



University of Sussex

A University of Sussex DSW thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

**Acknowledging and bearing emotions: A study into child
and family social work practice**

Paul Dugmore

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the
University of Sussex degree of Professional Doctorate in
Social Work**

April 2019

Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

Acknowledgments

Firstly I would like to thank all the participants of this research study. The children and families who agreed to be observed; the social workers who agreed to be observed and interviewed and to share their case records and to the management within the local authority who agreed to host my research. Without such cooperation and willingness this research would not have happened and I am extremely grateful.

Throughout the duration of the past few years of undertaking this doctorate, I am grateful to the many people who have supported me. The various colleagues where I have worked during its completion, fellow doctoral students, and managers who have supported my thinking, given practical support and guidance, agreed a sabbatical. All of this greatly assisted my ability to complete this work and I am immensely appreciative.

Thank you Amana, Andrew and Gerry for being part of my Many Minds group and for your wisdom, time and encouragement. Thank you also to Andrew Cooper for earlier supervision, Jackie for reading a full draft, Isabelle for formatting help and Karen for her input.

My friends and family who have had to endure my pain along the way and my frequent absence, I thank you for your support, encouragement and love.

Finally, my gratitude, thanks and appreciation to my wonderful supervisory team. Gillian Ruch who has been a constant source of support, encouragement and ability to keep me on track always with regular supervision, feedback, humour and warmth. Michelle Lefevre, who has provided such detailed, thoughtful feedback and always delivered in the most supportive, kind way that brought the best out in me.

Summary

This thesis is the product of an ethnographic research study that uses a psycho-social approach to explore how children's emotions are engaged with by child and family social workers. This theme is of relevance and professional interest to me as a CAMHS social worker where my role specifically focuses on this area of practice. It also relates to my previous experience as a teacher and supervisor of social workers. Informed by a psycho-social frame of reference to both practice and research, I was interested in the types of dynamics that might play out in the research both in relation to social workers and children and young people and also for me as a researcher/social worker and the participants in the research.

The literature identifies a range of knowledge and research that looks at how social workers should communicate and engage with children and some of the barriers that seem to adversely impact on effective engagement. There is also some evidence that specifically focuses on what social workers do when they meet with children, through the use of observation. However, research which focuses on how practice focuses on the emotional dimensions of children's lives is largely absent from the literature. This study aims to provide a perspective on how social work practice with children attends to their emotional needs and experiences and what factors promote or inhibit this from taking place.

Drawing on psycho-social perspectives in research (Hoggett, 2014; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013) this study brings together the individual and the social, giving credence to both. It is founded on an interpretivist epistemology and uses an ethnographic, qualitative methodology. Interviews were analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009) and observations and case records were analysed through a psycho-social lens. Discourse analysis was used to interrogate the case records. Observation reports were shared with a Many Minds panel as part of the interpretive process.

The thesis findings demonstrate that whilst social workers engaged with children's emotional lives to some extent, they often seemed to overlook, ignore or distance themselves from some of the emotional experiences shared and communicated by the

children and young people they met. Using examples from the observations, interviews and case records, the thesis demonstrates how complex emotional dynamics are mobilised, perhaps consciously and unconsciously, by social workers, to protect themselves from the complex emotional pain and anguish of the families they work with, as a way of managing the realities of the role. It also bears witness to the organisational defences that exist that serve to distant practitioners from full engagement with the emotional experiences they are faced with. This thesis makes an original contribution, developing new knowledge and understanding of complex processes that impact on practice, represented in a model for effective practice – the 4C model. Whilst the thesis identifies the limitations of this research and the methodology used, it also makes a number of recommendations for practice, education and further research.

Contents

Statement	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Summary	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Why this topic, why me?	1
Rationale	3
21 st Century child and family social work in England – the contemporary context	4
Theoretical framework – A psycho-social perspective	5
The children and young people in this study	6
The social workers	7
Structure of thesis	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review	9
Introduction	9
Definitions and clarification of terms and concepts	9
Models of emotion	11
The legislative and policy context	13
The contribution of psychoanalysis	14
Systemic influences	17
The complexities of communication	19
Relationship-based practice and use of self	21
Communication and engagement with children	27
Studies of social work practice with children	29
Social workers' emotions	32
The impact of the work on social workers	34
Organisational defences against anxiety	35
The tension between the bureaucratic and the relational	37
Support and supervision	38
Summary	40
Chapter 3: Methodology	41
Introduction to chapter	41
Methodological rationale	41
Research questions	42
Research methodology	42

Psycho-social methodology	45
Methods	47
Observation	47
Interviews	52
Psycho-social analysis of case records	55
Table 1: Research data index	57
Access and approval	59
Sampling	60
Ethical issues	60
Reflexivity	62
Data Analysis	64
Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	64
Step 3: Developing emergent themes	66
Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes	67
Step 5: Moving to the next case	67
Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases	67
Figure 1: Diagrammatic outline of analysis of interviews _	68
Psycho-social analysis	71
Criticisms of psycho-social methods	73
4: Jenny	76
Purpose of the chapter	76
A brief biography of Jenny and our first encounter	77
Family one	77
Figure two: Genogram	77
Avoidance	79
Building relationships	81
The complexity of home visits	83
Family two	83
Figure three: genogram family two	83
Avoidance and distancing discourse	85
Doing and being: the practical privileging the emotional	87
Embodied emotions	90
Observer discomfort	95
Summary	96
Chapter 5: Alana	98
A brief biography of Alana and our first encounter	98

Day one: A goodbye visit to a family	98
Figure four: Genogram	98
The importance of relationships: Difficulties relating	100
Engaging with children's emotions	102
Avoidance	103
Turning a blind eye	104
Distancing discourse	109
Further distancing	110
Acknowledging emotions	115
Observer discomfort	117
Summary	118
Chapter 6: The systemic, family and individual dimensions of practice	119
Introduction to chapter	119
Systemic dimensions	119
'It's a juggling act' – Managing multiple dimensions of practice	119
Administrative burden	122
Table two: Observations (see Appendix 5 for original table)	125
Stress	127
Family dimensions of practice: The Importance of relationships	128
Tensions and challenges: 'Everyone hates social workers'	131
Engaging with children's emotions	133
Self-protection - emotional distance	136
Feeling out of depth	137
Individual barriers to practice	141
Personal risk and distress	141
Training, confidence and skills to practice	143
The needs of social workers: Supervision, support and containment	147
Summary	148
Chapter 7: Discussion of findings	149
Introduction to chapter	149
What did the study find?	149
Overlooking, not seeing, not hearing, not asking, not thinking	153
Denial	154
Avoidance	156
Professional distancing	158
Training, skills and confidence	160

Social work practice as a defence against anxiety	162
The context of child and family social work practice	163
Researcher anxieties	164
The contribution of this research	166
A second skin	166
Figure five: 4C Model for (Confident, Compassionate, Courageous, Curious) practice	168
Capacity to ask, listen, see and think	168
Conclusion	170
Chapter 8: Conclusion	171
Introduction to chapter	171
Summary of main themes	171
Researcher impact and subjectivity	172
Implications for practice	173
Critique of methodology and limitations of the study	177
Bibliography	183
Appendices	200
Appendix 1: Outline of Research Process	201
Appendix 2: Information for participants and consent forms	203
Appendix 3: Extract from reflective journal	220
Appendix 4: Interview schedule	221
Appendix 5: Record of observations	222
Appendix 6: Extract from Many Minds panel	223
Appendix 7: Outline of IPA process	224
Step 1: Reading and re-reading	224
Step 2: Initial noting	224
Step 3: Developing emergent themes	225
Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes	225
Step 5: Moving to the next case	226
Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases	226
Appendix 8: Example of IPA analysis	227
Appendix 9: Examples of evidence for Super-ordinate themes	230
Appendix 10: Overarching themes and sub-themes from IPA	233
Table 1: Research data index	66
Table 2: Observations	77

Figure 1: Super-ordinate themes	77
Figure 2: Genogram, family one	85
Figure 3: Genogram, family two	91
Figure 4: Genogram	106
Figure 5: The '4 C' model	178

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis explores *how* social workers attend to and engage with the emotional lives of children. This chapter outlines the rationale for the research and contextualises child and family social work in England. It also sets out the theoretical framework underpinning the research and introduces the reader to the research participants, namely the children and social workers. Finally, it outlines the structure for the remainder of the thesis.

Why this topic, why me?

My experience in social work practice and academe led me to reflect on how social work practice and education have come to privilege surface, rather than depth approaches (Howe, 1996) in which successive reforms have resulted in managerialist outcome-focused practice, preventing social workers from engaging in the more painful and complex aspects of the role. As a practitioner in local authority children's services, working with young people I often experienced challenges in effectively engaging with their emotional lives. Over time, I recognised that what was happening on the surface was not indicative of what was going on at deeper levels. Whilst I seemed able to engage with them and build good relationships, I did not always seek to explore complex, difficult issues with them, through fear or feeling ill-equipped. Having undertaken training and latterly working at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, a mental health clinic, I became more comfortable and willing to be curious and immerse myself deeply in complex, troubling emotions that children and young people experience, many of which are communicated, sometimes in subtle, less visible ways. This requires confidence, experience, good supervision and theoretical frameworks on

which to draw. I also have time and space to explore complex issues through weekly individual sessions with children and young people, which is a different context to statutory child and family social work.

Working with students and social workers for over twenty years, I observed that they often appeared to lack the 'capacity to both endure the intensity of emotional pain and turmoil, and exercise measured thought, analysis and judgement' (Cooper and Lousada, 2005: 155), seeming unable or unwilling to deal with the intense emotions that families present with. My experience as a manager and educator of social workers led me to conclude that contemporary supervision is largely target driven, lacking exploration of the complex, often unconscious, emotional dynamics and the impact of these on social work intervention. I have encountered resistance from staff and students to using theoretically informed approaches to understand individuals, interactions and organisations, such as psychoanalytic or systemic perspectives. In trying to understand why this may be so, factors such as the prevalence of procedural, technical approaches to social work, the dilution of psychoanalytically informed practice and its inability to focus on the external factors are important to consider, as well as explanations of individual and organisational defences. The examination of how social work decisions in complex, tragic cases of child cruelty has identified how they appear to overlook or turn a 'blind eye' to often obvious intelligence that parents/carers were inflicting abuse on children in their care (Cooper and Lousada, 2005; Rustin, 2005).

Bower (2005) refers to the emotional impact of practice that can lead to social workers feeling fragmented and despairing, resulting in them behaving untypically and being either indulgent or punitive, for example. Menzies-Lyth's study (1988) of a teaching

hospital demonstrates the powerful impact organisational defences can have on professional practice, resulting in the depersonalisation of patients, routinisation of tasks and delegation of responsibility, so that nurses are protected against the emotional pain of dealing with sick and dying people. The same comparisons can be made with social work where less time is spent with service users as preoccupation with procedures and bureaucracy has occurred. Social work practice has become characterised by market, cost/benefit principles to the detriment of relationships (Froggett, 2002). Neo-liberalism has resulted in the fragmentation of organisations with services more likely to be commissioned out leading to a demise in long-term professional relationships. Dearnley (2002) contends that reduced contact with service users dulls workers' capacities to consider the unconscious dynamics involved, including those affecting their own behaviour. I have experienced such organisational defences in my work in various local authorities where managerialist policies and approaches have favoured performativity and processes rather than promoting relationship-based casework and the quality of interventions. For instance, as a manager, I was horrified that one performance measure we had to report on was that 100% of assessments had been completed on time, with no attention paid to the quality of the assessments.

Rationale

I wanted to undertake research that focused on how social workers are equipped to respond to the emotional context of social work practice and contain people in difficult situations and what may prevent them from doing this. My research question has not been addressed by an existing body of research and therefore provides valuable insight into what social workers actually 'do' in their practice and how they engage with children's emotions. In undertaking this research my hope is that I will identify what

factors promote positive engagement with children's emotional lives and what may prohibit successful engagement. In identifying these factors I hope that the findings from this research will be of value to social work practice and make a contribution to children's needs being better identified, understood and responded to. In order to answer the research question of how statutory child and family social workers engage with and attend to children's emotional lives, I undertook to observe a team of Child in Need social workers as they met with children, largely in their homes. Having observed the lived experience of these children and social workers in natural settings I interviewed the social workers about the observed interaction and their broader practice. I also obtained the case record written by the social worker pertaining to the observed visit. All of these data sources were then analysed, broadly using a psycho-social approach which is outlined in chapter three.

21st Century child and family social work in England – the contemporary context

In England in 2017, 389,430 children were classed as children in need, 51,080 children were the subject of child protection plans, having been identified and assessed as being at risk of significant harm, whilst 72,000 were in care (DfE, 2017). The Care Crisis Review (2018) reported that care order applications reached record levels in 2017 with the number of children looked after in England and Wales reaching its highest level since 1989. The review conveys the sense of crisis felt by families and the frustration of professionals working in an overwhelmed, under-resourced sector where help is often unforthcoming. It highlights the impact of inadequate resources and poverty on families and the culture of fear, blame and shame permeating the system, resulting in a risk-averse and procedural environment (Care Crisis Review, 2018, p4). In 2017, there were

28,500 full time equivalent children and family social workers in England, with 5340 agency social workers in local authority children's services. Just over half were reported to be in case holder roles and the turnover rate was fifteen per cent (DfE, 2018a).

This is against a backdrop of political and economic austerity since 2010 which has resulted in local government budgets diminish by almost fifty per cent in real terms between 2010-11 and 2017-18 (The Independent, 7 March, 2018). Despite social care funding being protected, such drastic budget cuts have impacted on resources, increasing workloads of social workers. Hussein (2018) identifies the impact of stress on human service work and the short timescales that social workers remain in the profession due to 'burn-out', lack of support and resources and the poor morale linked to the profile of social work in the media and general public.

Theoretical framework – A psycho-social perspective

Social work is complex, emotionally distressing and challenging, requiring effective relational capacity and a strong sense of self. My choice of a framework is informed by my experience in practice and the importance of drawing on an understanding of relationships in terms of what Froggett (2002, p. 4) articulates as "the connections between states of mind, interpersonal relations and the cultural and political world". Engaging with children and families at times when they are experiencing distress, difficulties or trauma requires being able to understand the impact of such issues on child and family development, an understanding of internal working models of individuals and their psychological and emotional capacities, plus wider considerations of family systems and structural, organisational and political dimensions. Social work has often struggled to gain professional status and articulate its theoretical foundations,

frequently criticised for borrowing from other disciplines. Underpinned by psychodynamic theory, the casework model (Hollis, 1972), predominant in social work from the 1950's-1970's, was criticised as being too pathologising and holding individuals as responsible for their behaviour. As radical and feminist critiques took hold (Bailey and Brake, 1975) the casework model declined and task-centred approaches became popular. The rise of managerialism replaced relationship-based ways of working with more transactional models where social workers were seen as care managers, co-ordinating packages of care. More recently, a return to relationship-based approaches has been promulgated (Munro, 2011; Ruch, Turney and Ward, 2018) and a resurgence of systemic approaches to social work, heralded by the 'Reclaiming Social Work' model in Hackney (Cross, Hubbard and Munro, 2010). Featherstone et al. (2014) highlighted the need for a turn to a social model of child protection that focuses on strengths and hope and considers the structural dimensions of family difficulties.

The theoretical framework of this study is psycho-social, drawing on psychoanalytic ideas and concepts but also taking account of the social environment in which families live and the impact of structural, political and economic factors.

[The children and young people in this study](#)

This research is about children's emotional lives and how they can be understood and engaged with by social workers. As such, I want to convey something about the children, their lives and families in this study, providing a sense of the experiences, challenges, and transitions that they faced. The eight observations I undertook involved fourteen children, in eight families, aged between one and thirteen years old. They were all white British, largely due to the research being undertaken in a county town in England where

95% of the population defined as white British in the 2011 census. Of the families observed, seven were subject to child protection plans under the category of emotional abuse or due to substance misuse or domestic violence. The remaining children were subject to a child in need plan. All names have been changed (See page 66 for a research index table that sets out each family/observation).

Whilst there were multiple differences for all these children, of consistent significance was their common experience of fragmented, discordant family relationships, and transient and changeable living conditions. Issues of separation, loss, abuse, trauma or neglect, parental substance misuse, violence or mental illness compounded these. For all children, life presented issues of uncertainty, insecurity or discontinuity. Within this context it would be reasonable to anticipate that these children were experiencing a range of emotions such as anger, fear, confusion, grief and possibly relief and gratitude.

The social workers

This research took place in a local authority children's service, Child in Need team. The social workers had caseloads of children who had been assessed as being a 'child in need' or subject to a 'child protection plan'. I observed seven social workers in their interactions with children, mainly at home but once in a school and once in the office. One social worker was observed twice. I also went out with another social worker but as the child was not at home I did not observe him engaging with a child. Levels of experience ranged from being newly to seven years' qualified, with all but one having three years' or less post-qualifying experience. Six were women and one was a man and most were white British, two were of dual heritage. In order to protect the identities of the social workers they have been given pseudonyms and I have chosen not to give more

specific detail to each participant as the small-scale nature of the study has the potential to identify participants.

Structure of thesis

Chapter two sets the context for the research in relation to relevant academic literature and research that has informed this study, identified gaps and the need for the chosen study. It focuses on relevant theoretical perspectives in relation to social work practice with children and studies exploring social work practice with children, including those that have observed practice with children.

Chapter three explicates the theoretical assumptions underpinning the research and sets out the research questions as well as the study's design and chosen methods. It details the research process and considers ethical issues.

Chapter four presents the first of two case studies, concerning the observations of a social worker, Jenny, drawing on the interview with her and her written case records of the two observed visits.

Chapter five presents the second case study, relating to a social worker, called Alana.

Chapter six, discusses findings in relation to the systemic, family and individual dimensions of practice drawing on data from all participants.

Chapter seven provides a discussion of the research study's key themes.

Chapter eight presents concluding thoughts, implications for practice and a discussion of the study's limitations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature in relation to this study of how social workers engage with children's emotions, focusing on other research that has explored similar or related issues. In presenting and synthesising this literature, I demonstrate the limited body of empirical research that explicitly observes social work practice with children. The chapter begins by considering what is meant by emotions in order to provide a framework for exploring social workers' engagement with this dimension of children's lives.

In undertaking the literature review various databases across a range of disciplines were utilised to identify appropriate and relevant research studies, reports and academic publications, including the UK Data Service and Social Care Online. I used multiple search terms including emotions, communication, children and young people, in the hope of accessing a knowledge base that focused on social work practice with children, either through research or developing theoretical understandings of practice. More details about this approach are contained in the methodology chapter. I have used a contextual methodology to frame the literature review, setting the study within the context of what has been undertaken previously and presented it based on themes that were identified in the course of carrying out the review (Lichtman, 2017).

Definitions and clarification of terms and concepts

When thinking about emotions, a variety of terms are used interchangeably, including feelings, affect, and mood, as well as emotions. There is an absence of universal agreement on the use of such terms in relation to describing what may be the same

phenomena (Keinemans, 2015). The study of emotions falls largely within the theoretical provinces of neuroscience, psychology, sociology and psychoanalysis, however, the complexity of such understanding is perhaps best approached from multiple perspectives (Holland, 2007). Trevithick (2014, p.4), in a theoretically-based paper summarising the contribution of research from neuroscience, describes emotions as ‘involving internal sensations, evident in terms of different bodily responses’. Affect, by contrast, conveys ‘the way an internal emotional state is externally revealed’ (Siegel, 2012, p389, cited in Trevithick, 2014, p.7) and includes how feelings are communicated non-verbally. Feelings are described as an emotional state or reaction, being touched or moved, to denote an awareness of a sensation (Trevithick, 2014). Hoggett (2014, p.57), writing from the perspective of psychotherapy and social policy, distinguishes between an emotion such as jealousy, typically having a fixed object and ‘therefore more anchored in language and symbolic thought’, and affect, such as anxiety, being more ‘unformed, visceral, and fluid, shifting from one object to another. For the purpose of this study, when referring to children’s emotional lives, the concepts of emotion, feelings and affect will all be included.

Edwards (1997, p. 236) points to the fact that emotions predate language:

The emotions are often defined in contrast to rational thought. They are conceived to be natural bodily experiences and expressions, older than language, irrational and subjective, unconscious rather than deliberate, genuine rather than artificial, feelings rather than thoughts.

Emotion is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as ‘a strong feeling deriving from one’s circumstances, mood or relationship with others; instinctive or intuitive feeling as

distinguished from reasoning or knowledge (OED online). Burkitt (1997, cited in Holland, 2007, p. 198), from a sociological perspective, describes emotions as:

...multi-dimensional and cannot be reduced to biology, relations, or discourse alone, but belong to all these dimensions as they are constituted in ongoing relational practices. As such... they cannot be understood as 'things' but are complexes composed of different dimensions of embodied, interdependent human existence.

There is wide ranging opinion about how many emotions exist. Within the social work literature, Howe (2008) identifies fear, shame, disgust, embarrassment, terror, jealousy, anger, loss, rejection, abandonment, surprise, love, joy and happiness. Wetherell (2012, p.24) also refers to Birkett (1997) who elucidates emotions as not an object inside the self but as in relation to others as a response to a situation, 'automatically distributed... across the psycho-social field'. Through sociological research into the emotion management of American flight attendants, Hochschild (2012), identifies the problem with a straightforward identification of emotions in that they are context dependent and therefore best understood in relation to the social context. Neuroscientist, Damasio (2000), states that the extent to which secondary or social emotions, such as embarrassment, guilt, jealousy and pride, are developed, encouraged, prohibited or suppressed is determined by experience. From his psychological research into the relationship between emotions and facial expressions, Ekman, (1999) describes different conventions within cultures in which indications as to which emotions can be expressed, in what situations and to whom, are present.

Models of emotion

Hochschild (2012) outlines two models of emotions that emerged in the twentieth century; the first from the work of Darwin and early Freud – an organismic model which

defines emotion largely as a biological process with an emphasis on instinct and energy, fixed across people. The second model, drawing from the work of Dewey, C. Wright Mills and Goffman, is an interactional model where emotion involves a biological dimension but the concern relates to the meaning that psychological processes take on. Hochschild points to the fact that some emotions are more obvious whilst others can be very subtle and more difficult to notice. Trevithick refers to the work of Siegel (2012) who postulates that non-verbal behaviours are fundamental to emotional messages such as facial expression, tone of voice, eye gaze, bodily motion and the temporality and intensity of response. As people's emotional vocabulary, particularly children's, might be limited, they may struggle to identify or describe their feelings. Trevithick contends that using all senses to check out what different emotional signals are being conveyed is essential to avoid misunderstanding. She suggests that encounters should be meaningful so that people feel less defended, preferably in family homes. She also affirms the importance of attunement which she describes as the 'ability to look beyond an individual's external behaviour and to feel another person's emotion, their inner world of sensations' (Trevithick, 2014, p.8).

Hochschild (2012) developed the term emotional labour to describe how emotions are managed and enacted by people during professional interpersonal encounters as part of their work. In order to manage dissonance between their felt and expressed emotion they engage in a process of affect regulation. In a paper theorising relationship-based practice, Turney (2012) discusses this in relation to social workers' relationships with children, young people and parents where encounters may involve and evoke complex emotions which arouse emotions and challenge their capacity to self-regulate. Following a two-year research study exploring everyday communications between social workers

and children and parents, Winter et al., (2018) applied Hochschild's emotional labour analytic framework and identified that social workers used a range of techniques to manage their feelings and to mitigate against the type of dissonance Hochschild conceptualises, including humour, self-care and distraction.

The legislative and policy context

The legislative and policy framework relating to children in need and child protection within England is largely set out in the Children Act (1989) which:

requires local authorities to give due regard to a child's wishes when determining what services to provide under section 17 and before making decisions about action to be taken to protect individual children under section 47. [It] requires social workers to consider the wishes and feelings of children looked after before making decisions which affect them (section 22).

The Children Act (2004) extended this to include children in need (section 53). The *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (2000) states that professionals should 'see, observe, engage and talk to' children and sets out that assessment must be:

Child centred, meaning "that the child is seen and kept in focus throughout the assessment and that account is always taken of the child's perspective. The significance of seeing and observing the child throughout any assessment cannot be overstated. The importance, therefore, of undertaking direct work with children during assessment is emphasised, including developing multiple, age, gender and culturally appropriate methods for ascertaining their wishes and feelings, and understanding the meaning of their experiences to them (DH, 2000, p. 10).

The Assessment Framework pyramid includes the dimension of the child's developmental needs which comprises their physical and mental health and their

emotional and behavioural development amongst other factors. The *Working Together* Guidance (2018b) states that:

Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child; listen to what they say; take their views seriously; and work with them and their families collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs. Special provision should be put in place to support dialogue with children who have communication difficulties... (DfE, 2018b, p. 11).

Whilst social work covers a range of roles, tasks and settings, even within child and family social work, the context of the work of the social workers I observed was child in need and child protection, therefore I have only made reference to the legal framework relating to this area of practice.

The contribution of psychoanalysis

A psycho-social model of social work, influenced by psychoanalytic theory and developed in the 1960's was borne out of ideas that attitudes and behaviours are affected by early life experiences which are often unconscious and not understood by individuals. Feelings evoked in professional relationships can be associated with earlier unconscious experiences which may be unconnected as explicated by Freud's concepts of transference, where significant features of earlier relationships are thought to be transferred onto a worker (Bower, 2017) and counter-transference, which relate to a worker's reaction to the transference. Kleinian concepts of defence mechanisms develop as a way of managing anxiety where parts of the self are split-off and projected into others (splitting and projection) and used, unconsciously, as strategies to dispose of unwanted anxiety-provoking aspects of individuals' experience (Ruch, 2018). These ideas have helped my practice when I have struggled to make sense of situations and dynamics between families or between myself and individuals. Bion's development of

the concept of containment provides a framework to enable thinking about the affective experiences. Originating in the mother's relationship with the baby where it projects unbearable feelings into the mother who, in turn, processes these and returns them to the infant in a more digestible form, the baby can then internalise the mother's capacity for containment (Bower, 2017). This principle has resonance in social work both because social workers act as containers for children and families with whom they work but in order to do this effectively, they need the containment of their supervisors, usually through the mechanism of supervision. Without this, their capacity to be containing will be restricted.

I have found that providing containment through supervision enables social workers to develop the confidence to share their anxieties about the work, leading to more open discussions about families, illuminating mine and their understanding. Psychoanalytic literature focuses on the processes that professionals engage in as a defence against the anxiety of the work and children's experiences of abuse and neglect. Many service users have experienced difficult relationships with parental figures and find it difficult to accept help, often showing hostility or anger to defend against the unconscious expectation of eventual rejection or attack from the worker, based on previous experience. I have also found attending to transference is helpful, as Mattinson (1975, p.35) outlines:

The type of feeling and the way in which it distorts the reaction in the present – that a particular feeling is inappropriately enacted, or cannot be held and is projected into the worker or some other person.

Social workers also need to be able to recognise that they hold their own transference templates, and are affected by the unconscious ways in which individuals transfer their

feelings onto them (Ruch, 2018). Given that such patterns develop unconsciously, she contends that social workers are unlikely to be aware of them whilst they occur but may be helped to make them visible subsequently through engaging in reflection and supervision. Distinction is made between personal and diagnostic counter-transference (Casement, 1985; Ruch, 2018), the former consisting of our own personal history and current emotional experience, inappropriately activated, drawing us into reactive or avoidant patterns and the latter, which can be aroused in the worker by individuals' projections (Preston-Shoot and Agass, 1995). In order to recognise and use transference and counter-transference dynamics, practitioners need to be self-aware and develop reflective skills.

The role of supervision is helpful in enabling social workers to reflect on how families make them feel and what this tells them about individuals can be valuable information. However, being aware of any unresolved feelings of one's own that might distort understandings is also important. Projective identification occurs when social workers experience unfamiliar intense emotional states, that on reflection, seem to be a disowned aspect of the service user's experience. In such an interaction, a person's feelings are located in the practitioner who finds him/herself 'unwittingly and uncharacteristically feeling confusing or unsettling emotions for no discernible reason' (Trevithick, 2011, p. 404). The relevance of this to supervision is expressed in Mattinson's work where she discusses how social workers sometimes communicate or respond uncharacteristically in supervision, mirroring features of the relationships of themselves and service users. She uses the term reflection to distinguish from transference, 'what is carried over from the immediate past with the client into the adjacent situation of supervision' (Mattinson, 1975, p. 44).

Much of my experience as a supervisor and educator has demonstrated that for social workers' engagement with the emotional content of families' lives to be consistent, they need to be able to pause, think and reflect in safe, containing settings. In theorising work with neglected children, Turney and Tanner (2001) advocate social workers being permitted and encouraged to think about and discuss the powerful responses they have to the work, including disgust, hopelessness and frustration, which, if unprocessed, can lead to reactive practice driven by undigested emotional states. Good supervision can help the meaning of emotional responses to be examined and 'habitualised and unthinking and potentially oppressive responses' challenged (Turney and Tanner, 2001, p. 201).

Systemic influences

The contribution of systemic theory to social work is significant and includes concepts and principles such as the life-cycle and developmental concepts; the importance of social and political contexts (social graces) including gender, race, culture, class and sexuality; sequences as patterns across time and behaviour; meaning and emotion; patterns of communication and relationship; adopting a stance of curiosity and neutrality; reflexivity and reflective practice and the impact of the worker on the system, as well as the complex interaction of multiple contexts on people's individual and relationship experiences (Flaskas, 2007, p.135-136). Another important contribution of systemic theory is the concept of 'not knowing' (Ruch, 2018) where the practitioner's capacity to tolerate uncertainty and sit with pain related to the dysfunction that is being experienced is important. The idea of multiple perspectives is also integral to systemic

ways of working in which the practitioner considers all possible views and ideas inclusively adopting a both/and position rather than a binary, right or wrong position.

Mandin (2007) discusses how systemic theory can help social workers' practice with families, including how the notion of circular understanding, whereby the elements of a system are seen to interact, influence and are influenced by each other, can be useful to consider the patterns and dynamics within families. Circular questioning can elicit new information about family members' different perceptions of events and the meanings they attach to these. Questions might focus on the temporality, location and relationships in which behavioural sequences occur. A systemic approach actively intervenes in systems where a non-blaming and neutral position that respects difference is adopted.

Systemic thinking has also developed the 'Domains Model' where distinction is drawn between the different aspects of the role a professional may be operating in (Lang et al., 1990). Firstly, in the 'domain of production' action takes place within a legal framework according to agreed ideas of what is right and wrong. There exists one 'universe' of truth which is absolute, blame can be apportioned and curiosity belongs only to the investigator, looking for causes and attributing blame where required. By contrast, the 'domain of explanation' has unlimited constructions, a 'multiverse' of perspectives (Mendez et al., 1988) can be explored; truth is relative, blame suspended and curiosity is about irreverence. The aim of the Domains Model is to create reflexivity with respect to which domain is being inhabited at any one time, to create a pause for reflexivity and to create agility and eloquence in the movement between domains.

The 'Reclaiming Social Work' (RSW) model, where systemic social work practice was implemented in five local authorities was evaluated by Bostock et al (2017). It identified several aspects that had a statistically significant impact on practice, including an association with greater worker skill in systemically trained practitioners, assessed using a social work skills coding framework. Additionally, levels of direct practice skill observed within the RSW group was higher than that in any group studied from over 500 recordings across seven local authorities using this framework. The model of systemic case discussion was strongly associated with the relationship to the quality of practice with families and social workers reported positive experience of the model. This mixed-methods study drew on observations of practice, interviews with families and practitioners, staff surveys and computerised records.

The complexities of communication

Research has identified both the depth and complexity involved in listening to children, including professionals' anxiety that disclosure of experience or information might lead to needing to take action as a result (Pinkney, 2011; McLeod, 2005). The term 'reluctant listeners' was used to describe the dynamic present in such situations (Pinkney, 2011). Analysing interviews and conversations with welfare professionals, the ways that social workers manage the distress involved in the work were identified and revealed how they developed ways of working and talking with and about children, consciously or unconsciously. Actions, such as avoiding difficult conversations by talking in code, serve to minimise the workers' anxieties, psychically defending them from the emotional demands of the work.

Pithouse's (1996) ethnographic research with social workers identified how social work practice is informed not just by formal skills, methods and values but also professional wisdom and experience and the careful management of social workers' personal and emotional investment in welfare relationships. He argues this relationship is socially constructed by practitioners in the context of organisational and personal imperatives. This research consisted of structured interviews and participant observation of two childcare teams including team meetings, colleague interaction, supervision and social events. He outlines how, in the context of unexpected urgent referrals, social workers needed to be cool and proportionate in their response and manage their emotions. He describes the adaptive mechanisms that social workers engaged in for managing the demands made upon their physical and emotional well-being. He suggests that the workers managed their relationships with service users that balanced an affective and official identity, both caring but managing the relationship, creating a sense of distance between them. Participants mostly claimed to avoid deeply searching encounters that might unearth more than they had time to resolve believing that they had 'neither the time nor the resources to do more than 'patch up' the fractures of family life' (Pithouse, 1996, p. 92). This resonates with my observations.

Describing how the emotional impact of the work is carefully managed so as to allow the worker some detachment in order to think and act clearly, he claims that if demonstrable emotion was an unrestrained dimension of practice, it would both jeopardise objectivity and 'drain the moral capacity' of the social worker, rendering them incapable. Thus, by gathering a sense of normative distance, practitioners gain emotional distance and social control. He outlined how the workers presented themselves to families using well-rehearsed gestures, tone of voice, posture and

demeanour that impressed a concerned yet official nature of the relationship. He concluded that for the social workers:

The skilful production of social and emotional distance, ignored or abjured in the official knowledge base, is not a cynical or uncaring manoeuvre but a common sense imperative that allows them to return to the office each day, and deal however, imperfectly, with the next case of child abuse, neglect or family breakdown (Pithouse, 1996, p. 101).

Pinkney (2011) claims professional emotional management involves both distance and control whereby strategies of avoiding difficult conversations are adopted and distance created by the development of bureaucratic, defensive working practices. These reduce practitioners' stress by directing their energies into the completion of tasks. She also identifies how 'professionalism' can be used as a convenient cover whereby workers assume rigid approaches to their role or use autonomy in ways that result in defensive practices. Pinkney identified a specific avoidance strategy by professionals of talking in code as a way of managing the pain of talking openly and honestly with children. Similar findings were reached by Pollak & Levy (1989) who identified how emotional reactions such as guilt, shame, anger, fear and sympathy might adversely impact the effective and timely reporting in child protection and a reluctance to involve other professionals where neglect or abuse was suspected. As such emotions are inevitable in working with child abuse and neglect and awareness of these types of defensive issues can support more effective methods of intervention.

Relationship-based practice and use of self

It is often said that social workers' biggest asset or tool is themselves with Turney (2012) emphasising the relationships' contribution to emotional and psychological

understanding and well-being. Cooper (2018, p.19) describes relationship-based and effective therapeutic social work as having:

A capacity for attunement to our emotional experience of ourselves in relation to others; attunement to the flow of emotional transactions between ourselves and our service users and colleagues, which are occurring constantly, whether we choose to recognise them or not.

He suggests that it is important social workers understand how to recognise, monitor and make sense of these emotional dynamics and processes. My experience in practice aligns with this, where attention to emotional dynamics deepens and develops practice and protects against the potentially psychologically damaging impact of the work. Supporting social workers to identify their emotional responses to encounters with service users as material or data and work with this can be insightful and helpful. Ruch (2018, p. 48) describes different approaches or stances that might need to be taken in different scenarios such as 'soft receptivity' to 'firm resistance' whilst O'Sullivan (2018, p. 9) writes of the need for "to confront the powerful and primitive emotional states that underpin helping relationships, particularly with families in most need".

