claiming benefits, is criticised by many academics and welfare rights lawyers. Social workers are not judged in the same way. This duty observation also illustrates how an individual with financial problems can be affected by the actions of the social worker; and that when the DSS system is inefficient, for example Mrs Grant not being able to claim child benefit for six weeks, social services is seen as the next step down. The difference between the "DSS" and the "SSD" may be a confusing one for people who have not had much to do with either organisation for example the "neighbours" suggested Mrs Grant came to social services for help with her finances. However probation and the welfare rights office also suggested social services as the last resort to help Mrs Grant with her money problems. The general public and other agencies, regard social workers as providers of practical help. This is not always the way social workers see themselves. Keith's comments on a number of occasions were cynical about people coming to social services for money. He seemed to see the process as some sort of game with them "trying it on" and him "turning them off". This sort of "process" implies different attitudes and actions for the different "players in the game" and has different outcomes according to social constructionist theory for Keith, Mrs Grant, Maria and other receptionists at social services - however no *one* account of the process is the "true" account.

The psychologist's (or sociologist's) privileged position of being able to define, over the heads of participants, the true nature of events has proved a powerful one in experimental studies, but it is a position that can also be illusory (there is no single, definitive version of everyday events), and risks losing sight of what is real for participants themselves. It focuses attention on objective truth and error, and underestimates the constructive, occasioned and rhetorically designed nature of how events are ordinarily described (Potter and Edwards, 1992, p.5).

One of the receptionists also gave a cynical account of social services' income maintenance policies. I asked her what the financial limits were on Section 1 payments. She said she didn't know there was a limit to the money, "*It's a bottomless pit*". There was a sense in which Keith came across as King Canute, trying to stop a rising tide of desperate sometimes devious poor people. He felt the ends - stopping people coming to duty to ask for money justified his attitudes and actions towards them - the means. "What really happened" in this observed event will differ according to the participant. However Mrs Grant's version of events has no power or authority attached to it.

The Admin officer in controlling financial resources in relation to Section 1 money *is* in a powerful position. It is likely that in the same way that social workers exercise discretion when doling out money to those who have come for financial help, she exercises discretion about which social workers she favours and gives money to. This could be seen to be "policy making on the hoof." It is created as it is implemented. A new Teamleader or social worker joins the team, a well established one leaves, a new admin officer commences work, one who "knows the ropes" leaves, receptionists change. Policy on Section 1 payments will drift according to who is exercising what discretion, and the power of the individual user in constructing their version of events.

In the City social work team, social workers could "p.p." their teamleader's signature on the Section 1 forms. They used their discretion about who should and should not get cash, subject to the cash limits that had been imposed on them by higher management. City team seemed quite proud that although some teams had been giving some families £30 a week and the new guidelines were £30 a month, "*We try to keep it down to £30 per family every 3 months*". The impression they were giving was that they were an efficient team who managed their budget well. This was the "subjective norm" for the team (see Diagram Two).

In the Silverton team, Vernon, the teamleader signed the Section 1 forms and has been discussed earlier, he was unhappy that social workers were involved in income maintenance policies. The attitudes and actions of the teamleader with regard to income maintenance may be extremely important until of course he or she leaves and the next teamleader has a different management policy. However at the time of the fieldwork, Vernon's views were more or less accepted by the rest of the Silverton team. He was in the powerful position for social service users with financial problems, of agreeing or not agreeing to sign the Section 1 forms which released the money, or food vouchers. His actions were therefore central to the way the team operated in relation to income maintenance. Vernon's attitudes towards income maintenance were a "subjective norm"

for the rest of the team when all were present together in team meetings. It is interesting to note in the following quote that Vernon uses "we" throughout, as if there is general consensus in the team on income maintenance matters. However as later fieldwork examples show, this was not always the case in terms of individual social worker's accounts and actions (see also Appendix 5 - comments on the research by Brian Lunt - local welfare rights officer).

*Vernon: Sections of the 1980 Act are so vague that we could really give money to anyone who came in here. We have to make that judgement don't we.....and you're also the judge and jury for that person and that's very unfair and that's not why we went into social work.*

Tight management and administrative controls of limited financial resources implies that the behaviour of the two social work teams can be predicted in relation to giving out Section 1 monies. Subjective norms in the City team suggest that limiting and controlling cash paid out to social service users makes them efficient managers as compared to other teams. The Silverton team on the other hand, have norms that suggest Section 1 money is only paid out for on-going casework and not for income maintenance. The social workers feel they have little power to alter administrative rules or financial restrictions, although in fact another social work team in the City authority, deliberately overspent their Section 1 budget in order to show the extent of financial need in their area. Many of the social workers, particularly the women, felt uneasy at saying no to the financial needs of lone mothers who were on social security. Was asking for money their way of asking for help? They were constrained in doing what they would like to do by departmental policy and their immediate boss. The women in both teams seemed more likely to seek reassurance or agreement for a decision from the - male in both cases - Teamleader. The following fieldwork example is representative of many others, and does show the different pressures that social worker and social services user feel constrained by. In most of these observations, both social worker and social service user were female.

The receptionist came in to say that Miss Lerner was in reception. She had nothing on her file but had come in, "*cos she hasn't got any money and thought you could give her some.*" Miss Lerner was separated with a child aged two. She usually borrowed from her mother on Friday and paid her back on Monday. This week her mother did not want to lend her any money and said she "*ought to manage on her own by now*". Jane, one of the City Team's social workers, went to see her on duty and came back to the office to confer. She said to Bernard, the teamleader, "*Help me make a decision I'm tired....What she's actually asking is to borrow it. I said we don't do that.*" Miss Lerner was not aware of and was not informed of the Social Fund loan system but she had got milk tokens from the DSS. The teamleader asked about practical help through her health visitor. Miss

Lerner had said, *"I wouldn't dare ask, she thinks I cope so well."* Bernard said Miss Lerner could not have Section 1 money and Jane went back to tell her.

**Jane:** *If you'd been battering your children or something we could help, but not in this case.*

**Miss Lerner:** *Well I'm not that bad.*

This is not a dissimilar case to Mrs Grant, the difference being that Keith used his discretion and Jane did not. Miss Lerner had also not learnt to "play the game" in admitting that she had a relative that might be prepared to help her if social services could not. *"There goes one dissatisfied customer"* sighed Jane. She discussed the irony of not being able to help people **unless** they reach crisis with their children. She rang the health visitor as Bernard had suggested but she could not help with Miss Lerner's finances. I was aware that Miss Lerner might not have wanted Jane to phone the health visitor. Not only had she gone away with no money for the weekend, her health visitor was likely to review her impression of Miss Lerner as someone who could cope. Miss Lerner was not "deserving enough" or did not put her case strongly enough for her to be given Section 1 money. The social worker's attitude to Section 1 payments was not the same as the policies of the department in which she worked. Jane felt the tension between her attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, intentions and actual behaviour.

A further explanation of Jane's behaviour which is referred to in Chapters One and Four is that of a moral ideology of need. Social work decisions are a response not just to the poor but to individual need. Smith and Harris (1979) suggest that although social workers may have acquired a material or psychodynamic ideology during training, that the pressure and institutional constraints of the work setting forces them to adopt a moral ideology of need. They define ideology of need as:

*...systems of ideas in terms of which social work professionals make sense of their everyday practice and of the administrative structure in which this occurs (Smith and Harris, 1979, p.57).*

Thus Jane's response to financial need although unwilling, contained certain moral ideas. Firstly it was assumed that because Miss Lerner's mother had helped her in the past, she would do so this time, despite Miss Lerner explaining that her mother had said she would not. Social Services tended to assume that local relatives could financially support the social service user and would be willing to do so. In this sense Miss Lerner is not **really** "deserving". Secondly she is not deserving enough because she has not an on-going casework relationship with a social worker, and thirdly Miss Lerner has not, it seems, maltreated her child in any way. If there was no moral ideology attached to giving out

Section 1 money, it would be allocated on first come, first served basis, or by a rationing system.

There are many other examples from the fieldwork which show that giving or not giving direct financial aid is the most common way in which social workers deal with the poverty of social service users. The two examples quoted are representative of many more where the user either gets no money at all or a small amount. Even on a rationing/rule book or a "first come, first served" system, there would under the present system of central and local government budgeting, not be sufficient resources to help all those in financial need. As has been previously discussed in Chapter One, there are many objections to social workers being involved in income maintenance including those from social workers themselves in the fieldwork. Despite these objections government legislation and policy seems to indicate the "cash" role is likely to become a greater part of the social work task in the future in a number of different ways:- the social worker as community care purchaser rather than provider, the social worker advising on or allocating community care grants, and the social worker having to make direct cash payments due to low benefit entitlement.

How can social workers and others - professionals and claimants/clients be better prepared for this? Firstly if the link between cash and care is to be effective, it must be based on some commonly accepted minimum income for all (Jordan, 1988; Leaper, 1988). Secondly an ombudsman who safeguards citizen's rights regarding cash and caring decisions would probably be more relevant than the tribunal system for social security questions. However social services departments who are now more than in the past subject to pressures regarding income maintenance should also be willing to have their decisions subject to scrutiny. As Leaper (1988, pp96-97) notes:

British social workers in any case make decisions about cash awards to their client families under the 1963 Act. It has become clear that payments under this Act were only marginally concerned with the limited and specific purposes of the Act - to prevent family break-up (ADSS, 1985). Logically one would have expected social services departments and their social workers to refuse to operate under this Act since it certainly involved them in making judgements about the eligibility of their clients for cash help. Yet on the contrary they hold tenaciously to their powers under the Act. They are also repeatedly involved in decisions concerning the liberty, liability, and culpability of citizens in a way which demands diagnosis and judgement. Why are judgements about cash entitlements so different in principle?

## 6.6 Research findings - 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor

Attitudes and actions which distinguished between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor appeared more marked in the Silverton team than the City team. The length of time I spent with Silverton (eight months) as compared to City team (five months) could mean that Silverton social workers were more relaxed in my presence and consequently more open in what they were saying and doing. Certainly I felt more accepted in the Silverton team. The city team was mainly composed of men and women who had come to Sheffield to train and had stayed on. They were younger than the social workers in the Silverton team, had "progressive" views and were mostly graduates - in fact they fitted Becker's (1987) analysis of social workers who were likely to have positive attitudes to poverty well. Most were however not new to social work.

City team seemed more aware than the Silverton team that they were being studied and therefore may have been careful of what they said and did, especially in relation to making a distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. For example, Dianne, one of the most experienced social workers in the City team was talking to one of the home help organizers in the office in my presence.

**Home help organiser:** *She's applying for a third grant, she's already had two, plus she's on full attendance allowance and she lives alone. She gets a disability pension and mobility allowance.*

**Dianne:** *Well I hope you said "good luck" to her.*

**Home help organiser:** *Well I don't know what she spends it on - it was a long 'phone call but she gets that through disability.*

Dianne then changed the subject to looking at the Home help organiser's holiday photo's. Discourse analysis and social constructionist would suggest that in saying things, people perform social actions. The home help organizer was not from the City team and would not be aware of the participant observation study or its purpose. Dianne as a member of the social work team was aware of my interest in their conversation and how I might think that she was colluding with the Home help organizer in agreeing that the user concerned was undeserving of the benefits she received. In more "natural" circumstances without my presence, Dianne might have decided to smile and agree, not wanting to offend a colleague while still being aware of her own different point of view. On field observation visits with Dianne, she appeared particularly sensitive to money issues and it would seem unlikely that she would in a more formal context have agreed with the Home help organizer that a social service user was receiving too much benefit. This fieldwork example can be used as an illustration of the constructivists' perspective that social interaction is subjectively situated and will vary, depending on time, place, individuals

present and environment. So Dianne's "attitude" in terms of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor cannot be measured as an objective entity but will depend on the specific context of the situated action for which it is constructed (Edwards and Potter, 1992). In terms of the social/psychological model however Dianne's comments to the Home help organiser could be explained in terms of the subjective norm with which the home help organizer wished Dianne to agree. This was not attractive to Dianne in terms of other colleagues' subjective norms, her own attitude and non stigmatising social work policies in the workplace towards social service users (perceived behavioural control). The control in this situation rested with Dianne as a senior social worker especially as the home help organizer was not from the City team. Dianne's attitude, intention and behaviour were straightforward and consistent in not agreeing with the comments made and then changing the subject when the conversation continued. Despite my role as a "neutral" observer (there were no other individuals in the office at the time), it is likely that Dianne would expect my attitudes to be consistent with her own rather than with the Home help organizer. She may have perceived myself as a control over her behaviour and acted to demonstrate her own attitude as different from the home help organizer.

In terms of general attitudes to 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor few comments were made in the City team. Female lone parents were often seen as having a difficult time, and pensioners who had financial difficulties were almost always seen as 'deserving'. In terms of the social/psychological model the subjective norm of the City team towards judging who should and should not receive Section 1 monies on 'deserving'/'undeserving' grounds was very much against making such a distinction. However strong behavioural control in the workplace in terms of budgeting meant that choices had to be made about who to give money to and without any other foundation for making such decisions moral choices were made and acted upon (Smith and Harris, 1979).

In both team offices but particularly City team, clothes and toys piled haphazardly in corners were part of the environment. Some commentators would say that this is part of the culture of a social work office - a rather disorganised but well meaning muddle (Pearson, 1973). The policy towards clothes, toys and furniture seemed to be that if people offered social workers these items, they would not refuse. On the other hand most social workers would not give them out to people unless asked, as Dianne commented, "*I don't like the Lady Bountiful image*". Rhodes Boyson sees Lady Bountiful as a person who uses her discretion and judgement to evaluate who is deserving of help, "As much as Lady Bountiful might be scorned, she could also distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving poor. Not so the state professional worker with his rule book" (Boyson, 1971, p.110). Social workers do not have rule books for dealing with poverty which may

well be why Dianne and others felt uncomfortable about using their discretion in relation to clothes and toys.

In the Silverton team, the women who worked as social workers, clerks and receptionists were mostly local, many of them from working class backgrounds, and most having to struggle themselves financially when their children were young. They tended to make joky but judgemental comments about social service users in the area, most of whom they knew.

**Karen:** *They're wasters they are. they'd have to win the pools three times before they'd have any money left* (deputy team leader, Silverton).

Linda, a social work assistant felt that some people "*were just evil and used other people*", Tina, another social work assistant felt some users did "con" social workers. Mary, the most qualified of the social workers in the team, talked about unemployed people as "*scroungers*". In the feedback team discussion at the end of the field work period August 1989, on social work and poverty, all agreed that poverty was "awful" and that there should be no distinction between deserving and undeserving poor. However, individually in the same meeting, after the team leader had left, social workers told me "horror" stories, almost competing as in the students' groups to tell the worst tale. Linda remembered the man who "*took from everyone and smirked*", and Karen talked about a woman's house that was so filthy that she had to go first "*to show Carol (the new social worker) how not to stick to the carpet*". In terms of subjective norms, unlike the student group, the tendency was to not pick the worst examples of poverty, but the worst examples of undeserving poor - people who were not grateful for what they were given, or who did not keep their house clean. However the comments were sometimes humorously made as if to avoid thinking about the reality of peoples' lives in these situations. A social constructionist perspective might suggest these are stories told in the office to amuse but also to distance individuals from a job that was often harrowing and may have reminded the women of their own working class backgrounds. However the context also appeared to be judgemental and may have reinforced the team's social norms regarding people in the local community - names were discussed - who could be labelled as 'undeserving'.

An in depth analysis of one of the female social workers in the Silverton team illustrates some of the dilemmas facing team members and how labelling some social service users and distancing oneself from such a group of people can be a means of avoiding emotional conflict. Mary was a part time social worker in the Silverton team. She was highly qualified for this post having a combined degree and CQSW. She had a generally



negative attitude to people coming to social services with financial problems, assuming they were "trying it on" - (see earlier discussion of Keith's attitudes and actions).

However Mary had a caring attitude to her caseload clients and was not only aware of but prepared to help those with low income. For example she would give lifts in her own car on her days off to a teenager who was attending therapy in another city for incest abuse, because she knew the lone parent concerned could not afford the train or coach fares. Her personal situation was to some extent in conflict with her work responsibilities. She was married to a Company Director and her son was at a public school. Her husband had offered to give her the equivalent amount to three years in her part time job if she left, but she wished to maintain her work interests. In relation to the social/psychological model (Diagram Two) her subjective norms at home with her family and neighbours were very different from those she encountered at work. The ideology of her family and friends appeared to be that those who depended on the welfare state were scroungers whereas on a day to day basis she was coming into contact with people in poverty and work colleagues who had very different views. Although she appeared genuinely sympathetic to users on her caseload, in terms of subjective norms and perceived behavioural control from home, it was easier for her to disassociate herself from users with financial problems by labelling them as "scroungers".

On a more general level, many of the social workers in the two teams, saw work on the duty desk as less important, less 'deserving' of their time than statutory child care work and their caseloads. From a social service users' perspective going to a social service waiting room and asking for help was very important. Although some social service users are referred on to specific social workers and others are referred on by other professionals, for many, going to the duty desk is the only way that users can personally ask for what they want from social services.

Hill et al (1984) note that the majority of social workers only became involved in financial problems because social service users brought the problems to them and not because social workers felt them to be an important part of their work. In labelling service users who have financial problems as "scroungers", social workers may be able to distance themselves from the idea of provider led services, responding to people's needs as users of services and being aware of users' rights. As Beresford and Croft (1993, p.50) note in relation to community care, "They (users) want services which respond to their needs, which consult with them, in which they have a say and sometimes which they run themselves." Social service users have a right to a minimum level of income and need policies, programmes and strategies to achieve that and social workers may be able to help in this process. From a social constructivist perspective social workers' accounts which define users as 'undeserving' may include all users who are not in a casework

relationship with a social worker, because this version of events has the purpose of constructing social work as social workers wish to perform it. Alternative accounts of social work constructed by users (see Chapter Seven), managers, the DSS, the government or social work academics might have a different purpose.

### **6.7 Research findings - welfare benefits**

These fieldwork findings and others (Melotte, 1977; Davies, 1984; Wilson, 1988; Hill et al, 1984) tend to show that there is a substantial gap between the theory regarding the need for practical help and welfare rights advice and advocacy (see Chapter One) and social workers' actual practice. Little benefits advice and hardly any benefits advocacy was observed during the thirteen months field observation with two social work teams. Stevenson and Parsloe's (1978) comments regarding welfare rights advocacy still appear relevant in relation to this 1988/1989 fieldwork observation of practice.

It is therefore appropriate to question the use of such words as 'advocacy' and 'welfare rights' in many contemporary presentations of the social work task, since while social workers become very widely involved in assisting clients with problems in getting benefits and resources from other agencies they seem but rarely to become engaged in fighting for rights in any strong sense of that term.

In Wilson's (1988) structured interviews with thirty seven social workers in two social work teams, she found that the vast majority of social workers acknowledged the nature and extent of users' financial problems. All of them disagreed that social security benefits provided sufficient levels of income to meet clients' needs and thirty one (84%) agreed that, in many cases, social service users failed to claim their full entitlements. A high number of respondents (30; 81%) agreed that low income was the prime cause of many users' problems and that many clients were forced to social services because of material need (32; 87%). Only two (5%) social workers said that clients on benefit made no effort to better themselves. When it came to the part that social services departments and social workers should play in this area of users' lives the responses became less uniform. Twenty four (65%) of the respondents agreed that social workers should make routine financial assessments for clients; 24(65%) agreed that social workers should act as welfare rights advocates and 23 (62%) agreed that social workers had a duty to campaign on behalf of social service users for higher cash benefits, better housing etc. However only 10 (27%) respondents agreed that social work should be about the relief of poverty and 12 (32%) that social workers could best help their clients by trying to improve their material circumstances. Social workers were almost equally divided over the place of welfare rights within social work: 17 (46%) agreed that dealing with welfare rights problems got in the way of more important social work tasks and an equal number

agreed that welfare rights should be a low priority task for social workers. So that while there was a high degree of agreement over the nature of financial and material difficulties to the point that most social workers said they could be the prime cause of problems which forced many users to seek help from social services departments, there was much less agreement over the type and extent of help that social workers should offer in such circumstances.

A similar conflict between attitudes to poverty and practice in relation to welfare rights was evident in this study. In fieldwork discussions with team members, all agreed that the poverty of social service users could almost "be taken for granted" by social workers, it was so much part of their work. They were able to cite many examples, discuss particular "cases" and take me with them on visits to show the conditions of poverty in which some social service users were managing. However in terms of welfare rights advice and advocacy, even basic benefits checks, there was little evidence of a practical motivation to help users with financial difficulties.

In terms of the theory of Planned Behaviour (Diagram Two), it could be argued that social workers' attitude towards poverty was positive but that subjective norms of colleagues, teamleaders and higher management tended to recognize for example, excellence in statutory child care work rather than the relief of poverty as an indication of a "good" social worker. As Stewart and Stewart (1986) note:

Priority in local authority social work is given to statutory work, particularly involving child care, and beyond that it is a matter of reacting to bombardment (p.24).

Perceived behavioural control in the teams was not only evidenced by opinions of management towards welfare rights but also by the pressure of high caseloads with little time and energy to perform all the statutory requirements required in each case. Silverton team had an on-going dispute with headquarters regarding the amount of casework they were expected to do especially with two members of the team off work with long term ill health and had resorted to "stacking" cases (i.e. noting the cases allocated to them but only tackling those they had time for), and restricting by half the times when social service users could see social workers on the duty desk. As the referrals from the duty desk were more likely to be financial than referrals from other professionals, this also restricted the time they would be able to spend on welfare rights related issues. The influence of the wider environment - particularly the 1986 Social Security Act has been discussed in Chapter Two - but it is worth emphasizing that the DSS policy of involving social workers in community care grants decisions had meant for the Silverton team an aversion to dealing with Social Fund issues and among some social workers a resistance to all matters concerning welfare rights.

Although Vernon's comments in the fieldwork appeared to be directed towards social workers not being involved with income maintenance, he did not take part in a three day training course on welfare rights for teamleaders which disappointed the welfare rights officer Brian Lunt (see Appendix 5):

In 1988 prior to establishment of Social Fund, welfare rights staff spent a great deal of time putting together a comprehensive training course for team leaders over a three day period. It was here that we found indifference and absence from some team leaders (Silverton). Other team leaders were enthusiastic and eager to gain information to pass on to colleagues at team level. I feel that team leaders' advice to social workers not to "cooperate" with the DSS" has been harmful to the so called "generic" and "holistic" approach to the point that now team members positively steer clear of benefits related issues and indeed are "fearful" of becoming entangled in the system for fear of being exposed as de-skilled in this area. We have referrals for such routine matters as the completion of benefit claim forms.

The conflict between attitudes and actions in the Silverton team was concerned with having positive attitudes to poverty and negative attitudes in some cases to welfare rights and in other cases to income maintenance. Actions in relation to users were concerned with giving out money, clothes or food vouchers but not working with users to claim what they were entitled to. Many users with benefit problems were referred to the local welfare rights adviser, by the secretarial staff as well as the social workers. This created problems for Brian Lunt, the welfare rights adviser, because he was often busy with appeals cases and had only Malcolm, an unemployed volunteer who Brian had trained himself, to help him.

Conflict in the City team was more likely to be concerned with positive attitudes towards welfare rights, but being able to do very little in practice. Perceived behavioural control from management and statutory cases was stronger than the pressure for help from users with financial problems. However social workers did have to respond to the pressure from "below". Some staff in City team tended to respond by being sarcastic. At a team meeting a woman was discussed who had had ten Social Fund applications.