Lemma's (2010) qualitative study exploring the role of the key-working relationship with 'hard to reach' young people, through interviews with young people and key-workers, identified the importance of therapeutic interventions as alternatives to psychotherapy. Therapy is often too challenging, partly because of difficulty in establishing trust. She found that helpful features of the key-working relationship were a steady unfolding of an attachment through 'playful and humorous exchangesand the flexible availability and provision of opportunities for 'therapeutic conversations' (Lemma, 2010, p. 413). This flexible, day-to-day therapy was found to more likely reduce inhibitions and

resistance to therapeutic processes so that mentalising conversations could occur in a way that diminished anxiety and shame about exposure and intimacy. This type of approach concurs with Ferguson's (2009) ideas about how it can often be easier to talk whilst on the move, or in cars, where direct eye contact is reduced. Lemma contends that the rehabilitative function of key-working relationships removes barriers impeding emotional and cognitive development. Initially, the provision of practical help and concrete examples of support assist young people to accept less tangible emotional support. Within this relationship, the young person identifies the key-worker as an attachment figure which serves, both as a basis for self-exploration but also as someone who responds differently to their parental attachment figures, in so doing, helping to modify representations of themselves and others. The young person is able to experience the key-worker as a container that emotionally digests difficult experiences or states of mind on their behalf. As a trusting relationship develops, the key-worker is more able to challenge the young person, introducing new perspectives and developing the capacity for reflection, leading to self-containment rather than acting out of their difficult feelings.

Drawing on interview data with social workers and young people, McLeod (2007) reasons that hearing and accepting young people's views also requires accommodating challenge to authority. She suggests that effective listening to young people requires a sound understanding of child development as well as a capacity to construct supportive relationships. She found that whilst the social workers in her study thought they were listening, the young people disagreed and did not feel heard. She describes a number of strategies used by young people in her interviews which mirror processes social workers experience in trying to engage young people. These included passive resistance where

monosyllabic responses led to her resorting to closed and leading questions. Another strategy involved changing the subject where young people took back control by avoiding answering direct questions, seeking to increase their power base. McLeod (2007) concludes that only by finding out a young person's agenda rather than imposing their own, can professionals truly hear young peoples' voices. This takes time and requires sustained relationships, in line with traditional casework models, which practitioners may not have time for when focused on bureaucratic and performative dimensions of practice. She postulates that a preparedness for resistance and challenge is required, alongside flexibility to be open and a confidence to enable assumptions to be challenged.

Killen's research (1996) in four Norwegian studies involving child protection professionals, found they protected themselves from the pain and grief expressed by children in different ways, including actively not hearing and seeing children's pain. Through interviews with and observations of the workers plus analysis of their case records, she concluded that self-protection was more important than protecting children and that children could detect what the adult world did not want to know or could not cope with. This, and other research (Pinkney, 2011; McLeod, 2005) has demonstrated that social workers engage in distancing practice in order to manage their emotions.

Bell (2002) explored the views of children and young people on their experience of child protection investigations. She identified that many were able to promote their rights and best interests through professional relationships. She suggests that working practices that embody supportive and friendly relations are more likely to meaningfully

engage children in child protection processes as opposed to more dominant/submissive dynamics. Bell contends that professionals who are physically and emotionally available are more likely to provide these types of relationships. Drawing on the work of Heard and Lake (1997) which postulates two main patterns of relating as being supportive/companionable and dominant/submissive, Bell suggests that some agency structures model more dominant/submissive patterns, which have the effect of disabling both practitioners and children where practitioners' efforts to maintain long-term relationships with children are not supported. Bell (2002) found that the children valued trust, availability, reliability and concern in their social worker where being treated with respect, listened to and taken seriously were important. They described appreciating qualities such as kindness, non-judgmentalism, humour and friendliness. Consistent with Lemma's research, children valued emotional support combined with practical help. Conversely, children cited as unhelpful, being patronised, controlled and questioned in intrusive, threatening ways. Discontinuity, as a result of change of worker or case closure, was experienced as unhelpful with children feeling forgotten, confused and bereft.

Bell's (2002) research identified the importance of relationships which positively reframe their experiences and provide good alternative parenting, similar to Lemma, where social workers embody aspects of good parenting such as warmth but not others such as love or constancy. As secondary attachment figures, the emotional availability of social workers is vital if parents are not. This enables children to be in touch with and express their feelings. Bell identified that social workers occupied different roles in trusting relationships such as counselling and offering practical help and guidance and that regular contact and keeping appointments enabled children to feel held. In cases

where these relationships were present, this enabled children to feel more able and safe to participate in adult-designed safeguarding structures due to feeling listened to, heard, treated with respect and care rather than as objects in procedural practices. Importantly, Bell testifies to the importance of social workers as not replicating the dominant/submissive dynamic many abused children experience from their caregivers.

She concludes that:

Social workers, then, need to convince children that they understand them, are reliable and can provide consistent and supportive relationships, in order to do this, they, too need an environment which reflects an SC [supportive/companionable] way of relating and provides them with the structures, resources and personal support they need (Bell, 2002, p. 9).

Further research on the experience of young people's participation in child protection processes (Cossar et al, 2014) confirms the importance attached by young people to the relationship and working together with social workers to create positive change in families. There was also evidence of young people having minimal relationships with social workers with seven out of eleven children under twelve not seeing their social workers alone and feeling interrogated. The research found that a trusting relationship has the potential to promote confidence and feelings of safety and self-efficacy. In the absence of a trusting relationship children felt unable to explore and express their feelings and views or believed their opinions impacted decision-making. The conclusions from this study were that social workers need to be skilled in communicating with children and pay attention to issues of power. The relationship needs to be considered as central to gauging the needs of the child as well as a means of intervening, including

discussion about the sense made by the child of their family situation and also the social work intervention itself.

Communication and engagement with children

To engage meaningfully with children and develop an understanding of their emotional lives, social workers need to be able to draw on a range of communication methods that recognise the complexity and diversity this requires. Additional to being able to communicate across the age range, issues of language, disability, and the specific needs, experiences and circumstances of children need to be taken into account. A multitude of methods and techniques such as touch, signing, play, writing, body language, drawing, activities, stories and symbols might be necessary (Morrison, 2016). Further complexity comes through issues such as the unconscious, denied or private dimensions of communication and the influence of individual, interpersonal, social, structural and cultural factors. A systematic review on the teaching, learning and assessment of communication with children and young people in social work education (Luckock et al, 2006) did not identify any studies where communication skills were specifically evaluated as an aspect of practice. Given that communication is the most likely mechanism by which a child's emotions are identified and understood, the absence of a research base of this specific nature seems to be a significant omission from the social work knowledge base. There is some evidence of social workers lacking confidence in their ability to engage directly with children with an absence of skill identified, associated with communication skill development being insufficiently addressed in qualifying and post-qualifying social work education (Luckock et al. 2006; Forrester et al., 2008; Handly and Doyle 2014; Narey, 2014; Lefevre, 2015a/b; 2018).

Following the review by Luckock et al. (2006), Lefevre, Tanner and Luckock (2008) proposed a framework for promoting effective communication with children consisting of three domains: knowing, being and doing. They suggest that multiple factors facilitate or hinder effective communication including 'personal attributes, capacities and competences both of child and social worker and interpersonal dynamics. Within the 'doing' domain, skills include listening, interviewing, establishing trust and working at the child's pace. These should be underpinned by knowledge, values and emotional and personal capacities so that social workers can overcome contextual barriers to communication – the 'knowing' and 'being' dimensions. 'Knowing' includes child development, how the social work role may affect mutual communication and the impact of trauma, for instance, on children. 'Being' comprises inclusive practice, attending to rights and needs, being child-centred and core social work values such as respect. It also involves working with depth processes, transference and counter-transference, developing relationships at a person-to-person level, with humanity, warmth, friendliness and concern and person-centred qualities such as empathy and openness (Lefevre et al., 2008, p.168). They conclude that the domains are not isolated and influence the other so that knowledge impacts on skills and vice versa.

Drawing on his experience of teaching social work students, Ayling (2012) discusses the use of play-based methods of teaching and learning as a way of supporting the development of qualifying social work students' communication skills with children. He contends that social work education should support students' skill development in using play-based methods to enhance understanding of children's developmental needs such as the ways in which young children require concrete experience and visual symbols to

assist their understanding and expression. Qualifying education should also equip them with tools to inform and assist their intervention.

Research on the impact of IT systems on social work is substantial (Parton 2008; Broadhurst et al. 2009), confirming that rather than reducing the burden and enabling social workers to spend more time with children and families, the opposite is true. As such, practitioners may be more adept in computer skills rather than relational skills with Gupta and Blewett (2007) finding that some social workers indicated that the time spent inputting data onto computer systems restricted their ability to engage with children. Winter (2009) highlighted that engaging with the bureaucratic dimensions of the work can act as a mechanism to avoid emotionally challenging dimensions of practice including direct work with children. Social workers reduce the opportunities of being exposed to emotion in order to manage psychological risk to themselves. Furthermore, it is contended that social workers' confidence diminishes the less face-to-face work they undertake (Munro 2011), with social workers engaging less with families, increasingly commissioning other agencies to engage in direct work (Parton, 2008).

Studies of social work practice with children

Whilst some studies have explored social work practice and what social workers do (Ferguson 2009; 2016a; Forrester et al. 2008; Hall and Slembrouk 2009), more predominant is literature that focuses on *how* social workers should practice rather than research looking at *what* essentially happens in practice. Studies have sought children's views about their experiences of social work and what children want from a social

worker (Morgan, 2006; and de Winter and Noom, 2003) and social workers reflecting on their practice (Horwath, 2011; Ruch, 2012, 2014).

Ethnographic or practice-near research that draws on data from social workers engaging in practice with children is scant, although there has been an emergence of this in recent years, led by the work of Ferguson (2009, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, and 2018). His research, largely consisting of observations of social workers carrying out home visits, focused on the emotions and challenges in accessing children whilst in the family home. Attempting to redress the fact that the 'doing' of the work is largely ignored in research, he suggests that a central issue with child protection practice is that social workers do not meaningfully engage with children. His research provides innovative ways of understanding social work as forms of 'embodied movement' (Ferguson, 2009, p. 471 demonstrating how social work practice within the home is determined by both social workers and the families they visit and the impact of the homes in which the visits take place. He contends that family homes become part of the workplace, suggesting that social workers 'make their own practice' by improvising within the home, requiring them to act upon 'knowledge, skill, intuition, ritual and courage' rather than bureaucratic rules, needing to be 'craftspeople and improvisers' (Ferguson, 2018, p68). He discusses the impact of children not being meaningfully engaged with, where there is an 'absence of eye contact, talk, active listening, play, touch and close observation', which 'results in crucial aspects of their experience remaining unknown'.

In observations of twenty-four social workers in eighty-seven practice encounters with families, he found variable practice regarding children being seen alone and engaged with. On average 23% of the visit related to time spent alone with children (Ferguson,

2016), influenced by parental cooperation, the child's willingness or readiness to engage, time, and the workers level of skill, confidence and knowledge. Whilst he found examples of relationships with 'real depth', Ferguson also cites the absence of rapport-building, a tendency to ask direct questions too quickly and different relational styles as impacting on the effectiveness of social work engagement, with observations revealing avoidant practice, suggestive of anxiety, leading to irrational professional behaviour (Ferguson, 2016, p.290-1).

Prior to Ferguson's work, the use of ethnography in social work practice was limited, with a few notable exceptions (Mattinson and Sinclair, 1979; De Montigny, 1995). Mattinson and Sinclair (1979) undertook ethnographic research amongst couples in a Social Services Department working individually and jointly with social workers on cases with families experiencing multiple problems. They studied the interaction of the families, workers and other professionals and the underlying, interactive processes operating between them as participant observers in the office. They detailed the strategies that couples adopted in their relationships in which feelings of helplessness and mistrust abounded, the self-destructive actions that often developed and how professionals became entangled in these dramas. This study analysed in detail what the social workers did when with families - a practice that until recently, has been noticeably absent in the literature.

Whincup (2017, p. 974) explored what social workers and children do when together through interviews with eight children and twenty-five social workers. She identified a typology of direct work with children comprising of three broad areas: Direct work to build and sustain the relationship between child and professional, laying the foundation

for assessment and intervention; direct work as part of a process of assessment; and direct work as intervention. Her research identified that social workers engage in meaningful direct work, often despite many other commitments and tasks. She found that some professionals underestimated the value of direct work and suggests that if they are not offered opportunities to engage in direct work there is the risk that such work may go unnoticed or unrecognised.

Winter et al (2017, 2018) undertook a two year study, the Talking and Listening to Children project (TLC), exploring how social workers communicated with children in their everyday practice by observing them in their workplace during visits to children. They found that social workers employed numerous skills to connect with children and a range of methods to engage them such as arts and crafts or building with Lego. Social workers had personal preferences in their work with children, such as the age of children or young people they worked with, which impacted on their comfort in engaging with specific age groups. The research, whilst not creating a list of definitive factors to facilitate communication, concluded that all encounters were unique to the children and practitioners involved and affected by temporality, space and wider social and political contexts. Broadhurst and Mason (2014)'s ethnographic research demonstrates how social workers can use micro-communication such as facial expressions, eye contact, touch and body language to develop trust and more effectively engage children.

Social workers' emotions

The emotional impact of practice on social workers and other professionals are subjects of wide concern (Maslach and Leiter, 2008; Shoesmith, 2016). Whilst I aimed to explore how social workers met the emotional needs of children, it is not possible to

disentangle social worker's own emotions from the dyadic relationship with children and doing so leads to dangerous practice, as written about with reference to Victoria Climbié (Cooper and Lousada, 2005; Rustin, 2005; and Ferguson, 2005). Ingram (2012) identifies how emotionally intelligent practitioners are better equipped and able to develop and maintain the affective relationships central to social work intervention by identifying and responding to the feelings arising from service user's presenting issues, be they anger, sadness and uncertainty stemming from experiences such as loss and separation. He maintains that the role of emotions affects the relationship both in terms of social workers needing to engage with the emotional context of families and acknowledging the impact of this on themselves and their practice.

Bower (2003, p.144) writes of the importance of helping social workers cultivate internal structures to enable them to 'function sensitively in the face of emotional bombardment by service users and the lack of institutional support' in managing this. There is evidence that social workers are motivated to enter the profession following tragic life events that they try to process and repair (Rochford, 1991, cited in Bell, 2000). As such, they are likely to hold feelings associated with their own, often early experiences as children, and bring these and current family relationships, into their work, which might sometimes be overwhelming and difficult to contain. In a study with social workers involved in reflecting on their work with children, Ruch (2014, p. 2156) identified multiple factors that impacted on their ability to engage with children which were affected by 'physical, relational and emotional dimensions of practice'. These were broadly the physical environment and the unpredictable and diverse nature of settings they encountered; competing familial, administrative and professional demands, such as remaining child-focused within the context of parental need, balanced against the need to gather

evidence and stay aligned with timescales; and the discomfort involved in communicating with children. She outlines how social workers resort to defensive responses to counter the unforeseen consequences of communicating with children combined with the emotionally distressing content such communications involve. In order to manage the emotions aroused by the work practitioners demonstrated ambivalence about talking in depth to children, exposing what Ruch describes as 'constrained honesty'. The use of bureaucratic requirements of the role were drawn on to legitimise their more proceduralised responses which served to 'defend practitioners against the emotional demands of the work and the discomfort it evoked' (Ruch, 2014, p. 2156).

The impact of the work on social workers

In addition to the multitude of complex and disturbing issues, including child abuse and neglect, often within the context of poverty and deprivation, these are compounded by working with involuntary service users which may lead to verbal or physical threat. Social workers hold prolonged, extreme anxiety about risks to children and have to make decisions in conditions of uncertainty with increasing and overwhelming workloads, diminishing resources and with the fear of failure looming in the background. The potential risk of being publicly vilified and targeted by the media and on social media platforms, which has become common place in the wake of recent social work failings, such as the Peter Connelly tragedy in Haringey, has been articulated by Jones (2014) and Shoemith (2016). These factors contribute to higher levels of stress and burnout amongst social workers than other human service workers (Hussein, 2018; Kim and Stoner, 2008), resulting in less stable and consistent social work teams, increasing the

burden on those who remain. Citing Mantarri-van der Kuip (2014), Hussein (2018) states that the nature of social work with its role of human agency intervening in highly emotional contexts is connected to higher levels of stress.

Research by Hunt et al. (2016) found that child protection workers frequently experienced intimidation and violence from the parents of children they worked with. Workers implement coping strategies to preserve their physical and mental well-being (Stanley and Goddard, 2002, cited in Hunt et al.) including identification with aggressive parents, denial, under-reporting, rationalising and justifying the parent's behaviour. They suggested that these unconscious defensive behaviours protect them from painful, threatening and anxiety-provoking emotions. They contextualise their research by outlining how social workers have to communicate effectively with children who are scared of their abusers who may have caused the children to fear social workers in an effort to ensure they do not disclose things. They found that half of participants worked with hostile and intimidating parents at least weekly, with most threatened by a hostile or intimidating parent in the past six months and eight percent receiving death threats in their careers. Almost half reported that the lack of supervision and support significantly impacted on the quality of their practice and the children they were trying to protect (Hunt et al., 2016).

Organisational defences against anxiety

There is a plethora of literature focusing on anxiety and how this manifests and is defended against within organisations. Pinkney (2011) discussed the different levels that organisations operate on as a way of protecting the organisation and staff from the emotional dimensions of the work, distancing professionals from the people they work

with. She suggests that social work organisations construct socially structured defences including policies and procedures which constrain practice. Staff working in high-risk areas such as child protection are expected to be most accountable because of the greatest levels of anxiety in the work. Such organisational responses often lead to over-controlled, defensive practice in which emotion work is undertaken through heavily proceduralised structures and processes which serve to assist staff in reducing emotion from their work (Rogers, 2001; Whittaker, 2011; Cooper, 2018). Cooper (2005) maintains that policy fails to engage sufficiently with the reality of practice dynamics in which the challenge of addressing the emotional realities of child protection work are ignored. Similar issues have been found in research from allied disciplines with Harvard and Tuckey (2011) seeking to establish how and why nurses regulated their emotions. Their content analysis of interviews identified that nurses manipulated emotional boundaries to create emotional distance or connection with patients and families in order to manage anticipated or felt emotions. They suggest that such manipulation is an adaptive process which protects nurses from experiencing maladaptive emotions and related arousal, therefore acting as a protective measure. Further, it may nurture the development of personal resources such as self-esteem and a sense of competence whereby nurses invest their resources to protect existing ones and to gain new ones. They propose that emotional distancing is associated with cognitive aspects of empathy where nurses only engage with patients cognitively in relation to clinical matters. Emotionally connecting, they posit, requires both cognitive and affective aspects of empathy where the emotional self is also invested. They conclude that:

Emotional regulation in one's work is not simply a reactive process, but a process that can be strategically and proactively engaged and is linked

to employees' intrinsic goals to protect, motivate and develop their professional identity and personal resources. (Harvard and Tuckey, 2011, p. 1518).

The tension between the bureaucratic and the relational

The debate between rational-technical approaches within managerialist agendas and relationship-based approaches has been well articulated in the social work literature (Ruch, 2018, Munro, 2011, Broadhurst et al, 2009), but even within this context, research focusing specifically on children's emotions is scarce. Hoggett (2000) writes of the array of performance monitoring systems that have developed since the 1990s which have provided ways of creating distance between workers and the lived experience of families. The emphasis on the professionalisation, formalisation, and standardisation of social work has resulted in the nature of social work itself changing. Parton (2008) postulates that managerialist requirements have shifted the main purpose of social work away from relational work with families in place of gathering, sharing and monitoring of information. This has resulted in decision-making and responses to children being service rather than needs-led (Bell, 2002). Ferguson (2010) submits that attending to bureaucratic task completion is an escape strategy employed by both social workers and organisations as a defence against the anxiety of undertaking hostile home visits, helping social workers to manage their difficult feelings of working in such environments which might involve child abuse and neglect.

I have previously proposed the view that the centrality of the relationship and emotion is neglected within contemporary social work. Collins (2007) suggests that in contexts where the mind is valued over the heart, the importance of emotion can be diminished where bureaucratic agendas are privileged in which workers' emotional labour takes

place within the context of organisational structures and procedures. These assist participants in 'distorting, manipulating, redirecting and neutralising emotion' rather than emotion work in caring professions being nurtured and sustained to support and maintain connections with service users (Rogers, 2001, cited in Collins, 2007, p.258). The importance of supervision and support which facilitates social workers to divest negative emotion has already been articulated. Social workers need to be able to acknowledge and address troubled and disturbing subjective experiences whilst thinking and making decisions within the context of outside reality and organisational procedures in order to be effective. However, their states of mind and the quality of their practice and attention given to children is implicitly associated with the quality of support and care available from supervision and colleagues (Ferguson 2011, p. 205).

The type of defences that professionals engage in such as splitting off negative attributes and projecting into others, and their allied impact on policy and practice, combined with a shift in focus from theoretical frameworks in social work education towards more problem-based practice, have, in my experience, resulted in a workforce that is less familiar with, skilled in, or informed by, psycho-social ideas and their application to practice. Most social workers and supervisors do not bring to supervision a sufficient understanding of concepts such as transference and counter-transference to enable them to engage in reflection.

Support and supervision

Whilst there is limited empirical evidence of the impact supervision has on practice (Wilkins, 2017), it is widely acknowledged that for social workers to manage the emotional dimension of practice they need to be supported by good quality supervision

and other reflective spaces within the workplace (Ingram, 2012; Munro, 2011; Wilkins, 2017). Various models advocating reflective supervision have been developed (Morrison, 2010; Ingram, 2012; Ruch, 2012) and both the Social Work Reform Board Employer Standards (2011) and Munro (2011) prescribed that employers should ensure that supervision challenges social workers to reflect critically on their work with families, service effectiveness and case decision-making. The literature attests to the complexity of social work within the child protection arena (Ferguson, 2005; Forrester et al., 2008) and a seeming inability of social workers effectively engaging with the children they are mandated to protect (Laming, 2003, 2009; Munro, 2011; Brandon et al., 2009). Winter (2011, p.398) summarises these failings as a:

Lack of personal, individual relationships with children; sparse evidence of any direct social worker engagement with children; and a failure to prioritise the views and opinions of the children in written records, planning and decision making.

Simmonds (2010) discusses the powerful forces at work embedded in dynamics of relating and how, within social work, these are highly charged because they happen at the point where the personal, political, organisational and bureaucratic collide. Relating at this boundary he maintains, may stir up the strongest feelings where there might be heightened expectations about the possibility of problems being resolved, or feelings related to humiliation, abandonment and loss. These expectations and fears are also present in supervision as they are in working with children and families so the need to understand their impact on practice and supervision is critical. For social workers to be aware of the emotional aspects of the work and overcome defensive practices such as

avoidance, they need critical reflection in a safe and supportive environment (Ingram 2013). As Hunt et al. (2016, p.115) conclude, supervision that is

Dominated by a managerial need to focus on performance, for example, throughput, case closure, adhering to timescales and completion of written recordsleaves little time for thoughtful consideration of what is happening in the lives of children and their families.

Summary

Social work with children is complex and impacts emotionally on social workers. The prevailing view is that effective organisational culture, support and supervision are required that facilitate relational, direct work with families over and above bureaucratic approaches to practice where social workers have the time and space to think about and understand the complex relational dynamics in the work. It is difficult to find much dissent in the social work or related literature. Until recently, there was little research that focused on what practice looks like between social workers and families, and whilst this is changing, more research is needed that focuses on the day-to-day lived experience of social work practice, specifically with children. Whilst this may not lead to vastly differing views it should add further depth to current understandings. It is within this context that my proposed study connects to this existing literature and seeks to illuminate this under explored area of practice and research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction to chapter

This chapter sets out the rationale and philosophical assumptions that informed my research study and the specific methods I adopted. It will outline the ontological and epistemological underpinnings for the research before detailing the chosen methodological framework to gather the data. It will describe the ethical issues that were anticipated prior to the research and those encountered during the data collection process before considering issues of researcher positioning and reflexivity.

Methodological rationale

Having worked within the profession during the proliferation of neo-liberal rational-technical approaches (Howe, 1996), I became interested in the idea that emotions have been pushed to the margins of practice. It seemed that measuring and counting how often things happened and within timescale became more important than the dimension of the relationship and the quality of the intervention. Hoggett (2000) identifies that a problem with social constructionist approaches to social policy is the tendency to privilege cognition and language over emotion and affect, leaving a one-sided view of human relations. As a social worker based in a child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), I wanted to approach the research from an epistemological position in which the emotional dimension is posited as central to social work practice. I was interested in exploring how emotions were engaged with by social workers in their practice with children and whether, within a culture of managerialism, it was possible to keep the emotional dimension of practice central or whether this got side-lined in place of other priorities. I decided that a mixed-methods ethnographic approach would

enable me to collect data in multiple ways and triangulate them with the aim of providing robust and dependable findings.

Research questions

Informed by a dearth of research focusing on child and family social workers' practice(s) with children, the main research question asked:

How do social workers in statutory children and families' social work settings attend to and engage with the emotional lives and experiences of children?

Various sub-questions were designed to help explicate the study further:

- How do social workers attune (or not) to the emotions expressed by children?
- What do social workers do and say when they meet with children?
- How are children's emotions written about in case records?
- What defence mechanisms do social workers demonstrate (or not) in working with children? Why?

Research methodology

To answer these questions I adopted a qualitative approach drawn from post-positivist and interpretivist ontological positions which are based on the view that the world is constructed rather than fixed and concerned with how individuals make sense of the world (Bryman, 2008; Wisker, 2008). Social constructionism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. I wanted to immerse myself into the world of social workers, children and families as they came together in natural settings. Guba and Lincoln (1989) define a paradigm as a set of beliefs that direct the way in which research is undertaken, with positivist and

constructivist paradigms at opposing ends of a continuum due to the divergent assumptions they make about ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge) and methodology (how knowledge can be acquired). A post-positivist paradigm is concerned with generating theories using small samples which produce rich data and which are subjective and qualitative in nature. As such, one must exercise caution in generalising statistically from one setting to another but can generalise theoretically if data are 'trustworthy' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). An interpretivist approach sees humans as subjects whose behaviour is affected by their knowledge of the social world, which exists only in relation to them. The human mind interprets experiences and then constructs meanings from them, therefore, meaning does not exist outside the mind.

The aim of the research was to observe, describe and acquire a real sense and understanding of the experience and values of the social workers. As I wanted to capture social workers' opinions, feelings and practice as well as their experience and the kind of settings in which they act, an interpretivist ontology and epistemological position was adopted and the use of qualitative research methods were thought to be a better fit than quantitative methods. The research approach was ethnographic and exploratory as I believed that this would bring me closer to the data I was seeking to collect and provide a greater understanding of social worker's lived experience of practice. Quantitative data conversely, would not effectively provide an understanding of the meanings, beliefs and experience of social workers' practice with children.

Methodology guides how a researcher frames a question and decides which methods and process to follow to collect and analyse the data to get to the outcome. The research

was inductive in that the data were obtained by asking social workers to share their experiences in interviews and by observing their practice and their case records. The aim was to understand phenomena according to the meaning given by participants so I adopted ethnographic, observational methods. Brewer (2000, p.6) defines ethnography as:

The study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'field' by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting... in order to collect data in a systematic manner.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994, p. 248) suggest ethnographic research usually involves four features:

A strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them; a tendency to work with 'unstructured' data uncoded at the point of collection; investigation of a small number of cases in detail and analysis of data that involves explicit interpretations of the meanings and functions of actions, through descriptions and explanations (cited in Silverman, 2011, p. 128).

Prior to starting the research I undertook a brief literature review which developed over the duration of my research, resulting in a comprehensive literature review. This located the study within a relevant context and identified its position within the extant research and knowledge base. I used various search databases to identify relevant literature: PsycINFO, PEP Archive, UK Data Archive and Social Care Online. I undertook a Boolean search with key terms - 'social work', 'emotions', 'communication', 'direct work with children' in various configurations. I then scanned the results, reading abstracts where available, to identify research or publications that had relevance to my study. For each

article or publication I read I also searched the references in a 'snowball' approach to identify any additional literature I had not encountered through my searches (Lichtman, 2017). As a social worker/researcher, I was mindful of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics* which refer to the interests of service users and carers being protected and the UK Research Integrity Office Code of Practice (2009, p.7) which states that "researchers who are members of a regulated profession must follow the requirements and guidance of the body regulating their profession".

Psycho-social methodology

A psycho-social approach to research offers a distinct position with which to undertake research, namely 'researching beneath the surface and beyond the purely discursive' (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009, p. 2). This involves attending to the unconscious communications, dynamics and defences present in the research environment and interactions. This seemed particularly relevant for my study given its focus on what social workers did in practice with children, what gets spoken and written about or not and what might get in the way. Using observation as a way of identifying, describing and analysing dynamics and emotions in depth as well as the co-construction of the research environment, seemed a useful position to adopt. Given that the subject was about the emotional dimensions of social work practice with children, I was interested in an approach that would facilitate self-reflection on the research methods and practice and which considered my own emotional involvement in the research, the affective relationship between me and the participants (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009) and the emotional dimensions of my practice as a white, male researcher and social worker.

Psycho-social methods of research were developed to enable research subjects' unconscious and defended internal worlds to be explored and for researchers to be reflexive. Clarke and Hoggett, (2009, p.6) propose a threefold argument for the synthesis of methodologies: firstly, psychoanalysis addresses why certain social phenomena occur by recognising the role of the unconscious in the construction of social realities. It emphasises that feelings and emotions shape our perception and motivation, constructing the way we perceive others. Secondly, the psycho-social analytic method recognises the role of the researcher in the interpretation of realities and the way in which unconscious forces shape the research environment. Finally, integration of social, cultural and historical factors at a conscious level yields information about unconscious motivations and defences.

It has been advocated that practice-near research (Froggett and Briggs, 2012) can elucidate and account for social workers' actions as they engage with the most vulnerable in society, by providing opportunities for understanding a richer depth of experience such as individuals' internal worlds and emotional experiences by bringing the researcher close to people in a live, emotional way (Hingley-Jones, 2009; Cooper, 2009). Practice-near research developed due to difficulties in researching the complex terrain of people's emotions. This approach seemed relevant because of its capacity to recognise the subtleties of emotional experiences and make these available for analysis by drawing on unconscious communications identified through counter-transference. The psycho-social lens adds richness to the analysis of observations, interviews and case records by helping to uncover some of the emotional dimensions of practice with children and young people. The way in which things are said and what is not said or cannot be said is also significant (Froggett, 2012). This methodological approach

facilitates the exploration of the structural and systemic nature of social work practice within a child protection context and provides a framework for thinking about how anxiety and emotions may manifest in working with children subject to harm and neglect, leading towards defensive practices.

Methods

This practice-near, ethnographic methodology, where unspoken, embodied and affective dimensions of experience could emerge (Froggett, 2012), informed the choice of research methods. I wanted to ensure a triangulation of different approaches to data collection in the study so that I could be as certain as possible that I was capturing the lived experience of social workers and children. Ferguson (2010-18) contends that in order for the home visit to be fully understood, all aspects including movement, transitions, ritual and bodily senses must be observed, described, analysed and theorised. He describes how social workers cross a boundary when they enter a family home, straddling a threshold between public and private worlds. As such, I planned to use ethnographic observation of social workers meeting with children, complemented by unstructured interviews of these social workers using the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) method (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013) and analysis of their case records from the observed visits. A table of the data collection methods and all participants is located on page 57.

Observation

Observational research aims to see through the eyes of participants, viewing events, actions, and values from their perspective, enabling the researcher to attend to routine

detail which helps to understand what is occurring in specific situations, encouraging other perspectives (Bryman, 2011). Waddell (1998), cites Kuhn (1962) who states that:

What a man sees depends upon what he looks at but also upon what his previous visual conceptual experience has taught him to see (Kuhn, 1962: 112).

Whilst ethnographic observation cannot provide complete access to the whole truth nor an exact reflection of what occurred, as the researcher's interpretations are open to challenge, getting close to social work practice does enable things to be seen and experienced that would be missed were such research not undertaken (Ferguson, 2016). Psychoanalytically informed observation stresses the role of emotionality within the process. The Tavistock method of infant observation developed by Bick (1964) for application in clinical settings, was adapted for use within the psycho-social research approach. This method involves the observer writing detailed descriptive accounts of what they observe which is then discussed with supervisors and in research groups, so that different views and hypotheses about the data and the observer's emotional experiences are gleaned. By keeping careful notes after the event, the observer details the actions observed and their responses to them and attends to any changes. A diary of the researcher's experiences and responses to these is useful in charting emerging interpretations so that what is seen, pursued and interpreted can be separated out. Price and Cooper (2012, p.64) suggest that psychoanalytic observational methods occupy:

A third position between naive realism and constructivist relativism and that 'facts' uncovered from observation restrict the range of interpretive possibilities. It therefore 'provides a systematic discipline for studying subjective and unconscious life that can be acquired in the same way as any other qualitative research method.

The Tavistock model of observation is premised epistemologically on the emotional dimension of experience as the central and informing force (Tanner 1999). Important dimensions are attending to emotion, tolerating uncertainty, and critical reflection in the observer role which requires observers to avoid initiating activity or becoming physically involved, and closely observing events and relationships. It is important that in the observer role there is no active participation as when in 'doing' mode there is less capacity to 'be' and reflect. The aim is to locate a position where one can be engaged with the observed individuals in an emotionally engaged way whilst holding distance to enable reflection on the emotional transactions.

After each observed visit I wrote up the observation in as much descriptive detail as soon after as was practicable. I presented observational data of two social workers (the focus of chapters four and five) to a 'Many Minds' panel consisting of fellow social work doctoral students and a non-social work academic. I read out my written account of the observations and recorded the panel's ensuing discussion about the observation. Sharing my observations with a panel which sat outside of my research enabled me to consider other perspectives on the observations and interpretations of the data and any disposition I had towards interpreting data in particular ways could be challenged. This enabled me to further develop my analysis of the participants, the observed visits, and myself as the researcher and my responses to the data. This enhanced my capacity to think and reflect upon unprocessed and unconscious aspects of the material (Price and Cooper, 2012). I audio recorded these and typed up the transcript, an extract of one is located in Appendix 6. Hingley-Jones (2009) suggests that observers should not be seen as neutral but that observation is an opportunity for the reflexive study and consideration of experience over time, enabling a story to gradually emerge signifying

the culture of the researcher and researched. Using Geertz's (1973) concept of 'thick description' resulting from the observations, she draws on his idea that the close and embedded nature of the researcher promotes a scientific approach in which conclusions can be made from small, densely textured facts.

Rustin (1989) suggests the parallels with other ethnographic approaches are that the observations take place in naturalistic settings and that observational reports aim to achieve descriptions of the subjects in ordinary language. Managing and understanding the dynamics between the observer and the observed is adapted from clinical practice by concepts of transference and counter-transference which indicate that the kind of emotion and relationship channelled through these observer-observed interactions embraces powerful emotional issues. Furthermore, the combination of transferred expectations from the observed and the observer's receptiveness may be an additional source of information for the observer. Any counter-transference may be as a result of the observer's past or current experiences, so it was important to be open to the potential for counter-transference as a significant source of personal learning.

Disadvantages of observation relate to reliability of the accuracy of the observer's recall of events and the likelihood that this will be subject to selectivity. The possibility of observer bias is a plausible criticism where observers see only what they want to see. A frequent way of increasing the reliability of observational evidence is to use more than one observer undertaking an observation. Cooper (2018, p.236) cautions that the researcher will need the help of other 'sensitised minds' to 'unlock and realise the potential of the material'. Briggs (1997) advises one should aim to make conclusions which can be further tested by the same methodology or by others to act as a form of

triangulation. Corroborating this from other levels of material is important, such as the descriptive narrative of interactions, the use of a research group to help think about the meaning of the observer's responses, the language used to describe what has been observed and the participant's verbal reports.