**Theresa:** *I don't believe her any more .... She might not want money, she might want counselling. (Others in the team laugh) .... She's coming in, will say she's lost her money and threatens she wants her kids taken into care if she doesn't get help.*

Theresa wanted to take the children into care but Bernard, the teamleader said that, "Those higher up might not appreciate it". Theresa's humour seemed to be reserved for the office, for whenever I accompanied her on visits she dealt with welfare rights

enquiries sympathetically and efficiently, including showing concern for the woman who had made so many Social Fund applications.

Negative attitudes to the Social Fund in particular are common among social work teams. Stewart and Stewart's (1991, p.40) study of 1,200 clients referred by 226 social work teams in the 21 participating local authorities, reported social workers as saying:

I think we've got a difficult enough time doing social work without keep having to get into all the financial aspects of people's problems. It's part of social work, but it shouldn't be as big a part as it is now.

....Many felt that it affected the quality of their work as well as the time they were able to spend on each case:

I think I'm conscious myself of wanting to be a bit more distant; you're turning away someone who actually hasn't got anything to sit on or who hasn't got the basic necessities of life.

It is not surprising under these circumstances that social workers employ black humour to distance themselves from problems they can do little to alleviate.

I was expecting social workers to be conducting basic benefits checks when they saw social service users in the duty room and possibly on their first visit to a new client. I did not observe one benefits check in thirteen months. As Hill, Tolan, and Smith found in 1984, social workers rarely check users' entitlements to benefits. Leaper (1988, p.98) suggests referral forms might have helped social workers to check entitlement to benefit.

Of the 26 social services departments which responded with the forms used by social workers, only 8 per cent had any mention of the financial matters of the client. More authorities in fact recorded data on the religion or creed of client than on their financial situation.

Neither Silverton not City referral forms included queries about users' financial status nor for example a box that could have been ticked to say that users' entitlement to benefits had been checked. During the period of the field observation, there was only one significant example of a benefits check that resulted in a successful back payment to a social service user. The welfare rights officer and social work assistant from Silverton challenged the DSS on their refusal to pay child benefit to Fiona, a woman with learning difficulties and her child. They won the case and Fiona received back payments of over £300 which she used to take herself, her son and her mother to Butlins for a week. This participant observation study also found (see also Hill, Tolan and Smith, 1984) that welfare rights appeared to be an area of work that social workers generally did not do and did not want to do, whereas although they also may not want to be involved in income maintenance and/or debt counselling, they *were* of necessity on a daily basis.

## 6.8 Summary and Conclusions

In Diagram Three previous research has been characterised as being based around different epistemological concerns. Becker (1987), Parsloe and Stevenson (1978), Wilson (1988) and others have described social workers' attitudes to poverty and welfare rights as individual preformed and relatively static. They have used mainly quantitative methods or structured interviews to suggest how social workers respond to poverty issues. This type of approach is defined as "snapshot" in that it fixes the data in terms of a particular time and place.

Other researchers who have not been solely concerned with understanding social work responses to poverty, (Satyamurti, 1981; Smith, 1980; and Pithouse, 1987) have developed a methodology and theoretical framework based on the idea that social workers' knowledge and ideologies cannot be measured in objective ways but are based on subjective interactions with others which vary from time to time and place to place.

By using methodologies that explore the more objective "snapshot" approach (questionnaire, group discussion and interviews) and also the subjective interactive approach (thirteen months participant observation) this research has been able to gain an understanding of the value and use of both epistemological frameworks. By using theoretical constructs that understand attitudes and actions as being fixed concepts (the theory of planned behaviour) or that attitudes and actions are both behaviours and can be appreciated best from a more fluid interactive base (social constructionists theory), it is envisaged that this research has developed a knowledge and understanding of social workers' attitudes and actions in relation to poverty that integrates and develops previous findings on the relationship between poverty and social work.

Social constructionists theory and social psychological theories on the relationship between attitudes and actions are not complementary but rather in epistemological opposition to each other. However as noted in Diagram Three, my belief is that social workers' attitudes and actions are sometimes influenced by the organisation or interactions with colleagues and at other times by previous or personal attitudes and beliefs. It is suggested that social constructionist theory and social psychological theory can develop our understanding of why social workers behave as they do in relation to poverty issues, and that the purpose of using two alternative theoretical frameworks concerning attitudes and actions is so that the reader can understand how each of the models "fits" the fieldwork findings in different ways and in different places.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **SOCIAL SERVICE USERS WITH FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES - THEIR RESPONSES TO SOCIAL WORKERS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This thesis is primarily about the attitude and actions of social workers to poor social service users. However, it would be incomplete if it did not assess users' views of social workers' actions if not attitudes. Unfortunately, the time available in a 2 year Ph.D to interview and analyse users' responses was limited. Interviews were "snapshots" of eighteen social service users at a particular time and place (see Appendix 2). Although generally users appeared grateful for social workers' help, they may have been inhibited by my presence and confused as to whether I had connections with social security or social services.

Time limitations and doubts about the validity of users' responses compared to what could have been achieved using participant observation or other more in depth techniques, has meant that this Chapter is brief. It concentrates on understanding users' expectations, satisfactions and dissatisfactions in relation to social services and putting forward ideas that users had to improve the service for those with financial difficulties. Where there was fieldwork data and observed contacts with the social worker, the social worker's attitudes and actions towards the user are compared with the user's perception of the social worker. However many users were not observed in the fieldwork setting and therefore users' social construction of events is presented as separate and independent from social workers' behaviour in Silverton and City teams.

#### **7.2 Dependency**

New Right thinking in the 1980s established the idea of a "dependency culture". This was supposedly characterised by distinctive behavioural or attitude patterns among social security benefit recipients of working age. Social security policies introduced in the 1980s were designed to reinforce work incentives, to encourage dependency upon liable relatives and/or the wider family and to increase the scrutiny to which benefit claims and claimants are subject. Social service users on income support are from the point of view of dependency theory doubly dependent on the state - through social security and social

services. Independence as it is defined by John Moore (1987) is concerned with being a productive economic unit in the labour market. Women's caring whether of the older or next generation, does not deserve a wage and carers are not seen as productive, but dependent. Ironically many carers on income support are actively working longer and harder hours than they would on the factory floor, by looking after the next generation and/or providing quality care for the older generation which would cost far more in a residential home. As Graham (1983, p.24) concludes, "for many women being dependent is synonymous not with receiving care but with giving it." The concept of dependency is discussed in this Chapter in relation to the attitudes of social workers and social service users interviewed.

Social workers were proud that they had been able to help Fiona, a woman with learning difficulties, to continue to be independent and to stay in the community where she cared for her child and disabled mother. She was living on income support, with financial help from social services (Section 1 money), while saving tax-payers' money by not allowing herself or her child or her mother to be dependent on an institution. Dependency in New Right policies does not explain the complexity of the real world. Carers like Fiona, who some would consider incapable of independence because of their disability, are proving their independence while acquiring the label of "scrounger". Independence for social service users and social workers has a different meaning from the one John Moore attaches to it, which is based on market economics. Fiona's brother who was working and living with the family, contributed irregularly to the finances of the household. He was by no means the family member who everybody else was dependent on. If Fiona had depended on him, it is likely that she and/or her son would have had to go to some sort of institution, as he was not tolerant of her abilities, the child or the social worker.

Family life, as conservative politicians describe it, values private independence above public dependence on the state. This image assumes the family is one big, well off, happy, amorphous unit and distorts the way many women users in the fieldwork and interviews saw their lives. Most of the users observed and interviewed were women, reflecting the fact that 96% of single parents on income support are female (Social Security Statistics, 1989, as cited in *Poverty Journal*, CPAG, 1991). Research on women and poverty (Oppenheim, 1990) indicates that women are financially and practically responsible for the family when partnerships break down and are often also responsible for maintaining the family when a partnership does exist. Many of the interviews in this Chapter and fieldwork examples in Chapters Two and Six illustrate the financial burdens with which women with children were coping



### 7.3 Methodology

The interview methodology is discussed in more detail in this Chapter because particular concerns of users were uncovered, which were not relevant to other aspects of the research or more general methodological issues. There was some doubt as to whether users were inhibited because they associated the researcher with social services or social security in some way. Letters sent to users requesting an interview were typed by the secretary at the first social work team on social services headed paper. Although the content of the letter explained who I was and that I was conducting confidential interviews, and this was reiterated at the interview, the user was likely to identify the researcher as part of social services. Vera was a 16 year old, estranged from her mother and staying with her 19 year old friend Joan. Vera was not entitled to income support and had asked social services for financial help. Joan who was the more confident of the two young women said:

**Joan:** *I'm not so bothered 'cos you're here because you're not a social worker yet are you?*

**Researcher:** *I'm just doing some research on what social workers do, so that's why I've come round, to find out what you think and what's happened.*

**Joan:** *Are you gonna be a social worker?*

**Researcher:** *I don't know yet. The research I'm doing is not to be a social worker. I'm doing a Ph.D.*

**Joan:** *What's that?*

**Researcher:** *It's an academic qualification not a social work qualification.....so people know what social workers do a bit more - and to find out what people think of what they do, like what you're saying, so it's interesting to hear because you've got different views really.*

**Joan:** *A lot of people I know like, don't like 'em.*

Everybody observed or interviewed was not quite sure what "research" was, apart from one middle class man from the Milk Marketing Board who had a student observe him at work. Incomprehension about what research is and how it relates to other services that the user may be dependent on, means that the validity of some of these findings may be suspect. If the researcher is seen as a middle class authority figure, either through association with social services or the university, then users may be conforming by answering in a way that they think the researcher wants, or rebelling by defending their own interests against the interests of authority. Most users seemed to feel that the power structure was such that they needed to conform. Sixteen year old Vera admitted how nervous and anxious she was about the interview.

**Vera:** *I didn't know what to expect from that letter. All sorts of things were rushing through me head, what you were gonna say, is it gonna be a fella, what you were gonna ask me.*

**Researcher:** *I thought you looked a bit nervous when I was coming up the front path.*

**Joan:** *I thought it was a proper social worker coming*

**Vera:** *If it were gonna be a man I wouldn't say anything at all.*

All interviewees seemed more nervous than the researcher, despite the psychological advantage of being interviewed in their own homes. If the interviews had focused on elites, it is doubtful whether they would be more nervous than I as the researcher (see Chapter Three). Thus this Chapter is also about social control, in relation to researchers and academics as well as social workers, and is concerned with the lack of power that a lack of resources brings to any situation.

The reason for Joan's honesty about social workers and Vera admitting how nervous she was, was probably because there were four individuals who knew each other in the room, compared to one researcher who knew no-one. Interviews with a group of people rather than just one, may reduce the status and power of the interviewer by giving the interviewee support from others. They were generally the interviews where the researcher felt most nervous. Vera, Joan and another woman (and Joan's two young children) were present during the interview, (Joan's husband joined us later). They were extremely hostile at first and it was only half way through the interview that Vera admitted going to Silverton social services, having with the collaboration of the others, denied it at the beginning of the interview. Some individuals used the interview to get further advice or to mediate between themselves and social services. This also implies the researcher has power and knowledge that the social service user does not have, and suggests that I was regarded either as a representative of social services or having some sway with it.

Gathering information using field observation with social workers led me to an understanding of the social workers' daily lives which put their attitudes and actions in context. Interviews with users were generally one-off sometimes superficial meetings where I had no means of checking what people were saying to me apart from my own subjective observations and through social workers' accounts and their records. Unlike the research conducted with social workers, there was little interaction with groups of users, nor the possibility of observing users' attitudes and actions over an extended period of time. The opinions and attitudes that social service users did express, concerning how social workers had dealt with their financial problems, would not necessarily be the same

attitudes and opinions that they might express to a friend or family member. Particularly with one of the social work teams I became "one of the family". This degree of contact and intimacy was not possible with users. Ideally I would have liked to use a similar participant observation method with users, getting to know them through a tenants group or community organisation.

#### **7.4 Characteristics of social service users interviewed**

The people whose comments are included here were either: randomly chosen from the referral book where their reason for coming to social services was "financial difficulties"; were individuals that a social worker thought I would be interested in interviewing; were users observed in the social services waiting room; or were individuals encountered when I was accompanying a social worker on a visit which was not about money issues but where the lack of money seemed part of the problem (Stewart and Stewart, 1991). Fifteen interviews were tape recorded, although in some cases revealing information was obtained after the tape recorder was turned off. In three interviews extensive notes were taken instead. The interviewees contacted through the referral book tended to have occasional one-off contact with a social worker - when they were having financial difficulties. Eleven out of eighteen interviewees were women on their own with children dependent on social security. They are referred to in the referral book as "Mrs" so this is how they are addressed in the text, but any traditional prejudices about them having men to support them should be scotched. The six users referred by social workers, who I interviewed without the social workers present, tended to have long term contact with social workers. Of eighteen users interviewed, three were couples with children, one a couple with learning difficulties, twelve were women, mostly on their own with children, and two were male lone parents. Two users did not wish to be interviewed.

Users observed in the waiting room, on duty and out on visits with social workers varied enormously from a 16 year old black girl who had been thrown out of her home by her adoptive parents, to an older woman who could not move from her bed. Young people and parents tended to talk about their money problems which does not mean that older people do not have money problems - just that they may be less likely to talk about them with a social worker. There were no older people interviewed because they did not appear in the random sample collected from the referral book, nor were they referred by social workers. Money was generally not mentioned in older peoples' observed interactions with social workers.

An exception was Mrs Merrivale an older women who while living on her own, had become anxious and confused about her money. All her bills, including her TV rental she paid months in advance. The manager of the TV rental shop had rung Tina, the social work assistant who looked after her, to say she was at that time twelve months in advance with her rental because she would forget she had paid and pay again. I observed two visits to Mrs Merrivale with Tina and was aware that here was a social service user who had fairly large amounts of money stashed around the house, which she had forgotten about. Tina and the home help had found some of the money (over £1000) while Mrs Merrivale was in hospital and put it in her Building Society account. On the second visit she gave Tina £5 to buy some fish and chips but became confused about the change. The aim of the social worker and the home help was to enable this lady to stay in the community where she wanted to be. However her dependency on them rather than an institution, led to their controlling role in relation to her money and left Tina and the home help vulnerable in their positions as public employees.

The low numbers of older people in this study has also been found by other researchers in studying the effect of the Social Fund on social service users, (Becker and Silburn, 1990; Social Security Research Consortium, 1989; Evason et al, 1989; Social Work Research Centre, 1989). Stewart and Stewart (1991, p.16) found in evaluating social workers' reports on 1,200 users using the Social Fund from 226 social work teams:

the proportion of pensioners was surprisingly low, considering the prevalence of poverty in old age and particularly in view of SSD's responsibility for providing "community care" services, which brings large numbers of people into contact with that agency.

### **7.5 Expectations of Social Service Users**

Not surprisingly users were influenced by previous experience of social workers. If previous experiences of social workers had been positive, they expected and often achieved satisfactory help with a financial problem. Mrs Crill was a lone parent looking after her two boys. Her two girls were living with their father. She found it extremely difficult to manage on income support and had contacted social services about her debts.

She first came to social services about the possible sexual abuse of her boys by another boy.

*Mrs Crill: He (John, a social worker from the Silverton team) came up to see them. He were really good.....*

**Researcher:** *So really having done all that with social services to go about the gas bill wasn't really.....I mean it's not the same.*

**Mrs Crill:** *No but they are helpful social services, really helpful.*

**Researcher:** *So you've not had any problems?*

**Mrs Crill:** *No problems at all.*

Mrs Crill had used social services to mediate for her on a number of occasions with the gas and electricity boards and D.S.S. However since her ex- husband had put her in touch with Brian the local welfare rights officer, she had decided to use him in future. She still was not really sure what were appropriate concerns for social services and asked whether she should report her ex husband and his girlfriend because her girls and the girlfriend's older boys were sleeping in the same room.

Vera was 16 and a ward of court. Because her mother regularly beat her up, and she was separated from her father, Vera had a social worker for seven years before moving to the Silverton area to live with a friend Joan.

**Vera:** *She (Mrs Stevenson, her social worker) were like an auntie to me. If I needed any money, any clothes, she'd get them for me. She'd talk to me. She'd sit there and listen to me while I were having problems. She were brilliant.....she's not like a social worker, she's just like a friend.*

This experience meant her expectations of a social worker from Silverton were high.

**Researcher:** *You didn't know you were going to get a new social worker?*

**Vera:** *No.*

**Researcher:** *You know what to expect from social workers don't you?*

**Vera:** *Yeh.*

**Researcher:** *Because of Mrs Stephenson?*

**Vera:** *Yeh.*

**Researcher:** *But what were you expecting when you moved here for the social workers to do?*

**Vera:** *To be like Mrs Stephenson.*

**Researcher:** *To come round and see you and talk to you and you could get some help with finances and things like that.?*

**Vera:** *Yeh.*

**Researcher:** *But it wasn't just money was it?*

**Vera:** *No.*

**Researcher:** *So you could go and talk to her if you wanted?*

**Vera:** *Yeh.*

**Joan:** *But you've got your money sorted out really now haven't you?*

**Vera:** *Mmmm.*

Joan who although only three years older than Vera dominated the interview. Joan had had previous negative experiences of social workers, and found the social control element of their work irksome and interfering.

**Joan:** *I don't like any social workers. I'm not saying I don't like the people. I don't like the things what they do. I just think they're nosey. They interfere a lot.*

It may be that other users felt like Joan but were afraid to say so, if the researcher was identified as involved with social services. Vera seemed confused about what she expected from social services. She wanted a similar "auntie" relationship to the one she had experienced before, but was constrained by living in the house of someone who did not have high expectations or opinions of social workers.

**Vera:** *If I got to know a woman and got to trust her like I have Mrs Stephenson then I'd go down there and talk to her and see if she could help me like. But Joan - that's what Joan's here for.*

**Joan:** *What?*

**Vera:** *I talk to her. You're like a social worker to me! (We all laugh).....*

**Researcher:** *If you had a problem would you go back to social services?*

**Vera:** *Yeh, if it was one that Joan couldn't help me with. If it was a small problem then No I wouldn't - me and Joan would sort it out. But if it were a big one that Joan couldn't sort out then I would.*

**Joan:** *Nowt I can't sort out! (Everyone laughs).*

By the end of the interview, Vera asked if they could send a female social worker out to see her. She had been to the town hall and seen the male social worker on duty but had not mentioned that she was hoping to see a female.

**Vera:** *....when I tried to help me mum, the social worker that came with me stepfather in Wales when we were over there - I was trying to get to me mother to stop him from hitting her and she (the social worker) pushed me back and told me to leave him alone and I saw it all. (break in voice). And I've just been scared of men - won't talk to them, not unless I get to know them.*

Joan then told Vera which female social worker, at Silverton she should see - Beverley - because she was young and trendy and had helped her mother in law with a practical problem. Although at the time the discussion over which social worker Vera should ask for seemed amusing if presumptuous, I later realised that middle class people might have similar discussions about which dentist or doctor they should see. Why does it seem surprising that working class people want the same choice over their social worker? When I took the message back to the team (with Vera's consent), that Vera would like a female social worker and a particular one at that, the team leader informed me that it was not their case and would stay with Mrs Stephenson's area. Mrs Stephenson was on long term sick leave. Vera did not appear to realise she was calling at the wrong social services offices.

If there was little or no previous experience of social workers, expectations were vague, and included comments such as "don't know" or that the person wanted "help". If the user has little knowledge of what social workers do, they are not sure what to expect, apart from what neighbours or a friend have told them. Mrs Frank had been to social services to see if she could get some financial help or advice while her husband was out of prison on home leave. She had no extra finances to support him at home.

**Researcher:** *Is that what you expected when you went down there?*

**Mrs Frank:** *Well I didn't know really. I heard like he could claim something but I didn't know how true it was, and like his probation officer told me and like other people who have had the same experience as me and that saying it to me - so I thought I'd get in touch with a social worker and see if they could advise me.*

Mrs Dale who was a lone parent living on income support, with one child, had a mother and sister who were home helps, so she had a fairly good understanding of what to expect from social services. Even if she did not know all that a social worker could do, she knew for example, that they could mediate with the electricity board.

**Researcher:** *When you went to social services did they do what you hoped they'd do?*

**Mrs Dale:** *Yeh, I tried to phone electric board myself but I haven't got a phone, - went down the road - all broken, couldn't get through. I didn't know what to do. They phoned through to electric board.*

Other users had more serious concerns. Mrs Bagthorpe as discussed in Chapter Two, was due to be evicted by her Building Society. She had four children and a working husband:

**Mrs Bagthorpe:** *..because of my handicapped daughter you see, I mean what would happen to her if I was homeless..also the other children as*

*well but mainly her. The other kids could make do but Marilyn couldn't....I was hoping they could either loan me the money or halt the proceedings which they did anyway.*

(Mrs Bagthorpe's handicapped daughter had died between the 9/1/89 referral and this interview on 9/8/89. She had three other children living with her).

Mr & Mrs Partridge were expecting financial help from social services because social security had refused them help. They had been visiting their three year old daughter who was in a City hospital every day. It was costing them £5 a day in petrol and expenses from Silverton. As Mr Partridge was unemployed they had no money left to feed their other two children and themselves. Mr Partridge phoned social security on Monday 17/7/89 and they said "*there was no way they could help with travelling expenses to hospital*". Mrs Partridge said her husband:

*...asked for like a loan. We needed help from somewhere so I said "nip to social services to see what they can do for us" (Friday, 21.7.89). They couldn't help us by giving us any money or anything but advised us that DSS can help.*

Initially Mr and Mrs Partridge were disappointed in their expectations of social services. They had hoped for direct financial help from social services rather than being passed back to social security who had already refused them a loan. However they persevered with social security and were able to claim a Social Fund loan after their visit to social services.

Jane and Richard, a couple who had learning difficulties, expected more financial help than they had received from social services. The oldest of Jane's three children, Rebecca, was cared for by Jane's mother. The second, Jonathan, had been taken into care, and the baby, Samantha, was in the process of being taken into care.

**Researcher:** *But would you say that's the same for all the social workers - that you would have liked more help?*

**Richard:** *Other two helped us more often with money sort of thing.*

**Jane:** *Yes.*

**Richard:** *But all the social workers have been the same, they've been mainly concerned about the children.*

**Jane:** *Yes.*

**Richard:** *They've all been the same they're useless.*



## 7.6 Satisfactions of social service users

Most users were satisfied when they received practical help or advice. With financial queries this could involve mediating with the gas and electricity boards, social security, or other council departments such as housing or the rates. The majority of social service users interviewed had short term financial crises with which they needed immediate help. They did not see themselves as dependant on social services, but were prepared to contact them in an emergency.

A minority of users - Mrs Routledge is representative of a number of other individuals - had become social work "cases" with financial difficulties as their main problem. They were often grateful for the help they had received over years. Mrs Routledge was on her own with four children. Her ex husband a milkman, had stopped paying the bills and burnt the evidence. She was left owing £1003 to the gas board and £700 to the electricity board. She withdrew all her savings and insurance (£300) to pay off some of the debts. The gas was cut off and she had *"three bad winters with no heating at all."* Her husband had *"always been bad with money"*. The worst period was when she injured her fingers and was off work as a cleaner for eighteen weeks. The social worker suggested she claimed sickness benefit from social security but she *"only got £4 then"* because her ex husband was supposed to be paying her maintenance. He owes £700 but has *"got no money to pay it"*. She has not been able to buy clothes, *"depends on what people give her"*. Her oldest daughter had now got a mortgage *"one less for mum to worry about"* is what she had said to her mother. The daughter had paid to have Mrs Routledge's hall and front room decorated, which were in stark contrast to the rest of the house. Although Mr Routledge had now moved out of their council house, originally when they separated he lived in an upstairs room while Mrs Routledge and the four children lived in the rest of the house. Her husband expected her to continue to clean, wash and wash up for him, as well as pay his debts. The housing department had told her to stop clearing up after her ex-husband and paying his debts. She kept paying the rent because she wanted to *"fight for my own house"*. Eventually the family was evicted from their council house at 12.p.m. and Mrs Routledge without her husband retrieved the keys at 4.30p.m. on the same day as the sole tenant. Brian, the welfare rights worker and John the social worker had been involved in helping her for three years. As Mrs Routledge explained, she was very grateful to her social worker, *"I don't know what I'd have done without John - much worse - be in the river by now."*

Jane and Richard, the couple with learning difficulties, were grateful for their social worker Martin, from the City team, lending them money.

**Researcher:** *Have the social workers' helped you with the financial things?*

**Jane:** *No, we're still waiting for a letter from.. (Richard interrupts).*

**Richard:** *Unofficially Martin lends us odd fiver which he's not supposed to - I think about the kids at the moment. He will lend us a fiver guarantee us we'll pay him it back when we have it - which is when we get it this week.*

**Jane:** *He'll get it back on Friday.*

Mr and Mrs Partridge, whose child had been in hospital, had mixed feelings about whether they were satisfied with their visit to social services.

**Interviewer:** *Were you satisfied with what happened when you went to social services?*

**Mrs Partridge:** *Not for the first five or ten minutes when they kept saying that no-one could help me but after that everything seemed to be O.K. I think if we'd not asked it calmer a little bit, we could have come home without nothing. We'd have to go back Monday or Tuesday...but without losing his temper an all - he's not one for losing his temper all that much - but with sitting there and trying to explain to young lassie - she was helpful enough don't get me wrong - she was trying to be as helpful as what she can ....she didn't actually know 'owt about this loan...and we slowed down and tried to explain more to her - she goes "I'll see what they say but I can't promise you nothing" and then we waited and then everything was smashing.*

The Silverton team had a policy of non co-operation with the Social Fund and so Beverley, the social worker concerned would have had to find out more about the loan system. Mr and Mrs Partridge requested a loan and would have been unlikely to receive any information about Community Care grants from social services.

One test of whether social service users were satisfied with the service they received, was whether they would return to the social services department if they had a similar problem. Both Mr and Mrs Partridge said independently of each other that now they knew they could get a loan or possibly a grant from social security, they would go straight there.

All of the social service users who had found out about Brian, the welfare rights worker at the Enterprise Centre since going to social services, said they would prefer to see him about financial problems. What they generally did not say directly was that going to social services, even if they were judged to be a "deserving" poor person felt stigmatising. Perhaps they were not sure how social services could be less stigmatising, given its structure and roles. However having participated in fieldwork visits to the Enterprise Centre with social workers where Brian the welfare rights officer was based, I could sense the difference in atmosphere. There were a number of workshops for unemployed

people where products were made and could be bought, a tea and coffee bar, volunteers organising various activities and a welfare rights office staffed by one paid worker and knowledgeable volunteers. Most importantly there appeared to be a welcoming atmosphere whereby visitors were greeted with a smile and offered a cup of tea. As Mrs Dale, the young lone parent commented:

**Mrs Dale:** *A lot of people go to Enterprise now though, if they have trouble with the electric.....You can say it to some of the social workers but I wouldn't to other people. (that she had been to social services).*

**Interviewer:** *You wouldn't mention it?*

**Mrs Dale:** *I do now because people can be helpful can't they? But some people are looking down.*

Mrs Bagthorpe felt embarrassed and humiliated at having to go to social services. She did not seem to know about the Enterprise Centre.

**Mrs Bagthorpe:** *I don't know what you'd feel like if you had to go to them. You don't feel as if you're putting them out but in a way you do.*

**Interviewer:** *You mean you're not in a very powerful position really?*

**Mrs Bagthorpe:** *Yes, it's also having to ask for something. I mean if I could sort out 'owt myself I will do, if I could like find another house for me to go into or rented accommodation, I would find it...I hate having to go to a middle person.*

**Interviewer:** *So you're quite independent really?*

**Mrs Bagthorpe:** *Yes.*

**Interviewer:** *So normally you wouldn't go to anyone.*

**Mrs Bagthorpe:** *I would never ask anyone in the family to look after these (three children). Not even my Dad I wouldn't ask.*

As Davies (1985, p.18) notes, "We know that virtually every visitor to a social service office feels some stigma in being there."

### **7.7 Dissatisfactions of social service users**

Eight out of eighteen users felt that their dissatisfactions with social services were that their money problems were not taken seriously and that users had to visit social services two or three times or become aggressive before getting help.

Davies (1985, p.19) refers to the problem in user research of users who present themselves not being taken as seriously as those referred by Doctors, Head teachers, Health visitors and the Courts. With financial problems there is also the difficulty that these problems are not accepted as part of the social work task.

Mrs Routledge although happy with the social worker John who eventually worked with her, said she had seen *"two or three social workers before"* when she went to social services. They *"didn't do anything"*, had said *"come again if you want another talk"*, and *"we can't help you"*. This was confirmed by her case notes where her two previous attempts to get help at the duty desk, had resulted in her being given advice and the file closed as NFA - "no further action". I asked Mrs Routledge why she had persevered, *"because of what other people said (her neighbours had suggested she should be able to get help from social services) and the arrears were more."* Other social service users with similar financial problems may not have returned three times, however desperate.

Mrs Partridge made the point in the last section that her husband had to stay calm when both social services and social security had told them they would not be able to claim any additional finances, not even a loan, for the hospital visits. Not all social service users or anyone else, would have been able to be as patient in similar circumstances. A social work student in Chapter Five recounts how a user is labelled violent and disruptive because she finds it difficult to return to social services five days running with three children for £4 a day, without getting upset. It appears that social workers may not always be aware of the financial and therefore emotional pressure that social service users are coping with when they come to social services to ask for help. Because financial problems are not necessarily seen as part of the social work task and they can be time consuming and "boring", users' poverty may be ignored or not taken as seriously as issues which are seen as more directly "emotional" (see Parkinson, 1970). For example a referral from a consultant surgeon discussed at a team meeting was one that most social workers present were interested in and eager to be involved with. It concerned a teenage boy who had been paralysed from the neck down after an accident while out playing. The surgeon thought that the family would need counselling concerning the boy's practical and emotional difficulties being back at home. This is obviously the case, but the social work help he needed is unlikely to be considered statutory any more than Mrs Routledge's situation with four children and enormous debts. From my interview with Mrs Routledge, her emotional and practical needs were intertwined as Stevenson (1973) suggests. However it was only on her third self referral to social services that she got the help she needed.

Criticisms of social workers were often aimed at the "system" rather than any individual social worker. The stigma for example, of going to social services was seen as part of the system not any individual social worker's fault. This may be partly due to a researcher being seen as "one of them" but also because many users did not know individual social workers and could only comment in general terms. Joan is complaining that the social worker whose name she did not know, firstly asked her lots of questions and secondly has not been back to see Vera.

**Joan:** *That were him who fetched the food voucher. That's all I thought he was coming for - to give Vera this food voucher, but when he got here, he were firing questions at me and everything. Ah just couldn't cope with it. I asked him nice enough to stop asking me questions. It was nowt to do with me. It's Vera.*

**Interviewer:** *And what did he say?*

**Joan:** *Nowt. "Well I'll see Vera then". But he's never seen her. He's never bothered.....They're not bothered.*

**Vera:** *Not bothered at all.*

**Joan:** *....He said he'd see her later ....but I think I gave him the impression not to come back here.*

Jane and Richard had a serious complaint to make about an ex social worker of theirs (Pete S) who was not a city team member. Their conversations are transcribed directly from the tape recording of the interview and are sometimes difficult to follow. Nevertheless as a couple with learning difficulties, these are their experiences of social services. One of the problems that Pete, the social worker concerned, seems not to have taken sufficient account of is the idea of inter household poverty (see Chapter Three). Jane is seen as equally responsible as her ex husband for starving their child - which is not her view of the situation. It may be that Pete was taking their giro from their accommodation because he did not recognize Jane's right to half of it and if she had received that money instead of her ex husband, it may well have been spent on food for the baby. In Richard and Jane's story there is also not a convenient dividing line between social and financial issues (Stevenson, 1973).

**Interviewer:** *....But you didn't really have the same money problems there? (In the Tower Block).*

**Richard:** *Yes since we moved here.*

**Interviewer:** *Since you got married and since you moved here. (Richard and Jane lost benefit when they married and their rent is £15 over the £35 allowed for housing benefit.)*

**Interviewer:** *Why were the social workers seeing you on Tower Block if it wasn't to do with money, was it to do with the children?*

**Richard and Jane:** *Yes.*

**Interviewer:** *So what happened?*

**Jane:** *Jonathan went straight into care.*

**Richard:** *They was going to take Jonathan into care, so when we found out we signed the papers to have him adopted. Now when this one was going into care I said "No chance baby No chance I'm fighting for this one."*

**Interviewer:** *So what happened with Rebecca?*

**Richard:** *Beccy, she's the oldest one. Well her husband was starving her (Jane) and Beccy, buying nowt but bloody wagon wheels and that Pete her ex social worker were nicking giro out letterbox. I took her down one day from Centre 90 to her mother's, to her mum's and dad's and she said "I'm going to Pete mum, to get some money off him." She said "all right love, better take bodyguard w'yer." Ah goes down. He says "th..th..th.." Ah says "Don't treat me cos I'll push you straight through that window right? You get that keys, get that safe and have that money on this table, if not I can do you for theft....Her husband pinched that giro - it's in both names, both have to sign it".*

**Interviewer:** *And he (the social worker) was taking it?*

**Jane:** *Yes.*

**Richard:** *...you can't take no mail out of anybody's letterbox, you're not pinching it off the tenant, you're pinching it off the royal mail ....and that's a criminal offence.*

**Interviewer:** *So did you get the money?*

**Jane:** *No he still owes me quite a bit.*

**Richard:** *She got about fifty quid one day. I takes her another week after "C'mon she wants some more money to pay her bills at Centre 45." "No more money left in safe for her" "Put it this way punkshit. I'm gonna kill you in a minute." He brought three more men in. Ah says they won't stop me to get to you. Ah'll kill you boy. They're motorway bobbies...Ah said only thing I want he's got an envelope in that safe belonging to her he's pinched out of their letterbox, giro after giro after giro. He says "you Mr S. did you take mail out of their letterbox?" He says "yes"...*

**Interviewer:** *Why was he doing that?*

**Richard:** *He didn't like her. He wanted to put the child into care.*

**Jane:** *He wanted to rush her into care straight away. He said I weren't capable of looking after her. Well I never got a chance to look after her.*

**Interviewer:** *So that was your first baby?*

**Jane:** *Yes.*

**Interviewer:** *So did you get that money back?*

**Richard:** *Got most of it back didn't we?*

**Jane:** *He still owes us quite a bit don't he?*

**Richard:** *Got some of it back, half of it.*

**Interviewer:** *So who's got the rest?*

**Richard:** *The social worker has stashed in their safe - I think he's spent it on his house - he's got a big house - he's got about 12 kids dirty git.....*

**Interviewer:** *He (Jane's ex husband) hasn't got the money then?*

**Richard:** *(laughs), He hasn't seen no money either...*

**Interviewer:** *So they took the baby away cos the baby wasn't eating properly?*

**Jane:** *My husband was eating the baby food.*

**Richard:** *They put it down that the baby was being starved by both parents. It turned out the baby was getting starved cos they weren't getting no money cos the mother was feeding both of them.....*

**Interviewer:** *I can't understand why your social worker took your money?*

**Jane:** *Pete didn't trust us with money because my husband kept buying wagon wheels daft, kept buying about 100 wagon wheels.*

**Richard:** *It wasn't her, it was him, he put it down as them.*

**Jane:** *Cos one day he (Jane's ex husband) put £90 in the bandit machines and there were no money at all.*

Richard and Jane's situation emphasizes Stewart and Stewart's hypothesis (1991, p.28-29) that "life events" are the context for extreme financial problems.

These events include: moving house, particularly without choice; changes in household structure such as birth or the death of a close relative, relationship breakdown, leaving the parental home; movement into or out of an institution; redundancy or unforeseen job loss; being the victim of a serious criminal offence or of a natural disaster such as fire or flood. Majorities of each survey population (in research on the Social Fund), were known to have recently experienced at least one such life event which had a bearing on their current financial situation.

In Richard and Jane's complex situation there were at least five life events which had occurred within a comparatively short space of time - the breakdown of a previous relationship for Jane; movement out of prison for Richard and for both of them out of the hostel where they met; marriage; and two moves to their present address; and finally the birth of their baby.

Other users were also experiencing traumatic life events which affected their ability to cope financially - for many female users for example Mrs Crill, Mrs Routledge and Mrs Crale, this included the breakup of their marriage and caring for children on their own. Mrs Bagthorpe and Mr and Mrs Partridge had seriously ill children. Mrs Dixon suffered a bereavement and mental breakdown and had recently come out of an institution, and Mrs Frank's husband was coming out of prison and she was finding it hard to adjust to having him back. Vera, at sixteen, had moved house and was estranged from her mother. As Stewart and Stewart (1991, p.29) note:

There is a substantial body of existing research on life events, which has been conducted mainly from a psychological perspective and which largely ignores people's material circumstances and poverty issues (reviewed by Titterton, 1989). Yet many of the events concerned can have the double effect of increasing the need for extra expenditure at the same time as reducing the person's income or command over other resources.

Mr and Mrs Baker's trauma involved suddenly taking responsibility for seven children rather than four. The Baker family already had four children when they agreed to take on his sister's three children. Mr Baker's sister and husband had split up in Skegness and neither seemed to want to take responsibility for the children. Mr Baker took them on because, *"I don't want them to go into a home"*. They had come to social services because they could not manage financially with an extra three children in the home. Mr Baker was working part time as a debt collector. They were claiming Family Credit but had found their financial support from this could not be altered for six months, despite their changes in circumstances. They had not yet received any child benefit for his sister's three children and it was six weeks since they had come to stay. Their situation had been discussed at a team meeting and although the team leader felt they should not have taken on these extra responsibilities if they could not afford to, and that the parents should be made to take responsibility, Karen was allocated the case.

Mr and Mrs Baker's dissatisfactions with how the Silverton team responded to their request for financial help were concerned with the time it took the team to respond. Karen was very busy and had hoped *"she would not get this one"*. It was two weeks before she got round to see the family. They had telephoned social services three times after their initial visit and she had telephoned them once. I had interviewed them during the time they were waiting to see a social worker, not realising that their problem was still ongoing. They seemed very anxious at having to wait as they had a number of unpaid bills because of the extra demands from the children. I urged Karen to see them as soon as possible. I did not observe Karen's visit but helped her load second hand clothes and blankets in her car before she went and discussed the situation with her when she came back. Before she went she said:



**Karen:** *Vernon (the teamleader) is not keen to give them more (than a £20 food voucher) as he feels the children should go back to their parents in Skegness. I feel he's being a bit hard.*

When she came back she said:

**Karen:** *I took them round what I promised but they didn't like me asking lots of questions. I said I needed to account for the food voucher money. When they found that's all they were getting from social services, the wife blew up and told me to take the food voucher and clothes back. They didn't want charity etc. I managed to calm them down, turned my back on the husband and said to the wife, "won't you please take this. £20 is not to be sneezed at". She snatched the voucher back and started going through the clothes saying "It's trousers I want" but then found the T shirts were good for her children. I said "I don't mind what children have the clothes - give them away if you don't want them. I don't want to take them back to the car as I've got a bad back".*

The social worker left with them still feeling disgruntled. I said:

**Interviewer:** *I'd tried to warn you about this.*

**Karen:** *I've never had anyone throw a food voucher back in my face before!*

She felt they were manipulative, whereas my previous interview observations indicated that they genuinely had financial problems and needed immediate short term financial help. The Baker family, Karen, Vernon and myself had different social constructions (see Chapter Six) of what the Baker's problem might be, and how it could be solved. I was aware that in some social services departments they could be paid to foster the children, rather than them going into institutional care. Mr and Mrs Baker had asked my advice about how social services could help them financially and this was one of the options I mentioned to them. They had not seen a social worker at the time I visited and were therefore anxious to find out about any financial information or advice that could be of use to them. It may be that when Karen visited them they already had considered in what ways they wanted help and expected more than a food voucher. It is also likely that Karen found them more demanding and assertive than other social service users with financial problems. They had more information, Vernon's construction of the problem and solution were that the Baker's should have said no to looking after his sister's children if they could not afford to look after them. They may have gone into residential care but it would have been in Skegness not in Silverton. The Silverton social work team would not have to cope with these financial problems of the family.

The Bakers felt they were preventing these children being taken into care, were looking after them adequately but needed financial help after six weeks to continue to do so.

Compared to the cost and administrative time of organising receiving three children into residential care, Mr Baker felt (with previous experience of foster homes), that he was doing social services "a favour".

**Karen:** *..not quite right, I don't trust them, something's going on there.*

Later she found a big old file on them.

**Karen:** *Fascinating, it's what happened to them as children.*

Mr Baker and his brothers and sister had been in foster homes as children. Karen felt this confirmed her opinion of them. However Mr Baker had told me during the interview that he had been in homes as a child and that was why he did not want his nephews and nieces to go in one.

The family appeared to have explored all the avenues by which they could get financial help to look after the children and had found none. Social services was their last resort. They had been to Brian, the Welfare Rights Officer, who had told Mr Baker to give up his job and go on to social security as he could then claim allowances for the extra children. Mr Baker did not want to do this as he enjoyed his job and there was the prospect of promotion. The Bakers thought that as they were preventing the children going into care, they should get some regular financial help from social services. In the emotionally stressful situation the Bakers found themselves in, it is understandable why they threw the food voucher back that Karen took round (two weeks later). Unfortunately, the team leader and the social worker did not perceive the situation in the same way as the Bakers. Being accepted as foster parents was not suggested to the family and very few families in Silverton were regularly supported by Section 1 payments or food vouchers. Unlike many people who came to social services with money problems, especially in this area, the Bakers did not adopt a passive pleading role. When they first came to social services they put their case in a direct, assertive way. As they waited for a response, received more information and finally were given a food voucher, their straight forward approach turned to anger and disappointment. As anger expressed in this way over a food voucher was not what Karen was expecting - people were usually grateful - she labelled them as deviant. Mr Baker's recognition that his sister was not able to look after the children was not recognized formally by social services and therefore the Baker's plan to prevent the children being taken into care was not taken seriously:

**Mr Baker:** *She's (his sister) working in Safeways and only just manages to keep herself and pay the rent. Her husband's on social security and has disappeared.*

Another situation where users' construction of events was often different from social workers was in the social services waiting room. As a participant observer in the social services waiting room, the conversation would usually start by somebody asking somebody else who they were "seeing". Social service users would assume I, like them, was waiting to see someone. On a number of occasions I was asked who I was seeing and I would tell them the name of a social worker I knew. On this occasion, I initiated the discussion.

**Researcher:** *Who are you seeing?*

**Michael:** *Ivan - met him nine years ago in hospital - the only thing he did then was to give me a lift home in his car - I don't suppose he's changed that much. I asked him about some money from the government 'cos I'm schizophrenic - he said "I don't keep up with that sort of thing" and that's his job!*

Presumably Ivan had heard some information about community care grants, which his social worker who was in the City team had not heard.

All users whether interviewed or observed had no doubt that dealing with money problems was part of the social worker's job. Some users had been encouraged by neighbours, friends or probation officers to approach social services when they knew the person had financial difficulties. Probation officers had no resources similar to Section 1/18 monies to help families with financial difficulties. Social workers did not always see financial problems as an important part of their work. This is the misunderstanding between users and social workers which Mayer and Timms (1970) dub "the clash in perspective" where social workers' training and subsequent attitude still emphasize caring rather than control, counselling for change, rather than the practical approach which users prefer.

### **7.8 How users would have liked social services to respond differently**

The White Paper "Caring for People" states that "promoting choice and independence underlies all the Government's proposals", aiming to "give people a greater individual say in how they live their lives and the services they need to help them to do so" (1989, p.4, para 1.8.). From this research it seems that individual users are at an enormous disadvantage in choosing what they would like from services. If they are not aware of what organisations can or should do, it is extremely difficult for them to say how they would like social services to respond differently. The most common answer to this question was "don't know". Some user studies have pointed out that if a service exists all members of the public have an equal right to know about it (Davies, 1985). If a booklet

can be sent to twenty three million households explaining the structure and services available under the NHS why is it not possible to allocate resources to explain social services?

In most interviews evidence that users were not sure what social workers do is present. Mr and Mrs Partridge commented that as they were not familiar with social services, they did not know if anything could have been different about their visit. Throughout another interview "social services" and "social security" were confused. Mrs Crale was similarly vague when asked what social services could have done differently to help her: *"Problems with children, any sort of problems they help with anybody don't they?...I think it's a great thing."* When observing one of the social work teams at work, the secretary came in with a phone referral from a Mrs Howarth: *"Have got a slug in the bathroom. Please can a qualified social worker remove it. Thank you."* Although this caused amusement in the City team at the time, it is of some concern if it is a serious request, that some member of the public have such little knowledge of what social workers do.

Suggestions about what social workers could do differently emphasised practical caring help rather than "control" which was seen as interference. As 19 year old Joan commented:

**Joan:** *They can do some good things. Like his mum's fetching up two twins and they're their daughter's twins and the social worker's been over to his mam. I agree on that, I don't agree on them coming out nosing.....She was talking to his mum and she seems very nice and she got twin beds for them. His father's got thrombosis - has to have a car with tax, insurance - couldn't afford beds. She had no help whatsoever - so she went to social services and said she needed two beds and Beverley (social worker) got them.*

Jane and Richard would have liked more practical and financial help:

**Interviewer:** *If the social workers haven't helped you as much as you would have liked, what do you think they should have done different?*

**Richard:** *Get off their arses for a start.*

**Jane:** *Martin could have helped us more often.*

**Richard:** *Martin he's not really bothered. We've only got a lift home off him from there (City social services office where Richard and Jane have supervised access visits to their child) four times.*

**Interviewer:** *What would you like him to do then?*

**Jane:** *He could have helped us to get a carpet.*

**Richard:** *He could have just gone to Social and said "look how about giving him a loan to decorate the complete house, why don't you just come, see what wanted doing then give him the money to do it." So instead of having high electricity bills and high gas bills like us got now, at least they would be low and won't get cut off. If he'd done that like I wanted....*

Richard and Jane use Social Fund loans to pay a little off their most urgent creditors. They also want their new baby Samantha back. Richard has been impressed by a magistrate who told him it was time to turn over a new leaf.

**Interviewer:** *What would you like social workers to be doing for you then?*

**Richard:** *Well if they said right there's a good chance of you getting Samantha.*

**Richard and Jane:** *Yes.*

**Richard:** *...cos if we go to social they're going to have to give us a fifth grant - for baby clothes, a cot, bottles ...*

**Interviewer:** *So you would like the social workers whether it was Martin or anyone to help you with the money side of it.*

**Richard and Jane:** *Yes.*

**Interviewer:** *And also the baby side?*

**Jane:** *Yes..to help us sort out what we got to pay out.*

Mrs Bagthorpe suggested social services should provide a list of privately rented accommodation so that women who had been battered and wanted to leave their husbands could go somewhere straight away rather than be taken to a women's' refuge. Previous to the problem with her mortgage, she had tried to leave her husband and stayed a night in the women's' refuge where Linda the social work assistant had taken her.