Observation can often feel like it is being 'done to' and can therefore feel oppressive, where the power feels to be at the hands of the observer. As my observation involved children, this felt even more significant and the importance of clear, accessible information sheets and the opportunity to explain my role and empower children to terminate the observation if they felt uncomfortable was crucial. Ethically, much of what goes on in social work practice is invisible and my research was aiming to bring to the fore children's experiences of social work which I hoped would offset any discomfort my presence created. In my study, data were restricted to my observations as a single observer hence my decision to complement the observations by undertaking interviews with the social workers. To offset this, Briggs suggests the use of video and the systematic review of transcripts. I decided against the use of video technology due to possible interference with the obtrusive method of this type of observation. The advantages of observing practice in natural settings with only minimal disturbance by my presence, I hoped, would enable me to experience an authentic relationship between social workers and children and constitute a more ethical approach.

Briggs (1997) also suggests that in order to identify how much the presence of an observer affects events and people being observed it is necessary to observe for long enough to be confident of not capturing a subjective snapshot and to keep a diary of one's experience and responses in order to chart changing interpretations and separate

out what is seen, sought and interpreted. My records written after each observation noted as many observed interactions and events as I could recall and my responses to them, including feelings, emotions and any changes in response so that my own transference and counter-transference experiences as a researcher were identified and theorised. Identifying whether the feelings related to a participant's or my own counter-transference in some of the observations and interviews was helpful and important, such as feelings of discomfort at the intrusion of being in a family's home, which probably belonged to both the social worker and me.

Interviews

Having observed social workers I interviewed them in order to obtain in-depth views about their perceptions of the observed sessions and their wider practice. These provided rich data into the emotions and experiences of the social workers as well as information about sensitive issues and privileged insights that the observations may not have identified. Interviews are often used in research to add to observation and may be highly structured with closely adhered to rigid, pre-prepared questions. Semi-structured interviews enable a more free-flowing exchange between participant and researcher whilst unstructured, naturalistic interviews tend to be more autobiographical and in-depth (Wisker, 2008).

Kvale (1996) distinguishes between interviewing as a 'miner' unearthing valuable metal, seeking objective facts and knowledge waiting to be uncovered by the uncontaminated miner and interviewing as a 'traveller' who reconstructs the stories of people encountered on the journey upon returning home, differentiating meaning through his/her interpretations. The journey might instigate a process of self-reflection, enabling

a more constructive understanding that involves a conversational approach to social research. This approach seemed more appealing and I opted for unstructured interviews, narrative in nature in which the real words of the interviewee are sought rather than their responses to closed questions in a structured interview. The Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) method (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013, p32-33) establishes four key principles: the use of open-ended questions; eliciting a story in which its detailed telling represent choices made by the teller; avoiding the use of 'why' questions and using respondents' ordering and phrasing, involving careful listening in order to be able to ask follow-up questions with respondents' own words and phrases. They suggest that the researcher, without the imposing structure on the narrative, is free to look at unconscious feelings and motivations of respondents and the defence mechanisms at play in the interview relationship. The aim is to enable the participant's agenda to be of primary significance with minimal intervention from the researcher. In terms of analysing data from interviews, Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p.51) suggest it is useful to ask 'what we notice? Why we notice what we notice? How can we interpret what we notice? How can we know that our interpretation is the right one?' They stress the importance of a holistic approach to data analysis as opposed to fragmenting data; utilising theory and reflexivity; and making links.

The interview method may also stir up uncomfortable materials for researcher and respondent, making both defended. Clarke and Hoggett (2009) articulate how the concept of projective identification can be used to understand how a research subject may be persuaded subtly but clearly into taking up a specific position. To counter this, the researcher should have an awareness of what s/he brings to the process by way of values, prejudice, identifications and object relations, all of which are important in

understanding the counter-transference. They profess that, if this is omitted, it is impossible to know whether the feeling a research subject has evoked in the researcher is the subject's, is co-produced or belongs to the researcher. Therefore, reflexivity – the capacity to be wary of one's own presuppositions, is essential. Supervision and the Many Minds panel were both helpful in testing out my assumptions and interpretations and helping to unpick what I brought to the research setting, what belonged to participants and the intersection of both. It is also necessary to be mindful of the impact that in-depth interviews may have on the participant and any arising psychological or emotional distress. This was relevant as the research required social workers to think, reflect and talk about their experience of attending to the emotional dimensions of their practice, which sometimes evoked strong emotions. As with the observations, the conduct of the interview must hold the well-being of participants as central throughout (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013).

Prior to commencing my research, I undertook a pilot interview with a social worker in my team, using the FANI method to understand how the interviewee experienced the approach and to practise using the method. This proved difficult as she struggled to speak in much depth without prompting which led me to develop some broad questions to counter this experience in my fieldwork. I was also required to produce general interview questions as part of the process of gaining ethical approval in the local authority so the interviews ended up being more structured than intended. A common criticism of interviews is that they rely on accurate recall of events by participants whose responses are subject to bias or inaccurate articulation. Corroborating interview data with information from other sources is recommended to counter this (Yin, 2018), which my choice of multiple methods aimed to do.

Psycho-social analysis of case records

I also undertook an analysis of social workers case notes of the observed visits. Originally I proposed to analyse case files in order to establish how children's emotions were written about but gaining access proved difficult as the local authority were uncomfortable with me having unfettered access to children's entire digitalised records. An alternative agreement of accessing the most recent assessment completed on each family observed also proved challenging as it resulted in the provision of detailed assessments often completed by social workers other than the ones that I observed. It was agreed with my supervisors that a more manageable and relevant document to analyse, would be social workers' case record of the session I observed.

Initially I proposed to use content analysis as an approach to documentary analysis that sought to quantify content in relation to predetermined categories systematically. Unlike the previous methods identified content analysis aims to produce quantitative accounts of raw data. By looking at case records, I hoped to see how the emotional lives of children were written about in official documentation and identify:

- How often emotions are referred to;
- Whether certain documents refer to the emotional lives of children more than others;
- Whether certain emotions are referred to more than others?

Having changed the type of written data I would gather, I decided that content analysis would be less relevant as I would only be obtaining a small number of case records. I adopted an approach consistent with the observations and interviews, using a psycho-social analysis to identify what was under the surface of the text. I was interested in

what was included in written records and what was omitted, such as whether social workers downplayed the subjective and emotional experience of children. As I was also interested in the way in which emotions are written about in case records, and how these are riven with relational dynamics, a discourse analysis was adopted. Critical discourse analysts such as Fairclough (2001) and Parker (2005) suggest step-by-step approaches to a critical discourse analysis (CDA). Fairclough (2001) contends that CDA enables one to move between close analysis of texts and interactions and social analyses of varying kinds with a view to discover how language figures in social processes. I also drew on the discourse analytic method developed by Crittenden and Landini (2011) for use with the assessment of adult attachment in which I had been trained. This method was developed to identify the psychological and interpersonal self-protective strategies used by adults by applying the discourse analytic framework to semi-structured interviews.

Table 1: Research data index

Data set	Family	Observation	Social Worker	Interview	Case record	Analysis
Family 1	Parents Mum Anna Dad Robert 3 children Chris (11) boy Leon (7) boy Iris (1) girl White British	Home visit 23.7.15 Observation record detailed: 2270 words	Alana Female	23.7.15 1 hour 5 minutes 12,221 words Emotional, good quality	Case record of home visit on 23.7.15 by Alana	Psycho-social analysis of observation – presented to Many Minds panel FANI Interview – IPA Case record: psycho-social/ discourse analysis
Family 2	Mother Lorraine 6 children 2 present, Maddy (7) girl Ruby (6) girl 3 asleep White British	Home visit 23.7.16 temporary accommodation in family centre Observation record quite detailed: 1773 words	Jenny Female	24.7.15 1 hour 5 minutes 10,536 words Good quality	Case record of visit on 23.7.15 by Jenny	Psycho-social analysis of observation - presented to Many Minds panel FANI Interview – IPA Case record: psycho-social/ Discourse analysis
Family 3	Foster carers Tina Graham 2 children Ivy (5) girl Jimmy (3) boy White British	Home visit 24.7.16 Foster carers house Observation record short, not very detailed: 948 words (I was late having gone to wrong address)	Barbara Female	24.7.15 39 mins 6634 words Second shortest interview – felt awkward at times with less depth.	Case record of home visit on 24.7.15 by Barbara	Psycho-social analysis of observation - FANI Interview – IPA Case record: psycho-social/ Discourse analysis
Family 4	Father Andy 2 sons Sidney (3) boy Bobby (1) boy white British	Home visit 24.7.15 Grandmother's home Observation record quite detailed – 2157 words	Jenny Female Same as family 2	24.7.15 1 hour 5 minutes 10,536 words	Case record of visit on 24.7.15 by Jenny	Psycho-social analysis of observation - presented to Many Minds panel FANI Interview – IPA Case record: psycho- social/ Discourse analysis

Data set	Family	Observation	Social Worker	Interview	Case record	Analysis
Family 5	Amber (9) girl Lives with grandparents White British	School visit 15.9.15 SW & child Observation record: 1989 words	Sam Female	15.9.15 1 hour 6 min 10,566 words	Case record of visit 15.9.16 by Sam	Psycho-social analysis of observation - FANI Interview – IPA Case record: psycho-social/ Discourse analysis
Family 6	Grandmother C Jamie (6) boy White British	Home visit 30.3.16 Detailed observation record: 2598 words	Adam Male	31.3.16 1 hour 2 min quite detailed	Case record of home visit on 30.3.16 by Adam	Psycho-social analysis of observation - FANI Interview – IPA Case record: psycho-social/ Discourse analysis
Family 7	Mother Diane Travis (13) boy Denise (10) girl White British	Home visit Both children & mother 31.3.16 Observation record: 2306 words	Sharon Female	31.3.16 37 min 7817 words Quite short, fast quality	Case record of home visit on 31.3.16 by Sharon	Psycho-social analysis of observation - FANI Interview – IPA Case record: psycho-social/ Discourse analysis
Family 8	Father R Stephen (9) boy White British	Office visit 31.3.16 Quite short session Observation record: 1817 words	Tammy Female	31.3.16 28 mins 4949 words. Shortest interview as Tammy had meeting to attend	No case record provided	Psycho-social analysis of observation - FANI Interview – IPA Case record: psycho-social/ Discourse analysis

Access and approval

Due to the ethical issues involved in undertaking research with children, it was necessary to gain access to a local authority children's service willing to be involved in this study. In order to minimise bias I approached local authorities in which I had not previously worked. Using existing networks I outlined the proposed nature of my research which a former colleague in a central government role sent to a number of senior managers in high-performing Children's Services on the assumption that such authorities would be more open and less defensive to an outsider wanting to study its practice. One replied promptly, inviting me to meet him to discuss my research proposal and agreed to approach managers of Child in Need teams to gauge interest. I submitted an application to the local authority research governance panel in parallel with the university's research ethics process. The process was positive and relatively straightforward and approval was granted without my having to attend in person. As the research was about understanding the emotional dimensions of practice, I was asked to develop an interview guide including examples of some questions that 'might' be used in the interview. This was consistent with my experience of piloting the FANI method with a colleague, so I developed some guided questions for use, if required. The university ethics committee required revisions to participant information sheets and similarly, an interview topic guide before granting ethical approval in July 2014.

Following a positive meeting with two managers who had agreed to host my research, they asked if I wanted to start there and then! I suggested that it would be good for the team to be aware of my visit in advance and agreed to return at a later date as an extract from my research journal describes (located in Appendix 3).

Sampling

Between July 2015 and March 2016, I undertook three visits to the team, spending two days with them each time. As this was a small scale, in-depth study it was not important for large numbers of participants to be involved as the fieldwork generated a wealth of data from the three different methods employed. As such, a case study approach was used in which a small number of social workers were identified and from this, children with whom they worked could be selected for the purpose of the observations of their practice. On each fieldwork visit I approached the social workers present, introduced myself if I had not met them before and outlined my research study. I gave participant information sheets to them to read and answered any questions they had. I left them to think about whether they would like to participate, by letting me observe them. I reiterated that both parents and children would also need to consent/assent which was needed as some social workers were relaxed about seeking consent in advance. Whilst the team members changed over the duration of my fieldwork, the usual team complement consisted of a team manager, assistant team manager, eight social workers, two child and family support workers and an administrator. In all, seven social workers were observed and interviewed, with one social worker being observed twice. All case records of the observed visits bar one were obtained.

Ethical issues

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed including discussing the issue of consent with participants which needed to be thoughtfully and sensitively managed given that participants included children. Consent needed to be sought from those with parental responsibility; parents or the local authority. Information for participants was provided

for children, parents and social workers respectively, setting out the aims of the research, emphasising that consent could be withdrawn at any time (Appendix 2). I was mindful of the *Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People* (NCB, 2011, p. 26-27), specifically relating to undertaking observation studies with children, such as observing without disrupting activities, politely declining requests to talk or play during an observation and when it would be appropriate to suspend the observation and intervene. It was important that participants understood that any information gleaned through the research process was stored confidentially, that neither they nor the local authority would be identified in the research, and that names would be changed and locations anonymised to ensure their identity was protected. This was relevant given that it was a small-scale study focusing on a small number of participants in-depth where their practice and emotional presentation was subject to analysis.

Whilst participant's names have been changed and I have tried to avoid identifying them through additional description, they might be able to identify themselves and their close colleagues and managers may also be able to identify them. Such recognition means that it is possible that their practice frailties or limitations could be exposed. It needs to be acknowledged that participation in this kind of research requires courage for practitioners to enable the observation and analysis of their practice and without their willingness and co-operation, it would not be possible to gain such insight into how social workers engage with children's emotions and provide deeper understandings of their lived experiences of practice. It was essential that my impact as a researcher on the process and experience of observation were held in mind or my presence might elicit feelings of suspicion, anxiety and negative projections.

On each fieldwork visit at least one social worker agreed to participate and most visits resulted in observations taking place. It was easier getting access to social workers' visits to families than anticipated and on reflection, I wondered what impact the endorsement of the Assistant Director had on participation. Given that most social workers in the team participated, they may have felt obligated despite my insistence that it was entirely voluntary. Conversely, most social workers seemed quite pleased that someone was taking a close interest in their practice. The majority of families agreed to my accompanying the social worker and none asked to terminate the research. Interestingly, the participant information and consent sheets did not raise any contentious issues and were often read quickly and signed without much attention.

Reflexivity

In undertaking the research it was important to bear in mind that I was as much a participant in the process as the children and social workers who participated. Hunt (1989, p.4) identifies a number of areas where unconscious forces affect research: the choice of research subject and setting may reflect an inner dynamic; unconscious forces mediate encounters between the researcher and researched; discomfort and guilt in obtaining data - feeling like a voyeur; transference – the researcher's unconscious reactions to the subjects and aspects of their world; unconscious images the subject imposes onto the researcher and counter-transference – the researcher's unconscious reaction to the subject's transference. Holland (2007) emphasises the importance of recognising that the researcher takes assumptions and emotions into the field and generates emotions about the researched whilst Hollway and Jefferson (2013) refer to the idea of defended research participants and researchers. As such, the importance of

being reflexive by engaging in continuous self-reflection on both the methods and practice of the research and my emotional involvement in the process and the affective relationship between participants and myself was essential (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009). The use of my research supervisors, research seminars, the Many Minds panel and a reflective journal assisted in this.

The power imbalance between the participants and me, as researcher, was exacerbated by the vulnerability of the children observed who may have been unclear about my role and anxious about my presence and what it may mean for them. It was important to consider my impact as a white, middle-class, male researcher undertaking a doctorate and a social worker practising at the Tavistock Clinic, plus the related dimensions of power these separate identities bring. Narrative interviews using the FANI approach enabled me to listen and hear more, humanising the interviewees and me as the interviewer and seeking to empower participants (bell Hooks, 1989). My ethical stance as a social worker and an epistemological position that privileges the relationship, subjecting my research to a process of group and self-reflection, all helped to ensure my research was undertaken in a sensitive, ethical way. My research was underpinned by the notion that children have a right to have their lived experience heard and understood and that not being involved in research limits this right.

In relation to ethics and data analysis, Silverman (2011) questions whether it is ethical for interpretations to be made whilst interviews are conducted. He cautions that it may be difficult to prevent it, suggesting an ethical approach to data analysis is sought so that researchers are able to recognise what gets left in or out of transcriptions and presentations. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) identify the dangers of fragmentation of

data as often happens in the breakdown and coding process used in qualitative data analysis. Instead, they suggest a process of immersion in the data in which a sense of the whole picture is gained. This informed my decision to use a Many Minds panel to assist with interpretation of data.

Data Analysis

I chose a combination of approaches to analyse the data. Interviews were subjected to an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to identify themes and psycho-social analysis and discourse analysis were used to identify less overt, 'below the surface' dimensions; observations were subjected to a psycho-social analysis and case records to both psycho-social and discourse analyses.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA was developed by Smith, Flowers & Larkin in the 1990's and draws on three theoretical strands – phenomenology, idiography and hermeneutics. It assumes the data can reveal something about people's involvement in the world and the sense they make of this. According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p.46), this requires the identification, description and understanding of two related aspects of a participant's account: 'the key 'objects of concern' in the participant's world and the 'experiential claims' made by the participant in order to develop a phenomenological account'. Hermeneutics is important as the researcher tries to make sense of the participant making sense of their experience, the interpretative activity that the researcher engages in. The researcher is engaged in a 'double hermeneutic' as they try to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their experience. The researcher's sense making is second order as they access the experience via the participant's

account (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.48). Finally, the idiographic is concerned with the detailed analysis of the case as an end in itself before moving to similarly detailed analyses of other cases. The focus is on what the experience is like for a particular person and what sense this person is making – the idiographic, before moving onto the next. A study may explore in detail the similarities and differences between each case. A small sample size of a reasonably homogeneous sample is used so that convergence and divergence can be examined in some detail.

IPA was selected because it was consistent with the epistemological position of my research question which focused on social workers' experiences and understanding of how they engage with children's emotional lives. As my aim was to uncover the experience of a group of social workers and how they made sense of these, IPA would assist in identifying how social workers ascribed meaning to their experiences. IPA assumes that participants' accounts of their experiences will reflect their attempt to make sense of that experience. Access to their experience is dependent on what participants tell the researcher who then needs to interpret the participant's account in order to understand their experience. IPA aims to get close to participants' personal worlds but it is also dependent on the researcher's own conceptions through the process of interpretation. I particularly liked the clear, structured framework that IPA provided to analysing data as outlined by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). This is summarised briefly here with a fuller description in Appendix 7.

Step 1: Reading and re-reading

I listened to audio recordings of interviews and read transcripts multiple times, paying attention to the experience of each individual participant. I read transcripts

hermeneutically - both critically to challenge the text and draw on external perspectives, and empathically, ensuring a warmer, more accepting view of the text focusing on the internal perspective (Ricouer, 1970). Close reading enables the participant to become the focus of the analysis which was challenging as slowing down and engaging with the data felt quite overwhelming. Having to do this meant that I was able to get in touch with the emotional dimension of the work, which perhaps the social worker participants in the field did not seem able to.

Step 2: Initial noting

A detailed reading of transcripts followed to identify semantic content and language beginning with descriptive noting to identify participants' key objects of concern e.g. relationships and the meaning of these. A more interpretive reading helps to understand how and why the participant had these concerns and involved looking at the linguistic nature of the transcript e.g. words used, pauses, laughter etc. Finally, a more conceptual reading focused on engaging at a more interrogative level helping to make sense of the patterns of meaning in participants' accounts. The transcript text is put into the middle column of a table with the right hand column used for documenting initial comments. In the left hand margin I recorded the emergent themes identified (See Appendix 8 for an example).

Step 3: Developing emergent themes

This involved reducing the data from the full transcript to a number of emergent themes, requiring an analytic shift to working with the initial notes rather than the transcript, producing concise statements to capture what was important in the

different comments attached to a section of transcript. Themes reflected not only participants' words but also my interpretation.

Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

Having identified emergent themes I developed these to map how they fitted together. I put all themes into a list and moved them into clusters of related themes, labelling and re-labelling them and dropping some of the less well-evidenced themes. I used the abstraction method identified by Smith et al (2009) to identify patterns. Themes were transferred from the transcript to either post-it notes which were then sorted before being entered into an Excel spreadsheet, or straight into an Excel spreadsheet.

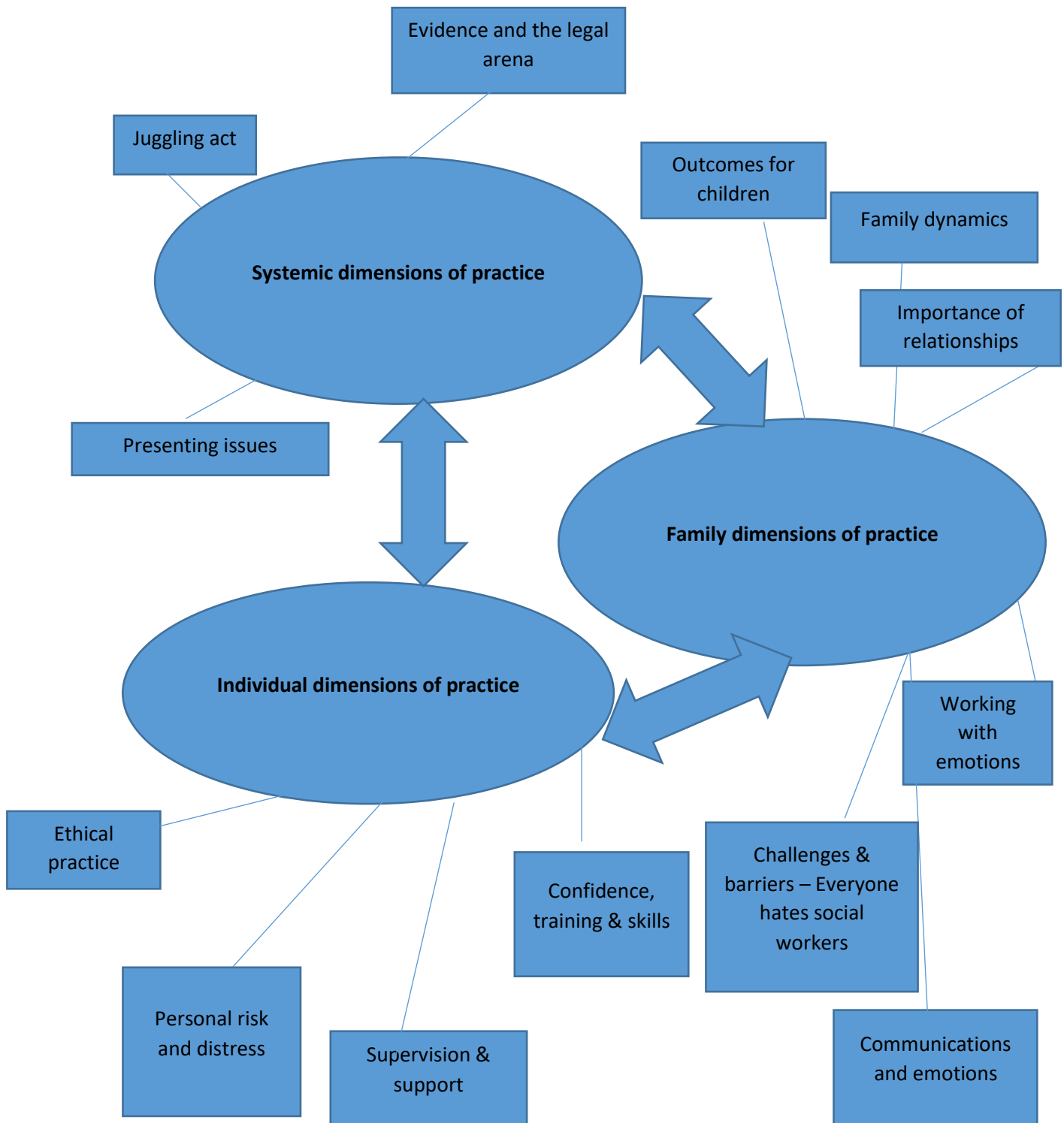
Step 5: Moving to the next case

Once I had developed a table of themes for a transcript I moved onto the next repeating the process. It was important to 'bracket' any ideas emerging from the previous case(s) staying true to the idiographic nature of IPA. The challenge was to allow new themes to emerge whilst being influenced by what I had already found. This is where the systematic nature of this step-by-step process helped.

Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases

Finally, once the process had been undertaken with each case I was able to look at the table of each list of themes, moving from emergent themes to super-ordinate themes where connections are made between the emergent themes. This process of ordering, sorting and re-sorting enabled me to identify superordinate themes. These are depicted in figure one below:

Figure one: Diagrammatic outline of analysis of interviews (Super-ordinate themes)



Smith, Larkin and Flowers (2009) contend that it is possible to think in terms of theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalisability. The reader makes links between the analysis in an IPA study, their own personal and professional experience and claims in the extant literature. A rich, transparent and contextualised analysis of the accounts of participants should be provided to enable readers to evaluate its transferability to people in similar contexts.

In order to draw together a composite model of data analysis for the different datasets in my research I subjected aspects of the same data set to IPA and a psycho-social analysis in an attempt to establish the value each might bring to the analysis of data. This might be thought of as a 'methodological moulding' or 'bricolage' to integrate two analytic methods to provide both psycho-social and phenomenological insights into the data. The notion of the researcher as 'bricoleur' is used by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) to describe the researcher as they embark on an emergent process of engagement with different methods and data to produce a 'pieced-together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p. 4). In my study the adoption of multiple qualitative methods for data collection and analysis lends itself to the exploration of the multi-layered experience in which the social worker and children and researcher and participant continually interact with each other. Kincheloe (2005, p. 317) writes of embracing the surprises that arise during the research process and incorporating them into the methodology as 'bricolage' where the researcher "actively construct[s] ... research methods from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the 'correct' universally applicable methodologies".

My study produced a range of different sorts and sources of data: observation reports; transcripts from interviews, social worker's case records of observed sessions and ethnographic notes written when I was in the team office. It was possible to refer to identifying themes from individual pieces of data, across the same data sorts/sources and across the whole data set, resulting in a systematic approach to operationalising my analytic approach, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of my findings. For instance, in the interview with Jenny she said:

'I think we, we work, we can get focused on quite practical things, getting done, being done. Erm, maybe those tangible things erm, where we can see what's being achieved, whether it's a family being rehoused or whether it's a new bed being brought, whether it's erm influencing where a child goes to school, or erm, and actually those, erm, emotional dimensions, I think risk getting missed.

The IPA analysis enabled me to linguistically identify a shift from 'I' to 'we' (other social workers) possibly seeking to minimise her feelings of guilt and then a repetition of 'we' which could signal a discomfort at feeling judged or exposed by me. The discussion is of doing things, getting them done, the practical aspects of social work where principles that value the 'doing', achieving tasks with tangible outcomes are privileged over the emotional.

Psycho-social analysis

As effective and helpful as IPA was for the analysis of interview transcripts, its approach did not privilege the emotions involved in the interactions between the social worker and the children and researcher and participant. This is where a psycho-social approach seemed to offer something more valuable – enhancing the ‘ethical dimension of knowledge production by revealing the projective dynamics of the researcher-researched relationship and utilising it for the purpose of deeper understanding’ (Alexandrov, 2009, p. 38). This was particularly the case in the analysis of the observation records that I wrote following each observation. Using the observations of Jenny’s engagement with children as an example of a psycho-social approach to analysing the data, it is possible to see how it enabled me to uncover more unconscious communications, dynamics and defences at play in the research environment, that is to research beneath the surface and uncover the more subtle, nuanced communications. For instance, in one observation I wrote of feeling:

‘...really awkward in this house during the observation. This was largely due to the fact that in addition to the father and the boys and my usual feelings of being the unspeaking observer, there were three other adults in the house. The father’s brother, sister and her boyfriend were present and at different times all came into the kitchen during the visit’
(Observation report, family 4).

A psycho-social approach encouraged a more sustained self-reflection on not just what I observed but also my own role in the research, my emotional involvements and the affective relationship between Jenny, the family and me in the room. It was helpful to

think of issues of transference and counter-transference and consider what belonged to me in terms of my discomfort as a researcher and the intrusion that felt tangible and what belonged to Jenny as the social worker going into the family home.

Being an observer in the home with Jenny added a further dimension that just would not be achievable from undertaking interviews alone. The same observation drew out my own anxieties:

I am almost compelled to act myself when Bobby sits at the bottom of the staircase in the adjoining hallway which only I can really see and he looks like he is about to be climbing upstairs. There is no gate. Fortunately Andy and Bobby's uncle both appear respectively in time to remove Bobby from potential danger. I think how difficult it is for Jenny to have a real uninterrupted and meaningful conversation with Dad when all this is going on and how she can't really do anything she needs to do for long as there are so many other distractions and competing demands. (Observation report, family 4).

This demonstrates how fieldwork is described as a 'voyage in which researcher and researched are engaged' (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009, p.5). With such strong feelings experienced on my part it is naïve to think that my feelings and emotional involvement in the research did not shape my perception and motivation, as a CAMHS social worker, as a man, as well as a researcher. This influenced how I perceived Jenny and what was going on in the room with her and the family. Presumably something of this was also communicated to Jenny, and shaped how she behaved with me, and with the family as well as what she said to me about the encounter subsequently. This analytic approach

enabled me to go beyond the discourse of the interview transcript so that the written record of the observation and my account of the experience provide additional insights into the affect and the dynamics at play.

The comparison of using both psycho-social and IPA approaches to analyse the same extracts of data was useful in illustrating the value that both methods could bring. It enabled me to see how adopting two different methods could bring something richer to the data and complementing one another, enabling me to see things that may not have been so accessible otherwise.

Criticisms of psycho-social methods

Psychoanalytic research methods, such as observation, have been criticised for their application of clinical processes into a research setting. Green (2000) and Frosh and Saville-Young (2017) dispute that such an approach is plausible due to the fact that in analysis the analyst and patient can revisit issues raised repeatedly as they are aroused in the analysts or the analysand's mind which may be enlightened subsequently in therapy. Such ongoing connections cannot be made in the research encounter because the relationship between researcher and participant is usually short-lived and not available for ongoing development of understanding. Furthermore, a psychoanalytic reading goes beneath the text which requires 'reading out' of the text to determine what else might be going on which has produced it or 'reading into' the text of the assumptions of the researcher (Frosh and Saville-Young, 2017). They suggest that any findings can only be provisional as they are constrained by the conditions under which they are produced, such as the dominant theoretical position or social and cultural contexts. Parker (2005) is more critical suggesting that psychoanalytic research methods

operate from a pre-established discourse that imposes an expert account on research participants where researcher knows best. Therefore, alternative interpretations are equally viable.

Psycho-social research has also been criticised for 'top-down' interpretation (Froggett, 2012) resulting in the need for dialogical approaches to data collection and interpretation. An ethical approach to psycho-social data analysis requires that thought is given to what gets left in and out in talk, transcripts and presentation and how data are presented to ensure care for participants and avoidance of harm (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009). It is important to adopt a 'beyond blame' approach in which it is clear that much of what I describe and interpret from the data constitutes normative social work practice encountered by most, if not all, social workers at different times, including myself. Developing trust and rapport with participants was important and being clear with both them, myself, and readers of this thesis that my research is about getting closer to practice with children and identifying the issues that it raises, rather than auditing social workers for effectiveness.

Further criticisms of ethnographic research includes the tendency of such research to speak on behalf of participants where accounts are presented as how things are and how the richness and complexity of human life captured from the perspectives of insiders can be difficult to translate neatly (Griffin and Howell, 2017).

Once I had analysed my data I contacted each participant and asked if they would like to receive a copy of their interview transcript. Of the seven participants, three replied, all requesting a copy. I invited them to share any thoughts they may have with me and that I would be happy to send a summary of my findings. Only one social worker

responded to this. Whilst this was disappointing, I thought perhaps receiving the transcript was sufficient and also might have been emotive to read, taking them back to difficult experiences. It may also have been that being a participant in the research was enough and they felt that they had fulfilled their part of the process.

The overarching question of this study concerns how social workers in statutory child and families' settings attend to and engage with the emotional lives and experiences of children. To answer this and the sub-questions, I have chosen to present the findings from the data by structuring them into three chapters. The first two are case studies of two participants, the aim being to bring the reader as close to the data as possible. The depth provides greater access to, and understanding of, the richness of the data that emanates from my observations, drawing out more of the affective sense of the interactions. The last of these chapters presents the super-ordinate themes emerging from the IPA of the social worker's interviews. Collectively, these chapters address the main research question and the sub-questions as the themes overlap and are interwoven in the social worker's interviews, my observations and the social worker's case records.

4: Jenny

Purpose of the chapter

This and the next chapter each focus on one research participant in depth. It also offers a reflexive account of my role in the co-production of data during the observed visits, enabling a greater understanding of the impact of my presence in the visits, on the families, social workers and myself. As discussed, I presented observational data of these two social workers to a 'Many Minds' panel.

As the methodology chapter outlined, I used IPA to analyse the interview transcripts and a psycho-social approach to analyse the observations. The case records were analysed using both a psycho-social approach and Discourse Analysis.

Throughout the following three chapters, in order to distinguish which data I am drawing upon, the following style and formatting will be used:

- My observation accounts are italicised and indented. I will also draw on contemporaneous notes written during my fieldwork which will be identified using quotations marks.
- Extracts from the social worker's case records are italicised and presented within a box on a grey background.
- Extracts from interviews are presented within a box with no shading. PD refers to me as the interviewer.
- Extracts from a Many Minds Panel are italicised and indented.

A brief biography of Jenny and our first encounter

I met Jenny on my first day of data collection in July 2015. She was not present when I visited the team previously. She was interested in my research, and agreed for me to observe her despite how busy she seemed. She was the second social worker I observed and the only one I observed twice, on two consecutive days. Following the second observation I interviewed Jenny, for an hour, in the team's office. Jenny had a self-assuredness and confidence about her. Despite going on leave the following week and needing to complete things before she left, she seemed calm and unflustered. I accompanied Jenny on two visits to see families, initially, a mother and her children aged between 6-13 years old, living in an unsuitable hostel. Her adult son had been stabbed and the children were distressed, the mother feeling like things were imploding. The following day Jenny went to see a father and his two sons, subject to child protection plans, to assess the father's parenting due to the contact arrangements in place following previous parental domestic violence.

Family one

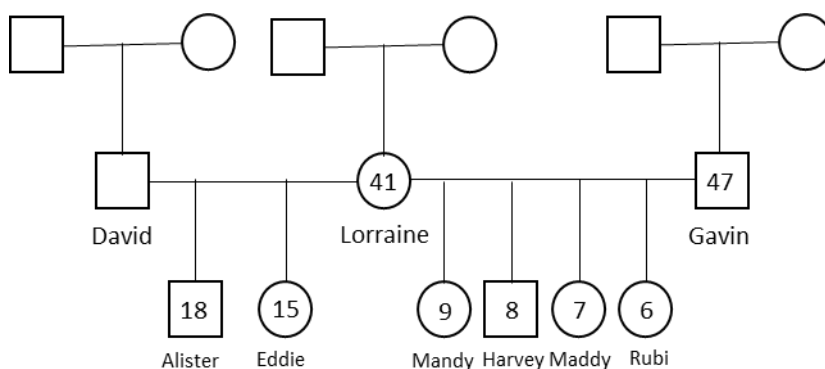


Figure two: Genogram

Driving to the first family, I was interested in hearing about Jenny's entry into social work. She described her career to date citing social work as the most complex and difficult role but went on to say how much she loved her job and what satisfaction it gave her. As the journey progressed the tension in the car grew, for Jenny, visiting a new family in a strange setting, and being observed, and for me, undertaking my second observation. This was Jenny's first visit to the family, having just been allocated the case. I wondered if this was her way of asking me to take this into account as she felt anxious:

Jenny told me that she was feeling a little apprehensive, as she had not had such a big family allocated to her before. I think through the complexity of undertaking a home visit to unsuitable temporary accommodation to see a family of six children and how daunting it would seem to most people, particularly whilst being observed, and I respect Jenny's openness in disclosing her feelings to me.

The family was placed in temporary accommodation following the sexual assault of the eldest child by a teenage boy in the area in which they had lived. They had requested a move out of the area. The case seemed both complex and quite distressing.

Arriving at the family centre the immediate feeling I had was that this was not an appropriate place for children to be living....Lorraine let us into a room which had a double bed, a sofa and a TV in it. Inside were two young girls, Ruby (6) and Maddy (7). Maddy was sitting very close to the TV watching a cartoon. Jenny and I sat on the sofa whilst Lorraine sat on the bed. Lorraine said that three other children were sleeping. Lorraine launched in to a long discussion about how difficult it was being there – they had been there for 9 months. Lorraine said that the children were exposed to things such as people on drugs

and things that they should never be exposed to. It felt like one of those moments was taking place there and then as she spoke in front of the children however, I also noted that she did not have much choice as there did not seem to be anywhere else she could have the conversation. She at least seemed aware of this and softened her voice at times. She also said that she did not like the girls seeing her cry and soon after began to cry. Ruby moved closer to her and touched her and I wondered how often they had seen their mum upset. It must be so difficult in such a small place where they were living on top of each other and Lorraine said she was with them 24/7 as she couldn't leave them. Lorraine said she wished she hadn't moved out of their house as it had been 9 months in this place. She said they weren't there because they'd done something wrong. Eddie had been assaulted and they moved away as she was too scared to stay there.

Avoidance

Jenny did not respond to Lorraine's torrent of anxiety about their living situation which seemed avoidant and almost to negate what Lorraine conveyed. The interview with Jenny the following day did not explore this. She did not raise it and in my attempt at ensuring the interview was unstructured, I did not follow this up. I am not sure if I would have identified this at the time as it was only through analysing my observation account in more depth that I identified this. My sense now is that Jenny may not have known how to respond. Perhaps she also felt the situation was perverse and was annoyed by it. Maybe she wanted Lorraine to stop talking about things in front of the young children. Instead, Jenny changed the subject completely:

Jenny explained that she had brought the assessment the previous social worker had completed and that she would give it to her to read later and she could let her know if there were any inaccuracies.

This feels like quite a harsh, insensitive change of subject and I wonder what impact this had on Lorraine, and simultaneously, what impact my presence was having on Jenny that perhaps she was anxiously rushing through.

Lorraine went on to talk about how her eldest son who also lived in the hostel was stabbed a few days ago which had made all the children worried and distressed and had stopped them being able to sleep at night, hence why three of them were asleep.

My fieldwork notes describe how this felt even more depressing and traumatic and I recall processing this and momentarily tuning out of the conversation, failing to remember what Jenny said in response to this. Reflecting back I now wonder how she felt hearing this, specifically in relation to the safety and wellbeing of the children. The Many Minds panel picked up on the powerful emotions present in the room and wondered if Jenny was cut off from these:

There's so much emotion in it isn't there. Paul obviously registers it and noted that it feels sad and sometimes it feels overwhelming and it's so interesting that the social worker is totally cut off, it's....it's almost that Paul feels everything that they should have been feeling. And engaging with and naming and talking about but nobody else is. Nobody else is dealing with it so he's left feeling it all for them. I wonder if some of it, I mean I was left feeling that it's another, I kept thinking it's about her,

she's avoiding it, its denial and all this other stuff but in terms of her emotions there's also the children and what they're feeling. I wonder if some of what's in the environment and Paul's in the environment so that's what he's [Paul] picking up as well (Many Minds panel member).

Being co-present in this interaction gave me insight into just how much there was going on for Jenny and I felt empathy for her in this difficult encounter. It also made me wonder if she was looking for a way of escaping it somehow.

Building relationships

Jenny spoke to Ruby about what she'd drawn – it was a tall house with a garden and lots of windows. She told Jenny that it was a house for them and talked her through how each window was a different room for each member of the family. She said that even she and Maddy had a room of their own. I felt quite tearful as I sat opposite this smiley, little girl with bright blue eyes. Just observing this whole sad situation felt overwhelming as I watched Jenny work with the children in a warm, caring way. Something about the observer role enabled me to just see this scenario and engage with the sad feelings it evoked in a way that being in the situation as the intervening social worker might not.

This last point seems like an observer's paradox whereby on the one hand I felt closer to the children in my observer role yet, on the other, the distance in that role through not being required to effect any change for the children seems to open up something greater. From spending time with the children and getting them to draw, Jenny was able to gain valuable, embodied insight into Ruby's emotional world and her fantasies of

them living in a nice house where they each had a room. It spoke so much of the anxiety and trauma the family had experienced.

My observation account described how Jenny then talked to Maddy about her drawing which felt like another missed opportunity to draw out Ruby's feelings further. *'When Lorraine had finished reading the assessment she said to Jenny that it would be better if there were toys in the garden as the children could play out there'*. My notes record a sense of my feeling overwhelmed by the overcrowded flat with no space for the children to play. Lorraine might have felt similarly overwhelmed and conflicted for having given up their home in the hope that they would be rehoused quickly. She may also have felt simultaneously guilty for putting her children through this as well as angry at the Council for not moving them on quicker. Jenny had to deal with all of these complex emotions.

Lorraine asked Jenny if she would like to see the other rooms. We walked down the corridor and stopped at the next door. Lorraine said she would just check if Eddie was covered up as she was in bed. She warned her that we were coming in. The room was larger than the one we'd been in and had one single bed for Eddie, the eldest child. She did not really wake up or move and was asleep under the duvet. It felt really imposing to be standing in the doorway whilst she was asleep in her bed. We walked to the last door in the corridor which Lorraine opened to show two bunk beds. The two boys were both fast asleep in the bottom bunk. Lorraine said that they were sleeping together since the stabbing of her eldest son last week.

The complexity of home visits

The observation of Lorraine and her family was possibly the most depressing and concerning. I felt saddened and moved throughout the visit. In spite of the many challenges Jenny was able to build an initial rapport with both girls and their mother which laid the foundation for further visits and a working relationship.

Family two

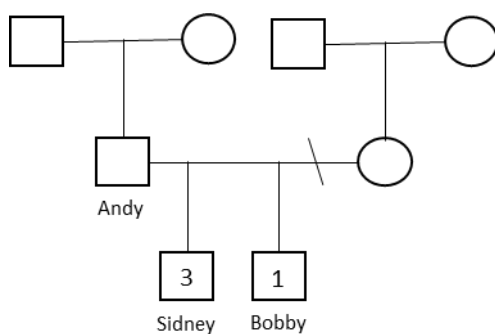


Figure three: genogram family two

The next visit, to Andy and his sons, was challenging in other ways:

I become aware of what a difficult job Jenny has on her hands. She is having to assess father's parenting capacity but she is also engaging with and observing Sidney and Bobby simultaneously. This is exacerbated by the presence of Andy's siblings who come into the room at different points. It feels hectic and because Andy seems so anxious Jenny seems to be doing quite a lot of looking after the children.

Despite the difficult environment, Jenny seemed to have a clear plan of what she intended to do in the session and her confidence enabled her to stick to this. Her preparedness made a considerable difference to her efficacy.

Jenny went back into the kitchen with Sidney asking if he'd like to do some reading which he seemed keen to do. They sat on the sofa and I returned to my position on the stool...Jenny took out a book from her bag and they sat together with Jenny putting the book over their laps... Sidney was very engaged with this and Jenny seemed quite at ease and relaxed with him. After a while Bobby wanted to come and look at what Jenny and Sidney were doing so Jenny picked him up and put him on her knee... Jenny managed to engage Sidney with the book with Bobby on her lap. He kept reaching for the book but couldn't quite get hold of it. After a few minutes Jenny took out a finger puppet. Sidney liked this so she got another out of her bag and they played with them together. Sidney wanted to play tag with them and they played this with each finger puppet taking it in turns to catch the other. At one point Sidney got more aggressive with his puppet hitting Jenny's. Jenny spoke calmly to Sidney saying that her puppet was hurt and upset and did not want to fight. This was sufficient for Sidney to continue to play how they had been before.

The Many Minds panel commented that this social worker was purposeful and clear about what she wanted to do, she '*took something of herself into that home*'. The fact that she had taken a book with her to read with Sidney and the finger puppets was thought to be really important. Perhaps the purpose of the visit was to assess the impact of the harm their father's behaviour had on the boys rather than his practical capacities. Her use of a technique of being able to determine the impact of violence through play felt deliberate and her calm response indicated that she had thought her intervention

through beforehand. I was impressed with Jenny's capacity to manage this session so effectively and the Many Minds panel agreed, commenting that it was an '*amazing piece of social work*'.

Avoidance and distancing discourse

In Jenny's case record of the first visit she writes about how overwhelmed Lorraine is and that she became tearful. It is largely descriptive as she outlines how she went '*on a walk around the accommodation*'. She elaborates on what she observed:

It was observed that on arrival, Maddy remained watching the television. She was sat close to the screen and her and Ruby were consuming pre-packed sandwiches and bottled drinks. Ruby was sat at a little table near to the television although moved onto the bed to be near her mother.

It is interesting how Jenny describes her observation in the passive voice. It has the quality of a police officer's account and serves to distance Jenny from the experience:

It was observed at this time that when Lorraine became tearful, Ruby reached out and touched her mother on the arm.

Jenny's case record describes her interactions with the two girls and their drawings similar to my own account. Her analysis of the home visit was outlined in a section entitled:

Analysis of risks to the child (achievements/progress with the CIN Plan/concerns/is the child safe/any actions taken to protect the child/what's it like to be a child in this family):

Ruby and Maddy appeared to come out of themselves as the visit progressed, and warm interactions were observed between them. It was noted that Maddy looked over to Mum a lot as she was talking and there was a playful interaction between Mum and Maddy, where Mum would make light of some of Maddy's behaviours including her eating habits... Additionally, it is acknowledged that mother is currently spending almost every minute with her children, which may be reducing her ability to maintain the 'adult' role.

It is also concerning that the children are struggling to sleep at night following the attack on J, [older brother] and them feeling scared as a consequence. This is impacting on their healthy functioning and Lorraine reported that she is feeling sleep deprived. There is a requirement to do some work with the children to support them in understanding behaviours and exploring their emotions.

... Ruby's picture clearly articulated her wish for the family to have a house where there is space for all the family. She was focused in her drawing and able to verbally articulate what it meant. Clearly the current housing is not meeting the family needs and all the children are able to recognise this.

[The four other children] were not seen today but H and A sleeping in the same bed was observed. This requires further exploration as to whether it is linked to them being scared or is their regular behaviour. Additionally, E was perceived to have a lot of space in comparison with

the rest of the family and this is worthy of exploration as to whether she is treated differently to her siblings. This will be followed up in future visits.

In this detailed write up of the visit, it is striking that Jenny absents herself by writing in the passive voice. This has the impact of distancing her from the observation, and in so doing, it seems to dismiss her perspective, intentions and feelings, almost as though she was not present, other than in an observer capacity. “*There is a requirement to do some work with the children to support them in understanding behaviours and exploring their emotions*” is written in a way that excludes Jenny from this and it is unclear whether she sees herself as doing such work.

Doing and being: the practical privileging the emotional

Jenny was in ‘doing’ mode and it seems difficult for her to engage with the emotional dimensions that become apparent in ‘being’ mode (Cooper, 2008; Lefevre, 2018). There seems to be little or no feeling in the discourse and emotions are not clearly expressed in any way. Expression of affect of both Jenny and the children is absent from her write-up of the visit, indicative of a self-protective strategy utilised by Jenny (Crittenden and Landini, 2011). Her writing demonstrates a reliance on cognitive information with relative exclusion of affect. As seen in the methodology chapter, Jenny’s interview provided evidence of her tendency to privilege the more practical aspects of her role rather than the emotional dimension:

PD: So you’re speaking to a fairly significant dilemma. You see the impact of when emotions aren’t spoken about (Jenny, yeah) but you’ve

identified some tangible things that prevent (JENNY hmm) children's emotions from being explored (Jenny, yep) when they're young and soon after they happen so, erm, what are thoughts about that, that gap?

Jenny: Erm, I think, yeah, I, I see in social work, I see in my own practice, as much as I don't want to, that there is scope for those things to get lost.... Erm, maybe those tangible things erm, where we can see what's being achieved, whether it's a family being rehoused or whether it's a new bed being brought, whether it's erm influencing where a child goes to school, or erm, and actually those, erm, emotional dimensions, I think risk getting missed.

Jenny continues to talk about her work and feelings of guilt and self-criticism seem present where she discusses the conflict between her practice and her values. The shift from the voice of 'I' to 'we' signals a move in agentic terms from talking about herself to other social workers which might serve to minimise her feelings of guilt. Perhaps she is using the institutional voice so that her actions are situated in a broader set of practices, institutionally sanctioned or 'normal' and commonplace. The statement about 'emotional dimensions risk getting missed' phrased in this way rather than 'I risk missing them' serves to downgrade her agency in relation to this kind of practice. The repetition of 'we' might signal a discomfort at this point in the interview where she may feel like she is being judged by me or that her practice is exposed. It provides an account for her actions, invoking the almost routine and inevitable nature of the pragmatic omission of the affective nature of the interactions. It has a certain functionality in the sense that it

diverts attention to the features of the situation that Jenny and her organisation can potentially influence for the better. The ensuing talk of doing things, getting them done, the practical aspect of social work seems to value the 'doing', achieving tasks with tangible outcomes. In identifying this Jenny seems to demonstrate an acknowledgement that the emotional dimension can get lost. When Jenny discusses the visit it appears that she is either seeking to provide a justification for her focus on the practical or an acknowledgement of the difficult circumstances of that particular visit.

PD: And a few minutes ago, you asked, erm some very important questions. You said do I have the time, do I have the capacity, do I have the skills? (Jenny, hmm) So I'm gonna (Jenny, yeah) put those questions back to you (Jenny, yeah).

Jenny: ... the skills side of things, erm, I think that's quite interesting. I think, erm, I think I probably have a concern, erm, about exploring emotions with children and, and knowing where it's going to take you and do you have the, the time, I think, I've come back to time but, to bring them back to a safe space. So, I think it's got to be a session where you there's not a time limit, you know you're not going to be rushing, you know you're not gonna have to be in the moment and yet thinking of the next thing, because that happens. Erm.. so yeah, erm.. don't think the job readily enables workers to, to do those kind of sessions. I think we're working with quite tight timeframes and even this afternoon having said, 'yeah, I'm free', I then get called out for a visit that I have to go and do (PD hm), erm so it's not always easy, to erm, to plan, to

plan to not to need to be somewhere (PD hmm), because things come up.

Here we see a repetition of 'I' and some hesitation. This hesitancy seems to be about acknowledging something quite difficult. Noyes (2017) identified in her research into the impact of direct work on social workers, that disturbing and troubling encounters were conveyed non-verbally through actions, gesture, tone of voice and manner of the discourse. Jenny describes a reluctance to engage for fear of what it might lead to. The change from the 'I' pronoun to 'you' might be distancing and then she gains an awareness that she has come back to the issue of time which may be a defence in itself and perhaps there is some recognition of this. Jenny seems to make a complaint at the job's limitations on workers which seems to act as a justification of why the emotional dimension gets neglected. She talks of "those kind of sessions" which serves to distance that kind of work from social workers – an 'othering' (Hoggett, 2000). The repetition of 'to', 'plan' and 'I' suggests a struggle to articulate strong and difficult feelings.

Embodied emotions

When Jenny talks of young people being full of emotions it feels like she is projecting her own feelings into them as she could so easily be talking about herself. At this point in the interview it seems like she is full of emotions and I sense that it is almost normal for her to carry her emotions inside. It is as if Jenny shows me how the young people's emotions become embodied in her.

Jenny: Well I think there's (sigh) I think in allowing greater scope to work with children and their, and work through their emotions and understand them from a younger age gives you far more, gives them far more scope to manage their emotions so we don't end up with angry teenagers or teenagers who were isolated or erm, you know, he just struggled to engage with the world 'cause actually it's enough to carry all this emotion around all the time (PD hmm). Erm, you know, whether that's anger, whether that's feeling let down, whether that's feeling worthless, you know there's a whole range of emotions that could be, ... yeah, so I think there is a greater requirement to work with young people, younger children to help them process emotions, help them to understand what those emotions are, why we have emotions, erm, and even just talking about emotions. I mean for a young person it's quite an abstract concept about what are emotions, what is, what is this that I can't see and yet makes me maybe not want to go into a room or it makes me cry or it makes me happy, erm so actually for young people to understand what emotions are, erm I think there are sessions with young people where, it might be easier to talk about emotions, so if they're able to maybe articulate I'm really angry and I'm really pissed off and to be able to say, then that more readily, I think, provokes a conversation, where you can explore that, erm about why that is, what that means, where it's come from. Erm, but I think with some younger children, where it does not so readily come forth,

and probably requires a more, erm, skilful, maybe worker, to identify and recognise and draw out, erm, I think that can be an issue as well.

In the first sentence of this section, Jenny uses an incorrect pronoun, 'you' rather than 'they'. This is interesting as what she is saying could be equally relevant in talking about the importance of discussing emotions for young people as it is for social workers. She continues on this subject and her language becomes more evocative. The list of feelings states she identified, and how the work leaves her feeling could all be Jenny's as much as the hypothetical young person she describes. Jenny conveys her view that a capacity to probe emotionality in such settings depends on the skill of the worker and perhaps requires more experience than she had at the time of the fieldwork. The hypothetical and quite elaborate telling about the range of emotions and how they vary according to a person's age, demonstrates however, that despite her 'admission' that the emotional side can remain shrouded and not unveiled in some of her interactions, she does have a certain epistemic authority and understanding about emotion.

Jenny spoke of a lack of rapport as a barrier for not talking to children and as this was her first visit to these children there was not much of a relationship present, however, she did build up a rapport with them and they seemed quite comfortable in talking to her about things, albeit at a surface level. It is interesting therefore that she did not feel that this rapport was present on the visit. Jenny's anxieties about engaging with children's emotions were apparent both by her disclosures and discussions about not doing so but also in what she did not say, in the multiple repetitions and dysfluency in her discourse. I am not seeking to negatively comment or judge her lack of willingness

to discuss deeper issues than was the case, rather to examine what underpinned her decision not to do so.

When Jenny discussed whether she felt she had the capacity and skills to engage children in relation to their emotional worlds, as seen previously, there was evidence of Jenny distancing herself from this issue switching from the 'I' to 'we' pronoun or suggesting that it is more systemic in nature across her team or the wider profession.

Jenny: Erm.. I think, for Sidney today... it was enough for me to see that he was uncomfortable (PD hmm), in having that conversation. Erm, I think in picking up on those emotions, of you know, I don't want to talk, you know, whatever that emotion is that is causing that, I think erm, there's a task on the social worker to then not jump to assumptions about what, what those emotions are. So if someone like Sidney, who's 3, erm, he might not regularly express how he feels about something, and you're happy to make an assessment and you're having to look at his language, look at his body language and listen to his speech and then try and think well what might be the emotion attached to that, is it fear? Is dad telling him off so, so, is that such an awful experience that he can't talk about it (PD hmm) or is it a case of I don't want to be seen as naughty in front of the social worker, because she comes and plays and thinks I'm a really good boy (PD hmm). Erm, so I think, erm yeah, like an open minded curiosity when thinking about what are the emotions being expressed, particularly by younger children who can't, you know, maybe aren't able to articulate how they're feeling (PD hmm) erm, I think that's

important. Erm, I think it can be tricky talking to, kind of, 3 year olds about emotions, (PD hmm). Erm, because the things we think are important as adults and professionals, aren't necessarily things they want to talk to you about... so I think it's kind of, maybe that in itself is kind of a skill, in knowing where you need to explore with a young person and, and where it's okay and actually you're using your observation of them and their setting and reading their emotions as they are (PD hmm), playing, talking, moving, erm, rather than trying to prompt them to verbalise, erm, how they feel (PD hmm).

In suggesting that engaging with younger children probably requires a more skilful worker, to identify, recognise and draw things out, it seems like Jenny is implying that she is not that worker and perhaps lacks the skills to do this or even the inclination. Jenny speaks of the interaction with Sidney as enough to see that he was not comfortable in having that conversation. It is ambiguous as to whether this is Sidney's discomfort to talk about things or Jenny's. When Jenny talks of knowing 'where you need to explore with a young person' and using one's observation of them and reading their emotions as they are, rather than trying to prompt them to verbalise how they feel, it is unclear whether she is suggesting that she does not have this skill and it is best left with someone else.

At times I feel like I am being critical of Jenny, as I move in and out of an analytic frame moving between empathic and questioning hermeneutics as IPA requires. Interestingly, when the Many Minds panel spoke critically of either Jenny or another social worker in

my study, I felt protective of them, as though I needed to defend them and their practice. Jenny displayed many moments of genuine and natural engagement with the children and clearly had capacity to work with the children, sometimes very skilfully. However, she still lacked confidence in engaging children in more difficult, deeper exploration of their inner feelings, worries and thoughts about the often, complex, worrying and confusing situations they experienced. She was not hugely experienced as a social worker yet there were thoughts that perhaps this type of emotional work was best left to other professionals better equipped to talk about the more difficult aspects of children's inner worlds.

Observer discomfort

My fieldwork notes convey how intrusive, almost inappropriate, it felt being in these families' space and impelled me to reflect on the range of settings social workers enter, much unknown before they step over the threshold into a family's living space. I wondered if Jenny was projecting her discomfort at being there onto me, or her discomfort of me being there observing, as she sometimes seemed stiff and tense. This transference seems to get projected into me as my feelings of being an observer were more palpable than previous experiences of being in an observer capacity. My further discomfort on the second visit was largely due to the fact that in addition to the father and the boys and my usual feelings of being the unspeaking observer, the father's brother, sister and her boyfriend were present and at different times came into the kitchen.

Whether in these visits the emotional experience might be split, such as might happen with co-facilitators in group work, whereby I might have carried one emotional

experience such as pain or concern and Jenny carried another, such as something more hopeful as well as the practical tasks and what she felt the children could manage might have been possible. My carrying this might have relieved Jenny in the moment.

Summary

Using IPA to analyse the interviews enabled me to reflect on the social workers' attempts to make sense of their experience. From interpreting Jenny's interview I was able to read the transcript and identify descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments before identifying emerging themes from this interview and building up themes across the other interviews. I was able to identify how Jenny spoke of doing things, getting them done, the practical aspect of social work and ascertain that she seemed to value 'doing' - achieving tasks with tangible outcomes. From these, I identified themes of identity, authority and ownership (shift from I to we) and how practical dimensions of practice often privilege the emotional. The use of a psycho-social approach as a way of analysing my observations seemed to reveal what I felt were perhaps the projective dynamics of the researcher-researched relationship which enabled a deeper understanding. In the observations of Jenny's two sessions with children a psycho-social analytic approach enabled me to research beneath the surface and uncover more unconscious communications, dynamics and defences at play in the research environment. For instance, in relation to my feelings of awkwardness as an observer, a psycho-social approach encouraged a more sustained self-reflection on not just what I observed but also my own role in the research, my emotional involvements and the affective relationship between me and Jenny and the family in the room. Being able to think of issues of transference and counter transference were important in opening up

what belonged to me in terms of my discomfort as a researcher and the intrusion that felt tangible and what belonged to Jenny as the social worker going into families' homes. Using a discourse analysis of the case records offered further insight into the emotional dynamics during the child-social worker interactions where issues of proximity and distance were identified. In line with some of the literature identified in chapter two, it is evident from my research that social workers engage in distancing and avoidant practice, perhaps as strategies of self-preservation. Similar themes are identified in the next case study chapter.

Chapter 5: Alana

A brief biography of Alana and our first encounter

This chapter is a detailed exploration of another social worker, Alana. As with Jenny, I presented my observation account to a Many Minds panel. Alana was the first person in the team who I observed when commencing fieldwork in July 2015. She was leaving the team and needing to complete all of her visits and administration beforehand. Alana was chatty, warm and had a level of confidence about her. In her interview she cried early on, surprised at how emotional she was feeling about leaving the team and her work.

Day one: A goodbye visit to a family

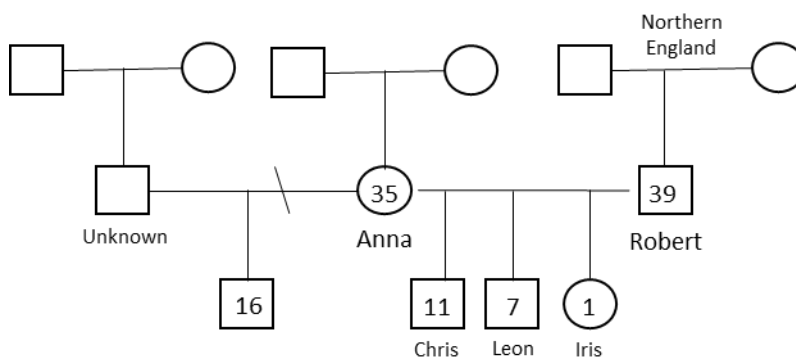


Figure four: Genogram

I observed Alana undertaking a home visit to a White British family consisting of a mother, father and their three children: Chris, eleven years old; Leon seven years old; and Iris, one year old. Alana was vocal as we drove to the family's home, conveying that the purpose of the visit was to say goodbye to the family. It made me wonder why she was leaving the team and where she was going, resisting the urge to know more until I interviewed her subsequently. Alana outlined how the family had recently moved to the

area from another part of England, and after the birth of their daughter, the mother had experienced post-natal depression and was drinking regularly. The children, subject to child protection plans, were allocated to Alana fairly recently. Now she was leaving they would be reallocated.

I was struck by how quickly Alana was talking in imparting the information to me. This may have been to give me a clear picture of the family but also it felt like she liked to have the opportunity to talk about her work with someone who was interested. She told me that mum could be quite open and would listen to Alana's concerns about the children. She could also be defensive. The local drug and alcohol service are involved ... offering mum sessions three times a week. Alana has told mum the fact that he is offering such frequent sessions shows how concerned he must be about her drinking. She told me that once mum told her she was abstinent then later that meeting told her she had already had a beer. Dad is considered to be a protective factor.

On reflection, I can picture the hurried, manic way Alana talked during the journey. Her description of Anna as defensive led me to reflect on how this was unsurprising given that a social worker was visiting to assess her parenting capacity. Alana said that she was not sure how good a case this was for me to observe as she had not had much opportunity to engage the children, only having worked with them for a few weeks. She conveyed that she felt guilty about this. Perhaps the torrent of words she relayed about the family was her way of ensuring she was contained before she went to see them.

Whilst they were talking Dad passed Iris some ear defenders which she put on and started playing with. She clambered over her mum and looked around taking them off and putting them on again in different ways. At one point Alana was near to Iris on her mum's lap and she spoke to her and touched her hair which was sticking up over the ear defenders. They exchanged a brief momentary contact before Iris rolled back over to the other side of her mum.

Robert seemed to symbolise his need to protect his young daughter by shielding her from the conversation that was about to take place. Perhaps this also signified his discomfort at being party to this discussion.

The importance of relationships: Difficulties relating

Alana asked Mum if she had been going to her sessions with the drug and alcohol service. She said she had been going for group sessions which she quite liked and found insightfulhad not seen the keyworker this week and ... had tried to contact the IAPT service about counselling but had not been able to get hold of them. Alana said she would follow this up before she left. Mum said that she had also seen some information about couples counselling with Relate which she thought was free. Alana said she thought these sessions would require payment but mum seemed quite sure they were either free or at least cheap. Dad said his friend had gone to Relate because he had anger issues and used to fly off the handle which he then laughed at... Iris was squirming and rolling around on her mum, not seeming able to sit still

but wanting attention. She would quite often look over at Alana or at me and smile as though she wanted to engage in contact with us both but was too shy to come over... I was struck by how little contact Alana seemed to have with Iris.

The conversation about Anna's drinking seemed to be process driven and Alana did not explore what lay beneath the drinking. There seemed a lack of an emotional connection to the alcoholism. This was the only time that there was physical contact between Alana and any of the children. Given the importance of touch during home visits (Ferguson, 2010; 2016; Green, 2017), particularly with young children, this seems a significant omission, perhaps signifying a lack of confidence or distancing practice. My own intrusive feelings might have been part of Alana's transference at not feeling able to be so intimate with Iris due to uncertainty about whether touch is permitted. On her final planned visit, Alana might have been reluctant to explore too deeply for fear of what she may uncover. Despite being aware of the issues for this family, the discussion remained superficial. The parents demonstrated a need to want to relate to each other and to Alana, however, this seemed to get lost or ignored. Robert's nervous laughter when discussing his friend's anger management seemed like an open invitation to explore issues of anger and domestic violence. Iris' squirming seemed to embody the sense of awkwardness in the room. The Many Minds panel focused on the tension within the family and how Alana's response to couple therapy focused on financial matters rather than exploring what they might want help with. An absence of, and difficulty in, relating between Alana and the couple seemed present.

Engaging with children's emotions

We went to the boys' bedroom...Chris and Leon were sitting on one of the two beds playing a computer game on a large TV... As Alana talked I was moved by how Leon was sitting close to his brother as though for support, occasionally leaning into him. Both boys continued to play the game and looked at Alana, answering her questions. She reminded them that she was leaving and today was their last meeting and a new social worker, E, would be coming next time. They did not seem visibly upset by this. Alana asked them how they had been and they talked about finishing school. Leon said he was going to have a new teacher and said her name and said he was a bit sad about leaving his old teacher. He did not mention any children in his class which Alana picked up on asking about friends, but he did not mention any. Chris proudly showed us a photograph of his class stuck on his door.

Leon's experience of loss was palpable although Alana did not address this. It may be that this was just too difficult to acknowledge for her. Alana continued to talk to the boys asking how they were feeling and whether anything was making them happy or sad.

Leon said that he missed home and his friends there. He said he would like to go back. Alana asked what was the best thing about being down here and he said that his grandparents were here.

Avoidance

Leon opened up further, seeming to reach out to Alana, wanting to talk about his feelings of sadness, related to the loss of his home and friends and his wish to return. Alana's abrupt change of subject about what was the best thing about being where they were now seemed to both disconnect herself and Leon from these sad feelings. The sense of Alana avoiding the more painful dimensions of practice felt striking as confirmed in her interview.

Alana spoke about the fact that she was leaving and that they would be having a new social worker. She asked them what they understood about her visiting. Leon said it was to make sure they were safe and then his voice quietened as he said and 'that nothing is wrong'. Alana did not quite hear and asked him to repeat the second bit of what he said. He became a little shy and Chris stepped in and said 'to make sure everything is okay'. Alana stated that she would be speaking to her colleague who would be taking over as their social worker and she would arrange to come and see them. She said she thought the boys had met her before and they went through the social workers they had known. Two were from their previous home and then Alana was the third. They had liked one of these two and asked if the new one would be like her.

The boys referred to having had multiple social workers and were faced with yet another change. However, Alana did not attend to this, instead talking about how the new social worker was nice and she was sure they would like her. This negated any feelings of loss and sadness the boys might have had about another social worker leaving. Their feelings

about a new social worker remained unexplored. The boys asked Alana if the new social worker would have colouring paper and pencils, as though these were a transitional object connecting Alana and the new social worker. The Many Minds panel questioned the boys identifying with the colouring activities as fun and wondered what had been going on in previous visits as, had they been engaged in discussions about what it was like to be living at home for them, these should have been quite difficult and uncomfortable if one was to be able to gauge how life was for them. Whilst this perspective has some value the use of play and colouring can put children at ease whilst talking about difficult issues.

Sometimes Leon looked at me as he was talking and I felt like I wanted to say something but I just smiled at him. I wondered what role Chris played as the eldest child and whether he felt a sense of responsibility. Leon said again that he wanted to go back home and that he was sad since he was here. Alana said that it would get easier and he would make friends.

Turning a blind eye

My reflections during this observation were of Alana's lack of engagement with Leon's emotions that he expressed directly to her, as though turning a 'blind eye' to these painful feelings. This concept has been used to describe the kind of individual and organisational defences that manifest when social workers in complex, child protection work, appear to overlook or turn a blind eye to often, obvious intelligence that parents or carers were inflicting abuse on children in their care (Cooper and Lousada, 2005; Rustin, 2005). It is as though Alana unconsciously chose not to respond to Leon's

articulated feelings of loss and sadness for fear of 'opening the floodgates', perhaps due to her awareness that she would not be there to deal with these emotions. This might also be a protective measure, a defence against the guilt she felt at leaving the boys when there was much work still to be done. Waddell (1989) suggests that such devices of survival militate against thinking and individually, 'induce excessive work, a tendency to act, an urgency to do something, to respond in kind to the dominant mode – by splitting, obsessing, carping, drinking, hardening or becoming depersonalised' (Waddell, 1989: 15). Perhaps Alana's decision to leave the team is a striking example of this.

Alana said she would have liked to have brought the new social worker to meet them and wondered if they were okay with her just coming or if they would like Alana to introduce them if she could. They said they would like her to do that so she said she would try and bring her to meet them before she left. Leon said he had an idea. He said why doesn't she become his social worker and Alana could be Chris' social worker. This led to Chris asking why Alana was leaving. She said she had a new job to go to so that she could learn some new things a bit like when they left one class to go to the next so they could learn new things. This seemed to make sense to the boys but I was moved at Leon's suggestion and apparent need to keep hold of Alana in some way and Chris' curiosity as to where she was going.

Alana's declaration that she would find a time to return and introduce the boys to their new social worker seemed helpful in supporting them to manage the transition to a new worker. Whether this happened remains unknown and may have served to make the

boys (and Alana) feel better in the moment. Before leaving, Alana informed the parents that Leon had told her about his new teacher and that he was sad about leaving their old home and missed his friends. Anna was surprised, commenting that 'he was not a people person and did not really have any close friends up there'. I wondered what she meant by this and how Leon would feel if he knew this. It saddened me as my impression was that he was a 'people person', able to reach out, engage and make a connection, with Alana and with me, further evidence of transference dynamics in the research encounter.

Alana's case record of this 'child protection visit' outlined her discussion with the parents the tasks and risks identified in the child protection plan. It is written in brief bullet point form. Whilst Alana was busy completing her work before leaving the following week, the brevity and formatting of the record seeks to distance her from the emotional dimension of the work, as seen in Jenny's case record. Furthermore, its focus is practical with little, if any, consideration of the emotional nature of the visit, as exemplified by this extract:

- *A has found going to Alcohol groups insightful yet not had one to one with worker.*

- *A advised having not heard from ITALK despite chasing this. She advised she will call again, yet shared seeing a flyer stating Relate would be doing a drop in at one of the local children centres.*

The descriptive nature of the note is consistent with the lack of depth in the discussion about this during the visit. Alana writes that the children were seen together and further brief points have the effect of making it easier to report on practical things rather than going into any detail of the emotional dimension. She states:

Leon told me he still did not have a name tag at school. Nor did he have one at the Junior School.

This seems significant as Alana knew from the session that Leon did not feel like he was part of the school. They did not make him feel welcome or like he belonged because he did not have a name tag. The impact this had on Leon and how it might have influenced his wish to return to his previous school was not explored with Leon nor reflected upon subsequently. Were Alana able to demonstrate that she understood how this made him feel and relay this to his parents and his school, it might have enabled them all to support Leon in managing this difficult transition. The absence of this type of thinking is suggestive of Alana not being open to Leon's communication of anxiety or distress that seemed to underlie their interaction. Perhaps it is too difficult for Alana to acknowledge this in her case record.

I asked the boys about what the role of a SW is - Leon said it was to 'keep us safe' and 'make sure we're ok!' Chris agreed. We talked more about importance of being safe and I asked what can make them feel unsafe - Leon said getting lost.

Reflecting on this now I wonder if the boys felt safe or that Alana was able to keep them safe. Similarly, whether they would be able to tell her if they were not feeling safe. My sense was that Leon was feeling lost, as symbolised by the lack of a name tag at school.