**Mrs Bagthorpe:** *At least you could fetch a few belongings from your home - what you wanted without him arguing - get what bits you think you should have and removals and just go. You're more likely to stop if you've got things there.*

Mrs Bagthorpe had said the Refuge was a cold and bare ex police station. There was only one other woman there and Mrs Bagthorpe had to baby-sit for four other children as well as her own three. She stayed one night and tried to claim social security the next day. She had her three children with her, it was pouring with rain and she had to get two buses to the social security office. Eventually she gave up and went back to her own home and husband the same day.

Practical help is what previous research suggests users would like from social workers. (Sainsbury, 1975; Mcgrath, 1979; Rees and Wallace, 1982). It is not necessarily what the professional social worker is most interested in, or capable of tackling.

### **7.9 Social workers' attitudes and actions in comparison to users' views**

Social workers tended to be more critical of users than users were of social workers. This may be due to "letting off steam" which is part of any work situation. "Service workers like teachers typically judge people they work with on the basis of how easy or difficult those people make it to get through a day's work" (Becker, 1963, p.59).

Certain long term users with financial difficulties were seen as hopeless cases and in this sense could be termed as 'undeserving' of social workers time and energy (see Chapter Six). These users were allocated to various social workers over the years and the general consensus appeared to be that nothing could be done about their problems. For example Mrs Dixon discussed in Chapter Two, who came to the duty office about the bailiffs coming round to take away her furniture. Mary, who was in the office at the time of Mrs Dixon's visit, pointed out to me how many social workers had tried to help Mrs Dixon and how hopeless was her case.

Other users who were not part of the long term case work system, were often seen as "deserving poor", especially if they were women with children on low incomes. Carol the social worker who interviewed Mrs Crawley on duty said, "*poor girl - she looks like she's at the end of her tether - quite tearful - other problems apart from money.*" When I interviewed Mrs Crawley at her home, she seemed quite happy and cheerful and did not give the impression of being particularly upset at the time of the interview. She did not think she had any other problems apart from money, and had not bothered to sort out the £40 that she thought her husband should have got from the Department of Employment. She was a shy Irish woman with a speech impediment, so the official setting may have increased her anxiety, or the social worker may have misread her appearance and state of mind. She had however been seen by the social worker as someone who was "deserving" of extra finances.

Social workers often have a different construction of an individual's problem than the users themselves. The social services' construction of the Partridge's problem was concerned with who was responsible for income maintenance in this situation. Vernon the teamleader advised Beverley the social worker on duty who was not sure what to do to send them back to the local DSS. She was reluctant because she said they had already

been there and had got a pink form. The teamleader said *"tell them to go back and tell them (DSS), they've got no money."* He had previously said that DSS enquiries are sent on to DSS and *"if they don't come back - presume it's O.K."* As a result of a team meeting discussing the research findings, what happens to these "No Further Action" cases was debated. Mr and Mrs Partridge had persevered in going back to DSS, having spoken to Beverley. Many users may not have had the resources or the energy to make three such journeys about a situation that may be desperate, but is also embarrassing and stigmatising. The successful outcome of this frustrating saga for the Partridges was after all a Social Fund loan not a grant.

Mrs Bagthorpe's telephone call to Karen, the duty social worker, about her mortgage arrears provoked the following comments. *"She's not like the sort of people we usually get...wouldn't guess she was from round here - make up and hair all up."* Karen must have known Mrs Bagthorpe from a previous contact as this referral was by telephone. My impression of Mrs Bagthorpe, on interviewing her later on in the research at her home, was that the main difference between her and other users interviewed, was that she had a mortgage. She did not appear to be especially "dressed up", although going to social services was an unpleasant ordeal for her and she may have dressed up to hide her embarrassment and prevent herself feeling stigmatised in a similar way to Mrs Grant, the grandmother in Chapter Two. Despite her comments, Karen, the social worker, was sympathetic to Mrs Bagthorpe in the two telephone calls I overheard.

Martin, Jane and Richard's social worker, had information regarding their past that I was not aware of at the time of the interview. Martin's construction of Richard and Jane's situation is primarily influenced by concern about their child. He is not prepared to recommend that they keep the baby Samantha. *"Because of Richard's past record it's very unlikely they will get the child."* Richard has served a prison sentence for sexual offences. Jane had been on probation for gross indecency and setting fire to her ex-husband's house. I observed a discussion between the social worker and a probation officer where they were discussing the idea that Richard had said that girls *"ask for it"* even as young as ten years old. Apparently a female social worker had been sexually assaulted when visiting his family home in Barnsley. Martin seemed to think that Jane had been abused by Richard's brothers when they lived in the same house. When Martin was discussing with the probation officer how Jane was pregnant when Richard had had a vasectomy, he said *"Oh well she probably had sex with one of his friends and he watched."* Martin suggested this probation officer did not usually make comments like this. Martin felt Jane would not stand up to him if Richard was abusive with the baby. There was also a discussion between Martin and two other social workers as to whether she wanted the baby. Jane had apparently gone quiet when asked how she would cope

when the baby cried. Some of the social workers felt Richard was pushing her into fighting for the child. Martin also said, "Richard had said things that were not true - that other social workers had supposedly said. For example that one social worker said he should be given a chance with the baby". Although Martin said he told them what he is going to say in court, Richard and Jane seemed unaware that he was going to recommend that they could not keep their baby. Martin was, as they had said, more concerned with their children than their financial situation. However some of the predicament Jane and Richard found themselves in was connected with their difficulty in managing their finances, especially when Jane was with her ex husband. During our interview Jane would occasionally raise her eye brows to indicate that Richard was embellishing a story. When I saw the couple six months later, and her third baby, Samantha, had been taken into care. Jane said she was "happy about that." Richard was in a hurry to get to the hospital and passed no comment on the situation.

### **7.10 Summary and Conclusions**

A number of important concepts have been raised in this Chapter. Firstly that users' financial problems were often part of larger "life events" that the individual is finding it difficult to cope with. These "life events" were usually not seen as part of the user's financial problems by the social worker or teamleader involved with finding a solution to these problems.

Secondly dependence on social workers was preferable for women such as Mrs Routledge to dependence on an unreliable husband. For other women such as Mrs Bagthorpe, dependence on social security which she talked about wistfully, was preferable to staying with a violent husband which she did not talk about.

Thirdly social workers were unaware of what had happened to social service users who had financial problems and were sent on to other agencies. Their referral forms were marked "NFA" as if another agency was sorting out the problem when very little was known about what had happened in relation to the user's problem. As Fimister (1988, p.318) notes:

There are also simple practicalities which, nevertheless, are of great importance to claimants as they seek a solution to their income problems. Take as a notable example the question of referral procedures. In-service training (and information systems) should be sensitive both to agency policy as to when and in what circumstances it is appropriate to refer a case to another body; and to the location, procedures and opening hours of organisations to which claimants might be referred. This may seem obvious, but I receive with depressing regularity accounts of claimants who have been caused inconvenience, financial loss and general



aggravation in being referred to the wrong building in the wrong part of town, or the right building when it is shut. 'Pot luck' referrals often originate, unhappily, from social services offices, confirming that training for good practice must sometimes concern itself with the most mundane of procedures, as well as with fine legal argument.

Fourthly many users did not know or understand what services they were entitled to from social services. Those users such as Mr and Mrs Baker who had worked out what they wanted could be said to be assertive. However social workers tended to see them as aggressive. It was unusual for users to suggest solutions to social workers that would help solve their financial problems. Occasional users were grateful for the help they received from social services and tended to put themselves in a passive supplicant role. They were often not clear what social services could have done for them differently. Social workers tended to regard these people as "deserving poor" whereas people with financial problems over a longer period of time or who behaved aggressively, tended to be seen as "undeserving" (see Chapter Six). In relation to the social constructionist theories discussed in Chapter Six, there were wide disparities between the social worker's and user's construction of their financial problem.

Thus social workers were concerned with who was responsible for income maintenance and/or sorting out benefit or debt problems. Some social workers did not see financial problems as part of their work and therefore were dismissive of these type of problems and the people that were bringing them. Users' perspectives were often that they had no one else to turn to and were using social services as a last resort because they (like most people) would have rather sorted out their financial problems without outside interference. Because they had no control over their situation (as others might feel about going to see the bank manager), most users tended to adopt passive behaviours as a way of coping with a doubly stigmatising situation. Doubly stigmatising because the problem involved a lack of finances and because going to social services was generally seen as stigmatising by other members of the community, (particularly Silverton). Social workers had come to accept this type of passive behaviour from users and therefore were surprised or offended if the users as in the Baker family had gathered more information and could be said to be exercising their "rights". The Bakers put forward solutions to their financial problems which they thought would prevent social services having to take the children into care and therefore save social services money as well as themselves. This problem solving "creative" approach by users was not appreciated by professionals who did not see themselves as in partnership with social service users. They expected users to be passive and merely require income maintenance.

From a social psychological perspective, (see Chapter Six) perceived behavioural control for social workers in dealing with these problems was: higher management, budgetary limits; statutory and other work whereas perceived behavioural control for users was

often: having no food; fuel debts which could mean disconnection; and accommodation arrears that could jeopardize their home.

Most users felt there was stigma attached to going to social services and stigma attached to having money problems. It was not clear whether users would have felt less stigmatised if they had been asking for social services help with problems that were not financial. Social workers sometimes appeared to take other problems that social service users had more seriously than their financial difficulties (see Chapter One). Many social workers dealt with users' financial queries efficiently, but there seemed little recognition of the underlying power structure or an awareness of the prejudices which we all have towards "deserving" and "undeserving" poor.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **SOCIAL WORK AND POVERTY - THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This Chapter answers the three questions posed in the introduction to the research, and summarises the main arguments of the thesis with reference to social work and poverty.

The evidence from the thesis suggests that poverty awareness should be an important part certainly of social workers' training and potentially that of many other professions. A programme for integrating poverty and welfare rights teaching is included here, although evaluation studies would be needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of such a programme. Considering the controversy surrounding race awareness programmes (Katz, 1978; Satow, 1982; Gurnah, 1982), poverty awareness would be likely to encounter similar hurdles to becoming accepted and understood, and would need to be handled by trainers and other teaching staff with tact and sensitivity.

Further research initiatives are proposed to highlight discriminatory social work practices in relation to poor social service users, and to develop policies for positive change where social workers, users and social work students play a more active role in dealing with financial problems.

Initially the research posed three questions: Who are social service users with financial difficulties and why are they poor? How do social workers and social work students interact with users? Were 1988 and 1989 - when this investigation took place - significant in terms of the relationship between poor users and social service departments?

#### **8.2 Who are the users of social services who have financial difficulties?**

The social service users interviewed and observed were generally not those who had mental health problems or were suspected of child abuse - they came solely because of financial problems. They did however constitute a quarter of the recorded referrals in the Silverton team - despite a well regarded welfare rights team working ten minutes walk away from the social work office. Silverton social workers to which social workers and

the receptionist would often refer individuals with financial problems to the welfare rights office without filling in a referral form. In City team a significant proportion of users observed had financial difficulties where the referral system was partially based on informal contacts in the community.

Many poor users had come to social services regularly over a number of years. However the effects of inflation, high unemployment in both of the areas where the social work teams operated, the freezing of child benefit rates for the two years previous to the research, and particularly the implementation of the Social Security Act 1986 in April 1988 had increased their financial need.

Throughout the fieldwork, there were examples of individuals who had not been able to survive on the benefits available from social security. Low wages from full or part time jobs also meant that families turned to social workers for financial and emotional support. Many users were in debt to the gas and electricity boards, the housing department, the rates department, credit card catalogue and hire purchase companies, and building societies. Some social service users had a number of different creditors (Berthoud, 1990).

Female lone parents were the most likely group to be asking for financial help from social services, because divorce or separation had significantly altered their financial status. They were prevented by their young children from earning - officially or unofficially - and depended on income support. Where fathers were contributing maintenance, an equivalent amount was deducted from the mother's income support so they were no better off. Satyamurti's (1981, p.169) participant observation study confirms the poverty of female one parent families and their attempts to get financial help from social services. "Of the 105 families to whom (section 1) grants had been made, 71 were one parent families. In the vast majority of these, the one parent was the mother".

Lone parent families wanted independence through part time work plus help with child care, rather than through dependence on another male breadwinner (Bradshaw, 1988). Such users did not see themselves as passively dependant on the welfare state. They had in reality active lives, where most were spending a large proportion of their time looking after children. They were unhappy at the level of benefit payments or the low wages they were surviving on, and that they had to ask for help from social services. In traditional families with the female member of the household staying at home to look after the children, there was significant intra - household poverty - a problem which was often not taken seriously by social services and other organisations. Social service users are poor for the reasons examined in previous Chapters - they are powerless in a system that values paid work which, unlike childcare, is labelled "productive".

### **8.3 How do social work students and social workers interact with social service users?**

Chapters One and Four suggest there is no one definition of social work or poverty - hence the relationship between poverty and social work is difficult to define. Consequently attitudes of social work students and attitudes and actions of social workers were not surprisingly sometimes confused and contradictory in relation to poor social service users (see Chapters Two, Five, Six and Seven).

The research findings indicate that students' beliefs, values and knowledge of the issues surrounding the relationship between social work and poverty were influenced by a number of personal, interactive and institutional factors. These included students' personal backgrounds; the recruitment practices of the Polytechnic and the University; the ideologies of the training students had; the membership of the groups and the dynamics of the group process; the researcher's interactions with the students; and the timing and environment in which the group discussions, interviews and responses to the survey took place.

Interview and group discussion methods can only freeze an individual's attitude at a particular moment in time. The group discussion transcripts provided illuminating material on the relationship between social work and poverty, but there is little evidence that students' attitudes remain consistent in work (Wasserman, 1970), and students' actions were not observed. However students' observations on for example, their placement experiences give an interesting and alternative insight into how social services departments deal with poverty issues.

Observing individual social workers over a year, on a three or two day a week basis, has meant understanding something about them as individuals, their strengths and weaknesses, in informal situations - where they did not have to be on their best behaviour, or have the "right" attitudes to poverty and social work. On an individual level, social workers were mostly unaware of the inconsistencies between their attitudes, beliefs and opinions and their actions in relation to poor users. Nonetheless social workers see themselves as professionals, and their attitudes and actions in relation to the poor had a significant observed effect on users' lives. For this reason their power in relation to poverty issues has been highlighted and challenged.

Social workers' responses during the fieldwork were influenced by the individual situation and person confronting them; the numbers of individuals requesting financial help on any particular day; peer relationships within the team and between the team and team leader; the pressures for economic stringency by management; careful accounting by administration; my role as a sometimes participant, sometimes non participant observer; and the large and small social, political and economic policies that affected users' financial situations and social workers' powers to aid those in poverty (see Chapters Two and Six). The main conclusion in relation to the fieldwork is that social workers need to be more aware of how poverty impacts on the lives of social service users. Furthermore ways of treating poverty more effectively within social services need to be found.

Others have argued that the observed inconsistencies in social workers' attitudes, beliefs, values and actions in relation to poor users is a product of professional discretion and autonomy; that social workers are well qualified "experts" and following a similar path to that of doctors and lawyers, social workers have earned the right to make decisions that are subjective, flexible and geared to the individual. Four issues need to be addressed in countering this argument. Firstly, are social workers "experts" on poverty related issues? The evidence from this thesis suggests they are not. Welfare rights and DSS offices are often overwhelmed by claimants' financial problems, and thus it is not satisfactory to argue that poor social service users should be dealt with only by organisations that are more expert. Social workers need to be reminded of the impact poverty has on social service users' lives and to be alerted to the opportunities for action that they have to support users in dealing with financial problems. Secondly inconsistency is not the same as discretion. Professional discretion should be based on guidelines so that individual users in similar circumstances receive similar treatment. Thirdly as G.B.Shaw noted, "professions are conspiracies against the laity". Professional discretion can be a form of social control that prevents users from acting collectively and knowing what their rights are in relation to a social services departments. Fourthly if social workers are supposed to be managing their resources and responsible for what they spend (Griffiths, 1988; NHS and Community Care Act, 1990), a proper account of how, what and to whom they are dispensing welfare rights advice, and/or Section 1/18 monies, and/or organising grants from voluntary agencies, seems necessary.

#### **8.4 The way forward - guidelines, accountability, access and participation**

If decisions are made on an arbitrary basis without rules, then social service users can only be passive. They have no rulebook to refer to or right of appeal. They cannot be

"consumers" with a recognized complaints procedure. A clearly written accessible policy for giving cash to social service users, with internal guidelines about how much can be given to each family made public, may in fact reduce the pressure on social workers for financial help. Combined with such a document, could be regularly updated welfare rights information which, alongside poverty awareness and welfare rights training for social workers, would give social service users concrete information and rights as citizens (Lister, 1990).

Social service users are not at present citizens with equal rights and power. They have very little information about what the service offers, as documented in Chapter Seven - but are treated as clients who have decisions made for them by a social work service that feels it knows best and is doing the best for its users (see Chapter Six).

Social Service users are now expected to be provided with a choice (Griffiths, 1988; NHS and Community Care Act, 1990). Furthermore, the practical effects of government policies are likely to spread throughout social work (Biggs, 1991; Dominelli, 1991). Welfare pluralism and the use of internal markets may well result in the weakening of social workers' power in relation to social service users (Walker, 1991). However users' views and participation in the social services - like the concept of community care - has been part of the radical view of welfare policies for far longer than it has been part of the New Right welfare agenda (Titmuss, 1968; Beresford and Croft, 1986).

A management emphasis on users as consumers has encouraged the Employment Department for example, to change the term attached to those who are signing on from claimants to "clients" (UB40, 1990). From staff attitudes to furnishing and decoration - the "customer ideology" prevails - although such an ideology has only recently permeated social security departments. Similarly the Department of Health has sent a booklet through every household's door, ("The NHS Reforms and You", July, 1990), explaining the organisation of reformed health services, complaints procedures and a health check so consumers are better informed to make "choices" about their health care.

The Department of Education has encouraged parent participation in schools through the strengthening and codifying of the role of parent governors on governing bodies (Education (No. 2) Act, 1986; Education Reform Act, 1988).

However social services departments have not been particularly concerned to improve relationships with their user groups. Pressure groups do exist who, for example, represent the rights of parents whose children have been taken into care. However their relationships with SSD's tend to be defensive and hostile, rather than learning

experiences. Guidelines to define social workers' role in relation to poverty issues, could more easily involve users than in child abuse procedures, and would implement a fair system to distribute cash and to inform people of their benefits.

Linked to the issue of greater and more equal communication between social workers and users and less social control and stigmatising of poor users is the concern by social services departments about confidentiality. Although some social services departments now operate open access to files by users, such policies need to be expanded. Fieldwork files and referral forms in the research sometimes had comments that labelled users as "deserving" or "undeserving" poor. Confidentiality is a concern of the medical profession too, but it has not prevented greater access to information by users in health debates. With open access, social workers dealing with people who have financial problems would have to think more carefully about what is prejudicial or patronising in relation to poverty issues when writing up referral forms or reports. A textual analysis of reports and referrals on people who have come to social services with financial problems would make an interesting follow up study.

### **8.5 Were 1988 and 1989 significant in terms of social services departments and social service users?**

The Fowler proposals were embodied in the 1986 Social Security Act which was brought into full implementation in 1988, so the year 1988 is, if not a year of fundamental change comparable to 1946, at least a very important turning-point in the history of the British social security system (Hill, 1990, p.56).

One of the more significant Acts for social service users, especially those with financial problems, and consequently also for social workers, was the 1986 Social Security Act which was functioning by April 1988. The negative outcomes for users, voluntary agencies, and social services departments are described in Chapter Two. Worsening poverty is not however a consequence of one particular Act, but a result of economic social and occupational policies that are described in Chapters One and Two. (Walker, 1987; Field, 1981; Harrison, 1983; Pond and Burghes, 1986; Munday, 1989; Ford, 1991; Becker, 1991).

It will be difficult to return to pre Social Fund days for any political party. The Labour and Liberal Democrat policy may abolish Social Fund loans and restore the independent right of appeal in the Social Fund system, but are unlikely to re-introduce single payments. In this sense, the Act has changed the definition of need, - it has restructured what was once claimed as of right and set a different agenda for considering social



security in the future. It is no consolation for claimants that similar policies are being enacted in most capitalist countries and some that are socialist (Munday, 1990).

Some social workers would probably not see the fieldwork year 1989/90 as particularly significant in that social work has always been stressful. Both of the observed social work teams found ways of avoiding the demands of social service users with financial difficulties. The Silverton team had a policy of non cooperation with the Social Fund - recognized by the union - and therefore were not involved with all its unfairnesses and intricacies, apart from with long standing clients whose financial problems increased. City team were more involved, partly because the office was central, they had large numbers of users in financial need, and because they had a more opportunist policy in dealing with the Social Fund. Nevertheless Satyamurti's (1981) participant observation study of social workers' duties, roles and responsibilities in 1971 has many similarities to the picture painted of two social work teams in the late eighties. There is no doubt however from the strong factual evidence surrounding this study, that the environment in which users, social workers and social work students conduct their business, has substantially impaired what users have to live on and what social workers can offer in the way of positive help.

#### **8.6 A defence of the thesis**

Critics of the philosophy of this thesis would argue that it is not the concern of the social worker or the social work student to combat an unjust society (Jordan, 1990) and deal with the financial affairs of poor users. Poverty is hardly mentioned in statutory legislation which social workers must attend to. Pinker's perspective (Barclay Report, 1982) suggests that social workers have neither the time nor resources to deal with anything other than the individuals they must deal with as part of their statutory obligations. This overview of social work criticises the argument that because most social service users are poor (Macpherson, Becker, 1988), social workers should be dealing with the problem. After all DSS would not deal with a child abuse problem, however prevalent among DSS claimants.

Arguing from a European perspective, Leaper's (1988, p.96) comparison of cash and care policies in Britain, Ireland, France and Belgium suggest that on the contrary, social workers should be more involved with social security and income maintenance:

What light do these references to other countries throw on the British cash and caring situation? First, it is clear that social work attitudes and practice can be integrated into the provisions of social assistance. In principle there is no real reason why DHSS special case officers should not be trained and qualified social workers. Indeed if one were planning a really effective operation of a properly organised Social Fund for people with acute difficulties it would make good sense for Social Fund officers

to have social worker training. Two essential provisos are: that decisions about entitlement are subject to review by some other body and that the basic income level for all in a clear and strictly enforced system makes discretionary grants (or loans) really exceptional. The British system of total nominal separation of cash and caring is an oddity, not a norm. We are the prisoners of our present system of administration which we disguise as a matter of principle.

These two views are the extremes in a wide spectrum of ideas on how and to what extent social workers' should be involved with users' poverty. The political left or right do not have a monopoly on either of these positions regarding more care and less cash or less cash and more care. Conservative government policy documents suggest that combining DSS and SSD functions would save not only the arbitrary division of cash and care in terms of responsibilities but also expense (Stewart and Stewart, 1986; Alcock, 1991b). Social work unions (NALGO, BASW) have been concerned that their members will be overloaded by short term income maintenance enquiries and have developed policies that in not cooperating with the Social Fund would appear to agree with Pinker's (1982) view that social workers should concentrate on their casework.