The case note continued with:

Things that make us happy / sad / worry discussed.

Leon said falling over on his roller blades make him sad. We talked about practicing to improve his skills.

Chris said there was not anything making him feel sad.

Leon said he would be sad to leave his teacher. And his social worker...

Leon said he misses home and we explored what would make being here better - he said if grandparents were here. There is a visit arranged. Both expressed concern of a new SW taking over, with Chris querying why I had to leave, Leon particularly presented as anxious about this.

Given that Alana's leaving featured prominently in the home visit, my observation record and her interview, it is interesting that it is not given much attention here. Perhaps it was too painful for Alana to write about given the guilty feelings she had about leaving and the surprise she spoke of at their reaction to her leaving.

Distancing discourse

Analysis of risk to the child (achievements / progress with the CP plan / concerns / is the child safe / any actions taken to protect the child / what's it like to be a child in this family):

All family members engaged with the visit. Parents presented appropriately and seem motivated to engage in support available.

Parents seem keen to ensure the children receive required support in school.

A has attended Alcohol service and continues to go twice weekly yet has not yet had the one to one work. Whilst there have not been any domestic incidents or obvious evidence of A drinking, she presents as very red faced which as previously stated can be related to alcohol consumption.

It is interesting to note that there is no discussion of the children in this analysis. The conversation that Alana had with the boys is omitted and there is no analysis of what she thinks the boys felt about their situation and the impact home life was having upon them. There is one practical action recorded in the section entitled 'Plan' and the 'next visit due' section states 'to be arranged'. There is no mention of a joint visit with the new social worker. Whereas Jenny's case record contained no mention of Jenny herself, Alana's record contains the word 'I' seven times and 'we' is mentioned on three occasions. Whilst Alana's presence in her record makes it seem less distancing, there are

still aspects of the discourse that give it a detached quality such as ‘after speaking to the children, this was fed back to parents’. There is no mention of the fact that it was Alana that spoke to the children. This has an artificial quality to it which accentuates the surface function of language, providing a literal meaning, serving to keep both Alana and the reader emotionally distant from the story being told. The use of bullet points and a listing syntax, prevents the text from being structured as dialogical in nature. Fairclough (2001) suggests a style of syntax such as this sets up a non-dialogical divide between those making the assertions and those they are addressed at. In a different way to Jenny, Alana’s case record also manages to suppress the expression of affect of the children and herself, indicative of a self-protection strategy, whereby emotions are pushed away. There is no sense of how Leon and Chris are from the written information.

Further distancing

In Alana’s interview the question of her leaving was referred to early on:

PD: ...anything else you want to say about your professional role and going into this line of work?

Alana: Erm.....I don't know really, I think what I'm doing is the job that I saw myself doing. This is the job that I enjoy in terms of the social work experience I've got so far. Erm, I like the court work. I enjoy going through care proceedings, picked it up quicker than I thought I would... erm yes so I think I, I enjoy working with the families and the new job is really, really far away from this and that's not cos I don't want to do it it's just because of opportunities and to progress and being stuck again otherwise which I think will happen (PD mm mm) and will then

*potentially have a negative impact upon myself and my team if I stay so
as much as I am gonna miss the work I think it's for the right reasons..
but I do see myself coming back to frontline social work, I don't see
myself staying away for any significant periods*

Alana seems to be clear about enjoying court work. When she talks about working with families, there seems to be less clarity -'I think I, I, enjoy' which sounds more hesitant perhaps than when talking of court proceedings. As Alana talked about her new job, it felt as though there was perhaps a quality of trying to convince me, the interviewer, or herself that she was doing so in order to progress. She talked of only having been in the team for a year and of being stuck which seems contradictory. It may be that there are other, more complex, reasons below the surface, such as the work being difficult and her needing some distance from it. She said that she would return to frontline practice in the future.

*PD: I'm interested to hear about your experience of working with the
children that we met this morning and your thoughts about the session
that I observed.*

*Alana: yeah, the reason obviously the visit was not chosen specifically...
it was like opportunistic really in that sense, haven't met the family that
many times, I'm quite a new social worker to them so I've probably seen
them three times, four times if that, erm.... My relationship with them is
still very new erm, I kind of, I felt like I haven't invested myself too much*

with the children, purposefully, because I knew that I'd be handing it over in such a short period of time having taken the case, so I was kind of resistant I wanted to kind of not become not too much of a figure for them knowing that I was not gonna be there for a long time, but from today I think that I underestimated the influence really and the impact (voice softens) and the relationship that we've already kind of managed to establish erm my kind of working with those children just in general, my initial visit with them.

When Alana begins to talk about the family, there is a lack of the 'I' pronoun which has a distancing effect. She referred to not being involved for long as an explanation for not having much of a relationship with them and when she discusses not having 'invested myself too much with the children' there is a hesitation 'erm, I kind of, I felt like'... indicative perhaps of her discomfort that she has resisted becoming 'too much of a figure for them' which might lead to feeling guilty at underestimating her influence. It is at this point that her voice softens indicating an emotional response to this. She continues:

Today I kind of go, went with an open mind I hadn't got any particular reasons, things that I needed to address with the children or raise and really just wanted to revisit the fact that I was leaving and explain to them what was gonna happen erm I'm surprised really by their reaction, they seemed quite anxious about that and put out by it erm and again I kind of, sometimes I will go with an intention of what it is I'm gonna

achieve but it's because I did not kind of want to go too deep in terms of what they're feeling and stuff because I'm gonna be leaving and they're gonna have to repeat it all to somebody else and start a new relationship, I think they shared quite readily actually. I could've probably turned the computer off or got them to turn the computer off but I also did not want them to feel uncomfortable.

Alana talks of being surprised by their reaction and of their feeling anxious and put out by her leaving. In contrast with my observation notes where issues of loss are omnipresent, particularly for Leon, it is surprising that Alana has not thought about the impact of her leaving on these children. In terms of preparation for her departure, one might imagine supervision would address such issues but perhaps it did not or was absent. Alana discussed not wanting 'to go too deep in terms of what they're feeling and stuff'. This would be consistent with not wanting to 'open up a can of worms' which might be understandable given that she is leaving, but it also feels like a projection of her emotional state where she does not want to deeply explore how she might be feeling, possibly related to feelings of guilt. She mentions not wanting to make the boys feel uncomfortable but part of the role of the social worker is about having to have difficult conversations that often lead to feelings of discomfort and being willing to bear children's suffering (Henderson, 2017). These themes continue in the interview:

PD: So do you think that was a typical erm example of your practice with children?

Alana: yeah I think so... I don't think I'm probably in the right space to because I think everything I'm doing now is about saying goodbye to children and that they're not ready for that and they're not prepared for that in the same way that I am so they're thinking this is just a regular catch up, having a chat with Alana whatever, and in my head I probably hadn't prepared for the look on his face when I told him I was not gonna be coming back if you know what I mean (PD: mmm) so I think I was probably more unprepared and taken aback by their reactions than I normally would because I'm leaving and that's emotional for me.

PD: So what was it like hearing, hearing and seeing that today?

Alana: Its' quite, I feel quite guilty, I feel guilty because I think like I said I underestimated the impact and also because I really do, do care like I actually want to see it through and when I had my interview for the job they said to me about erm what do you like about your job and I said about it being rewarding. They said what are you going to miss the most? I said actually doing the work with the families like that's really important to me so it's quite hard for me to say goodbye to them so (voice wavers) I'm gonna get upset, I'm so not prepared for that (laughs)..... (speaking whilst crying) I think because it's building up, you've got me at a time when... I'm leaving a job that I really love.....(crying)...Oh God....I don't' even know why I'm crying.

Acknowledging emotions

In the interview it is as though Alana is able, perhaps for the first time, to acknowledge the impact that her leaving is having on herself and her practice. By identifying that she is not in the 'right space' she acknowledges her own emotions and the impact these have on her. Of saying goodbye to the boys, she observes that they are not ready, however, it seems that under the surface, given the opportunity for exploration, neither is she. It appears that neither the boys nor Alana were prepared for her leaving. She is able to recognise that she feels guilty and this is evident in her seeming need to justify that she cares – 'I really do, do care'. During the interview Alana appears to unlock the feelings she has about leaving her job and is able to get in touch with these, becoming upset as she realises that she will miss the work with families most of all and acknowledging that it is difficult to say goodbye.

Alana: I think it's just because..... this week like I've realised that I'm kind of wrapping everything up so it's just a little bit...(sniffs) I think if I'd kind of burnt out a bit or had enough then it'd be different. You kind of get ready to go don't you? You kind of already left and a lot of people say ah, yeah the lady who's leaving as well in the team, she, has probably already left in her head so it does not really matter if she gets all her visits done and completes all the assessments whereas I'm like really wanna do all of that before I go (sniffs) so.... Maybe erm.. I'm not really ready to leave front line work it's just because I have to really and because I'll probably get on the nerves of my manager if I stay because I'll be really challenging and I am really challenging (laughs) so and I

know that so I've gotta.. gotta do it so I was really taken aback but not, I did not feel upset at the time (audible intake of breath) and today on a different visit when I took the new social worker out I felt really happy and confident that they're in good hands and that her being there was really positive ... I think in an ideal world we'd do that with all the visits and I'd feel a lot better and it'd be a better end for the children and the families but it's never gonna happen cos of capacity.

At the beginning of this extract Alana, surprised by her tears, reflects on why she is crying, saying that it is because she is 'wrapping everything up'. She goes on to say that 'it would be different if 'I'd kind of burnt out or had enough' as then she would have prepared for leaving, 'you kind of get ready to go don't you?' which contradicts her earlier point about the children not being prepared for her leaving in the same way she was. Alana then refers to another social worker in the team who has 'already left in her head so it does not really matter if she gets all her visits done...whereas I'm like really wanna do all of that before I go'. This feels like Alana is splitting off and projecting her negative feelings about leaving into a colleague, leaving Alana to be able to identify only positive reasons for leaving. Her continued explanation for leaving 'it's just because I have to really...I'll probably get on the nerves of my manager because I'll be really challenging and I am really challenging' (laughs) does not feel completely authentic. Alana's guilt returns towards the end of the extract where she admits to feeling 'quite bad...that these families are going to have to go backwards' and 'guilty for the children that aren't gonna get that handover'.

Observer discomfort

My discomfort in the observer role was patently present, as though the experience of being with these two boys and taking in their states of mind and emotions was possible for me but not for Alana. The very nature of the observer role prohibiting active participation, enabled me to just 'be' and to reflect whereas Alana seemed fixated in the domain of production (Lang et al, 1990) or the 'doing' domain or the which precluded the opportunity to 'be' and reflect (Lefevre, 2017; 2018). It was as though I was emotionally engaged with the three people present in the room whilst simultaneously, adequately detached to hold onto and reflect upon the emotional transactions observed. Alana's response to Leon's repeated view that he wanted to return home felt like a complete denial or avoidance of his emotions. Perhaps it was easier to try and make him feel better than acknowledge the sadness he felt at being away from his home, particularly as she was leaving and would not be around to support him. Such action however, failed to acknowledge his feelings and may have signalled that he could not be honest about his feelings to a social worker.

I wondered if Leon felt she had understood him at this point and if anyone acknowledged his feelings. This seems like I am being critical of Alana – it's not intended to be, just an observation of what I saw. I was also aware of how difficult it is to carry out such a discussion in the boys' bedroom whilst they are playing a computer game as she's being observed, with the parents in the next room and as she is trying to get everything done before she leaves next week. Alana asked if they had any questions about

anything before she left. Leon said yes and then started to speak but couldn't remember what he was going to say. I had the feeling that he did not actually have anything planned to say but that it was more an attempt to keep Alana talking and in the room perhaps not wanting to say goodbye to her. It seemed like another loss or separation he was having to face in a short space of time.

Summary

The three types of data enabled the identification of some of the unspoken or unconscious communication between Alana and the family and between Alana and me in the interview. This made it possible to draw out contradictions across the data. Alana's interview elucidates that she enjoys working with families and her new job is much removed from this, but it does not elaborate why she is choosing to leave a job that she really likes. The analysis of the observation and case record both identified multiple examples of Alana seeking to distance herself from some of the more painful dimensions of the work. Her inability to think about the impact of her departure on the family and herself is suggestive of a detachment from the emotional dimensions of practice. The next chapter continues to discuss these emergent themes of distancing and avoidance within the context of all participants, providing further evidence of why such practice might exist and how it impacts on engagement with children's emotions.

Chapter 6: The systemic, family and individual dimensions of practice

Introduction to chapter

This chapter merged out of an attempt to disaggregate three dimensions of practice arising from the analysis of the interviews of social workers and supported by the other data from observations, case records and my ethnographic observations and reflections. In the process of writing three separate chapters it became apparent that they were inseparable so after discussion with my supervisor I merged them into one chapter, with three sections which correspond with the super-ordinate themes that emerged from the IPA as outlined diagrammatically in the methodology chapter:

- Systemic dimensions of practice
- Child and family dimensions of practice
- Individual dimensions of practice

Systemic dimensions

'It's a juggling act' – Managing multiple dimensions of practice

The 'juggling act' social workers have to manage became apparent in the observations I undertook, where the multitude and range of roles that they needed to attend to, often simultaneously, was evident. Parton (1991, p.194) writes of the overlapping therapeutic, preventative and legal domains in the child and family social work:

It involves the superimposition of legal duties and rights upon the therapeutic and preventative responsibilities, essentially for the protection of clients.

It often seemed impossible for the social workers to effectively attend to the multifaceted roles required of them. Balancing these roles simultaneously presented huge challenges, exacerbated by the complexity of family circumstances, involving multiple issues including inadequate housing, deprivation, mental illness, disability, neglect, abuse and loss. Much of Sam's interview focused on her anxiety about the competing dimensions that needed attending to in relation to Amber, subject to a child protection plan, due to the diminishing adequacy of care as a result of her grandmother's advancing dementia and increasing level of care this required from her grandfather. To compound this, Amber's father suffered a brain injury which meant his parenting was inadequate.

"There's quite a lot of things that need to be managed to ensure that Amber is safe in the middle of it all. So there's the Nan's house, Grandad's coping strategies, Dad's behaviour, contact with family members, and school and it's about managing kind of all of them to ensure Amber is safe in the middle of it rather than take her out of that and so it's hard, it's a hard juggling act and there's a lot of different kind of micro bits that need to be looked at.

I observed social workers undertaking multiple tasks, bound by agency requirements and deadlines, whilst needing to engage with parents and children, often in inadequate or constrained environments. They negotiated concurrent, competing priorities including managing family dynamics and relationships compounded by the impact of the home itself which might have been dirty, smelly and felt unsafe or hostile. Such

conditions increased the likelihood of superficial, non-intimate practice (Ferguson, 2016).

I see a pug sitting at the baby gate on the kitchen door. I follow Adam in and notice that behind the door to the living room Jamie is sitting on the sofa. Grandmother asks Jamie to stand up so she can put a cover on the sofa which I notice is dirty and covered in stains which I guess are probably from the dogs. The house smells of dogs, is untidy and feels quite unpleasant to be in (Observation, family 6).

This observation, like most, revealed embodied social work practice where social workers' senses and emotions were central to complex interactions with families in their homes (Ferguson, 2018). The requirements of the visit seemed ambitious, particularly as it lasted for less than an hour. Adam was subsequently undertaking another visit before going back to the office to complete administrative tasks. Despite government policy prescribing how often children at risk need to be seen and seen alone, Ferguson (2018, p.68) identifies the absence of guidance or social work literature on where that should be done and best practice in home visits. He suggests perhaps in the absence of this, they act on their knowledge, skill and intuition as opposed to bureaucratic rules, 'making' their practice.

Barbara identified the importance of the evidence-gathering nature of her role in order that children could be effectively protected, often seeming at variance to direct work with children, such as preparing for them to move or relationship restoration (Whincup, 2017).

“That’s about evidence gathering, which I’m quite good at and I’ve got some good evidence from other kids in cases that I’ve actually took to court straight away, erm, but dealing with the after effects, I don’t really know what to do...I’m good with the evidence stuff because I’m quite focused and can be quite objective...I just want the evidence...yeah, yeah (laughs) that’s what I always go for the evidence, and I do that (lowers voice) I will do that.

Barbara’s approach to her work, with increased emphasis on procedural knowledge over direct work, is consistent with other research (Whittaker, 2011) and within the milieu that decisions relating to child welfare are undertaken in a legalised context in which the requirement for forensic evidence is prioritised (Parton, 1996). Barbara spoke of the challenge balancing evidence-gathering with a child just moving into a new placement. With the need for evidence paramount, it appears that the work needed to help prepare children for the move to a new placement and the support needed to help them settle (Lefevre, 2008), is relegated to second place, if undertaken at all.

Administrative burden

Social workers often struggled to be as involved as they would like with the children and families allocated to them due to administrative demands, court deadlines and workloads. Sandra spoke of the challenges of needing to prioritise different parts of her work:

I’ve got four court papers to prepare, thankfully I’ve got a month to do it and I’m thinking like I’m out and I’ve only got to do those. My priority,

whether it's wrong or right, is to go and see those children. So even though I know I've got a pile of work there, I know that I've got to see those kids, that's first and foremost. The courts can tell me I'm wrong but those children have got to be seen first.

This tension between balancing and prioritising competing demands was expressed by Sam, stating, *'I have to look at everything and I can't do everything. It's impossible'*. Excessive requirements around case recording, inputting data onto IT systems, high caseloads and adherence to performance measures (Broadhurst et al., 2010; Munro, 2011) are compounded by the often stressful environments, isolated working practices and little support. As Barbara articulated:

The caseloads just don't allow you to do that. If you don't meet your statutory targets you are given a sheet with all the ones that are outstanding....you have to compromise to meet them.

Whilst not underestimating large caseloads, I was struck by the contradiction in Barbara's interview. She spoke of caseloads preventing her from engaging with children whilst commenting that she did not like playing with children or know how to. Lack of time and busy caseloads can serve to act as a defence against engaging with the more difficult and painful aspects of children's emotional lives. Barbara disclosed that once she had gathered the evidence to support children being removed from their parents' care, she lacked the skill and knowledge to deal with the impact such removals had. This accords with Lefevre's (2015) research into how social work students' communication

skills develop whereby those who focus most on structural and organisational issues tend to attribute most of social workers' problems in engaging and communicating with children to their busy caseloads and lack of time. Social workers' collusion with busyness acting as a barrier to engaging with children is understandable as it is often emotionally and creatively demanding, and without support and a sense of self-efficacy the temptation to avoid such engagement may be high.

Sam commented on the lack of time affecting the type of work she could do with young people:

I don't think I have time to go into, do as much work with young people as I need to. I have like half an hour, hour max...all those different issues going on for Amber, it will be impossible for me to focus on one all the time and cover everything.

The presence of performance measures relating to home visits and timescales both pressured social workers and persecuted them if unmet, as well as preventing them from engaging with children meaningfully, such as talking openly about their feelings. Out of the eight observations I undertook, only three were for an hour. The remainder ranged from 40 minutes (two), 45 minutes (one) to 50 minutes (two). The majority of these visits also required the social worker to engage with the parents so the actual time that was spent seeing the child/ren alone was even less.

Table two: Observations (see Appendix 5 for original table)

OBSERVATIONS

Visit number	Gender and age	Nature of the case	Location of visit	Children seen alone How long?	Length of visit (minutes)
1	Boy 11 Boy 7 Girl 1	Child protection visit - Alcohol misuse	Family home	Yes in bedroom for about 20 minutes	50 minutes
2	Girl 7 Girl 6 Boy 9 Boy 11 Girl 14	Housing situation and impact on children	Self-contained flat in Community Centre	No – not easily possible due to space	1 hour
3	Boy 3 Girl 5	LAC visit – in care proceedings	Foster carer's home	Yes in bedroom 10 minutes	40 minutes
4	Boy 3 Boy 1	Child protection – parenting capacity assessment of father	Paternal grandmother's home	No	1 hour
5	Girl 9	Child protection – emotional harm	School	Yes Whole session	45 mins
6	Boy 6	Child protection – emotional abuse/neglect	Maternal Grandmother's house SGO	Yes 30 mins	50 mins
7	Boy 13 Girl 10	Child protection – emotional abuse	Family home	Yes 20 mins 15 mins	1 hour
8	Boy 9	Child protection – emotional abuse, neglect	Office	Yes whole session	40 mins

If such practice is typical, it denies opportunities for social workers to relate to children and explore in depth the range of issues that are fundamental to children's emotional safety and well-being. Limited contact with children diminishes the likelihood of a trusting relationship developing in which issues raised by children can be explored. Sandra, whose caseload was higher, was vocal in her frustration at the time spent on the administrative side of the role:

I've got 47 cases, 47 children currently.....I try and treat all of them the same, I try and give them all an equal amount of attention...I think we spend way too much time sat behind a laptop or computer, so much

paperwork. We're not given that opportunity to be social workers that we're trained as. And I think that's a shame of it, because at the end of the day, it's children that's missing on out. While we're sitting there dotting our I's and crossing our T's. We should be out there working with families.

Much has been documented in relation to the amount of time social workers spend inputting data rather than with families (Broadhurst, et al. 2010). The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) found that social workers spent 29 hours on administration in an average working week. BASW (2018) launched the '80-20 campaign' in an attempt to redress the balance of time spent working directly with families (<https://www.basw.co.uk/news/article/?id=1793>). The theoretical concept of organisational defences as attempts at managing anxiety, in which the importance of relationships is denied, provides insight into such behaviour (Menziess-Lyth, 1988). Such systems helps keep social workers from the troubling anxieties that might exist below the surface about responsibility for death and harm which are rationally managed rather than faced and tolerated (Whittaker, 2011). Whilst Government policy addresses such practice by imposing additional bureaucracy to manage such anxiety child protection systems continue to be organised as systems of defence against anxiety (Hoggett, 2000) and social workers will not be supported to engage in the most difficult dimensions of practice.

Stress

Social workers highlighted the impact of workloads on their wellbeing. Barbara said that it was unmanageable, making her ill, with symptoms easing following her resignation. Sandra talked about similar stress arising from her caseload, albeit from a different perspective:

It does get stressful. Erm, hence I'd be sat down working til God knows when every night (laughs) so yeah it does get a bit stressful. But I don't shy away from any of that. That's really important not to shy from it....Sometimes it can get you a little bit down, erm, because I'm always worried about making sure I got all my notes on, making sure I've seen the children. Next week I'm supposedly got a week's leave. I'm gonna come in... I am definitely going to be here for a day and a half to make sure all my, you know, visits are up to date. It can get really stressful, I'm not gonna lie, I've had a tear or two. I believe social work takes over your life completely...I don't mind because I love my job....I mean I don't mind working, I'm a worker, but yeah, when you're working 7 days a week, some weeks... but I think you only get out what you put on in. But it's yeah...

These social workers demonstrated different ways of managing work-related stress. Barbara could no longer contemplate remaining in post. Her interview contained examples of evocative language that elicited emotional and somatic feeling states, which left me feeling like she had emotionally 'dumped' her highly charged emotional

state onto me. Her exaggerated and negative affect consisted of splitting, embellishing and changing the presentation of mixed negative feelings to attract my attention and manipulate my feelings and response to her (Crittenden and Landini, 2011). This alternated between the display of a strong, angry invulnerable self, blaming others, whilst appearing weak and helpless and seeking support from me. Barbara seemed to embody the state of mind written about by Ferguson (2016, p14) which needs to be:

...understood in terms of the interaction of organisational processes, the practitioner's qualities, their visceral experience and emotional state during face-to-face encounters, and the atmospheres within which the practice occurs.

Sandra, by contrast, presented as capable and strong, inhibiting any negative affect, seemingly adopting a position of taking on a compulsive caregiving role, rescuing or caring for others, at her own cost. She conveyed how she worked all hours necessary, which were still insufficient, coming in during leave. I was left feeling more worried about Sandra and whether she would be able to identify that her position was unsustainable nor good practice, easily leading to burnout.

Family dimensions of practice: The Importance of relationships

The social work literature on relationships being inextricably linked to emotions is longstanding (Perlman, 1979) and Munro (2011) identified relationships as crucial to successful child and family social work, acknowledging how relationships had been subjugated in favour of managerialism. I observed social workers meeting with children in different settings, and with one exception, the child/ren were seen alone of varying duration. Social workers used various techniques and methods to engage children and young people – talking, play, drawing and written exercise sheets. All encounters

demonstrated the importance of the relationship and used this to different degrees of success to connect with the children on an emotional level.

[Jamie] comes back with a box of Spider man cake mix which he shows Adam. I get the sense that Adam is quite important to him. He goes and gets his table football game and he and Adam play this a few times... In the end Jamie wins and Adam says next time he comes back he wants a rematch as well as playing the car racing game (Observation of Adam, family 6).

The need to establish a trusting relationship with children and young people was identified by a number of social workers. Adam spoke of the children as needing 'to build up a relationship with me, somebody who is regularly coming to see them'. Whilst previous casework models enabled social workers to utilise therapeutic skills, the separation of assessment and care management functions from direct service provision has replaced this with a monitoring and review role. Services are often commissioned out, serving to locate social workers outside of the helping relationship (Parton, 1996; Broadhurst and Mason, 2014). However, there was evidence of social workers privileging the importance of the relationship, for instance, Sam changed teams in order to maintain continuity for Amber for whom fractured relationships were significant.

The importance of good communication in building relationships (Winter, 2011; Lefevre, 2018) is well documented. Rapport-building and possessing good communication skills should be a common attribute or skill in child and family social workers (Lefevre et al., 2008; DfE 2015). Some social workers demonstrated excellent communication skills with children, whilst others were good at communicating with specific age groups. Barbara,

for instance, was able to recognise her limitations stating *“I’m not so good at talking with little children”*. The matter of skill, competence and confidence is multi-layered and complex. Some social workers identified that relationship-based practice was sometimes impacted on by time, performance measures and administration:

Often we go out... and it’s about our agenda, so we’re going out and we’re kind of writing and often we’re not noticing what the child wants to speak about...so we’ve got a new form whereby we will give the child an opportunity to be part of that meeting.

Ironically, a form was developed to ensure that social workers gave children an opportunity to input into meetings. Social workers are not always attuned to their interactions with others and co-ordinating or managing care can commodify outputs and privilege information over affect (Broadhurst and Mason, 2014). Such bureaucratically preoccupied states of mind and detachment become further defended as they emotionally disassociate from children (Ferguson, 2016, p13).

Ferguson (2018) describes social work practice within the home as determined by social workers but also the families they are visiting, plus the impact of the homes in which the visits take place. He contends that people’s homes become part of their workplace. My observation of Sandra demonstrated the challenges faced in navigating complex dynamics within the family home. Even once negotiation had taken place and it had been agreed where the best place was to speak to the young people alone, it was not straightforward:

At this point the door opened and Denise's mum walked in and asked if she could take the washing out of the machine that had recently finished its cycle. Sandra said it was fine and talked to Denise about how much washing she had brought back with her. She said a suitcase full. Mum left the kitchen and closed the door.

Sandra managed the intrusion of the mother, deftly shifting the conversation to something less serious and linked to the interruption. Only when the mother left the room did she continue their conversation in private.

Tensions and challenges: 'Everyone hates social workers'

The reputation of social workers was reported to contribute to levels of successful engagement with children and young people as explicated by Jones (2014) and Shoemith (2016). Sam worried about how she was portrayed to the child she visited emphasising the need to ensure that families saw them in a more rounded light than just authority figures, rebuking the idea that she was someone to be scared of and reinforcing the support role. Some social workers discussed how their work was hampered by the preconceived views about social workers that had been conveyed to children and young people by their parents:

I think when children are exposed to parents saying that the social is turning up and seeing us in a negative light, we don't always get that, er good relationship (Adam's interview).

When we went in and he said erm, one of the first things he said was mum's told me not to tell you cunts anything....and it'd obviously been

bothering him all day, you could really see, once he'd said it he was like ugh and I felt so sorry for him, cause he's not, he doesn't talk like that (Tammy's interview).

It was striking to hear this story as Tammy had started her interview stating that her decision to train as a social worker was due to negative public perceptions of the profession:

I thought like, oh, I might go and be, try and be a good one cause you know from the outside, and then I realised coming into it that actually like they are not all bad like people say they are but erm, that's it's just quite a tough job and you're the one that kind of can't turn your back on things so other people move it on to children's services and then it kind of ends there.

Her realisation that 'they are not all bad like people say they are' suggests that she held a negative view of the profession herself. For social workers, knowing that families with whom they work to try and safeguard the well-being of children, think of them 'in a negative light', is difficult to bear. I asked Tammy how she responded to being called a 'cunt' by Stephen, a nine year old boy:

Erm.. I think I said, oh did she mean me? (laughs), mean me? and erm, and I was I like oh don't worry about that! (laughs), oh don't worry about that! (laughs).

This felt painful to listen to as Tammy realised that Stephen's mother was referring to her. She spoke quietly as she relayed her response to him with her voice becoming louder as she conveyed the shock and alarm that she felt at the time which seemed to embody her as she recalled the event. Tammy's response to this, combined with the laughter as she retold it, felt poignantly sad. The laughter however, served to keep the sadness and trauma at bay, suggestive perhaps, that she had heard such a view expressed before, perhaps not dissimilar to a view she previously held herself. Interestingly I did not say anything in response to this. Listening to the interview again, I reflect on how I moved through the questions quickly. Whilst aware that Tammy had to attend some training, I wondered why I did not explore this and how that felt for Tammy. There was no discussion about whether she felt disturbed by this nor whether she thought the origin of the disturbance lie within the psychic defensive structure of the mother and her feelings of failure at being unable to look after her son effectively, rather than any failing of Tammy's. My choice to ignore this in the interview paralleled practice realities. Tammy might have felt able to take this issue to supervision for exploration, however, had she not, any residual, shameful feelings might become internalised. Although some dispute the appropriateness of transference as a frame of reference outside a clinical setting (Frosch and Barraitser, 2008), this seems like a clear example of the ways in which transference and counter-transference might operate in relation to research (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013).

[Engaging with children's emotions](#)

Some social workers demonstrated a capacity to think about the children they worked with, moving beyond statutory requirements to assess risk, work with parents and understand children's experience of family life. However, systemic dimensions of

practice often impeded their capacity to focus on children's emotional lives. Ferguson (2016) describes how, when practitioners themselves are not held in mind, their ability to connect their thoughts and feelings diminishes, resulting in emotional detachment from children. Barbara spoke of feeling overwhelmed where children had been removed from their parents care and not knowing if their lives would be changed for the better:

I can't promise that they're gonna have a great outcome which is awful but I can't I couldn't tell them it was their last move because it isn't. I didn't know how to deliver that news, I don't know how to deliver that news in a child-friendly way.

The enormity of being unable to guarantee that her actions would lead to a better outcome affected Barbara's practice. My observation of her supported this where I described her behaviour on the visit mirroring her internal state of feeling like uncertain about what to do. My own practice mirrored this confusion as I went to the wrong address. She appeared to struggle, wanting the visit to be over as soon as possible consistent with Ferguson's (2016, p.11) observations of social workers overcome by the complexity and emotional intensity of their interactions:

Such detached practice is deeply non-reflexive in the sense that, while the worker may be reflecting superficially on what is going on, there is no self-monitoring or critical thinking being practised that results in them adjusting their approach in light of the experience they are having and the reasons they are there.

Barbara's interview felt full of complaint and inconsistency with frequent contradictions and elisions, conveying a lack of support within the organisation:

...it's quite, surprises me that we are working with the most damaged children (PD hmm) with no psychological support at all, which is, just, just amazing really. (Sigh)

Her sigh embodied her sense of feeling overwhelmed with the work and perhaps a detachment from some of the deeper feelings about the painful, disturbing work she was engaged in, as a self-protective strategy, along with her imminent departure from the team. Similarly, the overriding narrative in Sam's interview was one of anxiety and feeling overwhelmed at the complex circumstances with Amber.

I feel overwhelmed... I'm worried because I don't think there are enough resources in place that we can access for Amber that are intensive enough. I want to maintain her at a happy level but I know that a lot of the things that I'm going to be speaking about are gonna raise her anxiety or make her act out afterwards so I worry a lot about that and my intervention can make it worse sometimes. I'm not a psychotherapist or psychologist....so I worry that I don't know enough about her mental health and my impact on that...So that's my main worry. Is that I'm gonna trigger something or I'm gonna upset her, make things worse.

Self-protection - emotional distance

The research demonstrates that social workers, as care managers, do not see themselves as able to undertake direct work with families. Sam's anxiety about triggering something or upsetting Amber serves to distance herself from the sense that she might be able to draw on herself in their work together. There is little sense for Sam that she has within her a capacity for attunement to Amber's emotional experience. This prevents her from working with and understanding the emotional dynamics. Such processing not only deepens practice with children and increases effectiveness, it also serves to protect social workers from the sometimes psychologically damaging impact of the work (Cooper, 2018).

That social workers did not feel able to fully engage with children's emotional lives, due to time, skill, confidence, training, or because they did not see it as part of their role, was a common recurring theme in this research. Barbara was clear that the main remit of her role was to gather evidence so that children could be removed if required, a role she was comfortable with. However, she was equally clear that once the evidence was gathered she was not well equipped to deal with the implications arising from decisions made on the basis of the evidence:

*'The emotional wellbeing comes second to me, I just want the evidence'.
That's about evidence gathering which I'm quite good at... but dealing
with their after effects of that no, I don't really know what to do.*

Sam commented on how she was not trained, skilled or confident in dealing with children's emotional states in any 'deep' way. Similarly, her view about there being

insufficient time may have a reality but perhaps there is also a reluctance to spend more time with children and young people. In my observation of her and Amber, exercise sheets, used to evoke a discussion about aspect of children's emotional lives, seemed to create distance between them, particularly when she suggested that Amber complete them by herself at home. Lefevre (2018) suggests such tools may be a bridge into communication, and/or a container for emotion, but in this case they serve to distance Sam from having to engage her own creativity in finding a way that is tailored to Amber's needs and context. The session ended sooner than it might and it seemed like some of the more difficult feelings that Amber was managing could have been talked about. Sam seemed to not want to go there however, for fear of what it might uncover.

Feeling out of depth

As discussed, social workers identified similar feelings of being 'out of their depth' when it came to discussing feelings with children. Allied to this, there was an almost implicit acknowledgement that social workers did not need to be skilled in this area of work as it was the realm of other, specialist, and trained professionals. Tammy and Sam both spoke of being able to refer elsewhere, rather than 'opening a can of worms', evidence perhaps of the demise of the casework model and therapeutic techniques. Tammy spoke of knowing her own limitations in dealing with a young person with whom she was working in a task-centred, solution-focused way. There was no sense of her drawing on other theories to inform her work with a girl whose mother had murdered and sexually abused a woman. She spoke of them both knowing the other knew but not knowing how to talk to her about it.

Adam's observed interaction with Jamie demonstrated a real effort to get close to him and facilitate an exploration of his emotional state of mind as they sat at his small desk whilst Jamie completed a feelings exercise. My sense was, however, that whilst this opened up a conversation about feelings, there was not much depth to it and Adam could have further explored many things that Jamie said. Adam acknowledged his challenges with this dimension of the work:

I do struggle sometimes... I think there's things you should speak to a child about and this is my personal view and things you shouldn't but at the same time in this role, you can't always keep that hidden from the child, 'cause like I said they do know. I try to keep it for them to lead and then I question around what they ask me and ask them to tell me more about that if they can... We'll just be colouring and we'll see what is said and what he wants to say to me....I think to get how a child is feeling and to understand what's going on in their world, the only thing I can do at times is to just play and take that back to supervision...giving them, almost a silence to deal, to say what they want to say, but to do that you need to see them regularly so you get the trust and we have to see them every three weeks erm by policy, but I do try to get in at least fortnightly.