Those who do not see dealing with poverty issues as part of the social worker's role would suggest other groups as being more effective in preventing or ameliorating poverty. Pressure groups such as CPAG, welfare rights officers, CAB workers and community workers are all involved in challenging DSS decisions and empowering poor people to fight their own battles. The Departments of Employment and Social Security, are of course the parts of the welfare state which were developed to ensure "freedom from want" (Beveridge, 1942). Social workers, critics would propose, are already being overloaded with new legislation such as the Mental Health Act (1983), the Children's Act (1989) and the NHS and Community Care Act (1990). It is unfair to increase the stress of their work even further, by demanding that they provide adequately for the financial needs of their users, when DSS was set up specifically for this purpose.

This thesis can add the following points to the debate. Firstly social workers are at the frontline of the misery, violence and abuse that poverty can create - therefore they see the results of poverty and are one of the few professional groups concerned with poverty still routinely visiting families and individuals now that DSS visiting officers have been virtually abolished. Secondly there may be nobody else that an individual with financial difficulties can go to, when for example sorting out the inefficiencies of the DSS. Voluntary agencies, CABs and welfare rights departments have been starved of resources, their funding is uncertain and they are not accessible to the majority of the population in the same way that social services departments are. Social workers also have sufficient status to mediate with fuel boards, housing departments and other creditors. Thirdly helping individuals with practical problems is what users want and appreciate (Mayer and

Timms, 1970; Sainsbury, 1975; Davies, 1985) and what the general public considers an important part of the social work task (Weir, 1981). It would be patronising to suggest that social service users could not benefit from counselling that middle class people get (Laws, 1991). But in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, financial and practical help may be more immediately important than emotional support that friends and family can give.

If social services departments worked out clear policies on poverty issues that were accessible for users and social workers, money could empower users, rather than control their behaviour. A move in the direction of anti poverty policies would not only be preventative in terms of other social problems, but would give social workers a different, more positive relationship with users. Social workers are defined by some users as being enforcement agents for laws which oppose them and involve taking their children into care or sectioning individuals who are mentally ill. In order for social workers to have a more equal relationship with users, where they are treated as citizens rather than "clients", users need to feel supported in the area of their lives which is particularly important to them.

### **8.7 A poverty awareness programme**

The new Diploma in Social Work courses originally specified in terms of behavioural, quantifiable, teaching objectives that:

the minimum expectations of a social worker at the point of qualification include...a knowledge of the overall social services, including health, housing, **income maintenance**, legal, penal and education services and how they relate to each other in service to clients. (C.C.E.T.S.W. Paper 20.7, 1987).

This does not really tackle the question of how a knowledge of income maintenance is to be achieved; what that knowledge should include; and most importantly whether there is the desire among social work students, social work teachers and practitioners to take into account social work and poverty, including welfare rights, in their practice of social work. However, the CCETSW report Welfare Rights in Social Work Education (Curriculum Development Group, 1989, pp.4 & 5) makes the case for welfare rights as "an integral part of the mainstream social work task for all social workers". In a forward to the report, an Assistant Director of CCETSW noted that this view had been endorsed by educational, professional and employment interests in drawing up requirements for the new DipSW.

The main issue is what do social work students need to learn and experience in terms of attitudes, knowledge and skills about poverty as part of the role and tasks of a social

worker? This thesis suggests a learning experience that combines theory and practice, where increased awareness of poverty intensifies social workers' motivation to deal with poverty issues in practice. Welfare rights thus becomes the knowledge base that is an essential part of all social work courses. The initial and important part of such a course would be to use the student's own personal experiences of poverty to examine their attitudes. With this approach to social work education, there is no simple cause and effect relationship between training input and output, particularly when dealing with a subject such as social work and poverty. The meanings which educators and students give to the learning enterprise will affect the final outcome, such that objective criteria such as the course content and assessment evaluation will have to accommodate an equally important subjective approach.

The success of a poverty awareness programme, as with race awareness programmes, would very much depend on the interactions of individuals, including the tutors within the learning group. For the purposes of this programme, "students" will refer to social work students on DipSW courses, whether they are nongraduate or postgraduate or undergraduate. However it is further envisaged that this programme could be adapted for use by social service training departments, voluntary organisations and welfare rights agencies. Unqualified social workers as well as qualified, residential as well as non residential social workers, would benefit from such a programme.

I envisage a poverty awareness programme consisting of three separate learning phases, **Phase One, Two and Three. Phase One** - to be repeated before practice placements and after - would be where students discuss their experiences and attitudes to poverty. Their experiences of poverty could be personal in terms of their own background, and therefore the group would have to be settled into their course and feel comfortable with one another before the first part of the programme took place.

The aim of this phase would be to challenge notions of poverty which : make distinctions between deserving and undeserving poor; see social workers as controlling those in poverty; are not aware of the gendered nature of poverty or the conflicting nature of social workers' attitudes and actions; do not integrate the institutional and political aspects of social work into their thinking on poverty. Primarily the sessions - probably five two hour group seminars with up to ten students, would be an opportunity for students to understand and analyse their own attitudes to poverty. I would suggest that most social work students have not come from poor backgrounds (Becker, 1987) and even if they are temporarily poor as a result of being a social work student, will have their own prejudices about those who are poor.

The second series of sessions of **Phase One** would take place in their last term after their practice placements and **Phases Two and Three**. These five sessions would aim to integrate: theoretical teaching on poverty; welfare rights teaching; and issues that have arisen during practice placements. Students would also be developing personal awareness on poverty and understanding the relationship between poverty and social work. It might be at this stage that students would become aware of perceived behavioural control from the workplace in relation to their attitudes and actions to poverty and how they might construct their own attitudes and behaviour to fit in with the social norms around them. Case studies similar to those used in race awareness training could demonstrate how students deal with an institution or bureaucracy that has no anti-poverty policies or whose policies are not effective in the workplace.

The extracts from the group discussions presented in Chapter Five give some indications of the sort of discussion that could be productive. However the trainer or lecturer may well have their own questions and way of handling the group. What is important is that these are sessions where the students are the active participants and the group leader is only using questions or case studies to extend the discussion or to challenge beliefs. It is not the sort of group where the lecturer is the expert and this must be made clear from the first session.

This sort of group format poses some problems for the group leader in the same way that race awareness sessions poses problems for race trainers. The leader must be prepared to admit that everyone has some prejudices concerning poverty and that would include academics such as him/herself. This would hopefully lessen the tendency of some students to theorize the session in order to impress the lecturer. It may be important as with race awareness sessions, to have an outside trainer to conduct the sessions. It would also be important not to introduce poor social service users to the group as a way of helping students to understand the issues. As has been found with race awareness, this tends to result in such people being seen as experts and representative of all poor social service users. It would also be important for the group leader to be sensitive to students in the group who are working class or who had poor backgrounds, so that they do not feel isolated or stigmatised. This is an easier task with race awareness groups where black students have their own groups or are more easily identifiable to tutors in mixed groups. An understanding of group processes and an ability to tackle any undemocratic proceedings so that the more silent participants engage in the debate would be essential.

The initial **Phase One** sessions on learning about poverty are intended to bring out any thoughts, feelings, prejudices or attitudes that may hinder students' theoretical and welfare rights learning. The students will therefore not feel "blocked" by their own

experiences and ideally will be able to move on - enthusiastic and motivated - to **Phases Two and Three**. **Phase One** is intended to develop a deep approach to learning which can be carried through into **Phases Two and Three**. Entwistle (1987, p.1) defines a deep approach as:

Intention to understand, vigorous interaction with content, relate new ideas to previous knowledge, relate concepts to everyday experience, relate evidence to conclusions, examine the logic of the argument.

as compared to a surface approach:

Intention to complete task requirements, memorize information needed for assessments, treat task as an external imposition, unreflectiveness about purpose or strategies, focus on discrete elements without integration, failure to distinguish principles from examples.

Students on social work courses have to acquire a strategic approach to learning if they wish to obtain their professional qualification. Such an approach is not incompatible with a deep approach to learning and poverty awareness training. However it may be that an objective assessment of **Phase One** would have to be omitted, so that students could feel free to air their prejudices without compromising their qualification. Their attitude to poverty and social work, which it is expected would be more positive after training, would anyway be likely to be revealed and discussed by placement and academic tutors in the course of social work placements. One conflict that could occur between encouraging a deep and strategic approach to learning is that students on the university course complained that the number of course assignments and essays they had to complete, left them little time to consider and integrate their learning. It may be that a poverty awareness course would have to be a compulsory rather than an optional part of the course and this is what students in the fieldwork suggested (see Chapter Four). Coursework would therefore not be required until **Phases Two and Three** - otherwise students would feel they had an extra pressure imposed on them, rather than an opportunity to gain insight into their own and other individual's attitudes and to learn from them.

In the final sessions of **Phase One** (five two hour sessions) students would be encouraged to decide on a positive commitment to do something about poverty before they leave the course. They would discuss this commitment with a partner in the group and would report back to that partner at the end of the course. Commitments could be big or small, academic or practical and could involve for example: joining the local CPAG group; writing a final dissertation on an area of poverty and social work that interests them; conducting a benefits check with all of the social service users they come into contact in their placement or work situation; or working with a user who has chronic financial

problems to help her become more financially independent or more confident in dealing with the authorities with whom she has to negotiate.

**Phase Two** would involve the more traditional approach to poverty and social work of academic lectures and seminar groups. It would: establish a definition of poverty and social work; determine the relationship between poverty and social work historically and in the current social and political climate; analyse how and in what ways social workers can aid poor social service users; and consider what philosophical and ideological perspectives support the use of practical aid to poor people.

**Phase Three** may require an external tutor with expertise in presenting welfare rights to students in an accessible and understandable style. **Phase Three** would cover all aspects of welfare rights but in a form that would give students confidence in tackling DSS, tribunals and key texts. A practising welfare rights officer who can present case study material is most likely to give students confidence in this area.

In all phases, it is important to be consistent with the deep approach (Entwistle, 1987; Howe, 1989), by presenting: a clear conception of the subject being studied and its relevance to students' future work; the benefits of the teaching method employed; and the assessment - subjective and objective - expected from what has been learned.

If learning from poverty awareness can be incorporated into their practical placements and other written assignments, students can integrate their knowledge into the more traditional body of social work theory and therefore be less likely to have a compartmentalized view of the place of poverty in social work. The student needs to be free to develop insight and understanding without the pressure of yet another course assignment, certainly at **Phase One** stages.

In service social work staff who completed such a programme, would not necessarily have the time with work and domestic commitments, to complete course assignments, apart from the practical commitment that all students are expected to make after the final **Phase One** sessions. However it would be interesting to see if social work staff and social work students could combine on such a programme, so that students could benefit from the staffs' experience and staff could benefit from students' academic knowledge.

The Poverty Awareness Programme suggested here would thus have three phases but four series of sessions:

**Phase One:** Experiential  
(5 x 2 hour sessions)

**Phase Two:** Policy Orientated  
(10 x 2 hour sessions)

**Phase Three:** Welfare Rights Orientated  
(10 x 2 hour sessions)

**Phase One:** Consolidation of Theoretical and Practical  
Experience - Experiential (5 x 2 hour sessions)

## **8.8 Summary and conclusions**

Social workers appear aware of poverty in theory and acknowledge it is an indisputable part of social service users' lives. In practice the fieldwork has suggested, they appear to find it difficult to translate attitudes into actions. Psychological models used in the thesis have suggested that subjective norms of others and perceived behavioural control in the workplace and in the wider environment, will affect social workers' ability to turn attitudes into actions. The Poverty Awareness programme suggested in this Chapter would ask students and in-service social workers to examine their own attitudes and actions and to understand how "micropolitical" change (Statham, 1978) may be possible in the workplace when macro-change is out of the question. "Micropolitics" means making small practical changes in methods of day-to-day working that may have significant consequences both for relationships with clients and for developing more effective modes of participative practice.

By examining their own social construction of the relationship between poverty and social work, Poverty Awareness training could allow individuals to change their attitudes and behaviour so that they have a subject to subject relationship with poor users rather than a subject to object relationship which tends to increase users' feelings of marginalisation and worthlessness. There is no consensus either within or outside social work on the relationship between poverty and social work, and therefore the task of developing and implementing Poverty Awareness training becomes more difficult. What was discussed in Chapter One and needs to be returned to here is how social workers respond to the increasing poverty of social service users.

What role should social workers have in relation to ever-worsening poverty? How much discretion should they be allowed in dealing with clients? How many of their clients assumed client status only because of chronic destitution? Were there ways of working with people in extreme poverty that enhanced their independence rather than reinforced their dependency? The wider role of social workers in enforcing social security regulations has only intensified the dilemmas that were originally encountered in the field of welfare rights. (Langan and Lee, 1989, p.15)



In the 1970s and 80s there was the either/or situation of welfare rights or income maintenance. Welfare rights work particularly work that could be easily undertaken by social workers such as basic benefits checks were advocated by many (Stewart, 1989; Becker and MacPherson, 1988; Fimister, 1986) as an important part of the social work task while income maintenance was seen as a "necessary evil" by some and an unnecessary waste of social workers time and energy by others. This thesis suggests that although there are arguments as to why income maintenance should not be part of the social work task, in relation to government policies and observed social work practice income maintenance is in fact a substantial part of what social workers do (Wilson, 1988; Evason et al, 1989). Like Fimister (1988), this writer is not necessarily in favour of this turn of events, but from a pragmatic point of view training and policies need to be developed to help social workers deal with income maintenance issues.

I should add, perhaps, that I do not **advocate** a state of affairs in which claimants need to look to SSDs and charities for basic necessities: on the contrary, like all welfare rights advisers, I deplore it. However, given that the Government has brought such a state of affairs about, the implications for work within SSDs relating to income problems have to be thought through. (Fimister, 1988, p.321)

Fimister (1988) and Alcock (1991b) suggest that income maintenance, welfare rights and debt counselling are all practice issues that social workers and welfare rights officers need to be prepared to deal with in the 1990s. Poverty Awareness may be one contribution to preparing individual social workers and teams for social work practice in the 1990s.

Poverty is one area of social work that cannot be privatised, treated pluralistically or packaged. Treating poverty seriously may counteract feelings among social workers that they are coping with a rising tide of desperate people, that the rest of society does not even know about, let alone care about. Government policies have increased material hardship for users (see Chapter Two) and the new policies for social work do nothing to address this problem. By social workers becoming more aware of poverty, and being able to do something about it in the context of their work, there may be the opportunity for them to feel more positive about their work, and to combat the depressing feeling that social work is not valued because the people it is concerned with are not valued in ideological, moral or market terms.

This is an optimistic way to tackle the observed demoralisation in the social work teams (see Chapter Six). Some social workers did not see poverty as their problem and would not agree that dealing with it would help their sense of being undervalued. They believed themselves to be under resourced, overworked and overwhelmed by all the new policies

and legislation for which social workers are needed. Preventative work on ameliorating and publicising poverty among social service users would not be their first priority.

What is suggested is that many social workers entered the profession out of a sense of injustice as well as a desire to help. This is certainly evident from the social work students interviewed and surveyed. To emerge from the plethora of legislation, internal markets and demands of managers - to fight for the rights of users would remind social workers of their original aims in joining such a profession. A poverty awareness programme asks social workers to re-evaluate their own attitudes and actions to poverty, and would use participants' suggestions to find more positive ways of helping poor users.

Such determination from social workers could develop the "quasi-customer" (Langan, 1993) role of social service users in current legislation into a genuinely "user friendly" service. As Langan (1993, p.158) comments:

All the legislation highlights attempts to redress, at least rhetorically, the balance of power (and its implicit relationship of dependence) between the 'client' and the social worker. The main axes of this are the market/customer model in community care and the legal systems of scrutiny, appeal and complaint in child protection and mental health. In this respect, the changes have recognized some of the challenges from the margins to social work, although not necessarily in the forms that the challengers would have wished. (Langan, 1993, p.158)

In terms of the general position of welfare within and between countries, there has been a growing tendency to marginalise the poor (Mead, 1986; Murray, 1990) and therefore increase the stigma associated with their position (Lister, 1990). Poverty awareness suggests that the position of the poor cannot be considered without considering the attitudes and actions of those in positions of power and wealth (Titmuss, 1963) and how occupational and fiscal welfare increase financial security for only some sections of the population (Cook, 1989). The ideas connected with poverty awareness are relevant for the majority of the population who do not see themselves as part of the problem. As Titmuss noted in 1968 (p.163) "we have sought too diligently to find the causes of poverty among the poor and not in ourselves".

This thesis suggests that the poor as a discriminated group - whatever their age, disability, sex or race - need to be recognized, and that training, policies, practices and laws can begin the process of creating a citizenship that does not exist for them at the present time (Lister, 1990).

## **8.9 Recommendations for future research**

A number of research recommendations have been suggested throughout the thesis and they will be summarized here.

Poverty awareness programmes would need to be researched and evaluated if implemented as part of DipSW and other in-service training courses. These course development ideas have so far only been tested on groups of social work students as part of the research and as a part of a series of lectures on social policy to DipSw students at the University of Sheffield. By setting up a research study to monitor and evaluate the more extensive theoretical outline suggested in the thesis, poverty awareness programmes could prove their practical worth, and be developed further.

Social workers' relationship with DSS and welfare rights organisations need to be defined and understood. Action research on local policy guidelines for social work teams which involve their contributions and cooperation could develop small scale practical ways of dealing with income maintenance and welfare rights issues in the workplace. Policies that were agreed and acted upon as a result of such research could improve the accountability of social workers for their actions and develop ways in which access to social services and participation of users is encouraged.

Equally important would be research that investigates how social workers are becoming social care managers under a market welfare system, whether welfare restructuring continues and to what extent, and what this means for social workers' handling of poverty issues.

Textual analysis of social services referrals would highlight in more detail the way that poor social service users are discriminated against. Policy recommendations regarding the writing of case notes and referrals would need to take into account the open access to social service files practised by more and more social work teams. Referral forms that included details of social service users' financial status and/or work situation could be stigmatising for social service users however useful for research purposes. However if such forms also included a basic benefits check, it may be that this advantage to users would outweigh the disadvantage of disclosing personal information.



## THE PROFESSIONALS IN THE STUDY

### APPENDIX 1A - Silverton Team - Carshire Local Authority

Assistant Director	-	Geoff Harding
Divisional Officer	-	Barry Tomms
Teamleader	-	Vernon Rudd
Social workers	-	Karen (acting deputy teamleader)
(These social workers		Mary
were present for some		Beverley
or all of the		John
eight month fieldwork		Tony
observations)		Carol
		Linda (Social work assistant
		Tina (Social work assistant)
Shirley	-	newly appointed social worker who commenced work after the field observation period
Stephanie	-	off sick for most of observation period.
Sarah	-	Deputy team leader off sick during observation period.
Mrs Stephenson	-	social worker from another social work team discussed by Joan and Vera, social service users
Lorna	-	Home Help organizer
Edward Dent	-	Principal Welfare Rights Officer - Carshire social services department
Brian Lunt	-	Local Welfare Rights Officer - social services department
Malcolm	-	Volunteer assistant to Brian Lunt

## THE PROFESSIONALS IN THE STUDY

### APPENDIX 1B - City Team

Social workers and other social services staff observed, or discussed, during the fieldwork.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Research Officer  | - | Roger Plant   |
| Teamleader  | - | Bernard Sellars   |
| Social Workers  | - | Theresa<br>Dianne<br>Simon<br>Keith<br>Sheila<br>Jane<br>Tim<br>Tanya (Social Work Assistant)<br>Maria (Administrative Officer) |
| (These social workers were present for some or all of the 5 month fieldwork period) |   |   |
| Centre '90  | - | Hostel for sex offenders  |
| Ivan  | - | Social worker from another social work team discussed by social service user in the waiting room.                               |
| Pete  | - | Social worker from another social work team discussed by Jane and Richard, a couple with learning difficulties.                 |

## AN INDEX OF SOCIAL SERVICE USERS REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT

### APPENDIX 2A - Silverton Team

*Mrs Bagthorpe:* Married with a working husband and four children. Building Society had threatened to evict the family for mortgage arrears.

*Marilyn Bagthorpe:* Mrs Bagthorpe's handicapped daughter.

*Mrs Bailey:* Refused interview as her husband did not want to discuss their financial problems.

*Mr & Mrs Baker:* Had four children of their own - one who was hyperactive. They had taken on Mr Baker's sister's three children, but needed financial help,. Mr Baker had been in a children's home as a child and did not want this to happen to his sister's children. Mr Baker worked part-time and the family were claiming Family Credit.

*Mr Butley:* Married with one son. Requiring help with rates bill.

*Mrs Crale:* Lone parent on income support, with two children. A working husband in Saudia Arabia - however, she had recently separated from him. She had multiple debts caused by a sudden drop in income.

*Mrs Crawley:* Married with two children, husband unemployed. She was enquiring about welfare benefits.

*Mrs Crill:* Lone parent on income support with two boys - multiple debts. Her two girls lived with her ex-husband

*Mrs Dale:* Young lone parent with one child. She had difficulty paying electricity bill.

*Mrs Dixon:* Lone parent on income support with two children still living at home. She had a mental breakdown due to a sudden bereavement and her gas being cut off for a bill of £0.72.

*Mr Farmer:* Lone parent on income support, with five children. Oldest stepson continually running away. Mr Farmer wanted to move, but owed rent on his council house.

*Fiona:* Lone parent on income support with learning difficulties. She has a three year old child and lives with her physically frail mother and her brother.

*Mrs Frank:* Lone parent with two children on income support, whose husband was in prison.

*Mr & Mrs Hallam:* An ex miner and his wife with six children. Had dropped the keys to their mortgaged property through the doors of the Building Society as they could not afford the repayments during the miners' strike. They were living in a two bedroomed Housing Association house.

*Joan and Vera:* Two young women, one with three children. Vera had been to social services for financial help as she was under eighteen and separated from her mother (no income support).

*Mrs Merrivale:* Older woman on her own - confused about her money - drawing a state pension.

*Mr & Mrs Partridge:* On unemployment benefit and enquiring about financial help for visiting their sick child in the Children's Hospital 25 miles away.

*Mrs Routledge:* Lone parent with two children, still living at home. Her ex-husband, a milkman, had built up enormous debts that she was unaware of. She had to pay the debts back out of her low wages as a cleaner.

*Mrs Weller:* Lone parent on income support with two children, multiple debts.

## APPENDIX 2B - City Team

*Beatrice:* 45 year old woman with learning difficulties, in a hostel. In multiple debt until social work assistant became involved and helped her to sort out her finances.

*Mrs Crawford:* Lone parent on income support with four children under five - had been staying in a bed and breakfast for two weeks while awaiting a council flat in a high rise block. She had moved from a women's' refuge.

*Mrs Grant:* Wanted help with busfares taking her two grand-children to school, while her daughter was in prison. She had at that time no financial support from DSS or child benefit for them.

*Mrs Holden:* Telephone request for a qualified social worker.

*Mrs Howarth:* Telephone enquiry - wanted a social worker to remove a slug from her bathroom.

*Joyce:* Married woman whose two children were thought not to be adequately clothed for nursery.

*Jan and Richard:* Couple with learning difficulties who had problems managing their finances. Jan had had three children all of whom had been taken into care. They were called Rebecca (the oldest), Jonathan and Samantha.

*June:* A woman with learning difficulties who had moved out of Rampton Hospital. She had been told by loan sharks she could buy her council flat with a £25 deposit.

*Kate:* Lone parent with four children under five, had had twelve crisis loans from DSS.

*Miss Lerner:* Could not manage on income support - had a two year old child.

*Michael:* Had mental health problems, was waiting to see his social worker in the social services waiting room. He expected financial advice regarding DSS payments - but had not received any so far.

*Mrs Quell:* Telephone enquiry about money for her child's coat. (on income support).



## **APPENDIX 3 - RESEARCH BRIEF**

Similar versions of this document were sent to all social services departments to whom I intended to gain access.

### **MONICA DOWLING UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD DOCTORAL PROGRAMME**

#### **AIM OF INVESTIGATION**

To explore how social workers manage contradictions in attitudes and practice with regard to poverty.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of social work is "(1) to enhance the problem solving and coping capacities of people, (2) to link people with systems that provide them with resources, services and opportunities, (3) to promote the effective and human operation of these systems and (4) to contribute to the development and improvement of social policy." (Pincus and Minahan, 1977). There is a long-standing debate concerning how much of the professional role of the social worker should be concerned with alleviating poverty, (Wooton, 1959; Seebohm, 1969; Hill and Laing, 1979; Barclay, 1982; Becker, Macpherson and Silburn, 1983; Stewart and Stewart, 1986; Firnister, 1986).

Many local authorities still have little or no specific knowledge of the nature of poverty among their social work clients or the impact that financial deprivation has on demands for services (Becker, 1988). The AMA's (1985) study of the impact of unemployment on demand for personal social services found that 44.7% of referred persons had their first presenting problem classified as "Financial/Material". Ralph's study of Sheffield's Family and Community Service Department found 45.5% of referrals were poverty related in 1981-3, an increase of 44.5% over 1976-8. However as a referral means only that the individual has presented a request, not that the department has been able to satisfy that request, statistics of this type do not show what proportion of cases **allocated** to social workers fell into poverty related categories. (Becker and Macpherson, 1986; Strathclyde Regional Council Statistics, 1985).

By taking a qualitative approach to the main part of the research, I hope to avoid the coding and referral problems mentioned by previous researchers (Parsloe 1978, Becker and Macpherson, 1986; Ralph, 1985). In conducting a field observation study of a social services department, I will be looking at what **sort of** demands financial deprivation makes on a Social Services Department and what **sort of** demands social services may make on the financially deprived user in return.

#### **PROGRESS OF RESEARCH 1985 - 1988**

I have collected approximately 150 questionnaires from final year students on different types of social work courses on students' perceived knowledge and attitudes to the supplementary benefit system (up to April 1988). I have also conducted group discussions with final year students at Sheffield University and Polytechnic on the more general topic of social work and poverty. The proposed fieldwork would be a "stepping down" process to understand the reality of being a social worker in a social services department.

## METHODOLOGY

Field observation of social workers is the qualitative method that best allows me to compare the differences or similarities between an individual's attitudes and actions in relation to poverty. It would include accompanying, observing and talking to social workers over a six month period and informal interviews with managers, allocation officers and fieldwork directors. However neither social workers or managers would be expected to participate in a regular series of interviews. Observations of for example: the duty team's work, allocation and other meetings would be extremely useful to put into context individual social workers' words and actions. The fieldwork would also include a study of internal and external documents such as case notes, memos, policy documents, and minutes of meetings. All interviews, observations and information would be confidential and there is no reason why City F&CS should be named as such in the study.

Consultation with Divisional Officers and individual teams would determine the practical organisation of working with individual social workers. I envisage working with approximately six social workers who may volunteer to be involved because they are interested in the connections between poverty and social work and their own attitudes and actions. There would be no selection of staff unless more than six people volunteered. However I am aiming for the group of volunteers to include males and females, black and white people, experienced and not so experienced in the work, and from a variety of social work positions, such as principal social worker, social work assistant, senior social worker and social worker. I would work closely with each volunteer for one month. The field observation is expected to take approximately six months in total from January - June 1989 with the day to day arrangements to be negotiated with the individuals concerned.

I would suggest my background and experience as a social worker and social work teacher means that I am likely to be accepted and trusted by social services staff because of my understanding of the tasks and processes involved in being a social worker. This study does not aim to **judge** social workers but to **observe and analyse** their day to day attitudes and actions within the social services structure. It will not identify individual workers or teams, nor will there be any feedback between workers and management through my position as a research worker.

## BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

### CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Although there have been similar fieldwork studies of professional groups such as the police (Rubinstein, 1974; Holdaway' 1977, 1979, 1982; Smith' 1981), the military (Coser, Lewis et al, 1959; Sullivan, Mortimer et al, 1958) and many with teachers (Hargreaves, 1967, 1975; Lacey, 1970; Keddie, 1971; Hammersley and Woods 1976, Willis, 1979), there have been surprisingly few with social workers (Pithouse 1988).

Research on attitudes to race and how these attitudes are translated into practice are well known (La Piere, 1934), but there are few similar studies on how attitudes to poverty are translated into practice (Cooper, 1985).

### RAISING AWARENESS OF POVERTY

In terms of action research, my presence as an observer may make social workers more aware of the link between their attitudes and actions in relation to poverty. This in itself could be a positive benefit for the individual and a positive awareness of the poverty of social work users is supported by City Family and Community Services policy documents. All volunteers could be informed of the progress of the research through regular seminars organised throughout 1989 and 1990. The completed research would be

fed back to Sheffield Family and Community Services with policy recommendations and the implications of the study for future working practices of social workers.

### **FINAL OUTCOMES OF RESEARCH**

1. More knowledge and understanding of the attitudes and practices of social workers in relation to poverty.
2. Development of field observation methodology - with a new professional group, with reference to policy evaluation and practice.
3. Guidelines for model practice - in relation to poverty and social work.
4. Development of poverty awareness training. Experiential teaching exercises, similar to those used for promoting race awareness could be used to stimulate students / social workers and promote a greater awareness of the meaning of financial deprivation for the individual.

### **CONCLUSION**

Saul Becker's (1987, p.549) study on social work and poverty notes:

Until social work, their managers and agencies understand how poverty impacts upon clients and how attitudes, structures and contradictions affect the nature and delivery of social work services, then it is unlikely that the poor will receive a service that is appropriate to their needs.

This study intends to build on research that has examined social workers' attitudes to the poor by investigating what happens on a day to day basis in a social services team. Are attitudes translated into practice? How could the nature and delivery of social work services to the poor be improved?

**Monica Dowling B.A. C.Q.S.W. CertEd(F.E.)**

## **FEEDBACK PAPERS**

### **APPENDIX 4A - Silverton Team**

This was the original document, which was presented to the team members prior to the team meeting, apart from the anonymising of names and places in this version.

#### **Meeting with Silverton Social Services Team on 3rd August 1989**

#### **"Taking Stock" Participant Observation Study on Poverty and Social Work**

My main aims in conducting this study are:

1. To observe social workers' attitudes and actions in relation to poverty. I believe that other research that has dealt with these issues had not documented social workers' actions and that the methodology I am using will highlight the relationship between attitudes and actions, thus being an original contribution to literature on poverty and social work.
2. There are few participant observation studies of social workers (three to my knowledge). I would suggest that this study could develop the use of participant observation as a method for a qualitative understanding of professionals' work within a team and within a larger organisation.

#### **Details of what I have done so far (January - July 1989)**

Apart from just "being around" for team members to get to know me and talk to me, I have carried out the following activities:

- A. Identified from the Team's Referral book, referrals that are financial or non-financial and allocated or non-allocated. From 22.9.88 to 30.1.89 so far. I have also attended team meetings where these referrals have been discussed.
- B. Accompanied social workers on visits of all sorts, not necessarily related to poverty. I have changed offices so that I have been able to get to know all the social workers in the team. So far I have completed the following visits: Karen (5 visits); Tony (4 visits); Tina (4 visits); Linda (4 visits); John (2 visits). I have also been an observer when Mary, Tony, Karen (twice) and Carol (twice) have been on duty. I hope to have the opportunity to go out on visits with Mary, Beverley and Vernon.
- C. I have conducted informal interviews with John, Tony, Karen, Linda and Beverley on what they feel is important about social work and poverty and still have to interview Vernon, Mary and Tina.
- D. I have taken notes of team meetings (some written up for the team), attended meetings with outside agencies such as welfare rights and DSS (3 times) and have visited Carshire advice shop.
- E. I have had three interviews with the divisional field officer and have been present when the assistant director has been talking to the team leader and another member of the team.
- F. I have interviewed at their homes two women who John thought had particular problems with poverty and who were on his caseload and one on Linda's caseload.

- G. I have not yet followed up referrals on poverty which have been designated NFA (no further action).

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The second year of my research is devoted to analysing the data I have collected from the Silverton Team, along with the data I will be collecting from the City Team. Combining the practical work with theoretical perspectives on social work and poverty may significantly alter what I have to say now, so these findings are more in the form of questions rather answers which I hope will stimulate an interesting discussion at the meeting.

I am aware that my own conceptions of the relationship between poverty and social work affects my research. I am anxious that we can discuss these findings constructively rather than them being seen as critical or judgemental. The hypotheses I had when I started this research were that social workers' attitudes to poverty would vary, depending on their background, education, political views, social mobility and their personal and financial situation. I suspected that these attitudes would influence their practice. Social workers' attitudes and actions have proved more complex in practice. Here are some anonymised examples:

Social worker A spent a number of hours on the telephone sorting out how a striking miner's family could receive benefits that had been refused by the local D.S.S. However she admitted that if she had had a full caseload she would probably have just told them to "re-present their bodies to DSS" Even if this social worker's attitude to people with money problems is positive, how far will her actions be tempered by the amount of work she has?

Social worker B thinks some of the people who come to Social Services are "scroungers". She has difficulty dealing with benefit details although at home she does all her husband's book-keeping. I was aware when visiting a family with her how embarrassing dealing with money matters can be. Although the social worker's actions were positive in that she was enquiring whether the mother wished to claim benefits, the mother herself was uncomfortable and said her boyfriend didn't agree with it. If money like sex is a forbidden topic, is it possible for social workers to discuss it without compromising their relationship with the person? Is it something that has to be established in the relationship right from the start? Is discussing money seen by some people as socially controlling and an invasion of privacy?

Social worker C was dealing with an unemployed man in the duty room who she felt was manipulative and would be back again. She did not show this in her attitude to him, although there was a pregnant pause when he said he could not afford to take a job he had been offered because the pay was too low. It was only later when discussing the case with an unemployed friend that I worked out the financial details and realised he would be considerably worse off. How much does how rich or poor we are personally, affect our attitudes and actions?

Social worker D sees some individuals as "undeserving" but in her practice seems particularly concerned to deal with money issues, including setting up welfare rights sessions at a local clinic. Are there individuals or groups who are "undeserving"? Why? What do we mean when we define someone as poor?

Social worker E had given her own money to a mother who was in debt. The woman had got into debt for a number of reasons, but these included an oversight by the social worker and the welfare rights officer on an aspect of her benefits and an administrative mix up at the D.S.S. Do social workers feel they want to give money to people in individual cases? How do attitudes and actions link here?

Social Worker F took me on a visit where he saw the main problem as a teenager who continually ran away from home. He apologised because he did not know if I would be interested in a case that was not directly connected with poverty. In fact it was one of the visits I have found most shocking in terms of the poverty of the area and the family, in which the father had four other children to bring up on his own. His questions to the social worker were about money or feelings about his stepson. It must seem exciting to a teenager to get away from all this, especially to richer areas, homes and cars. The social worker and I agreed that there were financial implications for social services in bringing him back from where he had run to and that was a reason for social services returning the responsibility to his father. A runaway could come from a wealthy background too. What are our conceptions of poverty? How much of a social worker's caseload is to do with poverty and in what ways?

Social worker G has a sympathetic attitude to people with money problems but seems to feel they are problems for DSS to sort out. In a duty case an unemployed family had no money left to live on because they had spent it on fares to the hospital twice a day to see their youngest child. He suggested they re-present themselves to D.S.S. who had merely given them a pink form that morning. How much of a social worker's role is and should be connected with poverty? What is the relationship between social services and social security? How does the structure of social services fit in helping people who are poor?

The final question here must be how do we as social workers think our attitudes to poverty are connected to our actions?

### PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS

I have found that social workers' attitudes to poverty are often different from their actions. There have been several studies of social workers' attitudes to poverty but none to my knowledge of their actions. If attitudes and actions are different, then researchers cannot automatically rely on surveys and interviews when making policy recommendations.

Being a participant observer has not always been easy. I am aware that no members of the team can act as if I am not there and I have appreciated their willingness to discuss what they are doing and why. This method of research will involve a discussion of how I have made decisions about being a passive observer or an active participant. The times when I have been more active in my approach may have affected the team members in their awareness of the relationship between poverty and social work, (for example what effect will reading this paper have?).

Policy recommendations at this stage are extremely tentative. Here are some ideas to which I would welcome feedback.

- A. As approximately 25% of referrals are financial and designated N.F.A. a duty officer who had extra training in welfare rights and whose sole responsibility was duty may help people who come in with straightforward enquiries. A limited caseload of people who had more long term financial problems and who were going to be allocated to a social worker, could make this work more interesting.
- B. As most social work cases that I observed involved poverty, a training day once a month where poverty related issues were discussed perhaps with members of the welfare rights team, could prove useful for everyone. This would not necessarily be a welfare rights information giving session but a workshop/surgery where social workers could present cases connected with poverty that are proving problematic and hear advice or information from whoever was there. It could also provide a useful forum for discussing more general issues like the Social Fund or imminent changes in social security benefits.

## **FEEDBACK PAPERS**

### **APPENDIX 4B - CITY TEAM**

This is the original document presented to the City team prior to the team meeting. Names and places have been anonymised in this version.

#### **"A team under siege" - some thoughts on my research time with City Social Services Team.**

So far I have spent approximately 20 days over 4 months with the team, observing them in the office, on duty and out on visits.

The following thoughts form the basis for a discussion at the team meeting on 31/1/90:

1. All team members seem to work extremely hard and show care and concern for the people they are working with. It is difficult to quantify the number of cases each social worker deals with per day or per week as some cases come through the formal referral system, others through contacts such as G.P.'s and health visitors and others through the informal network on the patch. However the atmosphere in the team office is one of constant telephone calls and social workers rushing in and out from visits.

How many cases would team members say they deal with per day or per week on average? What percentage come from the sources I have mentioned? Are there any other sources?

2. Team members tend to respond quickly to calls for help. The administrative staff see this as sometimes causing referral problems. What exactly is the problem and can it be solved?
3. Most cases I observed had some connection with poverty. Social workers used Section I money up to the £30 limit where they could. Any money spent or applications for example a telephone have to be accounted for in increasingly bureaucratic ways due to overspending on the social services budget. I sensed some uneasiness about dealing with money issues. Who gives Section I money to and who not? Giving out food vouchers or taking food round to some families rather than giving money seemed part of the system rather than what individuals in the team wanted to do. Is this a fair reflection of procedures and attitudes in the team?
4. I did not observe very much welfare rights work with clients. Is this because people use the welfare rights or advice centres for money problems? Social workers did however cooperate with DSS to obtain large community care grants for some people who were setting themselves up in the community. Fostering allowances organised quickly for relatives of children that would otherwise be taken into care, seemed a useful procedure which I had not observed in other social services departments. How does this work in practice? Does it happen very often?
5. Clothes and toys presumably brought in to relieve hardship among clients, seemed instead to be creating extra confusion as files and papers (and the desk I was using!) got hidden underneath them. Social workers appeared too busy to distribute what had been donated. Are the toys/clothes distributed by anyone else? Have they been kept anywhere else?
6. Most of the team members have known each other and the area for a number of years. They seem relaxed and supportive to each other. There is no formal

hierarchy within the team, and the teamleader is happy about team members taking responsibility for their actions, coming to him when they need advice. How does this set up work for new members of the team, students and researchers? How often are staff meetings normally?

7. It seemed difficult to communicate with the whole team and be sure they had got a message for example when I was ill. Is this the case for communications that have to be conveyed to everyone, for example policy decisions? Linked to this is the system for messages and referrals. Are there day books for both tables or are there differences in the system for the two groups of social workers?

### **Summary**

I felt social workers in the team acted professionally and there was little evidence that social workers' attitudes are different from their actions in relation to poverty.

Why a team under siege? Apart from the constant pressure of the work, there is the feeling that higher management does not support their way of working. They did not succeed in getting an office that is based in the patch they are working and the new policy developments which are based on specialisms do not support a patch team in this area.

The structure of the social services department rather than the attitudes of individual team members seem to have the greatest effect on how social services do /do not alleviate poverty. What do team members think?

### **Team Policy Ideas for Consideration**

1. A minuted team discussion on policy developments and where the City team should fit in could be arranged and the results sent to management.
2. All toys/clothes could be stored in the waiting room and a sign put up suggesting people waiting help themselves.
3. A once a month team meeting to tackle poverty issues with/without welfare rights workers could be arranged. individual cases could be presented, thus sharing advice and support in a more formal way. Newcomers and students could learn more about the contacts and networks that existed and the information exchanged could increase everyone's knowledge of the patch, its clients and its resources.

If you are unable to be at the staff meeting on Wednesday, I would be grateful if you could send your comments to: Monica Dowling, Policy Studies Centre, 3 Northumberland rd. Sheffield. S.10 2TN or phone 768555 Ext6341(day) or 681148 (evenings). No doubt I will be popping back when I have something more comprehensive written, but thank you all once again for your help.



## APPENDIX 5

### COMMENTS ON THE RESEARCH BY BRIAN LUNT, WELFARE RIGHTS OFFICER, SILVERTON

(These comments on research and feedback papers to the Silverton Team have been amended to preserve anonymity)

One social worker (Shirley) arrived as a new member of the team at Silverton. She was a working class woman who had experienced poverty first hand and had come into higher education and social work in her forties. She immediately made contact and joined CPAG and even participated in a residential course on Benefits. Within months the contact had reduced to purely "crisis" cases and I discovered a change in her attitude. I realised that the influence "to steer clear of benefits matters as we already have welfare rights workers" was very potent and that this had come from the team leader, Vernon. So we had a situation where a positive start to integrating social work with a developing awareness of poverty issues and practical benefits knowledge was "strangled at birth" by the pervasive influence of the team leaders' opposition to involvement with the DSS.

In 1988 prior to establishment of Social Fund, welfare rights staff spent a great deal of time putting together a comprehensive training course for team leaders over a three day period. It was here that we found indifference and absence from some team leaders (Silverton). Other team leaders were enthusiastic and eager to gain information to pass on to colleagues at team level. I feel that team leaders' advice to social workers not to "co-operate with the DSS" has been harmful to the so called "generic" and "holistic" approach to the point that now team members positively steer clear of benefits related issues and indeed are "fearful" of becoming entangled in the system for fear of being exposed as de-skilled in this area. We have referrals for such routine matters as the completion of benefit claim forms.

I suggest:

- a) More specialist welfare rights staff attached to social work teams.
- b) Take the income maintenance issues, and associated stress away from social workers and place more emphasis on a knowledge of the social security system and a strengthened "advocacy" approach.
- c) I think poverty awareness training is essential coupled with more benefits system training at the social work student stage (which is now the case).
- d) I would also like to see more use of the direct client - social services relationship for benefits take-up work.
- e) I feel some knowledge of the DSS system of "out of hours" emergency payments scheme may have helped to (the DSS social fund officer comes out to the clients' home now with cash!) avert the use of S1 funds.

Monica, I really enjoyed reading your paper and fieldwork conclusions. I'm sorry that our contact rather faded towards the end owing to my disappearance underneath a mountain of casework. I should like perhaps sometime in the future to use your paper as a basis for discussion with the Team about attitudes, approach and further training.

Your work was really valuable and I'd appreciate any feedback from other sources you receive.

With best regards

Brian Lunt, August 1991



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abel Smith, B., and Townsend, P., (1983), *Social Security : The Real Agenda*, Fabian Trait no 498, Fabian Society
- Ackroyde, S. and Hughes, J., (1981), *Data Collection in Context*, Longman
- Age Concern, (1989), *The Discretionary Social Fund: Its Impact on Older People*, Age Concern Briefing Series
- Ajzen, I., and Fishbein, M., (1977), 'Attitude Behaviour Relations: A Theoretical Analysis and Review of Empirical Research', *Psychological Bulletin*, 84, pp.888-918
- Ajzen, I., and Fishbein, M., (1980), *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behaviour*, Englewood-Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall
- Ajzen, I., and Madden, T., (1986), 'Prediction of Goal-Directed Behaviour: Attitudes, Intentions, and Perceived Behavioural Control', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol.32, p.453-474
- Alcock, P., (1991), 'The End of the Line for Social Security: the Thatcherite Restructuring of Welfare', *Critical Social Policy*, Spring
- Alcock, P., Shepherd, J., and Stewart, G., (1991), 'Welfare Rights Work into the 1990's - a Changing Agenda', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol.20, part 1, January, pp. 41-63
- Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, (1986), *Faith in the City*, Church House
- Askham, J., (1982), 'Telling Stories', *Sociological Review*, vol.30 (4), pp.555-537
- Association of Metropolitan Authorities, (1985), *Caring for Unemployed People: A Study of the Impact of Unemployment on Demands for Personal Social Services*, Bedford Square Press
- Bailey, R., and Brake, M., (eds.), (1975), *Radical Social Work*, Edward Arnold
- Baker, B., (1990), 'Exceptional Payments Or Income Maintenance? - Report of the Section One/Twelve Monitoring Exercise', *Social Fund Project Research Report*, SFP.90 BRU, University of Nottingham
- Baldock, J., (1989), 'United Kingdom - A perpetual crisis of marginality' in Munday, B. (ed.), *The Crisis in Welfare*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Baldwin, S., Parker, G., and Walker, R., (eds.), (1988), *Social Security and Community Care*, Avebury
- Ball, C., Harris, R., Roberts, G., and Stuart, V., (1988), *The Law Report : Teaching and Assessment of Law in Social Work Education*, CCETSW, Paper 4.1
- Balloch, S., and Jones, B., (1988), 'Social Services Responses to Poverty', in *Public Issues, Private Pain*, Becker, S., and Macpherson, S., (eds.), Care Matters Ltd., Insight
- Balloch, S., and Jones, B., (1990), *Poverty and Anti-Poverty Strategy : The Local Government Response*, Association of Metropolitan Authorities
- Bamford, T., (1990), *The Future of Social Work*, Macmillan Education