How the social workers engaged with children was also crucial to determining how effective they were in engaging with the emotional dimensions of their lives. A range of practice was observed with social workers using themselves in a range of ways or using other methods. All of them, unsurprisingly, used speaking as the primary mechanism for engaging children. Most also used paper and pens so that the children could draw whilst

they talked; Jenny had finger puppets and books in her bag. Some used worksheets that required children to answer questions, usually relating to feelings about things or spoke of having other resources in the office or car, such as toys or 'feelings' cards. Some participants described feeling more confident in relating to children than others. Barbara, spoke candidly of her discomfort in using play as a means to engage children acknowledging not only that she was not very good at play but that she hated it.

My observations and social worker's admissions that they lacked confidence and proficiency in using more sophisticated methods such as play, in their communication with children, is consistent with other research (Ferguson, 2016; Winter et al, 2018). This testifies to the importance of what Ferguson terms 'intimate child protection practice' where social workers are able to engage with children in 'embodied ways, through touch, play and other forms of movement' (walking or driving), in families' spaces, including bedrooms (Ferguson 2017, p.1012). I observed children being meaningfully engaged with and examples where they were not; where there was an absence of eye contact, talk, active listening, play, touch and close observation, resulting in crucial aspects of their experience remaining unknown (Ferguson, 2011). Sandra demonstrated an effective engagement with Travis, a 13 year old boy:

I was struck by how openly Travis was talking to Sandra. He was really able to articulate his feelings clearly and seemed to trust her. Their rapport was open and seemed positive and trusting. Travis seemed to talk with ease and had lots to say to Sandra (Observation, family 7).

Sandra expressed a comfortableness in talking to children, citing 'emotional first-aid' training as helpful as well as being a parent herself and the importance of trust.

Broadhurst and Mason (2014) attest to the value of face-to face encounters in social work suggesting that practice should reclaim interactional expertise and foreground embodied ways of knowing. They emphasise the value of home visits where practitioners are 'co-present' with service users. Sandra's description of her work spoke to 'the face (and faciality) as the index of emotion' and 'how body talk offers a visual and social grammar that provided maximum facilitation to communication' (Broadhurst and Mason, 2014, p591):

I think it's really important to be looking at children's faces 'cause a child can say they're ok but it's the faces or the looks they give that will tell you something different. And their reactions.... So I think looking at a child, I think that is really, really important. I think their facial features give an awful lot away, 'cause they do look worried. You can sit down and say you do look a little bit worried or you look a little bit sad.

The extent to which social workers felt skilled and/or confident in their role varied. Whilst Sandra spoke of feeling able to undertake emotional work with children, 'trained to go and sit there and listen to most things', this was not a consistent view. Most social workers identified this as an area in which they felt uncomfortable, lacked confidence or did not have the relevant skills or training to undertake such work. Tammy described herself as 'unequipped to deal with and it could be detrimental to their emotional state, which would be against anything I was doing anyway'.

Individual barriers to practice

Personal risk and distress

A striking feature from the data collection was the emotional impact the work had on participants. It is widely known that should opportunities not be provided to offload and seek support, it will, in turn, adversely impact practice (Ruch, 2012; Cooper and Lousada, 2005). The dynamics of interactions with families, coupled with organisational processes, contribute to social workers experiencing emotional and sensory overload leading to detachment from children and families (Cooper, 2018; Ferguson, 2016). There were a number of examples of this, such as Sam being overwhelmed and worried she would not make it okay for Amber. Barbara spoke of the overwhelming nature of the complexity of a case she was working on and the impact this had on her practice and her own emotional wellbeing:

We got a real failure to protect, not just the violence, and the not feeding the baby, erm we've got sexual abuse gone on....I can't make it better. I know they must be in complete turmoil ...but ...how can I change that, how can you make it any better? I don't know.... I feel really guilty. I think God I've pulled you out of home and then I'm up going now, I do think that.

Social work can also lead to practitioners fearing for their own safety with threats of violence prevalent (Littlechild, 2005). Barbara was the only participant who spoke of the most distressing aspects of the work. Her interview was the most disturbing:

I got threatened to be shot last week...he threatened to shoot me and the judge and his Facebook profile was a picture of him with a gun. I live close to here and I think God, I gotta get out really otherwise I'll go mad.He bit a kids tongue out. He held a kid down, pulled the tongue out and bit it off. ...we've actually got photos of the tongue, it's just awful. And there were five kids, so we got them all out.

Barbara was also explicit that for her, the work was about evidence gathering, so that children could be removed, where necessary. It is perhaps not surprising that the circumstances described might lead to Barbara being unable to focus on the emotional dimension of practice, both the children's and her own. As discussed, social work decisions in complex, tragic cases of child cruelty have appeared to overlook or 'turn a blind eye' to often, obvious intelligence that parents/carers were inflicting abuse on children in their care (Cooper and Lousada, 2005; Rustin, 2005). At times in the observations it felt like social workers were demonstrating the emotional impact of practice that leads to feeling fragmented and despairing, resulting in them behaving untypically and being either indulgent or punitive, for example (Bower, 2005). The powerful organisational defences at play in professional practice as seen in Menzies-Lyth's study also seemed to be present, resulting in the depersonalisation of the child or family, tasks being routinised and responsibility delegated so that social workers were protected against the emotional pain of dealing with troubled and disturbed people. Ruch (2018) refers to the reduction in time spent with service users, preoccupation with procedures and the bureaucratisation of decision-making as further evidence of

organisational defences. Within this context, it is not surprising that meaningful work focusing on children's emotional lives is limited in practice and practitioners did not see their role as providing longer-term therapeutic work which requires more skills (Whincup, 2015).

Training, confidence and skills to practice

Winter (2010) affirms that listening to children and helping them communicate is a statutory duty under the Children Act (1989) and serves to diminish an emotional void being present when children are not encouraged to talk about things. The issue of social workers not being trained to speak to children about things in-depth and lacking the skills and confidence to do so was a major factor raised throughout this study. Some social workers felt they lacked both confidence and expertise in using more sophisticated methods of working with children. Most social workers questioned whether their qualifying training or employer had equipped them sufficiently in developing requisite skills to effectively engage with children and young people.

Handley and Doyle (2012) surveyed 70 child care practitioners, finding under a third had been trained in communicating with young children. Similarly, Leeson (2010) interviewed seven child and family social workers and found none had received training on communicating with children at qualifying or post-qualifying levels. Lefevre et al. (2008) argue that effective skills and capabilities to communicate and engage with children must be taught at qualifying level, which integrate honed micro-skills alongside a commitment to child-centred, inclusive practice as well as 'underpinning knowledge about how mirroring, empathy and attunement create engagement and promote a 'holding' and containing environment within which children feel safe to communicate

their thoughts and feelings freely, and the developed capability to create such an environment' (Lefevre et al, 2008, p. 174). I observed a range of ability with social workers generally presenting as confident in relating to children and discussing things at a basic level but most seeming to struggle and lacking confidence with more sophisticated communication, as outlined by Lefevre et al. The findings from this study concur with arguments that social work education must address both *how* to communicate with children in terms of techniques and skills and also engender deeper learning relating to the ethical commitments and personal qualities required to effectively work with children and attend to their emotional needs (Lefevre, (2015a; Ferguson, 2016). Sam's interview clearly outlines her view about her own capacity:

I've done some direct work training but that's more about the practical activities you can do with children...it's all very well taking sand box in and having your things and saying let's talk about and you can play with that and we can talk, so what do you do with that information. I'm not trained to evaluate the information that I'm given. I don't think I've had that kind of psychological training ...I can only think of what I think as a person, as a social worker.... And I think that's quite dangerous ground because it might not be what they were thinking.

The issue of training was perhaps the single most cited issue across all interviews. The type of training social workers received as part of their qualifying or post-qualifying

training was thought to be insufficient by most participants. This impacted on their skill and capability but also their confidence as Adam describes:

Confidence is probably a different thing. Erm we're obviously not trained in that side of it, though, for all my years of training, we don't delve much into the emotional lives of children. Whilst we understand the impact of behaviours, and external factors but not necessarily so much about their emotional wellbeing... Obviously I can do the work with them like I did yesterday, erm to see how they feel about certain aspects and how we can improve erm, put things in place for them to make things better. Erm but I think when things get more deep rooted, I think it can become a bit harder, 'cause we don't have that full training and he doesn't necessarily meet the full criteria for CAMHS or anything.

Adam's visit to Jamie highlighted that he was able to build a rapport with him and demonstrated that he had personal attributes that enabled this. In terms of the 'being domain' identified by Lefevre et al's review (2008), he was able to develop his relationship with Jamie at a person-to person level, getting on the floor and sitting at his desk with him and showed warmth, friendliness and humour. He was also able to use person-centred qualities such as empathy, sincerity, genuineness and openness but the discussion never became in-depth. In interview, he did not talk much about his qualifying training, and I wondered if it included developing a working knowledge of theory as a way of understanding relationships and communication dynamics. Tammy identified similar themes:

I definitely think we need more, for sure....i have the sort of tools training which is useful...I haven't had a lot through the social work practice so I definitely think we need more and it's something that I don't think I'll ever feel fully confident at....Don't get me started on the social work degree and like how that prepares you to be a social worker cause I think it's erm quite far from you know, the grounding of understanding the ecological perspective or whatever is, is there, but the actually how to carry out your day to day task, I don't think we have been taught that....

One thing I've learnt and something that I used to struggle with I'd try and I used to feel like I had to fix things, so if someone told me something, I then had to give them something to make it better and erm that's the one thing I feel like I have developed in is you know, that I can't do that and actually that can be detrimental because not everything you can fix...I used to worry, cause I think oh my God, what can I say to that.. I feel a bit more at ease and confident now just to listen.

Tammy's recognition that she did not feel the need to rescue and 'fix' things but was able to provide a space to listen to children, suggests that she had more capacity to move into the 'being' rather than 'doing' domain, important for emotional work to be possible (Lefevre, 2017). All but one of the families observed comprised children experiencing difficult relationships with parental figures. They may find it difficult to accept help, or might show hostility to defend against the unconscious expectation of

eventual rejection or attack from the worker, based on their previous experience. In order to understand what is underlying a child's response to social work intervention, it is important for social workers to be cognisant of unconscious patterns in making sense of their relationships with children (Ruch, 2018). Understanding issues of transference and counter-transference and the range of unconscious processes at play in social workers' interactions and complex relationships, through engaging in reflection and supervision, will better enable them to grasp the emotional undertones present for children, young people and themselves. None of the social workers talked about using these ideas in their practice and I did not observe any working with the unconscious dynamics or processes in their sessions with children. In order to recognise and use transference and counter-transference dynamics, practitioners need to be self-aware and develop reflective skills. Without supervision that enables practitioners to identify and process their emotional responses their effectiveness diminishes.

[The needs of social workers: Supervision, support and containment](#)

Practitioners identified a need for support in helping them process the emotional demands of the work and saw their organisation as key to this. How support was provided or accessed varied with some participants more positive than others. Some accessed support internally within the team whilst others used support outside of the team or workplace, such as family members. Some practitioners identified a lack of support, with Barbara commenting that 'we don't have the admin support here' and Sam identifying CAMHS provision as problematic. Barbara said supervision had not happened regularly, often cancelled due to court pressures. This was corroborated by Sam who said it happened monthly if 'you're lucky' and that whilst it was possible to speak to the manager if there was something burning, as she was worried about

everything, she took it home. Sharon and Adam were extremely positive about support from managers, the team and other colleagues.

Summary

This chapter has identified the plethora of systemic, family and individual factors that influence how much social workers are able to engage with children effectively and attend to their emotions. There were many challenges identified by social workers such as the multiple, conflicting dimensions of the role. Of significance was the consistent presence of how social worker's self-efficacy in relation to skills and confidence impacted on their ability to engage effectively with children. The impact of organisational support and supervision on creating space for social workers to engage with the complexity of their practice was also identified. The manifestation of organisational and professional anxiety on social worker's capacities to attend to the more difficult dimensions of practice was apparent. This chapter has considered the emotional dimensions of child and family social work and how important the relationship is. It has explored what happens when social workers engage in 'emotional work' with children, what gets in the way of this and why the emotional impact of the work on social workers might curtail their capacity to engage in deep, 'below the surface' engagements with children's inner worlds. The following chapter discusses the findings from the observations, interviews and analysis of case records and links these to the extant literature.

Chapter 7: Discussion of findings

Introduction to chapter

This thesis has explored how social workers engage with the emotional dimensions of children's lives, the factors that make this engagement more or less effective and the emotional impact of practice on the social workers themselves. In this chapter I discuss the main findings from the study in relation to the research question: How do social workers in statutory children and families' settings attend to and engage with the emotional lives and experiences of children?

What did the study find?

This research demonstrates that social workers engage with and attend to children's emotional experiences to varying degrees and with greater or lesser effectiveness, dependent on the complex interplay of multiple factors. The extent of this engagement is determined by their use of self, their views about their role and responsibilities as social workers, their level of capability, skill and confidence - all impacted upon by their training and the support and supervision they receive. The research reveals, through the experience of a small number of social workers, some of the ways in which they approach and manage this aspect of their role. Not only is there variation amongst social workers, the practice of individual social workers also varies, as seen with Jenny, depending on a range of factors, such as the personal circumstances of the family they are intervening with, the nature of the work, whether they are consumed by anxiety and fear, as in the case of Barbara, feeling overwhelmed, such as with Sam, or feeling out of their depth, as identified by Tammy.

Examples of social workers attuning to children's emotions were observed through sitting and talking, using creative engagement, such as play or drawing or in their use of affect, through how they expressed themselves, such as facial features, or tone of voice to convey warmth, understanding and empathy. Practice often involved seeing children alone for varying periods of time, as seen in all but one observation. Overall, the extent and level to which social workers were attuned was limited and there were clear examples of when there seemed to be a reluctance to fully engage with the expressed emotions, as the two case study chapters demonstrated. Themes that emerged related to how social workers' engagement with emotions were often hampered through what appeared to be unconscious mechanisms of distancing, avoidance and states of denial. The interviews with social workers resulted in a number of emergent themes that, through IPA, I clustered into superordinate themes: the individual dimensions of practice, the family dimensions of practice and the systemic dimensions of practice. The analysis of social worker's case records also revealed themes of emotionally distancing practice. From the data it has been possible to identify some complex dynamics that impact on this aspect of practice and generate knowledge that might contribute to issues of practice, training, support and further research. This chapter explores these themes further and draws on the new literature engaged with as a result of my research.

Engaging in this research required me to re-immense myself in statutory child and family social work from the perspective of practitioner-researcher. The work is beset with dilemmas and challenges and requires managing complex relationships with damaged, scared and angry adults and children. Interactions are filled with emotional tensions at conscious and unconscious levels, exacerbated by social workers' own complicated emotions. The dynamics that surface in interactions between social workers and families

are sometimes explicit but often subtle and nuanced, requiring insight and formal and informal opportunities to think about and be alert to these in order to understand and process them. These are often unexplored in practice and social workers frequently have to work in isolation without sufficient opportunity to make sense of the emotional undertow of the work.

I am mindful of how privileged I feel in my clinical role where I am able to spend sufficient time – one hour a week – in a private space, away from the family home – to talk to children and young people about their emotional lives, without undertaking multiple other roles simultaneously and in an organisation where such practice is encouraged and supported. Contextual frames of reference are important to consider as they impact on what workers can do, and have agency and internal authority to do, in practice. That the depth of discussion in the interviews was greater than in the observations or written case records, suggests that given space and time, social workers are more able and likely to engage with the complex emotional dimensions of practice and of children's lives.

In writing up the research I sometimes felt like there was too much important material making it difficult to decide what to keep as it seemed that nothing could be wasted, overlooked or avoided, otherwise I too, would be engaging in the type of defensive practices observed. The themes from the analysis of the interviews, discussed in chapter six, provide breadth rather than depth, to the issues the social workers identified in trying to engage with children's emotional lives, focusing largely on the external rather than internal worlds of social workers and children - the 'social' rather than the 'psycho'. Whilst themes such as confidence, skills, training and support have been frequently addressed in the literature, they were extremely prevalent themes in the interviews and

were also evident in the observations. The process of writing up this thesis sometimes paralleled the social workers as I struggled to develop the confidence to make decisions about what material to select and engage with and what to exclude.

The three types of data triangulate or crystallise the findings from the study. The main issues relate to how the emotional dimensions of practice are pushed to the margins by largely systemic factors that get played out in what social workers consciously or unconsciously choose to focus on or not. The 'system' seems to support a practice that is thin and fast, almost 'going through the motions', so that time to stop, see, think, talk, explore, analyse and ruminate is not prioritised or encouraged, in organisations, in supervision, in social workers' minds, families' homes, and in time spent with children. Higgins (2019) refers to 'automatic thinking' whereby practice has an automatic, fast approach rather than deliberative and balanced. My research echoed this, resulting in things getting missed, overlooked or avoided, intentionally or unintentionally, often in favour of practical actions. An example of this is how social workers took tools, such as exercise sheets, paper and pens so that children could communicate and express their feelings. Ironically, this resulted in these articulated feelings not being given sufficient time to explore their meaning, draw out complex feelings, or discuss difficult things. Rarely did I observe social workers opening conversations up so that difficult things could be acknowledged, let alone talked about in any depth. This was replicated in the interviews where things were often not explored in as much depth as they might by the social worker, or sometimes, by me, another parallel process. The most striking examples were in the case records where the social workers tended to distance themselves from the children and the visit, by writing in a way that had the effect of absenting themselves from the visit and not giving full value to the emotional

dimensions of the often poignant encounters. It seemed like there was nowhere to locate this dimension.

Using a psycho-social approach enabled the emotional dimensions of social workers' practice to be attended to, identifying anxieties that may not have been evident on the surface. What was apparent were the limited ways in which the social workers seemed to be able to surface some of the more honest feelings and emotions they harboured about their work. It was helpful to unpick some of the communications of the social workers in their practice, interviews and case records. It enabled me to identify some of the self-protective strategies that they employed to assist them in managing their work without feeling overwhelmed or further out of their depth. These processes, which I have referred to as distancing or avoidant practice, were evident in what the social workers did in their interactions with children and their families, how they wrote about their interactions and in how they spoke about them with me in interview. Exploring the affective aspects of child protection practice, I have articulated these missed opportunities as arising out of the use of defence mechanisms – denial, distancing and avoidance - which the social workers enacted as a way of suppressing and managing complex emotions.

Overlooking, not seeing, not hearing, not asking, not thinking

Social workers seemed to miss, overlook, avoid and ignore the emotional dimensions of practice remarkably, and worryingly, frequently. There was a multitude of examples from each observation where the emotional dimensions of practice were overlooked and ignored, consciously or unconsciously. In the interviews, explanations for this observed behaviour related predominantly to lack of time, knowledge, skill, confidence

but social workers also seemed to lack curiosity. Burton and Revell (2017) highlight the lack of clarity afforded to the term professional curiosity that has emerged in social work over the past few years. They suggest it should include experiencing tension because anxious thoughts and discomfort are a natural aspect of curiosity. They further maintain that social workers must have a sense that tensions can be managed in order to engage in curious behaviour. Therefore, they need to be assured that anything they uncover, alongside their own feelings, revulsion, anxiety and hopelessness, will be managed. Practice should also be exploratory and inquisitive; stretching the limits of practitioners' knowledge and experience, clearly the domain of reflective practice and supervision.

Additionally, the social workers did not always see their role to explore deeply for fear of doing harm or upsetting a child, as in the case of Adam who wrote in his case record of the visit: *'This appears a little distressing for him and at times he turned his head showing he was anxious and I ensured I did not push him'*. Winter (2011) also found some social workers were reluctant to ask children about their experiences as they were afraid this would traumatise them. Similarly, Whincup (2015) identifies the potential cost of direct work with children if social workers avoid particular aspects of the work to protect themselves, whereby they might not ask in order not to know. Whilst social workers should not seek to make children feel uncomfortable, it is inevitable that the work will involve difficult discussions that result in feelings of discomfort or awkwardness.

Denial

In psychoanalytic terms denial can be understood as an unconscious defence mechanism for managing anxiety, guilt and other disturbing emotions where

information seems unbearable or too difficult. Cohen (2001) describes Freud's interest in the idea that awkward facts of life could be managed by simultaneous acceptance and disavowal due to being too difficult to confront whilst impossible to ignore. Cohen maintains that they are both denied and acknowledged synchronously, serving as a protection against reality rather than seeking to confront it. He suggests that we turn away from our insights and hide their implications, half-knowing but not wanting to discover the other half. For Cohen, referring to the work of Steiner (1985), turning a blind eye is a 'social motion', meaning that we have access to enough facts about human suffering but resist or avoid drawing their disquieting implications as we cannot consistently face them. In my observations, I think this is what was potentially going on for the social workers. They were partly aware of some of the emotions of the children but were not always able to face them. I contend that this was due to fear of feeling overwhelmed, unsure how best to respond, feeling out of their depth, lacking the skill or confidence to feel that they could help, or perhaps, not wanting to hear about the painful reality that some children experience, often at the hands of their parents.

Holland (2007) cites the research of Walkerdine et al (2001) where psychoanalytic concepts are used. They identify denial as a psychic process to manage anxiety where the internal significance of an experience is not recognised. Killen's research (1996) found that seeing and not seeing abuse and neglect is a continual struggle for child protection professionals due partly to the pain that is caused by facing the anxiety, grief, aggression and emptiness expressed by children as well as that of the parents. Killen (1996:792) suggests that professionals defend against facing the realities of families and:

what they do to us emotionally: our own aggression, grief, and anxiety...
we have to both function and to survive within this emotionally highly

charged field...and our need to defend ourselves will sometimes hinder good work' (Killen, 1996, p.792).

She states that this is also a problem for researchers as well as practitioners. Part of this involves denying or minimising abuse or neglect and its impact on children, choosing instead to develop a distorted picture of the child as healthier or stronger than they are and interpreting their behaviour more positively than is the case. Killen (1996) discussed the impact of a narrow theoretical frame of reference for observing, analysing and assessing abuse and neglect which results in the worker being more vulnerable to introjections of chaos, hopelessness and anxiety signalled by children. Such a mechanism, she argues, prevents appropriate intervention from occurring as well as workers being prevented from coping with their own feelings, stifling creative responses. When professionals' survival strategies interact with those of children, this can lead to a blindness on the part of the worker which leads the child to work out and adjust to the needs of adults and carry their responsibility. Killen (1996) contends that such children learn quickly that they are expected to look after the adults, both parents but also professionals.

Avoidance

Avoidance was observed on multiple occasions where social workers did not pick up on things expressed by children. Whether something resonated for me or felt important as an observer, does not mean that it was the most important issue. The social workers would have had thoughts, feelings, ideas and other agendas that they chose to follow up in contrast to the things that stirred or aroused my thinking. However, there were multiple experiences of children opening up about their feelings that the social workers

seemed to avoid and often, their responses did not enable effective emotional engagement. There were examples where the social workers developed more positive narratives of the child or children they were working with, possibly as a way of not having to face the reality of a situation or where they minimised abuse or neglect:

Barbara said she thought Jimmy seemed more relaxed than she had ever seen him and that it was like the children had reversed roles... Barbara started to talk to Ivy about when she was at home and she said that her mum's partner used to tip her upside down. Ivy said she couldn't remember. Barbara said maybe they could talk about it later (Observation report, family 3).

Adam says he would like to see Jamie's bedroom if that's okay and grandma says it's fine but to ignore the mess of the landing. Jamie agrees and leads the way with Adam following... We go upstairs and it is hard not to notice the clutter around on the landing. We go into Jamie's bedroom which smells of animals and there is a cat on his unmade bed sleeping on what looks like his coat. There is a pillow but the duvet is pushed towards the edge and there is a mattress protector on and it makes me wonder if Jamie has enuresis (Observation report, family 6).

Initially, Barbara seems to construct a positive account of Jimmy and whilst this may have been the case, there is no discussion about whether there have been any difficulties with him settling in with his new foster carers. When talking with Ivy, Barbara

opens up the possibility of exploring Ivy's experience with her mother's partner but quickly ends the conversation, suggesting that it might be revisited later but it is not.

Professional distancing

In my research, in keeping with Killen's 1996 study, which I encountered after analysing the data, social workers protected themselves from children's pain in a multitude of ways, such as actively not hearing and seeing this. Common examples of this included reducing painful human experiences, such as domestic violence or looked after children, to the abbreviated forms of DV and LAC. This serves to distance professionals from having to think about the pain and suffering of those who experience violence in the home and children who have to be looked after by the state. Killen's research was undertaken through interviews with social workers about their practice and observations of them in offices and meetings. This practice can be seen to operate whereby social workers develop, often unconsciously, strategies to communicate with, and also about children, as a way of minimising their own anxieties and psychically defending themselves from stress (Pinkney, 2018).

Interestingly, there was very little evidence of children's emotions being written about in the records of the sessions I observed. Not only were emotions often omitted from the written records, the social workers wrote about the children in a way that served to detach or diminish their emotions and almost seemed to remove themselves from the situation they were writing about. Where children's emotions were written about this was at a surface level where children were described as happy, sad or angry. This was consistent in the observations where there was little exploration of emotions and feelings, other than superficially. Using a discourse analytic framework it was possible

to see how the child (or their emotional world) and even the social worker, seemed to retreat from view in the case record of the visit. I assert that this is not a conscious intentional practice, rather, that something happens in the social worker's capacity to think about and reflect upon the session that once they are away from the home they also distance themselves emotionally, possibly as a form of managing full caseloads, ripe with complex, troubling and sad emotional lives.

Winter et al. (2018) postulate that such bureaucratic approaches might be seen as 'necessary for professional survival in a context where the system is overladen with cases and in which social workers are expected to process vast volumes of work' (Winter et al, 2018, p. 8). Both the interviews and case records were abundant with examples of distancing discourse including dysfluency, repetition, changes in tone and volume and other non-verbal communications. Such distancing may be an attempt to create and maintain professional distance, which, like detachment and objectivity, may be seen as positive approaches to practice, to the detriment of engaging emotionally with families which might be viewed as unprofessional (Ingram and Smith, 2018). Social workers might also be directed or encouraged to focus on specific issues in their case records, in line with organisational policy, focusing on practical, bureaucratic issues than relational ones such as play, touch and emotions (Winter et al., 2017, Pinkney, 2018). This chimes with the findings of Pithouse (1996) where the careful management of the emotional impact of the work enables workers to create detachment so that they can think and act clearly.

Killen (1996) identifies one type of distancing as 'problem displacement' where social workers focus on a particular aspect of neglect or abuse such as the developmental

delay of the child, rather than on the abuse or neglect itself, in order to manage feeling overwhelmed. I would add to this a temptation to focus on the practical dimensions of the role to the exclusion of the emotional dimension, examples of which have been demonstrated in this thesis.

Training, skills and confidence

Throughout the research, the identification of a lack of confidence and skill in engaging children in meaningful in-depth discussion was evident from my observations and social workers' own assessment of their practice. Whether this refers to sophisticated methods or core basic listening skills is debatable. The capacity to bear the content is critical and this often seemed lacking. Almost all of the social workers lacked the confidence to talk to children about anything particularly deep and below the surface. Aside from citing time as a factor, they also identified not having the skills or training to know how to respond to 'opening a can of worms'. It felt like these were all defence mechanisms enacted to make it easier for them not to 'go there'. This feels like a stark contrast to the casework model (Perlman, 1964; Hollis, 1972) where social work involved engaging with the feelings and dynamics in the room between the worker and 'client'. Social workers seem not to see their role as engaging in this kind of work anymore. This leads one to ask what is authorised by the agency in which they work and by policy makers setting out the remit of the role and what social work qualifying students are being taught to do. There is much in the literature about how social work courses do not equip social workers with skills to intervene, consistent with my findings. The research suggests that engaging in the emotional dimensions of work with children is facilitated by an environment whereby social workers can develop skills and

knowledge and apply these in practice. This needs to be supported by effective supervision and reflection that enables deeper engagement with the complex interplay of unconscious dynamics that exist between social workers and the children and families with whom they work. The social work literature suggests that reflective supervision acts as a protective factor which promotes emotional resilience and is associated with higher levels of practice skills (Bostock et al., 2017). How organisational structures provide spaces for experiences of being listened to and heard in order that skills in listening and intervening might be modelled and developed needs consideration. Practitioners need to be able to move beyond the core basic listening skills they (hopefully) develop in qualifying training to practice that draws on knowledge, personal qualities, values and skills. This should include being able to explain complex, delicate matters in ways which make sense to children irrespective of ability, age and culture, using an array of approaches relevant to particular situations and children, as identified by Lefevre (2015) in relation to social workers' self-efficacy and capability regarding the development of communication and engagement with children. Whincup (2015, p.312) concludes from her research into direct work with children that organisations should:

Train and employ social workers to expect, prepare, actively encourage, adequately resource and sensitively support practitioners to engage in meaningful direct work with children' and that universities adapt their curricula accordingly.

When social workers are not sufficiently equipped, supported and challenged to engage effectively with children's emotions, they do not develop the skills and confidence to practice in a way that enables children to express their emotions. Such practice does not enable them to be curious or to hear, understand and acknowledge these expressed

emotions. Practice, instead, is more aligned to bureaucratic, technical approaches that do not privilege more relational, direct working practices.

Social work practice as a defence against anxiety

This research identified instances of practice seeming to be organised or undertaken as a way of managing some of the more difficult, messy, disturbing aspects of the work. Psycho-social perspectives (Cooper, 2018; Hoggett, 2014) offer theoretical understandings about how social systems act as defences in contemporary social work. With 'New Public Management' adopted by successive governments, relationship-based practice has been relegated in favour of rational activity that can be more easily quantified, increasingly framed around following procedures and ensuring compliance (Ingram and Smith, 2018). Hoggett, 2014, p.57-8) suggests that:

'Anxieties, particularly when manifest as panics, get into the life of organisations...where they may be contained, embodied, enacted, or projected. Emotional dynamics lean upon or are propped up on pre-existing organisational structures, but because these dynamics involve both conscious and unconscious agency they also influence that structure in an iterative way'.

I observed evidence of social workers tending to privilege practical over emotional dimensions of practice. The visits often seemed to comprise a more practical focus with children and families. For instance, in my observation of Barbara she dealt with the practical aspects of the work whilst she spoke much more openly of the emotional dimension in her interview. The context in which social workers are practising needs to be borne in mind. Featherstone, Morris and White (2014, pp. 1743) discuss the implications for social workers of an agenda that is preoccupied by standardisation, e-technology and performance management with evidence of workers 'tethered to their

computer stations with direct contact with families a precarious, time-limited project'. Cottam (2011, p. 139) maintains that the system constraints are evident with eighty-six per cent of social worker's time spent on system-driven tasks, only 14 per cent in direct contact, with dialogue dictated by forms. In such contexts virtual and electronic children replace actual children engaged in real relations with professional staff (Hoggett, 2014, p. 56).

The context of child and family social work practice

The social workers in this study conveyed the complexity of the task in hand and the multitude of priorities they were needing to juggle at any one time, including meeting timescales and reporting measures, dealing with practical issues such as housing and managing complex family dynamics, as well as needing to see the children alone and assess their safety and wellbeing. Amongst all of this, there seemed limited opportunity to pause and think about the work in meaningful ways. It is important to emphasise the complex arena in which child and family social workers operate: politically in relation to what can often feel like incessant, ongoing policy and legislative change; the economic backdrop of years of austerity measures and the impact of these on local authorities; the continued negative media portrayal of the profession (Jones, 2014, Shoesmith, 2016); and the perpetual constraints of technical, managerial practice which persist, despite attempts towards relationship-based practice (Munro, 2011; Ruch, 2018). The reduction in funding to preventative or mainstream services has resulted in a diminution of resources available to support families, requiring social workers to do more, with increased referrals, less time and insufficient support. Whincup (2015) found that the complex nature of child protection work is exacerbated by anxieties around the role and

remit of social work; children whose experience of loss and neglect and previous experiences of professionals, emotions, expectations and behaviour, influenced the work and the relationships they developed.

Researcher anxieties

In conducting this research, my own journey as a researcher has mirrored some of these distancing and avoidant practices as I struggled to sit and be with the data in order to try and make sense of it. MacLure (2013, p.229) suggests that engagements with data are like experiments with “order and disorder... subject to metamorphosis, as new connections spark among words, bodies, objects and ideas”. This resonated with my experience where I was sometimes overcome with too much information, not knowing where to go next. The attraction to organise my data in specific ways was sometimes tempting as a way of avoiding full immersion into the data.

I was also reluctant not to come across as judgemental. Listening to Barbara’s interview and her description of a father biting off a child’s tongue was at times too much to bear, as was engaging with her discussion of dealing with the sexual abuse of two young children. This countertransference is an important part of the research process as it has brought me closer to my research participants and helped me to understand why they too struggled to sit and be with some of the complex, disturbing and traumatic dimensions of children’s lives. In this way it has been much easier to understand why they may be tempted to stay on the surface without penetrating too deeply into the fissures of troubling and distressing human behaviour. It has helped me to take a more appreciative view of, for example, Tammy’s avoidance and reluctance to speak to her young person about the fact that her mother killed someone, an incredibly difficult

conversation for anyone to have with a young person. Clearly, the young person would have benefitted from such a discussion, so the question raised is how can practitioners like Tammy be enabled to address these avoidant feelings? Whilst individual factors such as lack of motivation or emotional capacity contribute, most identified barriers relate to the deeply complex and distressing nature of the work and inadequate support, training and supervision.

Whilst it can feel difficult to identify shortcomings in practice for fear of seeming critical and judgemental, not explicitly identifying these observations and interpretations dilutes what I contend was at play, for a multitude of internal and external reasons, that I have articulated. The hope is that through opening up the practice of social workers with children, it is possible to emphasise what can get in the way and undermine social workers who are often trying their very best to improve the lives of the children they work with. In doing so, it can also illuminate the barriers to effective practice that are often put in place, again unconsciously, by policy makers and social work services and organisations. The more these are known about, the more strategies to shape a different approach to child and family social work practice can be developed with a view of changing cultural norms. Whilst this was a small-scale research study involving only one child in need team in one local authority, I am of the view that practice observed is likely to represent a reasonably typical example of normative practice, consistent with my experience. This leads me to conclude that what I observed was an authentic representation of current practice.

The contribution of this research

A second skin

When social workers are working in such organisational and professional cultures, it is too overbearing for them to be open to the complex emotional dynamics the work exposes them to and I contend that they develop a 'second skin', rather like Bick (1968) suggested an infant develops when it is not contained by its mother:

The "second skin" phenomenon which replaces first skin integration, manifests itself as either partial or total type of muscular shell or a corresponding verbal muscularity (Bick, 1968: 486).