- Bandura, A., Adams, N., and Beyer, J., (1977), 'Cognitive Processes Mediating Behavioural Change', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35, pp.125-139
- Bandura, A., Adams, N., Hardy, A., and Howells, G., (1980), 'Tests of the Generality of Self-Efficacy Theory', *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 4, pp.39-66
- Barbour, R., (1984), 'Social Work Education : Tackling the theory - Practice Dilemma', *British Journal of Social Work*, 14, pp.557-777
- Barclay, P., (1982), *Social Workers: their Roles and Tasks*, NISW Bedford Square Press
- Barclay, P., (1982), 'A New Direction for Social Work - The Barclay Report and its Implications', *Community Care*, 1 February, p.7
- Barry, K., (1989), 'Biography and the Search for Women's Subjectivity', *Women Studies International Forum*, Vol.12, no.6, Pergamon Press
- Bastin, R., (1985), 'Participant Observation in Social Analysis, in Walker, R., *Applied Qualitative Research*, Gower
- Becker, H., (1963), *Outsiders*, Free Press
- Becker, H., (1967), 'Whose side are we on?' in *Social Problems*, 14, pp.239-247
- Becker, H., (1986), *Writing for Social Scientists*, University of Chicago Press
- Becker, S., Macpherson, S., and Silburn, R., (1983), *Saints, Ferrets and Philosophers*, Benefits Research Unit, University of Nottingham
- Becker, S. and MacPherson, S., (1986), *Poor Clients*, Benefits Research Unit, University of Nottingham
- Becker, S. and MacPherson, S., (1986), 'Researching Poverty Among Users of Social Work Services, *Research Policy and Planning Journal*, Vol 4, nos 1 & 2
- Becker, S., (1987), *Social Workers' Attitudes to Poverty and the Poor*, Ph.d Thesis, University of Nottingham
- Becker, S., Hannam, J., and Hyde, S., (1988), *Guide to the Social Fund Manual*, Benefits Research Unit, University of Nottingham
- Becker, S. and MacPherson, S., (eds) (1988), *Public Issues Private Pain*, Social Services Insight Books
- Becker, S., and Silburn, R., (1991), *The New Poor Clients : Social Work, Poverty and the Social Fund*, Community Care and Benefits Research Unit, University of Nottingham
- Becker, S., (1991), *Windows of Opportunity: Public Policy and the Poor*, CPAG
- Bell, C. and Encell, S., (1976), (eds) *Inside the Whale*, Pergamon
- Beresford, P., and Croft, S., (1986), *Whose Welfare - Private Care or Public Services?*, Lewis Cohen, Urban Studies Centre, Brighton
- Beresford, P., and Croft, S., (1989), 'Empowerment: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?', *Social Work Today*, 30/3
- Beresford, P., and Croft, S., (1990), *From Paternalism to Participation : Involving People in Social Services*, Open Services Project, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

- Beresford, P., and Croft, S., (1993), 'Community Care and Citizenship' in Open University Workbook 3, *Community Care*, Open University
- Berger, P., and Luckman, T., (1967), *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin
- Bernbaum, G., (1979), *Knowledge and Ideology in the Sociology of Education*, Macmillan
- Berthoud, R., (1984, & 1985), *The Reform of Supplementary Benefit - Working Papers*, PSI
- Berthoud, R., (1985), *The Examination of Social Security*, PSI
- Berthoud, R., (1986), *Selective Social Security*, PSI
- Berthoud, R., (1986), *Standing up for Claimants: Welfare Rights Work in Local Authorities*, Policy Studies Institute
- Berthoud, R., and Kempson, E., (1990), *Credit and Debt in Britain: First Findings*, Policy Studies Institute
- Beveridge, W., (1909 & 1930), *Unemployment: A Problem of Industry*, Longmans Green & Co
- Beveridge, W., (1942), *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, HMSO, Cmnd. 6404, reprinted 1984
- Biesteck, F., (1957), *The Casework Relationship*, Allen and Unwin
- Biggs, J., (1979), 'Individual Differences in Study Processes and the Quality of Learning Outcome', *Higher Education*, 8, pp.381-394
- Biggs, S., (1991), 'Consumers, case management and inspection: obscuring deprivation and need?' *Critical Social Policy*, Spring
- Blackburn, R., (1972), (ed) *Ideology in Social Science*, Fontana
- Bourdieu, P., (1986), 'L'illusion Biographique', in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 62/63 : 69-72
- Booth, C., (1889), *Labour and Life of the People, Vol 1 of Life and Labour of the People in London*, Williams and Norgate
- Bottomley, B., (1976), 'Words, Deeds and Postgraduate Research', in Bell, C., and Encell, S., (eds.), *Inside the Whale*, Pergamon
- Boyson, R., (1971), *Down with the Poor*, Churchill Press
- Bradshaw, J., (1988), *Lone Parents: Policy in the Doldrums*, Family Policy Studies Centre
- Bradshaw, J., and Holmes, H., (1989), *Living on the Edge - A Study of the Living Standards of Families on Benefit in Tyne and Wear*, CPAG
- Brady, J., (1987), *Living in Debt*, Birmingham Settlement Money Advice Centre
- Brandon, R., and Davies, M., (1979), 'The Limits of Competence in Social Work: The assessment of Marginal Students in Social Work Education', *British Journal of Social*

- Work*, 9, pp.295-347, in Parley, J., (1987), 'Social Work and the Sociology of Knowledge', *British Journal of Social Work*, 17, pp.172-186
- Brauns, H., and Kramer, D., (1989), 'West Germany - The breakup of consensus and the demographic threat' in Munday, B., (ed.) *The Crisis in Welfare*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Brewer, C., and Lait, T., (1980), *Can Social Work Survive?*, Temple Smith
- Briggs, J., (1970), *Never in Anger - Portrait of an Eskimo Village*, Harvard
- British Sociological Association, (1991), *Women and Social Research*, BSAA Equality of the Sexes Committee
- Brown, A., (1981), 'Usefulness of Group Feedback Analysis', *Human Relations*, Vol 34, part 2, p.141-156
- Brown, G., and Harris, T., (1978), *Social Origins of Depression : A Study of Psychiatric Disorder in Women*, Tavistock
- Brown M., and Madge, N., (1982), *Despite the Welfare State*, Heinemann Educational Books
- Brumbaugh, R., (1978), *Whitehead, Process Philosophy and Education*, Allen & Unwin
- Bryson, (1989), in Burrows, R., (ed.), (1991), *Deciphering the Enterprise Culture*, R & KP
- Bryson, A., (1989), *The 80's : Decade of Poverty*, Low Pay Unit Review, No.1, pp.11-14
- Budge, I., Robertson, D., and Hall, D., (1986), *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Bulmer, M., (1982) 'When is disguise justified? Alternatives to Covert Participant Observation', *Qualitative Sociology*, pp.251-264, Human Sciences Press
- Burgess, R., (1982), *Field Research: a Sourcebook and Field Manual*, Allen and Unwin
- Burgess, R., (1988), *Studies in Qualitative Methodology*, JAI Press
- Burke, R., (1990), *Professional Agents and Social Change*, British Sociological Association Conference Paper, (unpublished)
- Bernbaum, G., (1987), *Knowledge and Ideology in the Sociology of Education*, Macmillan
- Burrows, R., (1991), *Deciphering the Enterprise Culture*, Routledge
- Butrym, Z., (1976), *The Nature of Social Work*, Macmillan
- Byrne, D., (1987), 'Rich and Poor: The Growing Divide', in *The Growing Divide A Social Audit 1979-1987*, eds Walker, A., & Walker, C., CPAG
- Campbell, B., (1984), *Wigan Pier Revisited*, Virago
- Cannan, C., (1972), 'Social Workers: Training and Professionalism', in Pateman, T., (ed.), *Counter Course : A Handbook for Course Criticism*, pp.247-264, Penguin Education

- Cannan, C., (1975), 'Welfare Rights and Wrongs' in Bailey, R., and Brake, M., (eds) *Radical Social Work*, Edward Arnold
- Caputo, R., (1988), *Management and Information Systems in Human Services*, Harworth Press
- Carew, R., (1979), 'The Place of Knowledge in Social Work Activity', *British Journal of Social Work*, Vol.9, pp.349-363
- Castaneda, C., (1973), *Tales of Power*, Penguin
- CCETSW, (1975), *Education and Training for Social Work*, paper 10, CCETSW
- CCETSW, (1987), *Better Education and Training for Social Workers. A Progress Report*, Paper 20.7, CCETSW
- CCETSW, (1988), *Survey of Social Workers Attitudes to their Training*, Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work
- CCETSW, (1989), *Welfare Rights in Social Work Education*, (ed.) Stewart, J., Paper 28.1 CCETSW
- Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, (1977), *Cultural Studies 10 on Ideology*, WCPS
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, (1987), *Personal Social Services Statistics, 1985-6 Actuals*, CIPFA
- Citizens Advice Bureaux, (1990), *Hard Times for Social Fund Applicants*, National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
- Clarke, J., (ed.), (1993), *A Crisis in Care? Challenges to Social Work*, Sage/Open University
- Cohen, A., (1966), *Delinquency and Control*, Prentice Hall
- Cohen, R., and Rushton, A., (1982), *Welfare Rights*, Heinemann Educational
- Cohen, R., and Tarpey, M., (1982), *The Trouble with Take Up: a Report of Work with Social Services to Increase Take-up of Social Security Benefits*, Islington People's Rights
- Collins, J., (1990), *Formal and Informal Networks of Support - An Anthropological Study*, unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Sussex
- Cook, D., (1989), *Rich Law Poor Law*, Open University Press
- Cook, S., and Sellitz, (1964), 'A Multiple Indicator Approach to Attitude Measurement in Warren N., and Jahoda, M., (eds), *Attitudes*, Penguin
- Cooper, J., (1991), 'The Future of Social Work : A Pragmatic View', in Loney, M., (ed.), *The State or the Market*, Sage
- Cooper, S., (1985), *Observations in Supplementary Benefit Offices*, The Reform of Supplementary Benefit Working Paper C, Policy Studies Institute
- Coser, C., Lewis, O., et al, (1959), 'Participant Observation and the Military: An Exchange', *American Sociological Review*, 24, pp.397 - 400
- CPAG, (1991), 'Family Credit : CPAG's View', *CPAG Poverty Journal*, Winter

- CPAG, (1991), *Poverty Journal*, CPAG, Winter
- Craig, G., and Coxall, J., (1989), *Monitoring the Social Fund. A Bibliography 1985-9*, University of Bradford
- Critchley's Chartered Accountants, *Budget Notes*, 19/3/91
- Curriculum Development Group, (1989), *Welfare Rights in Social Work Education*, CCETSW
- Curtiss, J., and Petras, J., (1978), (ed), *The Sociology of Knowledge. A Reader*,
- Davies, M., (1984), 'Training : What we Think of it Now?', *Social Work Today*, 24/1
- Davies, M., (1985), *The Essential Social Worker*, Wildwood House
- Davies, M., and Wright, A., (1989), *Probation Training : Consumer Perspective*, Research Report 1, Norwich, University of Anglia, Social Work
- Davis, A., Grimwood, C; Stewart, G., (1987), 'The Benefits of Benefits Training', *Community Care*, 12/3/87
- Davis, A., and Brook, E., (1985), *Women, The Family and Social Work*, Tavistock
- De Almeida, P., (1980), 'A Review of Group Discussion Methodology'. *European Research*, Vol 8, part 3, p.114-120
- De Schweinitz, K., (1947), *England's Road to Social Security 1349-1947*, University of Pennsylvania
- De Schweinitz, K., (1961), *England's Road to Social Security*, Barnes, New York
- Deacon, R., and Bartley, M., (1975), 'Becoming A Social Worker', in Jones, H., (ed.), *Towards a New Social Work*, pp.69-87, R & KP
- Dean, H., (1991), *Dependency Culture : The Image and Reality of the Claiming Experience*, a paper presented to Social Policy Association conference, July
- Dean, M., (1991), *The Constitution of Poverty*, Routledge
- Donzelot, J., (1980), 'Policing Families', cited by Knights, D., in *Sociology*, (1989), Vol.23, p.535
- Denzin, N.K., (1970), *The Research Act in Sociology: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, Butterworths
- Department of Education, (1988), *Education Reform Act*, HMSO
- Department of Education, (1990), *Education No 2 Act, 1986*, HMSO
- Department of Health, (1989), *Caring for People*, CM288, HMSO
- Department of Health, (1990), *NHS Reforms and You*, Ref.HSR6, HMSO
- Department of Health, (1991), SSI Conference II, *Caring for Quality*, 12-13 February
- DHSS, (1971), *Assistance in Cash*, HMSO



- DHSS, (1978), *Social Assistance : A Review of the Supplementary Benefits Scheme in Great Britain*, DHSS
- DHSS, (1979), *Relations with Social Services : Report of a Joint Study by the Department's Regional Directorate and Social Work Service of the Relationships Between the Supplementary Benefits Organisation and Social Services*, HMSO
- DHSS, (1980), *Liaison in Practice*, HMSO
- DHSS, (1985) *Reform of Social Security: Programme for action*, White Paper Cmnd 9691, Technical Annex HMSO
- DHSS, (1985), *Reform of Social Security*, Green Paper, Cmnd 9517-9, HMSO
- Digby, A., (1989), *British Welfare Policy*, Faber & Faber
- Dollard, J., (1949), 'Under What Conditions do Opinions Predict Behaviour', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol.12, pp.235-65
- Dominelli, L., (1988), 'Thatcher's Attack on Social Security: Restructuring Social Control', *Critical Social Policy*, Issue 23, Autumn
- Dominelli, L., (1991), *Women Across Continents : Feminist Comparative Social Policy*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Donnison, D., (1955), 'Observations on University Training For Social Work in Great Britain and North America', *Social Services Review*, December
- Donnison, D., (1982), *The Politics of Poverty*, Martin Robertson & Co Ltd
- Douglas, M., (1978), (ed), *Rules and Meanings*, Penguin
- Dowling, M., (nee Beattie), (1986), *Social Work Students' Knowledge and Understanding of the Supplementary Benefit System*, unpublished M.Phil Thesis, Hatfield Polytechnic
- Dugger, W., (1990), 'The Wealth Tax : A Policy Proposal', *Journal of Economic Issues*, March
- Easterday, L., Papademas, D., Schorr, L., and Valentine, C., (1982), 'The Making of a Female Researcher : Role Problems in Fieldwork', in Burgess, R., (ed.), *Field Research : A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, Unwin Hyman
- Edwards, B., (1982), *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, Fontana
- Edwards, P., (1983), 'The Sharp End of Bias', *Network*, no.27, October, p.136
- EEC Statistics, (1991), as quoted in *New Internationalist*, June
- England, H., (1986), *Social Work as an Art*, Allen & Unwin
- Entwistle, N., and Ramsden, P., (1983), *Understanding Student Learning*, Croom Hill
- Entwistle, N., (1987), 'A Model of the Teaching - Learning Process Derived from Research on Student Learning', in Richardson, J., Eysenck, M., and Warren Piper, D., (eds.), *Student Learning : Research in Education and Cognitive Psychology*, RSRHE and Open University
- Ernstbrunner, M., (1987), 'The Assessment of Prospective Foster Parents : A Study of Intuitive Practice', Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, Department of Social Policy, Cranfield

- Institute of Technology in Paley, J., (1987), 'Social Work and the Sociology of Knowledge', *British Journal of Social Work*, 17, pp.172-186
- Evason, E., et al, (1989), *The Deserving and Undeserving Poor - The Social Fund in Northern Ireland*, CPAG, (NI)
- Eyles, J., (1986), *Qualitative Approaches in Social and Geographical Research*, University of London
- Fabian Society Tract No 498, *Social Security : The Real Agenda*
- Family Policy Studies Centre, (1989), *One Parent Families*, (Fact Sheet 3)
- Family Welfare Association, (1990), 'Charities, The Social Fund and Income Support', *Benefits Research*, April, pp.34- 36
- Fern, E., (1982), 'The Use of Focus Groups for Idea Generation', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol.19, part 1, p.1-13
- Field, F., (1981), *Inequality in Britain : Freedom, Welfare and the State*, Fontana
- Field, F., (1987), *Freedom and Wealth in a Socialist Future*, Constable
- Fimister, G., (1986), *Welfare Rights Work in Social Services*, Macmillan Education
- Fimister, G., (1988), 'The Organisation of welfare rights work in social services' in MacPherson, S., and Becker, S., (eds), *Public Issues, Private Pain*, Insight
- Finch, J., and Groves, D., (eds.), (1983), *A Labour of Love: Women, Work and Caring*, R & KP
- Fishbein, M., (1967), 'Attitude and the Prediction of Behaviour', in M Fishbein, (ed.), *Readings in Attitude Theory and Measurement*, Wiley
- Fitzgerald, M., et al, (eds.), (1977), *Welfare in Action*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd
- Foot Whyte, F., (1982), 'Interviewing in Field Research', in Burgess, R., (ed.), *Field Research : A Source Book and Field Manual*, pp.111-123, Unwin Hyman
- Foot Whyte, W., (1984), *Learning from the Field: A Guide from Experience*, Sage
- Ford, J., (1990), 'Households, Housing and Debt', *Social Studies Review*, May
- Ford, J., (1991), *Consuming Credit, Debt and Poverty in the UK*, CPAG
- Frazer, D., (1973), *The Evolution of the British State*, MacMillan
- Friedman, M., and Friedman, R., (1980), *Free to Choose : A Personal Statement*, Harcourt Brace, Javanovich
- Fuller, L., (1984), *Use of Panels for Qualitative Research*, Market Society Conference Paper, pp.267-278
- Gallup Poll, (1981), as cited in *New Society* 15/7
- Gardiner, D., (1988), 'Improving Students' Learning - Setting an Agenda for Quality in the 1990's', *Issues in Social Work Education*, 8, 1:pp.3-10

- Gardiner, D., (1989), *The Anatomy of Supervision - Developing Learning and Practice Competence for Social Work Students*, Open University Press
- Gardiner, D., and Mathias, P., (1988), 'Improving Learning: The Impact of Learning on Professional Training and Staff Development Programmes', *Aspects of Educational Technology : Proceedings of ETIC*, Kogan Page
- Garfinkel, H., (1967), *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Engelwood Cliffs - Prentice Hall
- George, V., and Wilding, P., (1976), *Ideology and Social Welfare*, R & KP
- Giddens, A., (1976), *New Rules of Sociological Method*, Hutchinson
- Giddens, A., (1990), *Sociology*, Polity Press
- Glaser, B., and Strauss, A., (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory : Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago Aldine
- Glendenning, C., and Millar, J., (eds.), (1987), *Women and Poverty in Britain*, Wheatsheaf
- Goffman, E., (1961), *Asylums*, Penguin
- Goffman, E., (1963), *Stigma : Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Prentice Hall
- Goffman, E., (1969), *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Allen Lane
- Golding, P., and Middleton, S., (1982), *Images of Welfare*, Martin Robertson
- Goldthorpe, J., (1984), 'Women and Class Analysis', *Sociology*, vol.19, pp.384-409
- Gordon, W., and Robson, S., (1982), *Respondent Through the Looking Glass*, Market Research Society Conference Paper, p.445-473
- Gouldner, A., (1973), *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, Heinemann
- Graham, H., (1983), 'Caring: a Labour of Love', in Finch, J. & Groves, D., (eds.), *A Labour of Love, Women Work and Caring*, RKP
- Gray, J., and Gardiner, D., (1989), 'The Impact of Conceptions of 'Learning' on the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Social Work Education', *Issues in Social Work Education*, vol.9, nos. 1&2, pp.74-92
- Gregory, L., (1991), *Social Services Departments and One Parent Families*, unpublished M.Phil Thesis, University of Sheffield
- Gregory, P., (1988), 'The End of Welfare Rights', *Social Work Today*, 4 February
- Gregory, P., (1988), 'The Myth of Social Worker Opposition to Welfare Rights', *Social Work Education*, vol.8, no.1, Winter, pp.17-23
- Griffiths, R., (1988), *Community Care: Agenda for Action*, HMSO
- Guardian, (1990), *British Social Attitudes*, 14/9
- Gurnah, A., (1982), 'The Politics of Race Awareness Training', *Critical Social Policy*, Spring, pp.6-20

- Hadley, R., and McGrath, M., (1980), *Going Local : Neighbourhood Social Services*, Bedford Square Press
- Haines, J., (1985), 'Alternative Frameworks for Organizing the Social Work Syllabus' in Harris, J., *Educating Social Workers*, Sage
- Hammersley, M., and Woods, P., (eds), (1976), *The Process of Schooling*, R & KP
- Hannam, J., (1988), 'Social Services and welfare rights' in Becker, S., and MacPherson, S., (eds), *Public Issues, Private Pain*, Insight
- Hargreaves, D., (1967), *Social Relations in a Secondary School*, R & KP
- Harris, J., (1970), 'Unemployment Politics', cited by Valiochi, S., (1989), *Sociological Forum*, Vol.4, p.349
- Harris, R., (1972), 'Prejudice and Tolerance', cited by Gallagher, A., (1989), *Human Relations*, Vol.42, p.917
- Harris, R., (1983), 'Social Work Education and the Transfer of Learning, *Issues in Social Work Education*, 3,2
- Harrison, P., (1983), *Inside the Inner City*, Penguin
- Harvey, D., (1988), *Lecture to ESRC Postgraduate Students at the School for Advanced Urban Studies*, University of Bristol, April
- Hasenfeld, Y., and Hoefler, R., (1989), 'USA - Social services and social work under Reaganism' in Munday, B., (ed.), *The Crisis in Welfare*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Hatch, S; Fox, E; Legg, C., (1977), *Research and Reform, Southwark CDP, 1969-1972*, Hatch, Fox & Legg and the Urban Deprivation Unit, The Home Office
- Hawkes, B., (1988) in 'Assessment' as quoted in Cook, D., (1989), *Rich Law, Poor Law : Different Responses to Tax and Supplementary Benefit Fraud*, Open University Press
- Hayes, J., (1990), *Smart Love*, Arrow
- Hedges, A., (1985), 'Group Interviewing' in Walker, R., (ed.), *Applied Qualitative Research*, pp.71-92, Gower
- Heller, F., (1969), 'Group Feedback Analysis, A Method of Field Research, *Psychological Bulletin*, p.1098-1117
- Heller, F., (1970), 'Group Feedback Analysis as a Change Agent, *Human Relations*, p.319-333
- Heller, F., and Brown, A., (1978), *Group Feedback Analysis applied to Longitudinal Monitoring*, Tavistock Institute Paper
- Hepinstall, D., (1980), *Interview with Ruth Lister and David Donnison*, Community Care, 23.10.80.
- Hill, M., Tolan, F., assisted by Smith, R., (1984), *Impact of changes in the Supplementary Benefits system upon Local Authority Social Services Departments*, School of Advanced Urban Studies, University of Bristol, (unpublished)
- Hill, M., and Laing, P., (1979), *Social Work and Money*, Allen and Unwin

- Hill, M., (1990), *Social Security Policy in Britain*, Edward Elgar
- Hills, J., (1987), 'What Happened to Spending on the Welfare State?', in Walker, A., and Walker, C., (eds), *The Growing Divide*, CPAG
- Hills, J., (1988), *Changing Tax*, CPAG
- Hobsbawm, E.J., (1972), *Bandits*, Penguin
- Holdaway, S., (1977), 'Changes in Urban Policing', *British Journal of Sociology*, 28: 119-137
- Holdaway, S., (1979), *The British Police*, Edward Arnold
- Holdaway, S., (1982), 'An Inside Job: A Case Study of Covert Research on the Police', p.59-79, in M Bulmer (ed.), *Social Research Ethics*, Macmillan
- Holman, R., (1973a) 'Poverty, welfare rights and social work', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol 4, no. 12, 6 September, pp358-363
- Holman, R., (1973b), 'Poverty : Consensus and Alternatives' in Fitzgerald, M., et al (eds), *Welfare in Action*, R & KP
- Holman, R., (1978), *Poverty : Explanations of Social Deprivation*, Martin Robertson
- Holman, R., (1991), 'No Accident', *Poverty Journal*, CPAG, pp.6-8
- Hoogvelt, A., (1987), *First Year Undergraduate Lecture Notes*, University of Sheffield
- Howard, M., (1990), *Family Poverty and Social Services*, unpublished M.Phil Thesis, University of Nottingham
- Howe, D., (1986), 'the Segregation of Women and Their Work in Personal Social Services', *Critical Social Policy*, no.15, pp.21-35
- Howe, D., (1989), 'Evaluating Social Work Training and Education', *Issues in Social Work Education*, Vol.9, nos. 1&2, pp.3-20
- Hudson, A., (1989), 'Changing Perspectives: Feminism, Gender and Social Work' in Langan, M., and Lee, P., *Radical Social Work Today*, Unwin Hyman
- International Movement ATD Fourth World, (1991), 'The Wresinski Approach : The Poorest Partners in Democracy', cited in *Poverty Journal*, CPAG, July
- Jackson, M., and Valencia, B., (1979), *Financial Aid Through Social Work*, R & KP
- Johnson, J., (1975), *Doing Field Research*, Free Press, Macmillan
- Johnson, N., (1987)), *The Welfare State in Transition*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Johnson, N., (1990), *Reconstructing the Welfare State, 1980-1990*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Johnson, P., and Webb, S., (1991), *UK Poverty Statistics : A Comparative Study*, Institute for Fiscal Studies, Commentary No. 27
- Jones, B., 'Section One: At the Crossroads', *Benefits Research*, 3, pp. 22-25
- Jones, H., (ed.), (1975), *Towards a New Social Work*, RKP

- Jordan, B., (1987), 'Counselling, Advocacy and Negotiation', *British Journal of Social Work*, 17, pp.169-186
- Jordan, B., (1988) 'Poverty, social work and the state' in Becker, S., and MacPherson, S.,(eds), *Public Issues, Private Pain*, Insight
- Jordan, B., (1990), *Social Work in an Unjust Society*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Jordan, B., James, S., Kay, H., and Redley, M., (1992), *Trapped in Poverty? Labour-Market Decisions in Low Income Households*, Routledge
- Kaldor, N., (1983), *The Economic Consequences of Mrs Thatcher*, Fabian Tract, 486, Fabian Society
- Katz, J., (1978), *White Awareness*, University of Oklahoma Press
- Keddie, N., (1971), 'Classroom Knowledge in Young,S., *Tinker Tailor ... The Myth of Cultural Deprivation*, Penguin
- Kelly, A., (1991), 'The Enterprise Culture and the Welfare State : Restructuring the Management of the Health and Personal Social Services', in Burrows, R., (ed.), (1991), *Deciphering the Enterprise Culture*, Routledge
- Kingsley, S., (1985), *Action Research Method or ideology?*, Association of Researchers in Voluntary Action and Community Involvement, Occasional Paper No.8
- La Piere, R., (1934), 'Attitudes v Actions', *Social Forces*, 13, p.230-7
- Lacey, C., (1970), *Hightown Grammar*, Manchester University Press
- Lakatos, I., (1970), 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', in Lakatos, I., and Musgrave, A., (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press
- Land, H., (1985), 'The Construction of Dependency', in Bulmer, M., (ed), *The Goals of Social Policy*, Unwin Hyman
- Langan, M., and Lee, P., (eds.), (1989), *Radical Social Work Today*, Unwin Hyman
- Langan, M., (1993), 'New Directions in Social Work' in Clarke, J., (ed.), *A Crisis in Care?*, Sage
- Langmaid, R., (1984), 'Games Respondents Play', *Journal of Marketing Research Society*, Vol.26, part 3, p.221-229
- Lasch, C., (1977), *Haven in a Heartless World : The Family Besieged*, Basic Books
- Laws, S., (1991), 'Women on the Verge', *Trouble and Strife*, Spring
- Leeper, B., (1988) 'Cash and Care in a European Perspective' in Becker, S., and MacPherson, S., (eds.), *Public Issues, Private Pain*, Insight
- Le Grand, J., (1982), *The Strategy of Equality*, Allen & Unwin
- Levine, M., (1974), 'Scientific Method and the Adversary Model', *American Psychologist*, September
- Lewis, J., and Piachaud, D., (1987), in Glendenning, C., and Millar, J., *Women and Poverty in Britain*, Wheatsheaf

- Lewis, O., (1966), 'The Culture of Poverty', *Scientific American*, 215 : 4, pp.19-25
- Lewis, O., (1968), *Five Families*, Penguin
- Liddell, A., (1989), 'Working for Patients : A Blue Print for the 1990's', *Public Money and Management*, Summer
- Lishman, J., (1978), 'A Clash in Perspective?', *British Journal of Social Work*, pp.253-255
- Lister, R., and Emmett, T., (1976), *Under the Safety Net*, Poverty Pamphlet 25, CPAG
- Lister, R., and Lakhani, B., (1987), *A Great Retreat in Fairness*, CPAG
- Lister, R., (1988), *The Politics of Social Security : An Assessment of the Fowler Review*, University of Bradford
- Lister, R., (1990), *The Exclusive Society. Citizenship and the Poor*, CPAG
- Lister, R., (1990), *The Politics of Child Poverty : Reflections on Three Decades*, unpublished paper, University of Bradford
- Lister, R., and Beresford, P., (1991), *Working Together Against Poverty*, Open Services Project and University of Bradford
- Lloyd, P., (1990), *Community Care and the Griffiths Report - Users' Views and Participation*, paper given at British Association for Social Anthropology in Policy and Practice Conference, 19 January, University of London
- Low Pay Unit, (1987), 'The 1987 Budget: A Poor Deal', using figures derived from Wallis, K., et al (eds), (1987/8), *Models of the UK Economy: A Third Review by the ESRC Macro - Economic Modelling Bureau*, Oxford University Press, (updated for 1987/8 in line with money GDP growth rate, table 2.1, 'Financial Statement and Budget Report')
- Manstead, A., Proffitt, C., and Smart, J., (1983), 'Predicting and Understanding Mothers, Infant Feeding Intentions and Behaviour : Testing the Theory of Reasoned Action', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44, pp.657-671
- Mack, J., and Lansley, S., (1985), *Poor Britain*, Allen and Unwin
- Marton, F., and Saljo, R., (1976), 'On Qualitative Differences in Learning - Outcomes and Processes', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46, pp.4-11
- Marx, K., (1976), *Capital Volume 1 A Critique of Political Economy*, Penguin Books
- Mathinson, J., and Sinclair, I., (1979), *Mate and Stalemate*, Blackwell
- May, J., (1984), 'A Buyers Guide to Qualitative Research', *Market Intelligence and Planning*, Vol. 2, Part 2, pp.67-76
- Mayer, J., & Timms, N., (1970), *The Client Speaks*, Routledge & Kegan Paul
- McGrail, S., (1983), 'We Shouldn't Really be Teaching This Sort of Thing', *Community Care*, 15/12, pp.26-27
- McGrail, S., (1983), *Survey into the Teaching of Welfare Rights on Postgraduate CQSW Courses in the United Kingdom*, Department of Sociology, University of Stirling

- McGrath, M., (1979), 'Planning for Children in care', *Social Work Today*, 10,(29), 20 March, pp.21-8
- McKay, A., et al, (1973), 'Consumers and a Social Services Department', in Fitzgerald et al, (eds.), *Welfare in Action*, R & KP
- McNemar, Q., (1946), 'Opinion-attitude Methodology', *Psychology Bulletin*, Vol.43, pp.289-374
- Meyer, C., (1970), *Social Work Practice*, Collier-Macmillan
- Mead, L., (1986), *Beyond Entitlement : The Social Obligations of Citizenship*, Free Press
- Means, R., (1977), *Social Work and the Undeserving Poor*, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham
- Miller, R., and Dolan, P., (1971), *Race Awareness*, Oxford University Press
- Mishra, R., (1984), *The Welfare State in Crisis*, Harvester Press
- Mishra, R., (1990), *The Welfare State in Capitalist Society*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Moore, J., (1987), *Welfare and Dependency*, speech to Conservative Constituency, Parties Association, September
- Morgan, D., (1981), 'Men, Masculinity and the Process of Sociological Enquiry', in Roberts, H., *Doing Feminist Research*, RKP
- Morley, B., (1988), 'Women, Poverty and Social Work' in Becker, S., and Macpherson, S., (eds.), *Public Issues, Private Pain*, Insight Books
- Morley, R., (1990), 'Charities: The Social Fund and Income Support', *Benefits Research Journal*, April, BRU, University of Nottingham
- Morris, L., (1984), 'Redundancy and Patterns of Household Finance', *The Sociological Review*, New Series, Vol.32, No.3
- Mukai, T., (1989), 'A Call for Our Language : Anorexia From Within', in *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.12, no.6, Pergamon Press
- Munday, B., (1989), *The Crisis in Welfare*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Murray, C., (1990), *The Emerging British Underclass*, Institute of Economic Affairs
- Noble, M., and Stewart, G., (1987), *Welfare Rights and Social Work Education, Report of CCETSW Conference 6/4/87 on Teaching Welfare Rights*, CCETSW
- Norwood, R., (1989), *Women Who Love Too Much*, Arrow
- Novak, T., (1988), *Poverty and the State*, Open University Press
- O'Connor, I., and Dalgleish, L., (1986), 'Cautionary Tales from Beginning Practitioners : The Fate of Personal Models of Social Work in Beginning Practice', in *British Journal of Social Work*, 16, pp.431-447
- Office of Fair Trading, (1989), *Overindebtedness*, HMSO
- Oppenheim, C., (1990), *Holes in the Safety Net*, CPAG



- Oppenheim, C., (1990, 1993), *Poverty The Facts*, CPAG
- Oppenheim, C., (1991), *Poverty in London : An Overview*, CPAG
- Orwell, G., (1940), *Inside the Whale and Other Stories*, Penguin
- Oyen, E., (ed), (1986), *Comparing Welfare States and Their Futures*, Gower
- Packman, J., (1975), *The Child's Generation*, Blackwell
- Pahl, J., (1989), *Money and Marriage*, Macmillan
- Paley, J., (1987), 'Social Work and the Sociology of Knowledge', *British Journal of Social Work*, 17, pp.169-186
- Parker, G., (1987), 'Making Ends Meet: Women, Credit and Debt', in Glendinning, C., and Millar, J., (eds.), *Women and Poverty in Britain*, Wheatsheaf
- Parker, H., (1974), *View from the Boys*, David & Charles
- Parkinson, G., (1970), 'I Give Them Money', in Fitzgerald et al, (eds), (1977), *Welfare in Action*, R & KP
- Parsloe, P., and Stevenson, O., (1978), *Social Services Teams: The Practitioner's View*, HMSO
- Parton, N., (1985), *The Politics of Child Abuse*, Macmillan
- Pateman, T., (1972), *Counter Course : A Handbook for Course Criticism*, Penguin
- Patten, C., (1991), *The Times*, 3/1
- Pearson, G., (1973), 'Social Work as the Privatised Solution of Public Ills', in Fitzgerald et al, (eds), (1977), *Welfare in Action*, R & KP
- Pearson, G., (1975), 'The Politics of Uncertainty : A Study in the Socialization of the Social Worker', in Jones, H., (ed.), *Towards a New Social Work*, pp.45-69, R & KP
- Pearson G., (1989) 'Social Work and Unemployment' in Langan, M., and Lee, P., (eds.), *Radical Social Work Today*, Unwin Hyman
- Perlman, H., (1957), *Social Casework : A Problem Solving Process*, University of Chicago
- Peters, R.S., (1981), *Ethics and Education*, Unwin
- Piachaud, D., (1987), 'The Growth of Poverty', in Walker, A., and Walker, C., (eds.), *The Growing Divide : A Social Audit 1979-1987*, CPAG
- Piachaud, D., (1980), *The Cost of a Child*, CPAG
- Pike, (1876), as quoted in 'Women and Crime', *Observer*, 29/9/91
- Pincus, P., and Minahan, T., (1977), *Models and Methods of Social Work Practice*, Sage
- Pinker, R., (1979) 'Slimline social work', *New Society* 13/12 pp.595-596

- Pinker, R., (1982), Minority Report in Barclay, P., *Social Workers : Their Roles and Tasks*, NISW/ Bedford Square Press
- Pirsig, R., (1974), *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Bodley Head
- Pithouse, A., (1988), *Social Work : The Social Organisation of an Invisible Trade*, Sage
- Platt, A., (1977), *The Child Savers*, University of Chicago Press
- Pond, C., and Burghes, L., (1986), 'The Rising Tide of Deprivation', *New Society*, 18 April pp.43-45
- Pond, C., (1989), 'The Changing Distribution of Income, Wealth and Poverty' in *The Changing Social Structure*, Hamnett, C., Mcdowell, L., and Satre, P., Open University Press
- Pound, J., (1973), *Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England*, Longman
- Pucelick, E., and Lewis, B., (1982) *Magic Demystified. An Introduction to Neuro Linguistic Programming*, Metamorphous Press
- R and D Subcommittee on Qualitative Research, (1979), 'Qualitative Research - A Summary of the Concepts Involved', *Journal of the Market Research Society*, Vol. 21, No.2
- Ralph, N., (1985), *The Impact of Unemployment on Service Provision and Revenue Expenditure in the F&CS Department*, Sheffield Family and Community Services (unpublished)
- Rees, S., and Wallace, A., (1982), *Verdicts on Social Work*, Edward Arnold
- Rein, M., (1970) 'Social work in search of a radical profession', *Social Work*, vol 15, no. 2, April, pp13-28
- Richards, M., (1978), 'What Shall We Teach Next Year?' *Social Work Today*, 11 April, pp.10-13
- Richards, M., (1985), 'Learning for Creativity', in Harris, R., *Educating Social Workers*, Association of Teachers in Social Work Education
- Riley, M., (ed.), (1988), *Sociological Lives*, Sage
- Ringen & Donnison, (1988), *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol.17, p.367
- RIPA Seminar, (1986) 'Big Business in Private Care', *Health Service Journal*, pp.134-136
- Roberts, H., (ed.), (reprinted 1990), *Doing Feminist Research*, Routledge
- Robson, S., (1988), *Group Discussion, Advanced Workshop in Applied Qualitative Research*, SCPR
- Rodger, J., (1988), 'Social Work as Social Control re-examined : Beyond the Dispersal of Discipline Thesis' in *Sociology*, vol.22, no.4, November, pp.163-174
- Rowntree, S., (1901), *Poverty : A Study of Town Life*, Macmillan
- Rubenstein, J., (1974), *City Police*, Ballantine

- Sainsbury, E., (1975), *Social Work With Families*, R & KP
- Satow, A., (1982), 'Racism Awareness, Training : Training to Make a Difference', in Ohri, A., Manning, B., and Curno, P., (eds.), R & KP
- Satyamurti, C., (1981), *Occupational Survival, The Case of the Local Authority Social Worker*, Blackwell
- Schifter, D., and Ajzen, I., (1985), 'Intention, perceived control and weight loss: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49, pp.843-851
- Schlackman, W., (1984), 'Discussion of the Use of Sensitivity Panels in Market Research', *Journal of Marketing Research Society*, Vol.26, part 3, pp.279-294
- Schutz, A., (1962), *Collected Papers*, Vol.1, The Hague: Nijhoff
- Schwarz, B., (ed.), (1977), *Working Papers in Cultural Studies 10, On Ideology*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham
- Seebohm, F., (1968), *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, Cmnd 3707, HMSO
- Seebohm, F., (1969), *Report on Reorganisation of Local Government Services*, HMSO
- Senior, N., (1865), *Historical and Philosophical Essays*, Longmans Green & Co
- Sharkey, P., (1973), 'Welfare Rights In Social Services Departments', *Social Work Today*, 20/9/73
- Shirley, I., (1990), 'New Zealand : The Advance of the New Right', in Taylor, I., *The Social Effects of Free Market Policies*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Silverman, D., (1985), *Qualitative Methodology and Sociology*, Gower
- Sinfield, A., (1969), *Which Way for Social Work?*, Tract 393, Fabian Society
- Smart, B., (1984), *Sociology, Phenomenology and Marxian Analysis*, RKP
- Smart, C., and Smart, B., (eds.), (1978), *Women, Sexuality and Social Control*, R & KP
- Smith and Gray, (1981), *Police and People in London*, PSI
- Smith, G., and Harris, R., (1979), *Ideologies and the Organisation of Social Work Departments*, unpublished paper
- Smith, G., (1980), *Social Need*, R & KP
- Smith, S., (1988), *Lecture on Philosophy, Methodology and Empirical Research*, ESRC Conference, Quorn Hall, Leicestershire
- Social Security Consortium, (1987), *Of Little Benefit. A Critical Guide to the Social Security Act 1986*, Social Security Consortium
- Social Security Research Consortium, (1989), *Social Fund Cases Taken to Advice Centres 1989 Study, General Report*, Newcastle University, unpublished

- Social Security Research Consortium, (1991), *Cash Limited - Limited Cash, The Impact of the Social Fund on Social Services and Voluntary Agencies and their Users*, AMA
- Social Services Committee Ninth Report, (1988), *Social Security : Changes Implemented in April 1988*, Volumes 1 & 2, HMSO
- Social Trends, (1988), 'Silverton' is noted as one of the areas of highest unemployment and disability in Britain and has recently become the target of government and EEC initiatives
- Social Work Research Centre, (1989), *Monitoring the Impact of the Social Fund on Social Work Departments : The Second Study February - March 1989, The National Report*, University of Stirling
- Spencer, G., (1982), 'Methodological Issues in the study of Bureaucratic Elites; A Case Study of West Point', p.23-31 in Burgess, R., (ed.), *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, Allen and Unwin
- Stark, T., (1986), *The A-Z of Wealth*, The Fabian Society
- Statham, D., (1978), *Radicals in Social Work*, R & KP
- Stevenson, O., (1973), *Claimant or Client?*, Allen and Unwin
- Stewart, G., and Stewart, J., (1986), *Boundary Changes : Social Work & Social Security*, CPAG & BASW
- Stewart, G., and Stewart, J., (1988), *The Beginning of the End? Welfare Rights Workers' Experience of the Amended Single Payment Regulations*, Cleveland County Welfare Rights Service for WROG, Middlesbrough
- Stewart, G., and Stewart, J., (1991), *Relieving Poverty : Use of the Social Fund by Social Work Clients and Other Agencies*, AMA
- Stewart, J., (ed.), (1989), *Welfare Rights in Social Work Education*, Paper 28.1, CCETSW
- Strathclyde Regional Council, (1984), *Social Strategy for the Eighties*, Policy Document
- Strathclyde Regional Council, (1985), *Unemployment - Implications for Regional Services*, commissioned by the Regional Deprivation Group
- Strathclyde Regional Council, (1986), *Social Needs and Social Work Resources*, Policy Document
- Sullivan, Mortimer et al, (1958), 'Participant Observation as Employed in the Study of a Military Training Program', *American Sociological Review*, 23 pp.660-667
- Sullivan, O., (1986), 'Housing Movements of the Divorced and Separated', *Housing Studies*, vol.1, no.1
- Sutherland, H., (1990), quoted in Atkinson, A.B., *Poverty, Statistics and Progress in Europe* - revised version of Keynote address at a seminar on Poverty Statistics in the EC, July
- Tawney, R., (1921), *The Sickness of an Acquisitive Society*, Fabian Society
- Taylor Gooby, P., and Papadakis, E., (1985), 'Who Wants the Welfare State?', *New Society*, 19/7

- Timmins, N., (1988), 'A Harsh Way to End the Dependency Culture', *The Independent*, 6/4
- Timms, N., and Timms, R., (1977), *Perspectives in Social Work*, Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Titmuss, R., (1958), *Essays on the Welfare State*, Allen & Unwin
- Titmuss, R., (1963), *Essays on the Welfare State*, Allen & Unwin
- Titmuss, R., (1968), *Commitment to Welfare*, Allen & Unwin
- Titmuss, R., (1970), *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*, Allen and Unwin
- Titmuss, R., (1974), *Social Policy: An Introduction*, Allen and Unwin
- Todaro, M., (1991), *Economic Development in the Third World*, World Bank
- Toren, N., (1972), *Social Work : The Case of a Semi-Profession*, R & KP
- Townsend, P., (1970), *The Concept of Poverty*, Heinemann
- Townsend, P., (1979), *Poverty in the United Kingdom : A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*, Penguin
- Townsend, P., (1984), *Why are the Many Poor?*, Fabian Tract no 500, Fabian Society
- Townsend, P., (1991), *Meaningful Statistics on Poverty 1991*, Statistical Monitoring Unit, University of Bristol
- Trend, M., (1978), 'On the Reconciliation of Qualitative and Quantitative Analyses. A Case Study', in *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Evaluation Research*, pp.68-86
- Tunnard, J., (1973), 'Marriage breakdown and the loss of the owner occupied home', *Roof*, Vol.1, no.2
- Valencia, M., and Jackson, M., (1979), 'Variation in provision of financial aid through social work', *Policy and Politics*, 7(1)
- Walker, A., (1981), 'Social Policy, Social Administration, and the Social Construction of Welfare', in *Sociology*, 15 (2), pp.225-50
- Walker, A., (1984), *Social Planning*, Blackwell
- Walker, A., and Walker, C., (1987), *The Growing Divide. A Social Audit, 1979 - 1987*, CPAG
- Walker, A., (1990), 'The Strategy of Inequality', in Taylor, I., (ed.), *The Social Effects of Free Market Policies*, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Walker, A., (1990), *One Generation on: The Rising Tide of Child Poverty, 1965 - 1990*, CPAG
- Walker, A., (1991), 'Poverty and the Underclass' in Haralambos, M., (ed.), *Developments in Sociology*, Vol.7, Causeway Press
- Walker, A., (1991), 'The Persistence of Poverty under Welfare States and the Prospect for its Abolition', *International Journal of Health Services*

- Walker, R., (1985), (ed.), *Applied Qualitative Research*, Gower
- Walton, R., (1975), 'Welfare Rights and Social Work : Ambivalence in Action', in Jones, H., *Towards a New Social Work*, pp.102-122
- Walton, R., (1975), *Women in Social Work*, R & KP
- Wasserman, H., (1970), 'Early Careers of Professional Social Workers in a Public Child Welfare Agency', *Social Work*, Vol.15, pp.93-101
- Waxman, C., (1988), *The Stigma of Poverty*, Pergamon
- Weir, J., (1981), 'What do Social Workers do?', *New Society*, 17/5, pp.17-21
- Whitehead, M., (1987), *The Health Divide, Inequalities in Health in the 1980's*, Health Education Council
- Wicker, A., (1969), 'Attitudes v Actions: the Relationship of Verbal and Overt Responses to Attitude Objects', in Warren, N., and Jahoda, M., (eds.), (1979), *Attitudes*, Penguin
- Williams, F., (1989), *Social Policy, A Critical Introduction*, Polity
- Willis, P., (1977), *Learning to Labour*, Saxon House
- Willis, P., (1980), 'Notes on Method' in Hill, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A., and Willis, P., *Culture Media and Language*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
- Wilson, A., (1988), *Social Workers and Welfare Rights: Perceptions, Practice and Problems*, un-published M.Phil thesis, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- Wilson, E., (1977), *Women and the Welfare State*, Tavistock
- Wilson, W., (1988), 'Academic Controversy and Intellectual Growth', in Riley, M., (ed.), *Sociological Lives*, Sage
- Wooton, B., (1959 and 1967), *Social Science and Social Pathology*, Allen and Unwin
- Wright Mills, C., (1970), *The Sociological Imagination*, Pelican
- Youll, P., (1985), 'The Learning Community', in Harris, R., *Educating Social Workers*, Association of Teachers in Social Work Education
- Young, Lord, (1985), Speech at St Lawrence Jewry, 6 November