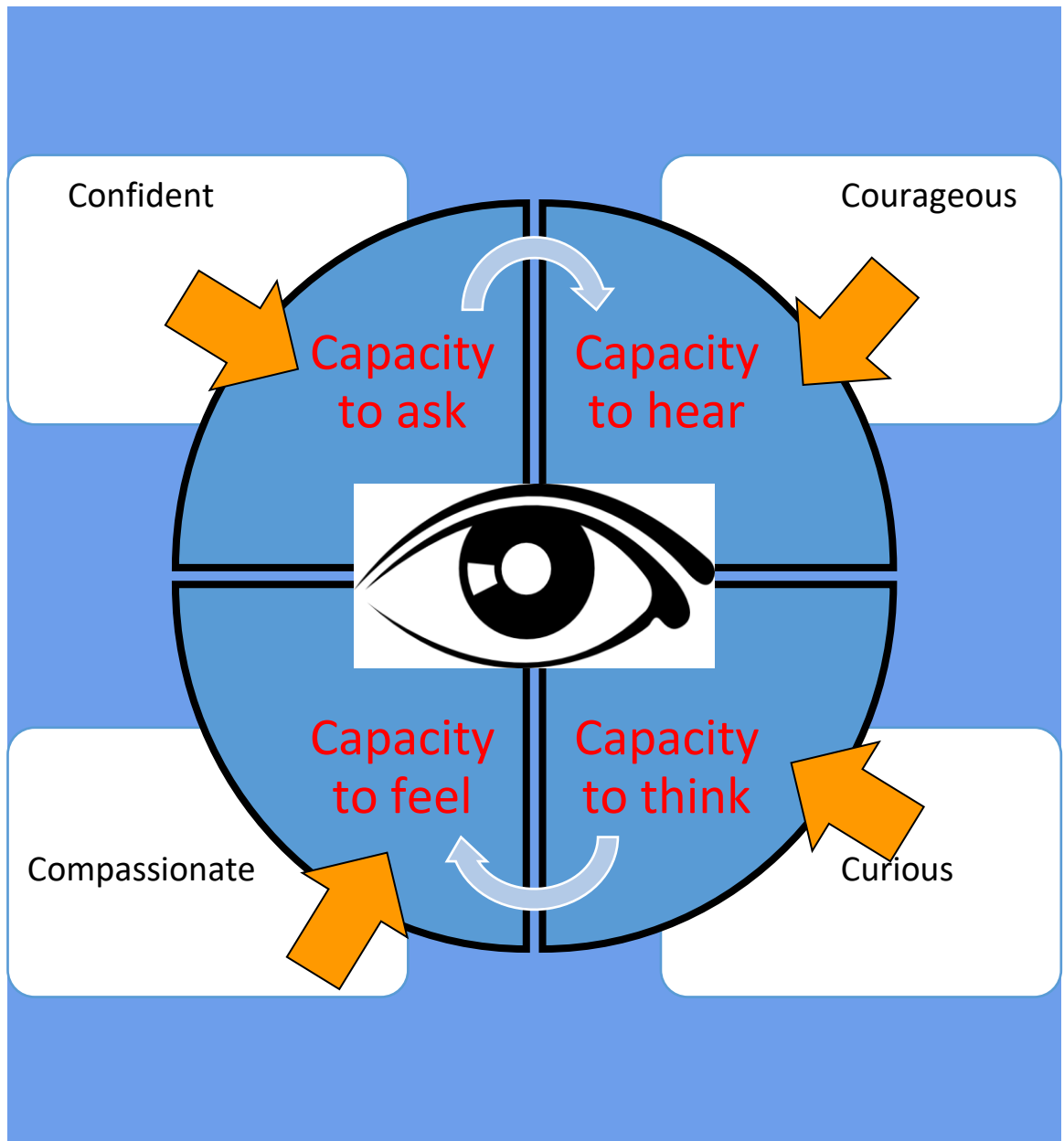
This second skin, or shell, I suggest, develops as a way of managing uncontained anxiety. This additional layer of protection impacts on social workers' capacity to ask, hear, see, think and feel, all human senses, which interrelate with each other. The second skin prevents social workers from using their senses to gain a fuller understanding of what is going on for the child as they turn a blind eye, see, but do not see, what is under their nose. The absence of a containing environment for social workers leads to a thickening of this skin, or shell, as the need to defend oneself from the complex emotional distress of the work increases. Hoggett (2015, p.55) draws on Menzies-Lyth, suggesting that the:

analytic question concerns the way in which the state and its institutions may come to embody social anxieties through its rules, systems, structures, and procedures, creating a kind of "thick skin".

In figure two I propose a model for social work practice in which social workers, who are adequately trained to communicate and engage with children, supported by an organisational culture that prioritises relationships and direct work with children, and

receiving supervision that focuses on emotional as well as procedural dimensions of practice, can develop confidence and capacity to engage effectively with children without the need to develop a second skin. In the '4 C' model, the arrows permeate the quadrants representing the absence of a second skin as the social workers are supported and enabled to think about the complex dynamics from their practice encounters and encouraged to engage with the emotional dimensions of the children's worlds and what this stirs up in them. This in turn, means that their capacity to ask questions, hear children's answers, see children's non-verbal behaviours and responses, think about what this might mean for them and feel the emotions aroused in the work, can all contribute to more meaningful understandings of children's lived experiences. In this model, the eye in the centre of the quadrant is open - able to see, absorb and process the data and use it to inform the intervention.

Figure five: 4C Model for (Confident, Compassionate, Courageous, Curious) practice



Capacity to ask, listen, see and think

In all observations the social workers asked questions and often tried to ensure the children and young people understood why they were involved or visiting. Questions were sometimes open in nature but often closed, therefore eliciting less information

than they might. Too often questions were answered but not followed up by social workers. I observed many instances of children answering questions that could have led to follow-up questions but social workers often shifted the conversation to another subject. This seemed to be due to issues of skill and confidence. The social workers lacked curiosity and seemed not to have been taught to use systemic questioning, such as circular or relational questioning, which encourage and facilitate the continuation of discussions (Brown, 1997). Lynch et al. (2018) found social workers using open questions were considered to be more empathic and when their communication consisted of high levels of curiosity they conveyed their interest in parents' experience. I would suggest the same is true when communicating with children. The use of open questions invites children and young people to share their experience and views, indicating that the social worker is interested in their emotions and what they think and feel about their lives. Being curious and trying to understand what life is like for children is more likely to generate a focus on the emotional content of their experiences, as Alana might have achieved had she continued the conversation with Leon about his feelings of loneliness. This is not to ignore the impact of organisational requirements to process cases efficiently and smoothly from one social worker to the next before Alana left the team (Winter et al., 2018).

The importance of the blind eye/open eye conceptualises the important contribution of observation in engaging with children's emotional lives at individual, child/family and organisational levels in which social work practice encourages social workers to use all of their senses and move beyond just the verbal dimension of practice. Phillips (2014, p.2268) with reference to choreographic and dance literature, reasons that a reliance on quantitative record-keeping reduces knowledge to technical practice as opposed to

the importance of critical observation that attends to movement and the body. She maintains that seeing is not just about a skillset, but also requires an understanding of concepts such as bodies, embodiment, subjectivity, space and movement. Ferguson (2016, p. 11) stresses that in addition to the skills, knowledge and confidence of social workers, it is also important to understand examples of practice where children are lost from sight in terms of a process of invisibility that arises from the interaction of organisational influences, the absence of containment and workers' qualities and lived experience.

Conclusion

The findings from my study are triangulated or crystallised through analysis of all aspects of data, which have supported the finding of distancing practice taking place. I conclude that such close observation of practice can and does provide valuable insights into how social workers engage, or not, with the emotional needs of children and what factors enable more effective practice in this regard. In the next chapter I detail recommendations for practice and further research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Introduction to chapter

The inspiration for undertaking my research was my experience of social work students' and newly qualified social workers' seeming reluctance to engage with the emotional dimensions of the work. I was often struck by this and a seeming allied anxiety to 'get stuck in' and have conversations about difficult things. This chapter will summarise the findings from the research and develop proposed areas for practice development. This research sought to explore and understand social workers' practice and how they engage with children's emotional worlds and the factors that make this more or less successful. Through the close observation of social work practice in family homes, schools and social work offices, and through interviews with social workers and analysis of the case records it has been possible to develop a picture of contemporary social work practice with children in relation to engagement with children's emotions.

Summary of main themes

This research has highlighted the mechanisms that social workers engage, often unconsciously, to enable them to undertake their work without being overwhelmed by the complexity of emotive and distressing interactions and situations they encounter. It has identified the organisational defences against anxiety that support social workers to keep a distance from the more relational aspects of the work such as technical, bureaucratic tasks and responsibilities. Finally, it has identified the gaps in social work qualifying and post-qualifying training in the application of theoretical frameworks, such as psychoanalytic and systemic theory, to better understand children and young people; to have a greater knowledge of communication and the dynamics of engaging in

emotions work; to develop skills in more effective open, circular questioning which facilitate curiosity; and use observation and all the senses.

Researcher impact and subjectivity

Thinking about the impact I may have had on research participants and their practice also helps to identify other interpretations of the findings. From a systemic perspective it is possible to think about how the practice context is constructed to inhibit emotion and that perhaps I can afford to 'feel', as I have the privilege of being able to leave the field at the end of my research which social workers and families do not. It is also important to think about how as an observer, I may have changed the system by my presence and what social workers' perceptions of me might have been in terms of what they thought I might want to see, perhaps more 'doing' than 'feeling'.

A systemic perspective is also helpful in thinking about which domain the social workers may have been in during my observations. They might have been operating within the domain of production, grasping for expert knowledge in an attempt to make an objective assessment which might make a difference to the family - in this domain a third person positioning would be appropriate, as in the case record of Jenny. In the domain of explanation first person positioning is more appropriate as she connects with 'local' rather than expert knowledge. This case illustrates very graphically the dilemma of how space for reflection can be created but one can then shift into decision-making. This would be the domain of aesthetics, i.e. moving elegantly and clearly between the two - which is sadly what Jenny and the family are constrained from doing. It may be that Jenny is in a double-bind about what domain she is in which is stifling, like the

accommodation itself and inhibiting her ability to perform in either domain as she would hope - much as the family are constrained from living the life they hope for.

A further dimension is the issue of difference. In thinking of how gender might be influencing my observation and social worker's perceptions of what I might want to see, they may, for example, be thinking that I, as a man, might want to see a more action-focussed rather than emotional discourse. With the exception of one social worker, all participants were women so it is important to acknowledge that gender will have played a part in influencing the interactions between me and the social workers. As Winter et al. (2018) noted, it is essential to attend to the factors that influence and shape emotions including gender, age, status and organisational context. In child and family social work, much emotion work is undertaken by women with men often occupying more senior roles. This must be given credence in thinking about the impact of me as a male social worker/ observer/researcher.

Implications for practice

It seems that social workers engage in defensive practices, such as avoidance and distancing, in order to protect themselves from the ongoing challenges of the work and the impact this has on their own emotional wellbeing. As with the nurses in the Hayward and Tuckey (2011) research, these distancing mechanisms might be viewed as "processes that link emotional demands inherent in client-oriented occupations to both positive and negative outcomes in terms of well-being, development, and performance". Within this context it is clear that it is important that social workers develop strategies to preserve their wellbeing in order to be able to continue to do the

work. However, if society, policy makers or social work employers want social workers to move beyond a gatekeeping and commissioning role, change is required.

Based on the findings from this study I have identified three broad areas of development in relation to practice, training and research. This first of these is that:

- Qualifying and post-qualifying training must better prepare social workers to develop a comprehensive understanding of communication including skills to engage children.

From qualifying training onwards, social workers need opportunities to develop their skill and efficacy in being able to engage children and young people, addressing differences in background, levels of communication, diversity of presenting issues and being able to elegantly move between the dimensions of doing, being and knowing. They need to be supported to develop their curiosity and a capacity to ask questions that elicit honest answers that can be tolerated and responded to. Training should provide social workers with a range of theoretical frameworks to understand communication dynamics, to draw on all their senses, including observation, to gauge what life is like for children. Training should enable social workers to be able to recognise the complex psychodynamic processes present in interactions in order to understand defence mechanisms which may be the child/young persons', the parents/carers' or their own. Opportunities to develop their communication and engagement skills need to be provided in order that they have the confidence and courage to broach sensitive issues, asking difficult questions and entering the messy terrain which may feel uncomfortable and worrying. Curricula should support social workers to be able to tolerate and bear what children disclose without the need to refer to other services so quickly whilst knowing what their limitations are. It should include the development of higher-order

skills including flexibility, adaptability and a desire to look for and be open to new knowledge (Burton and Revell, 2017, pp.1518-9).

The second recommendation is:

- The provision of supervision, reflection and continued professional development to support a culture of critical reflection.

Ensuring that social workers have space and time to think about their work and understand their practice encounters more, promoting supervision and reflective spaces as a tool for exploration, curiosity and better understanding and opportunities to reflect upon how practice is written about in case records, will all assist in children's emotional lives being better attended to. Ensuring that social workers are challenged to think about their work, consider the emotional dimensions and identify gaps in their practice in an environment that does not seek to blame but to develop skill and expertise is a priority for the profession. The research base in demonstrating the value of developing social workers' reflective capacity on practice is complex and emerging and as Wilkins (2017) suggests, the provision of opportunity for critical reflection does not necessarily need to be in traditional, formal structures such as individual supervision. Evidence of differing arrangements is emerging such as systemic supervision where a strong relationship was found between the quality of group systemic case discussion and the quality of practice with families (Bostock, et al. 2017). Further research is required that identifies more clearly the dimensions of good supervision and the impact of this on practice with families. Such reflective spaces also allow for multiple perspectives to be considered, opportunities for the emotional dimensions of the work or families to be discussed and

shared and the provision of support when practitioners are distressed or stuck. Support to local authorities is needed on how to embed a culture of reflective supervision that moves away from managerialist approaches as evidenced in this study and other research. Preston-Shoot and Agass (1990) suggest that social work needs to accept that it cannot be effective if it only focuses on the practical aspects of the role as the feelings and emotions evoked by the work and individuals and the impact of these upon workers cannot be ignored. If practitioners are to become the critical, analytic thinkers that Munro (2011) advocated, supervision needs to move beyond monitoring of work and consider the process issues involved in practice. Social workers need an organisational culture where they can regularly reflect on their experiences in a positive, containing way, consistently supported to be able and ready to engage intimately with children and parents. They need to be helped to make sense of those experiences and be attuned to their emotional and visceral experiences and the impact of the home itself (Ferguson, 2018), in ways that help them to think clearly, keep their focus on the child and provide effective care (Ruch, 2007).

The final recommendation is:

- Social work professional and regulatory bodies need to instil confidence in social workers that they are able to engage in direct work with children without needing to refer to other professionals as readily, believing that they are able to undertake emotional work themselves, with adequate support and supervision.

This recommendation is timely as the establishment of a new specialist regulator, Social Work England, takes place. Having a powerful regulatory body that is able to champion the profession and support professional development so that social workers

are encouraged and supported to develop their practice through continued professional development could be instrumental to influencing a change of practice culture. The regulatory and professional bodies need to work closely with the profession/sector in supporting social workers to be able to engage in practice where relationships are prioritised over budgets and performance targets. Policy developments need influencing whereby social workers are facilitated to see themselves as agents of change, supported and confident to undertake casework with families rather than needing to externally refer families for interventions. This requires more manageable caseloads so that social workers have time to spend engaging with children and their families, developing trusting relationships, undertaking direct ongoing work as required, thoughtfully considering what is happening in children and young people's lives.

Critique of methodology and limitations of the study

This study has utilised a largely psycho-social frame or lens for data collection and analysis. This approach has provided insights into what goes on in social work practice with children. However, the research involved observations of only seven social workers in one team, in one local authority in England so it was not possible to identify and analyse variations. My observations also represent only a small snapshot of those social workers' practice on one particular day (bar two observations in the case of Jenny), occurring with its 'contextual and temporal contingent aspects' (Winter et al. 2018). Further, the practice I observed was impacted by my presence, as a white, male, dual researcher and experienced social worker from a respected organisation, known for working within relational and emotional realms. I cannot be sure what impact my

presence had and exactly how much the practice I observed represented the everyday practice of these social workers. The observations were undertaken only by me so I will have been struck by particular things and may have not noticed other things. Specific material will have unconsciously been part of the written record I made of each observation. Another researcher may have identified different things. As Walsch (2013, p.47) states:

Quantum physics tells us that nothing that is observed is unaffected by the observer. That statement, from science, holds enormous and powerful insight. It means that everyone sees a different truth because everyone is creating what they see.

A similar critique could be made of my choice of psycho-social analytic framework which led to my findings of defence mechanisms being drawn on by social workers. Other interpretations may have been arrived at had I used a different approach. I reflect on how I my findings were reached and whether I have been sufficiently aware of what I chose to observe, avoiding finding what I already believed and staying open to noticing other kinds of processes (Burke and Cooper, 2007). Partridge (2007) contends that we continually make choices in terms of clinical approaches adopted, theoretical ideas and techniques privileged and the stories fostered, challenged or neglected. Due to the pragmatics of time, interviews were undertaken whenever the social worker was available, usually quite soon after the observation. Completing them later in the research process, after I had analysed the observations, might have meant I was able to pick up on other things, although this would have been somewhat counter to the FANI approach. That we privilege some decisions over others according to the opportunities

and constraints available to us in a given context is as relevant in research as it is clinically.

I have tried to counter this type of research practice by presenting three of my observations to a panel of doctoral students and academics from within and without the social work profession and by discussing my approach and findings with my supervisors. Additionally, the use of IPA with the interviews enabled me to identify emergent themes within each interview and before moving on to the next interview. Once this was complete it was then possible to look for patterns across all interviews and arrive at a master table of themes. These themes were then mapped against the original data and all evidence relating to the same theme was pulled together in one document so it could be easily identified. The IPA coding frame was increasingly refined until the three superordinate themes were identified from across all interview transcripts which was used as a basis for analysis and writing. Additionally, themes identified in the psycho-social theoretical framework were looked for within the transcripts and case records and inductive codes that were not pre-conceived then emerged from within the data. Deductive coding was guided by the theoretical framework, in particular paying attention to anxieties, defences and emotions in observations, interviews and case records.

Limitations of psycho-social research include the risk of 'wild analysis' where findings may be 'just an imposition of our own preconceptions' (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009 p18). It can be a very labour intensive approach whereby multiple sources of data are always present including the researchers' own notes, accounts and insights into data collection. As psycho-social research usually involves single-case analysis or a small number of

comparative case analysis, this is also subject to criticism. These include the possible difficulties of sustaining a commitment to ethics around anonymity and confidentiality; not paying close attention to the particularities of each individual case; becoming immersed in participants and their projections and the researchers' projections into them (Cooper, 2018; MaClure, 2013). There is also the challenge of representing complex particulars from a case study that might be difficult to hear and not appreciated (Cooper, 2018).

A psycho-social approach has enabled me to stay close to the research and be clearly visible so, for instance, drawing out my own experiences and reflections during the observations and interviews and thinking about my own emotional responses to the data at the time or subsequently. This has helped to inform and structure my analysis by thinking about issues of transference and counter-transference and how these are alive in social work practice and in research. It has also enabled me to adopt an appreciative stance (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2011) to the participants in the messy and complex distressing work they undertake, in both data-gathering and analysis.

Whilst the small numbers of participants and practice situations observed means that caution is needed in generalising from the findings of this study to wider practice, the findings draw on theorising of psycho-social approaches to social work and previous research such as that of Ferguson (2009-18) and Pinkney (2018) where theoretical constructs such as denial and professional distancing have been identified, which this research further develops. Whilst the case study approach focused on only seven social workers at a specific time and place, the findings from this study have supported extant research literature as identified in chapter two. Whilst it is likely that a similar study

undertaken elsewhere at a different point in time might identify a range of different themes, it is possible that issues of distancing and denial will also be identified even if alternative, opposing hypotheses were stated at the outset (Yin, 2012). Yin (2018) refers to multiple case studies as having a replication logic whereby a theory derived from one case is replicated in further cases which strengthens the basis of the theory. The case study method brought together data from the observations, interviews, case records and ethnographic notes from the office and in cars with social workers and then crystallised with each data set. Through cross-case comparative analysis it was possible to draw out themes which I have illustrated through two detailed case studies.

Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 21) challenges the view that the case study approach leads to a verification bias - a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived ideas, arguing that 'the case study contains no greater bias toward verification of the researcher's preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry'. Citing research conducted using intensive, in-depth case studies where preconceived views and assumptions were proved wrong leading researchers to revise their hypotheses, he suggests that the concentration of the case study approach is more likely to uncover new understanding of situations and complexities which can lead to broader understanding through a process of falsification.

This mixed methods approach has brought to life these encounters between children and social workers by identifying patterns in how social workers engaged with children or struggled to do so. In doing this I have been able to theorise practice and reach deeper understandings of such practice. The specific contribution of this research is the 4C model which brings together the components required for social workers to be able to

effectively communicate and engage with children, supported by an organisational culture that prioritises relationships and direct work with children and develops the confidence and capacity of its workforce to engage effectively with children without the need to develop a second skin. The '4 C' model represents a practice culture that prioritises engagement with complex dynamics involved in the work, a focus on the emotional dimensions of children's worlds underpinned by a capacity to ask questions, hear children's answers, observe and think about children's lived experiences. Such a culture will more readily equip social workers preventing them from approaching the work from the anxious position expressed by one of the research participants:

I know that a lot of the things that I'm going to be speaking about are gonna raise her anxiety or make her act out afterwards so I worry a lot about that and my intervention can make it worse sometimes. I can ask how they're feeling, what they would have liked to have happened....so talk about kind of their feelings and the impact... but to go any more into that, I don't think I'm trained enough to dig more into emotions and feelings.

Bibliography

- Alexandrov, H. (2009) Experiencing knowledge: the vicissitudes of a research journey, in Simon Clarke and Paul Hoggett (eds), *Researching beneath the surface: Psycho-social research methods in practice*. London: Karnac.
- Atkinson, P. and Hammersley, M. (1994) 'Ethnography and participant observation'. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of qualitative research*. California: Sage.
- Ayling, P. (2012) 'Learning through playing in higher education: Promoting play as a skill for social work students', *Social Work Education*, 31(6), pp. 764-777.
- Bell, M. (2000) 'Social work responses to domestic violence in the context of child protection', in U. McCluskey and C. Hooper (eds) *Psychodynamic perspectives on abuse: The cost of fear*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Bell, M. (2002) 'Promoting children's rights through the use of relationship', *Child and Family Social Work*, 7, pp. 1-11.
- Bick, E. (1964) 'Notes on infant observation in psychoanalytic training', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 45, pp. 558-566.
- Bick, E. (1968) 'The experience of skin in early object relations', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 49, pp. 484-486.
- Bostock, L., Forrester, D., Patrizo, L., Godfrey, T., Zounouzi, M., Antonopoulou, V., Bird, H. and Tinarwo, M., (2017). *Scaling and deepening the Reclaiming Social Work model*. Department for Education.
- Bower, M. (2003) 'Broken and twisted', *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*. 17(2), pp. 143-151.
- Bower, M. (2005). *Psychoanalytic theory for social work practice: Thinking under fire*. London: Routledge.
- Bower, M., and Solomon, R. (Eds.). (2017) *What social workers need to know: A Psychoanalytic approach*. London: Routledge.

- Bailey, R. and Brake, M. eds., (1975). *Radical social work*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Brandon, M., Belderson, P., Gardener, R., Sidebotham, P., Dodsworth, J., Warren, C. and Black, J. (2009) *Understanding serious case reviews and their impact: A biennial analysis of serious case reviews 2005-7*. London: DCSF.
- Brewer, J. (2000) *Ethnography*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Briggs (1997) *Growth and Risk in Infancy*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- British Association of Social Workers (2018) 80:20 campaign:
<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2018/may/basw-england-launches-80-20-campaign-improve-working-conditions-social-workers> [accessed 12 December 2018].
- Broadhurst, K., Wastell, D., White, S., Hall, C., Peckover, S., Thompson, K., Pithouse, A. and Davey, D (2009) 'Performing 'initial assessment': Identifying the latent conditions for error at the front-door of local authority children's services,' *British Journal of Social Work*, 40(2), pp. 352-370.
- Broadhurst, K. and Mason, C. (2014) 'Social work beyond the VDU: Foregrounding co-presence in situated practice – Why face-to-face practice matters', *British Journal of Social Work*, 44, pp. 578-595.
- Brown, J (2013) Circular questioning: An introductory guide, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 18(2).
- Bryman, A. (2011) *Social Research Methods*, (3rd ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burke, C. and Cooper, A (2007) Introduction: 'Dialogues and developments in social work practice: applying systemic and psychoanalytic ideas in real world contexts', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 21(2), pp. 193-196.
- Burkitt, I. (1997) 'Social relationships and emotions', *Sociology*, 29, pp. 151-158.
- Burton, V. and Revell, L., (2017) 'Professional curiosity in child protection: Thinking the unthinkable in a neo-liberal world', *British Journal of Social Work*, 48(6), pp.1508-1523.
- Casement, P. (1985) *On Learning from the patient*. London: Tavistock.

Clarke, S. and Hoggett, P. (2009) *Researching beneath the Surface: Psycho-social Research Methods in Practice*. London: Karnac.

Cohen S (2001) *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Collins, S. (2007) 'Resilience, Positive Emotions and Optimism'. *Practice* 19(4), pp. 255-269.

Cooper, A. (2005) 'Surface and depth in the Victoria Climbié inquiry report', *Child and Family Social Work*, 10(1), pp.1-9.

Cooper, A. (2009) 'Hearing the grass grow: Emotional and epistemological challenges of practice-near research', *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*. 23(4), pp. 429-442.

Cooper, A. (2018). *Conjunctions: Social work, Psychoanalysis, and society*. Routledge.

Cooper, A and Lousada, J. (2005) *Borderline welfare: Feeling and fear of feeling in modern welfare*. London: Karnac.

Cossar, J., Brandon, M. and Jordan, P (2014) 'You've got to trust her and she's got to trust you': children's views on participation in the child protection system', *Child and Family Social Work*, 21(1).

Cottam, H. (2011) 'Relational welfare', *Soundings*, 48, pp. 134-44.

Crittenden, P. and Landini, A. (2011) *Assessing adult attachment: A dynamic-maturational approach to discourse analysis*. New York: Norton.

Cross, S., Hubbard, A. and Munro, E. (2010) *Reclaiming social work: London Borough of Hackney children and young people's services, Parts 1 and 2*. London: Human Reliability Associates and London School of Economics and Political Science.

Damasio, A.R., (2000) 'A second chance for emotion' in R.D. Lane and L Nadel (Eds.). Series in affective science. *Cognitive neuroscience of emotion*, pp.12-23. Oxford: OUP.

- Dearnley, K. (2002): Mate and stalemate revisited, *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*, 16(2), pp. 203-206.
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. (2005) *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Department for Education (1989) *The Children Act*. London: HMSO.
- Department for Education (2004) *The Children Act*. London: HMSO.
- Department for Education (2015) *Knowledge and skills statement for child and family social work*. London: Crown.
- Department for Education (2017) *Characteristics of children in need in England, 2016-17*. London: Crown.
- Department for Education (2018a) *Experimental statistics: Children and family social work workforce in England, year ending 30 September 2017*. London: Crown.
- Department for Education (2018b) *Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*. London: HMSO.
- Department of Health (2000) *The framework for assessment of children in need and their families*. London: HM Government Crown.
- De Montigny, G.A.J. (1995) *Social working: An ethnography of front-line practice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- de Winter M, and Noom, M. (2003) 'Someone who treats you as an ordinary human being: Homeless youth examine the quality of professional care', *British Journal of Social Work*. 33(3) pp.325-338.
- Edwards, D. (1997) 'Emotion', In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S. Yates. (eds) *Discourse theory and practice: A reader*. London: Sage and Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Ekman, P. (1999) *Basic emotions. Handbook of cognition and emotion*. New York: Wiley.

Fairclough, N. (2001) 'Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research', *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 5(11), pp.121-138.

Family Rights Group (2018) *Care Crisis Review: options for change*. London: Family Rights Group.

Featherstone, B., Morris, K and White, S. (2014) 'A marriage made in hell', *British Journal of Social Work*, 44, pp. 1735–1749.

Ferguson, H. (2005) 'Working with violence, the emotions and the psycho-social dynamics of child protection: Reflections on the Victoria Climbié case', *Social Work Education*, 24(7), pp. 781-795.

Ferguson, H. (2009) 'Performing child protection: home visiting, movement and the struggle to reach the abused child', *Child and Family Social Work*, 14(4), pp.471-80.

Ferguson, H. (2010) 'Therapeutic journeys: the car as a vehicle for working with children and families and theorising practice', *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*. 24(2), pp. 121-38.

Ferguson, H. (2011) *Child protection practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ferguson H. (2014) 'What social workers do in performing child protection work: Evidence from research into face-to-face practice', *Child and Family Social Work*, 21(3), pp. 283–294.

Ferguson, H. (2016a) 'Researching social work practice close up: Using ethnographic and mobile methods to understand encounters between social workers, children and families', *British Journal of Social Work* 46, pp. 153–168.

Ferguson, H. (2016b) 'How children become invisible in child protection work: Findings from research into day to day social work practice', *British Journal of Social Work*, 47(4), pp. 1007–1023.

Ferguson, H. (2018) 'Making home visits: Creativity and the embodied practices of home visiting in social work and child protection', *Qualitative Social Work*, Vol. 17(1), pp. 65–80.

- Flaskas, K. (2007) 'Systemic and Psychoanalytic ideas: Using knowledges in social work', *Journal of Social Work Practice*. 21(2), pp. 131-147.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006) 'Five misunderstandings about case-study research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), pp. 219-245.
- Forrester, D., Kershaw, S., Moss, H. and Hughes, L. (2008) 'Communication skills in child protection: How do social workers talk to parents?', *British Journal of Social Work* (13), pp. 41-51.
- Forrester D, McCambridge, J. and Waissbein, C. (2008) 'How do child and family social workers talk to parents about child welfare concerns?', *Child Abuse Review*, 17(1), pp. 23–35.
- Froggett, L. (2002) *Love, hate and welfare: Psycho-social approaches to policy and practice*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Froggett, L. (2012) 'Psycho-social research', in S. Becker, A. Bryman and H. Ferguson (Eds.), *Understanding Research for Social Policy and Social Work*. (2nd edition). Bristol: Policy Press.
- Froggett, L. and Briggs, S. (2012) 'Practice-near and practice-distant methods in human services research', *Journal of Research Practice*, 8(2), p.M9.
- Frosh, S. and Baraitser, L. (2008) 'Psychoanalysis and psycho-social studies', *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, 13(4), pp.346-365.
- Frosh, S. and Saville Young, L. (2017) 'Psychoanalytic approaches to qualitative psychology', *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, pp. 124-140.
- Geertz, C. (1973) *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Green, A. (2000). *Clinical and observational psychoanalytic research: Roots of a controversy* (No. 5). London: Karnac Books.
- Green, L. (2017) 'The trouble with touch? New insights and observations on touch for social work and social care', *British Journal of Social Work*, 47(3): pp.773-792.

- Griffin, C. and Bengry-Howell, A. (2017) 'Ethnography', in, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1989) *Fourth generation evaluation*. London: Sage.
- Gupta, A. and Blewett, J. (2007) 'Change for children? The challenges and opportunities for the children's social work workforce', *Child and Family Social Work*, 12(2) pp. 172-181.
- Hall, C. and Slembrouck, S. (2009) 'Communication with parents in child welfare: skills, language and interaction', *Child and Family Social Work*, 14(4), pp. 461-470.
- Handley, G. and Doyle, C. (2012) 'Ascertaining the wishes and feelings of young children: social workers' perspectives on skills and training', *Child & Family Social Work*, 19(4), pp.443-454.
- Harvard, R. M, and Tuckey, M. R. (2011) 'Emotions in uniform: How nurses regulate emotion at work via emotional boundaries', *Human relations*, 64(11), 1501-1523.
- Health and Care Professions Council (2008) *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics*. London: HCPC.
- Heard, D. and Lake, B. (1997) *The challenge of attachment for caregiving*. London: Routledge.
- Higgins, M. (2019) 'The Judgment in Re W (A child): National and International Implications for Contemporary Child and Family Social Work', *British Journal of Social Work*, 49, pp. 49-58.
- Hingley-Jones, H. (2009) 'Developing practice near social work research to explore the emotional worlds of severely learning disabled adolescents in 'transition' and their families'. *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*, 23(4), pp. 413-218.
- Hochschild, A.R. (2012) *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hoggett, P (2000) 'Social policy and the emotions', in G. Lewis, S. Gerwitz and J. Clarke. (eds) *Rethinking Social Policy*. London: Open University.

Hoggett, P (2014) 'A psycho-social perspective on social defences', in D. Armstrong and M. Rustin, M. (eds) *Social defences against anxiety: Explorations in a paradigm*. London: Karnac.

Holland, J. (2007) 'Emotions and research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. 10(3), pp. 195-209.

Hollis, F. (1972) *Casework: A psycho-social therapy*, (2nd Ed). New York: Random House.

Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2013) *Doing qualitative research differently: A psycho-social approach* (2nd ed.) London: Sage.

Hooks, B. (1989) *Talking Back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston MA: South End.

Horwath, J. (2011) 'See the practitioner, see the child: The framework for the assessment of children in need and their families ten years on'. *British Journal of Social Work*, 41, pp. 1070-1087.

Howe, D. (1996) 'Surface and depth in social work', in, N. Parton (Ed.) *Social Theory, Social Change and Social Work*. London: Routledge.

Howe, D. (1998) 'Relationship-based thinking and practice in social work', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 12(1), pp.45-56.

Howe, D. (2008) *The emotionally intelligent social worker*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hunt, J. (1989) *Psychoanalytic aspects of fieldwork*. London: Sage.

Hunt, S., Goddard, C., Cooper, J., Littlechild, B. and Wild, J. (2016) 'If I feel like this, how does the child feel?' Child protection workers, supervision, management and organisational responses to parental violence. *Journal of Social Work Practice*. 30(1), pp. 5-24.

Hussein, S. (2018) Work engagement, burnout and personal accomplishments among social workers: A comparison between those working in children and adults' services in England. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health Services Research*.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s/10488-018-0872-z>.

Ingram, R. (2012) 'Emotions, social work practice and supervision: an uneasy alliance', *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*. 27(1), pp. 5-19.

Ingram, R., and Smith, M. (2018) '*Relationship-based Practice: Emergent themes in social work literature*', (IRISS Insights; No. 41). United Kingdom: Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Sciences.

The Independent Newspaper (2018) Local councils at financial breaking point due to austerity, warns National Audit Office, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/local-councils-finances-budget-cuts-austerity-services-national-audit-office-a8242556.html> [Accessed 31 August 2018].

Jones, R. (2014) *The story of Baby P: Setting the record straight*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Keinemans, S. (2015) 'Be sensible: Emotions in social work ethics and education', *British Journal of Social Work*. 45, pp. 2176-2191.

Killen, K. (1996) 'How far have we come in dealing with the emotional challenge of abuse and neglect?', *Child Abuse and Neglect*. 20(9), pp. 791-195.

Kim, H. and Stoner, M. (2008) 'Burnout and turnover intention among social workers: Effects of role stress, job autonomy and social support', *Administration in Social Work*. 32(3), pp. 5-25.

Kincheloe, J.L. (2005) 'On to the next level: Continuing the conceptualization of the bricolage', *Qualitative inquiry*, 11(3), pp.323-350.

Kuhn, T. (1962) 'The structure of scientific revolutions', *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*. 2(2).

Kvale, S. (1996) *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.

Laming, H. (2003) *The Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report*. London: TSO.

Laming, H. (2009) *The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report*. London: TSO.

- Lang, P., Little, M. and Cronen, V. (1990) 'The systemic professional: domains of action and the question of neutrality', *Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management*, 1(1), 34-49.
- Leeson, C. (2010) 'The emotional labour of caring about looked-after children', *Child & Family Social Work*, 15(4), pp.483-491.
- Lefevre, M. (2008) 'Knowing, being and doing: core qualities and skills for working with children and young people in care', in, Luckock, B. and Lefevre, M. (eds) *Direct work: Social work with children and young people in care*. London: BAAF.
- Lefevre, M. (2015a) 'Becoming effective communicators with children: developing practitioner capability through social work education', *British Journal of Social Work*, 45(1), pp. 204-224.
- Lefevre, M. (2015b) 'Integrating the teaching, learning and assessment of communication with children within the qualifying social work curriculum', *Child & Family Social Work*, 20(2), pp. 211–222.
- Lefevre, M. (2017) 'Learning and development journeys towards effective communication with children', *Child & Family Social Work*, 22(1), pp.86-96.
- Lefevre, M. (2018) *Communicating with children and young people: Making a difference* (2nd Edition) Bristol: Policy Press.
- Lefevre, M., Tanner, K. and Luckock, B. (2008) 'Developing social work students' communication skills with children and young people: A model for the qualifying curriculum', *Child and Family Social Work*, 13, pp. 166-176.
- Lemma, A. (2010) 'The power of relationship: A study of key working as an intervention with traumatised young people', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, (24)4, pp. 409-427.
- Lichtman, M. (2017) 'A Review of Research Literature', in *Qualitative research for the social sciences*. London: Sage.
- Littlechild, B. (2005) 'The stresses arising from violence, threats and aggression against child protection social workers'. *British Journal of Social Work*, 5(1), pp. 61–82. Luckock

- Luckock, B., Lefevre, M., Orr, D., Jones, M., Marchant, R. and Tanner, K. (2006) *Knowledge review: Teaching, learning and assessing communication skills with children and young people in social work education*. London: SCIE.
- Lynch, A., Newlands, F. and Forrester, D. (2018) 'What does empathy sound like in social work communication? A mixed-methods study of empathy in child protection social work practice', *Child and Family Social Work*, 1, pp.1-9.
- Lyth, I.M., (1988) *Containing anxiety in institutions: Selected essays*, Vol. 1. Free Association Books.
- McLeod, A. (2005) *Listening to children: A practitioners guide*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- McLeod, A. (2007) 'Whose agenda? Issues of power and relationship when listening to looked-after young people', *Child and Family Social Work*, 12, pp. 278-286.
- MacLure, M. (2013). 'The wonder of data. Cultural Studies?', *Critical Methodologies*, 13(4), pp. 228-232.
- Mandin, P. (2007) 'The contribution of systems and object-relation theories to an understanding of the therapeutic relationship in social work practice. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 21(2), pp. 149-162.
- Mantarri-van der Kuip (2014) 'The deteriorated work-related well-being among statutory social workers in a rigorous economic context', *European Journal of Social Work*, 17, pp. 672-688.
- Maslach, C. and Leiter, M. P. (2008) 'Early predictors of job burnout and engagement', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93, pp. 498-512.
- Mattinson, J. (1975) *The Reflection process in casework supervision*. London: The Institute of Marital Studies.
- Mattinson, J. and Sinclair, I. (1979) *Mate and stalemate*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mendez, C.L., Coudou, F. and Maturana, H.R. (1988) 'The Bringing Forth of Pathology', *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 9(1): 144-172.

- Morgan, R. (2006) *About social workers: A children's views report*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Commission for Social Care Inspection.
- Morrison, F. (2016) *Social workers' communication with children and young people in practice*. Edinburgh: IRISS Insights.
- Morrison, T. (2009) *NQSW guide for supervisors*. Leeds: Children's Workforce Development Council.
- Munro, E. (2011) *The Munro review of child protection: Final report. A child-centred system*. London: Department for Education.
- Narey, M. (2014) *Making the education of social workers consistently effective: Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of the education of children's social workers*. London: Department for Education.
- Noyes, C. (2017) 'Written on the body', in M. Bower and R. Solomon (eds) *What Social Workers need to Know: A Psychoanalytic Approach*. London: Routledge.
- O' Sullivan, N. (2018) 'Creating space to think and feel in child protection social work; a psychodynamic intervention', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 14, pp. 1-11.
- Oxford English Dictionary online <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/emotion> [Accessed 21 August 2018]
- Parker, I. (2005) *Qualitative psychology: Introducing radical research*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Parton, N. (1991) *Governing the family: Child care, child protection and the state*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Parton, N. (1996) 'Child protection, family support and social work: a critical appraisal of the Department of Health research studies in child protection', *Child & Family Social Work*, 1(1), pp.3-11.
- Parton, N. (2006) (Ed) *Social Theory, Social Change and Social Work: The State of Welfare*. London: Routledge.

- Parton, N. (2008) 'Changes in the form of knowledge in social work: from the 'social' to the 'informational'?', *British Journal of Social Work*, 38(2), pp. 253-269.
- Partridge, K. (2007). 'The positioning compass: a tool to facilitate reflexive positioning'. *Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation & Management*, 18, pp. 96-111.
- Perlman, H.H., (1975) 'In quest of coping', *Social Casework*, 56(4), pp.213-225.
- Phillips, C. (2014) 'Seeing the child beyond the literal: Considering dance choreography and the body in child welfare and protection', *British Journal of Social Work*. 44, pp 2254-2271.
- Pinkney, S. (2011) 'Participation and Emotions. Troubling Encounters Between Children and Social Welfare Professionals', *Children and Society*. 25, pp. 37-46.
- Pinkney, S. (2018) *New directions in children's welfare: Professionals, policy and practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pithouse, A. (1996) 'Managing emotion: Dilemmas in the social work relationship', in K. Carter and S. Delamont (eds) *Qualitative research: The emotional dimension*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Pollack, J. and Levy, S. (1989) 'Counter-transference and failure to report child abuse and neglect', *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 13, pp. 515-522.
- Preston-Shoot, M. and Agass, D. (1990) *Making sense of social work: Psychodynamics, systems and practice*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Price, H. and Cooper, C. (2012) 'In the field: Psychoanalytic observation and epistemological realism', in C. Urwin and J. Sternberg (eds) *Infant observation and research*. London: Routledge.
- Ricoeur, P. (1970) *Freud and philosophy: an essay on interpretation*. Translated by Denis Savage. Yale University Press.
- Rochford, G. (1991) 'Theory, concepts, feelings and practice: The contemplation of bereavement within a social work course', in J. Lishman (ed) *Handbook of Theory to Practice in Social Work*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

- Rogers, A. (2001) 'Nature, bureaucracy and re-balancing the mind and heart', *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*, 15(2), pp.181-191.
- Ruch, G. (2012) 'Where have all the feelings gone? Developing reflective and relationship-based management in child-care social work'. *British Journal of Social Work*, 42, pp. 1315-1332.
- Ruch, G. (2014) 'Helping children is a human process: Researching the challenges social workers face in communicating with young children', *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(8), pp.2145-62.
- Ruch, G. (2018) 'The contemporary context of relationship-based practice'. In G. Ruch, D. Turney and A. Ward. (eds) *Relationship-based social work: Getting to the heart of practice*. (2nd ed) London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Rustin, M. (2005) 'Conceptual analysis of critical moments in Victoria Climbié's life', *Child and Family Social Work*, 10, pp. 11-19.
- Rustin, M.J. (1989) 'Reflections on Methods', in L. Miller, M. Rustin, M. Rustin and J. Shuttleworth (eds) *Closely observed infants*. London: Duckworth.
- Shaw, C., Brady, L and Davey, C. (2011) *Guidelines for research with children and young People*. London: National Children's Bureau.
- Shoesmith, S. (2016) *Learning from Baby P: The politics of blame, fear and denial*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Siegel, D. J. (2012) *The developing mind: Toward a neurobiology of interpersonal experience*. (2nd edn). New York: Guilford Press.
- Simmonds, J (2010) 'Relating and relationships in supervision: Supportive and companionable or dominant and submissive', in G. Ruch, D. Turney, and A. Ward (eds) *Relationship-Based Social Work: Getting to the Heart of Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Silverman D. (2011) *Interpreting qualitative data*. London: Sage.

- Smith, J. Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. (2009) *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory method and research*. London: Sage.
- Social Work Reform Board (2011) *Standards for employers and supervision framework*. London: HMSO.
- Stanley, J. and Goddard, C. (2002) *In the firing line: Violence and power in child protection Work*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Steiner, J. (1985) 'Turning a blind eye: the cover up for Oedipus', *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 12, pp.161-172.
- Tanner. K. (1999) 'Observation: A Counter Culture Offensive Observation's contribution to the development of reflective social work practice', *Infant Observation*, 2(2), 12-32.
- Trevithick, P. (2011) 'Understanding defences and defensiveness in social work', *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*, 25(4), 389-412
- Trevithick, P (2014) 'Humanising managerialism: Reclaiming emotional reasoning, intuition, the relationship, and knowledge and skills in social work', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 28(3), pp.287-311.
- Turney, D. (2012) 'A relationship-based approach to engaging involuntary clients: the contribution of recognition theory', *Child and Family Social Work*, 17, pp. 149-159.
- Turney, D. & Tanner, K. (2001) 'Working with neglected children and their families', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 15(2), pp. 193-204.
- UK Research Integrity Office (2009) *Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct: Code of practice for research*.
- Waddell, M. (1989) 'Living in two worlds: psychodynamic theory and social work practice', *Free Associations*, 1(15), pp.11-35.
- Waddell, M (1998) 'Infantile Development: Kleinian and Post-Kleinian theory, infant observational practice', *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 4(3), pp. 313-329.
- Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H., & Melodt, J. (2001) *Growing up girl: Psycho-social explorations of gender and class*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Walsch, N.D. (2013) *When everything changes, change everything*. Ashland: Emnin Books.

Whetherall, M. (2012) *Affect and emotion: A new social science understanding*. London: Sage.

Whincup, H. (2017) 'What do social workers and children do when they are together? A typology of direct work', *Child and Family Social Work*, 22, pp. 972-980.

Whincup, H (2015) *Direct Work and Home Supervision Requirements: A Qualitative Study exploring experiences of direct work from the perspectives of children, young people, and social workers*, PhD thesis, University of Stirling.

Whitney, D. and A. Trosten-Bloom (2011) 'Five Strategies of Appreciative Leadership', *AI Practitioner*, 13(1).

Whittaker, A. (2011) 'Social defences and organizational culture in a local authority child protection setting: challenges for the Munro Review?', *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*, 25(4) pp. 481-495.

Wilkins, D. (2017) 'Does reflective supervision have a future in English local authority child and family social work?', *Journal of Children's Services*, 12(2-3), pp.164-173.

Winter, K. (2009) 'Relationships matter: The problems and prospects for social workers' relationships with young children in care', *Child and Family Social Work*. 14(4), pp. 450-460.

Winter, K. (2011) 'The UNCRC and social worker's relationships with young children', *Child Abuse Review*, 20, pp. 395-406.

Winter, K., Cree, V., Hallett, S., Hadfield, M. Ruch, G., Morrison, F., and Holland, S. (2017) 'Exploring communication between social workers, children and young people', *British Journal of Social Work*, 47, pp. 1427-1444.

Winter, K., Morrison, F., Cree, V., Ruch, G., Hadfield, M. and Hallett, S. (2018) 'Emotional labour in social workers' encounters with children and their families', *British Journal of Social Work*, 0, pp. 1-17.

Wisker, G. (2008) *The postgraduate research handbook*, (2nd Ed). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yin, R. (2012) 'Analytic generalisation', in A. Mills, G. Durepos and E. Wiebe, (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Yin, R. (2018) *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. London: Sage.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Outline of Research Process

Stage	Objective	Method
Preparation for research	Obtain university ethics approval to undertake the research with social workers and children	Submit ethics approval document along with relevant appendices: information sheet for participants parents; children; social workers Consent form
	Obtain research governance clearance from Local Authority to undertake the research in the respective organisation	Submit research governance application to research governance team and supporting documentation: information sheet and consent form, interview record
	Conduct pilot interview	Interviewed a colleague to test out the Free Association Narrative Interview method to establish if it elicited the kind of relevant information required and to develop my skill in using the method
	Meet with Team	Introduce myself and the research proposal and establish if team members willing to be observed and interviewed Arrange first site visit
Conducting fieldwork	Site visit 1 – July 2015	Observed first three social workers (one twice) on visits with allocated children Interviewed social workers after the observations

	Site visit 2 – Sept 2015	Observed 4 th social worker on visit to allocated child in a school Undertook interview of social worker after observation
	Site visit 3 – March 2016	Observed 5 th , 6 th and 7 th social workers on visits to allocated children Interviewed respective social workers after the observations
Post fieldwork	Data analysis April 2016 – Oct 2016 Intermission Oct 16-Jan 18 Data analysis resumed Jan 18	Transcribed interviews and started analyzing each transcript in turn using IPA Analysed observation records and social worker's case records
	Sharing findings with participants Summer 2018	Emailed participants transcripts of their interviews and asked if they wanted to read a summary of my findings.
	Writing up thesis – Summer (including sabbatical) to December 2018	

Appendix 2: Information for participants and consent forms

Information sheet for child participants

Hello

Thank you for your interest and thinking about letting me sit in on your meeting with the social worker.

About me -things you might want to know

My name is Paul Dugmore and I have been a social worker for nearly 20 years. I have really enjoyed my time working with children, young people and their families and I am very keen that social workers do their best when working with children.

As social workers it is important to make sure children feel safe and comfortable when we are working with them. I would like to see how social workers try to find out about the lives of the children at home and school and how they talk to children, listen to them and support them.

Who will be there?

Just you, the social worker and me.

What will happen?

With your permission I will sit in on meetings with you and your social worker. This could be at your family home, the social work offices or your school or some other place. I will not be asking any questions but just sitting in and seeing what goes on and how you feel during the meeting.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is completely up to you and your parents. Nothing will happen if you decide not to.

What will happen if I do take part?

You would agree to me sitting in and watching a meeting with you and the social worker at least once in their office, your home or school. Your parent would also have to agree to me observing the session. I will not get involved in the meeting but will sit quietly at the side of the room and listen to and watch what takes place. I am especially interested in what the social work does and says. I will make notes after the meeting is over and think about what I have seen. I will then interview the social worker at a later date to find out what they thought about the session that I observe. Anything observed will be treated confidentially and you will not be identified in any way.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

Your involvement in this study is totally up to you and you can change your mind at any time, even during the session. This will not matter and you do not need to worry about this. It will not make any difference to what the social worker does or what services you or your family receive. If you decide that you do not want to be part of the research anymore I will not make any notes about the session I observe or if you decide afterwards, any notes that have been made will be removed from the study and destroyed.

Is it just between us?

Yes it is - it will be confidential and I will not use your name so apart from the social worker and your parent(s) nobody will know that it was you whose session I sat in on.

What will you do with the things you see?

I will make some notes afterwards and type them up. I will use the typed up version (with your name changed) as what we call data and I will try and understand and learn some things about your experience. I will also keep a diary about what I see over the time that I will be carrying out my research. I will have someone called a supervisor who will help me too. They are not part of Hampshire Children's Services and will not be able to find out who you are (your real identity). I will also have access to case notes, assessments, plans and records of supervision sessions.

What happens in the end?

I will write lots about what I have found out about and this will be called a thesis and my supervisor and university will read it and give me a mark. If I do well and they think what I have written is good I will get a qualification called a doctorate.

Will anyone else see it?

It maybe that I turn the long thesis into a short report that may be published in a social work journal (magazine). If you like I can give you a copy of the section we call a summary. This may include publishing some of the data that I gather from sitting in on meetings with social workers and children.

What if I change my mind?

That's fine, it would have been nice to meet you and if at any point it feels uncomfortable speaking to a social worker with me sitting and watching you can tell me at any point and we can take a break or I can leave the room at any point.

What if I have more questions?

Then you can ask me at any time.

Tell me exactly what you are trying to find out?

I would like to understand how social workers speak to children and find out how they are feeling and what they do to try and make them feel better.

I want to see how they try and build relationships with children.

To get lots of information about how social workers work with children and find out what they think and feel

If you are unhappy about any part of this study you can talk to me at any time or contact my supervisor, Gillian Ruch, by emailing gruch@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Once again thank you for agreeing to be involved.

Paul Dugmore

Pdugmore@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Consent to Participate in an Experimental Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants.

Acknowledging emotions and being able to bear them – An ethnographic study into the practice of social work with children.

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what it being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the experimental programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant research publications.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Investigator's Signature

.....

Date:

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Applications for the Approval of Experimental
Programmes Involving Human Participants

Notes for the Guidance of Applicants

Information to Participants and Forms of Consent and Undertaking:

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The following models are intended to assist you in drawing up a hand-out for the information of participants and a form of consent and undertaking. It is not possible to provide a pro-forma which would be appropriate for all eventualities. It is designed to provide a check-list of points to help you to ensure that you have included what should be included.
- 1.2. You should read carefully the notes for the guidance of applicants to ensure that you prepare forms which are relevant to your participant group. For example, the form of consent required from adults is different to that which is required from children who are not old enough to give consent in their own right, but require the consent of a parent or guardian on their behalf.

2. Information to prospective participants

- 2.1. **Annexe 1** sets out the information which should be included in the hand-outs which you prepare for the information of prospective **participants**. You should use the model as a checklist to ensure that you have included all that is relevant. The points highlighted under the heading 'Project Description' may be not appropriate in all cases nor will all programmes involve remuneration, but it would be unusual for any of the other points highlighted not to be included.

3. Form of consent to participate

- 3.1. **Annexe 2** provides a model form of consent. In the case of experimental programmes involving minors consent is obtained from the parent or guardian on behalf of the child, so the wording should be amended to reflect this.
- 3.2. The model does not provide for the form to be witnessed by a person other than the principal investigator. In most cases the witnessing of the form by an independent third party would not be considered necessary, but in experiments

involving some physical exertion or examination (most notably in clinically-related programmes of research) it may be prudent to make provision for the form to be witnessed by a third party.

- 3.3.** If participant groups are composed of people who could be considered particularly vulnerable, such as the visually impaired or the elderly and infirm, consideration should be given to whether provision should be made to have the form witnessed by a third party to whom the purpose of the programme has also been explained and who is competent to explain what is required to the participant and ensure that their interests have been protected.

Annexe 1
University of East London
[Docklands Campus]

University Research Ethics Committee

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

Catherine Fieulleateau, Ethics Integrity Manager, Graduate School, EB 1.43
University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD
(Telephone: 020 8223 6683, Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk).

The Principal Investigator(s)

Paul Dugmore
Tavistock Centre, 120 Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BA
020 8938 2632/ 07809 550963

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Project Title

Acknowledging emotions and being able to bear them – An ethnographic study into the practice of social work with children.

Project Description

This research study seeks to explore how social workers in children and families' teams work with the emotional lives and experiences of children. Little is known about what social workers actually 'do' in their practice and how they engage with the emotions of the children with whom they work. What is known is that social work is a complex activity with social workers having to do many things at once. I want to understand how social workers establish, build and maintain relationships that enable children to talk about their circumstances, their feelings and their thoughts about their lives. I want to illuminate the different methods and techniques that social workers draw upon to enable this complex piece of work to be effective and identify what might impinge on their capacity to do this effectively. It is anticipated that the outcomes and impact of the research will be:

- An increased understanding of the ways in which social workers can effectively engage with the emotional lives of children
- Understanding what social workers do well
- Understanding what they struggle to do

- What measures might be taken to enable them to perform their role more effectively with particular attention to the welfare of children and good decision making.

I plan to find out more about this area by observing social workers meeting with children as part of their ordinary work. This could be at the family home, the social work offices, the school or some other place in the community.

Participation in this study would require your agreement, as a parent/carer, to me observing a meeting with your child/children and the social worker on at least one occasion in the office, during a home visit or a meeting at the school. Your child would also have to agree to me observing the session.

I will not get involved in the meeting but will sit in and observe what takes place. I will make notes after the meeting is over and think about what I have observed. I will then interview the social worker at a later date to find out what they thought about the session that I observe. Anything observed will be treated confidentially and your child/family will not be identified in any way. I will also have access to your child's case notes and copies of any assessments and plans. The audio recording of the interview with the social worker will be safely and securely destroyed once it has been transcribed.

I will also be keeping a reflective diary of my observations where I will write down things from the observation. This will be stored securely and will not contain any information that could identify your child.

If you wish to speak about any issues raised by participating in the study you can inform the researcher at any time and a time will be arranged for a confidential discussion to take place.

This research is for my doctorate and be used as part of my thesis. As such, the data may be published. At no point will your child's/family's name be disclosed.

Confidentiality of the Data

The information given will remain confidential and will not be disclosed **except** where safeguarding issues or imminent harm to self or others arise. If such issues are disclosed then the Local Safeguarding Children Board's policy will be implemented and you will be kept informed in line with the policy, details of which can be found on the local authority website.

I will be keeping a reflective diary during the research to record any observations, thoughts or feelings from any aspect of the research. This will be kept securely and will not contain any information that will identify you specifically. All data gained through this study will be stored, used and destroyed in compliance with the Data Protection Guidelines of both HCC and UEL.

Disclaimer

Your child's involvement in this study is totally voluntary and choosing to participate in the study or to decline will have no bearing on you or the outcome of the social work involvement in any way. It will not affect any assessment or services.

Your permission can be withdrawn at any time and any unprocessed material from the observation will be removed from the study and destroyed. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

Annexe 2

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to Participate in an Experimental Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants.

Acknowledging emotions and being able to bear them – An ethnographic study into the practice of social work with children.

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what it being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the experimental programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant research publications.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Investigator's Signature

.....

Date:

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Applications for the Approval of Experimental
Programmes Involving Human Participants

Notes for the Guidance of Applicants

Information to Participants and Forms of Consent and Undertaking:

4. Introduction

- 4.1. The following models are intended to assist you in drawing up a hand-out for the information of participants and a form of consent and undertaking. It is not possible to provide a pro-forma which would be appropriate for all eventualities. It is designed to provide a check-list of points to help you to ensure that you have included what should be included.
- 4.2. You should read carefully the notes for the guidance of applicants to ensure that you prepare forms which are relevant to your participant group. For example, the form of consent required from adults is different to that which is required from children who are not old enough to give consent in their own right, but require the consent of a parent or guardian on their behalf.

5. Information to prospective participants

- 5.1. **Annexe 1** sets out the information which should be included in the hand-outs which you prepare for the information of prospective **participants**. You should use the model as a checklist to ensure that you have included all that is relevant. The points highlighted under the heading 'Project Description' may be not appropriate in all cases nor will all programmes involve remuneration, but it would be unusual for any of the other points highlighted not to be included.

6. Form of consent to participate

- 6.1. **Annexe 2** provides a model form of consent. In the case of experimental programmes involving minors consent is obtained from the parent or guardian on behalf of the child, so the wording should be amended to reflect this.
- 6.2. The model does not provide for the form to be witnessed by a person other than the principal investigator. In most cases the witnessing of the form by an independent third party would not be considered necessary, but in experiments involving some physical exertion or examination (most notably in clinically-related programmes of research) it may be prudent to make provision for the form to be witnessed by a third party.

- 6.3.** If participant groups are composed of people who could be considered particularly vulnerable, such as the visually impaired or the elderly and infirm, consideration should be given to whether provision should be made to have the form witnessed by a third party to whom the purpose of the programme has also been explained and who is competent to explain what is required to the participant and ensure that their interests have been protected.

Annexe 1
University of East London
 [Docklands Campus]

University Research Ethics Committee

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

Catherine Fieulleateau, Ethics Integrity Manager, Graduate School, EB 1.43
University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD
(Telephone: 020 8223 6683, Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk).

The Principal Investigator(s)

Paul Dugmore
 Tavistock Centre, 120 Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BA
 020 8938 2632/ 07809 550963

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Project Title

Acknowledging emotions and being able to bear them – An ethnographic study into the practice of social work with children.

Project Description

The main aim of this study is to explore the following question:

How do social workers in statutory children and families settings attend to, and engage with, the emotional lives and experiences of children? In order to set about answering this, the following sub-questions will be explored:

- Do social workers attune to the emotions expressed by children? How?
- What do social workers do and say when they meet with children?
- How are emotions talked and written about with children; in supervision; in case files?
- When do social workers miss/overlook/avoid/ignore the emotional dimensions of practice? What explanations might be given for this?
- What defence mechanisms do social workers; children; parents; carers and other professionals create in working with children? Why?

- Can the close study of social work practice with children provide insight into how social workers might more effectively meet the emotional needs of children and improve their practice?

It is hoped that the research will enable a picture to emerge of how social workers establish, build and maintain relationships that enable children to talk about their circumstances, their feelings and their thoughts about their lives. It will illuminate the different methods and techniques that social workers draw upon to enable this complex piece of work to be effective and identify what might impinge on their capacity to do this effectively. It is anticipated that the outcomes and impact of the research will be:

- An increased understanding of the ways in which social workers can effectively engage with the emotional lives of children
- Understanding what social workers do well
- Understanding what they struggle to do
- What measures might be taken to enable them to perform their role more effectively with particular attention to the welfare of children and good decision making.

I plan to gather a range of data by using different approaches in the study:

Undertaking observations of social workers meeting with children

As a participant you would agree to be observed meeting with a child on your caseload on at least one occasion in the office or during a home visit, subject to parental consent and child assent. Once I have observed the meeting you may want to make some notes on the session as it will probably be a few days before I interview you about the observed session.

Unstructured interviews will be conducted to gather more information from the social workers about the observed sessions

The interview will take approximately one to one and a half hours and will comprise of an opening question and follow up questions designed to expand or clarify the information you have given. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed so that the emerging themes can be analysed. You will only be

asked to give details that you feel comfortable discussing and can stop the interview at any time, either for a short break or to withdraw from the study completely. If you wish to speak about any issues raised by participating in the study you can inform the researcher at any time and a time will be arranged for a confidential discussion to take place. If you and the researcher feel that you require further support a discussion about accessing support from your employer will be possible.

Case records will be analysed

I will analyse the content of the case records of the observed children to see how the emotional lives of children are written about in official documentation to identify:

- How often emotions are referred to
- Whether certain documents refer to the emotional lives of children more than others
- Whether certain emotions are referred to more than others.

Confidentiality of the Data

The information given will remain confidential and will not be disclosed **except** where safeguarding issues or imminent harm to self or others arise. If such issues are disclosed then the Local Safeguarding Children Board's policy will be implemented and you will be kept informed in line with the policy, details of which can be found on your agency intranet.

Once the interview has been transcribed the audio recording will be safely and securely destroyed.

I will be keeping a reflective diary during the research to record any observations, thoughts or feelings from any aspect of the research. This will be kept securely and will not contain any information that will identify you specifically. All data gained through this study will be stored, used and destroyed in compliance with the Data Protection Guidelines of both HCC and UEL.

Location

Participants will be drawn from one social work team within your local authority children's service which I will be based in for two one-week periods.

Remuneration

There is no remuneration for taking part in this study. Through the interview process I hope you will be able to gain additional insight into your practice and

reflect on the emotional impact of the work upon you. You will have the opportunity to be involved in a piece of research into a very much unknown and explored area of practice and be part of new knowledge generation and construction that may lead to improvements into the ways in which children and their emotions are addressed in child and family social work practice

Disclaimer

Your involvement in this study is totally voluntary and accepting the offer or choosing to decline will have no bearing you or your employment in any way. Your permission can be withdrawn at any time and any unprocessed material you have given will be removed from the study and destroyed. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

Annexe 2

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to Participate in an Experimental Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants.

Acknowledging emotions and being able to bear them – An ethnographic study into the practice of social work with children.

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what it being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the experimental programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant research publications.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Investigator's Signature

.....

Date:

Appendix 3: Extract from reflective journal

I arrived at the office [and] checked in with the receptionist who tried to locate the team manager. She couldn't get hold of her and I said she might be in a team meeting. She took me down to the room where the meeting was due to be but it was empty. We went back out to reception and she called her again. She came to tell me that she wasn't in yet but the Assistant Team Manager would come and get me. For the first time I felt forgotten about and like the team were not prepared for me. This was in contrast to the previous experiences I'd had of feeling welcomed.

Aside from the team manager and ATM there was a mixture of social workers and CFSO's, all women apart from one man and all white apart from two social workers, one was the man. I introduced myself more thoroughly...and my research study and gave out the information sheet/consent forms for professional participants, children and parents. When I spoke about being interested in how social workers engage with the emotional lives of children one social worker said she was already starting to feel bad as she thought she could do more of this. I emphasised that I was not there to judge, inspect or evaluate their practice but to try and understand it and gain an insight into their practice with children.

I explained what I wanted to do and why and how I had ended up coming to this team in this authority. Some of the workers spoke more than others – the manager was quiet which I thought was helpful – I noticed that the two black social workers were silent other than introducing themselves and I wondered what this was about. The team told me about the other people who were absent – other social workers, NQSWs and a student.

The team was warm and friendly and whilst they had some questions, didn't feel hostile or sceptical. I asked whether people felt like they would like to participate or if they would like time to think about it. One of the vocal social workers said she would like to participate and a couple of the others nodded and seemed positive. We agreed that they would think about it and let the team manager know and she would email me.

Appendix 4: Interview schedule

Interview

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my study into how social workers attend to and engage with the emotional lives and experiences of children.

As discussed before, the information you give will be held confidential unless it causes concern about the welfare of any adult or child. If this were to happen I will stop the interview and give you an opportunity to discuss what might happen as a result of sharing the information. I expect the interview to last between 1 and 1.5 hours and you can stop it at any time for either a short break or if you wish to withdraw from the study. Given the subject material it is possible that you may find it distressing at times. If following the interview you would like support to deal with the feelings aroused we can talk about this or I can put you in touch with support services. Do you have any questions before we start?

Firstly could you tell me a little about your professional role, and what brought you into this line of work?

I am interested to hear about your experience of working with (*child's name*) and what you think about the session that I observed on Please tell me as much as you feel able to. I will listen and may ask further clarifying questions.

Interview and clarifying questions.

How comfortable do you feel talking with children about their emotional lives?

What training have you had to enable you to do this?

What ways do you think help you to engage children in talking about their emotional lives?

How do you try and get a sense of children's emotional states?

What do you think are some of the barriers in talking with children about their emotional lives?

How do you attend to their emotional lives?

Is there anything else you think it might be useful for me to know or consider?

Thank you very much for taking part. In the meantime if you have any further questions you know where and how to reach me.

Appendix 5: Record of observations

Visit number	Gender and age	Nature of the case	Location of visit	Children seen alone How long?	Length of visit (minutes)
1	Boy Boy Girl	Child protection visit - Alcohol misuse	Family home	Yes in bedroom for about 20 minutes	50 minutes
2	Girl Girl Boy Boy Girl	Housing situation and impact on children	Self-contained flat in Community Centre	No – not easily possible due to space	1 hour
3`	Boy Girl	LAC visit	Foster carer's home	Yes in bedroom 10 minutes	40 minutes
4	Boy Boy	Child protection – parenting capacity assessment of father	Paternal grandmother's home	No	1 hour
5	Girl	Child protection – emotional harm	School	Yes Whole session	45 mins
6	Boy	Child protection – emotional abuse/neglect	Maternal Grandmother's house SGO	Yes 30 mins	50 mins
7	Boy 13 Girl	Child protection – emotional abuse	Family home	Yes 20 mins 15 mins	1 hour
8	Boy	Child protection – emotional abuse, neglect	Office	Yes whole session	40 mins

Appendix 6: Extract from Many Minds panel

- MM1 It would be unusual to be involved with that family for 9 months post there being an incident outside of the family home with a child that required statutory intervention for that much longer so there is obviously something else happening. She sort of alludes to it doesn't she when she says it impacts on mum's ability to parent and care for all the children effectively but there's clearly a lot more going on and I get the impression that the social worker is not that interested in touching it or engaging with it, or whether there's something about that defended position
- MM2 Or whether there's something avoidant of looking at what's really going on which might reflect mum's state of mind..... I mean I think that's right but I mean is it not intimidating to go to a house where there are about 6 children, it's not the children, but so many people may be and also she's being observed. Well she wasn't being observed but the situation was, having someone there, it's not just that we're trying to mitigate the presence of an observer but I wonder to what extent having an additional person might have impacted on her.
- MM1 And it was an observation of a family she clearly didn't have a relationship with. Yeah, so she's not going to be able to navigate that space with them so it probably impacted but even with that, even with the feeling nervous it just feels very very process led, even getting the children to do what we would call direct work, she gets them to sit and do drawings but when they mention things that you would be interested in and want to tease out a bit more, you draw with children to gain their trust and understanding, then you would expect really for the social worker to ask more enquiring questions to really feel a sense of what it's like for them living there, she doesn't ask anything about the environment that's so stark or that their brother was stabbed and how they might be feeling about that. Yeah that's the big elephant in the room – this massive things gone on. And even when the child herself gives something very personal about her own, a preoccupation of food, that could be linked to a sadness that she also talks about, she drops that too, she doesn't engage with that. She says I'll come back and do some drawing with you again sometime.
- MM2 There is another thing that's maybe not attended to which is the previous social workers' gone, but so she's come and she's got an answer back emblematic of the past relationship which is the assessment, she's got the document, but it's so she's left, the mum's left to sit with it and read it and approve it and stuff but I wonder how the mum felt about the other social worker leaving and a new person coming in.
- MM1 That's a detachment as well, a defence cos she doesn't, you might leave someone to read something for a moment to absorb it but there's no point in the observation when she engages with mum about how that might feel to read about herself and her children and mum responds in a very defended way by just picking up on a very practical inaccuracy about the marriage but I'm assuming within that there would have been a lot of emotional prodding, or maybe there wasn't that kind of assessment.

Appendix 7: Outline of IPA process

In undertaking the IPA analysis I used the approach outlined by Smith et al (2009).

Step 1: Reading and re-reading

I began the process of immersing myself in the data by reading the interview transcript a number of times and by listening to the audio recording of the interview so I could remember it in as much detail as possible. I then read the transcript hermeneutically, paying attention to each word and sentence and the experience of the individual participant. Ricouer (1970) identified two types of hermeneutics: the critical that challenges the text and draws on external perspectives and the empathic: a warmer, closer more accepting view of the text focusing on the internal perspective. Boden (2016) suggests shuttling between the two in order to disclose the deep meaning in the text without losing the participant's perspective. In this stage the close reading enables the participant to become the focus of the analysis. It requires the close attention to detail which was challenging as I had to slow down and engage with the data which at times felt quite overwhelming. This was interesting as the social worker participants in the field did not seem to be slowing down, however, by me having to meant that I was able to get in touch with the emotional dimension of the work, which perhaps they were not. Smith et al (2009) refer to the need to 'bracket off' some of the initial and most striking observations and feelings about the transcript, to suspend critical judgment in order to engage fully with the experiences of the participant.

Step 2: Initial noting

This stage of the initial analysis is the most time consuming requiring detailed reading of the transcript to identify semantic content and language used on an exploratory level. It is important to keep an open mind at this stage and record anything of interest. Smith et al (2009) suggest the aim at this stage is to produce a comprehensive set of notes and comments on the data. The approach has three stages to it where the readings focus on a descriptive noting in which the identification of the key objects of concern to the

participant such as relationships, places, events, values and principles and the meaning of these for the participant is undertaken. A more interpretive level of interpretation helps to understand how and why the participant has these concerns and involves looking at the linguistic nature of the transcript such as words used, pauses, laughter etc. Finally, a more conceptual reading focused on engaging at a more interrogative level helps to make sense of the patterns of meaning in their account. In order to undertake this level of analysis the approach suggests putting the transcript into a table with three columns. The transcript text is put into the middle column with the right hand column used for documenting initial comments. I used different coloured pens for each of the descriptive, linguistic and conceptual readings. In the right hand margin I recorded the emergent themes identified.

Step 3: Developing emergent themes

The task at this stage is to reduce the volume of data from the full transcript to a number of emergent themes whilst maintaining complexity. This requires an analytic shift to working with the initial notes rather than the transcript itself. This involved producing a concise statement to capture what was important in the different comments attached to a section of transcript. Themes reflected not only participants' words but also my interpretation.

Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

Having identified emergent themes the next step required developing these themes to map how they fitted together. To do this I put all themes into a list and moved them into clusters of related themes, labelling and re-labelling these emergent themes and dropping some of the less well-evidenced emergent themes. I used the abstraction method identified by Smith et al (2009) to identify patterns. At this stage the emergent themes were transferred from the transcript to either post-it notes which were then

sorted before being entered into an Excel spreadsheet, or straight into an Excel spreadsheet.

Step 5: Moving to the next case

This step involved following the same process on the next interview transcript and only when I had developed a table of themes would I move onto the next interview. It was important to 'bracket' any ideas emerging from the previous case(s) staying true to the idiographic nature of IPA. The challenge was to allow new themes to merge whilst being influenced by what I had already found. This is where the systematic nature of this step-by-step process helped.

Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases

Finally, once the process had been undertaken with each case I was able to look at the table of each list of themes, moving from emergent themes to super-ordinate themes where connections are made between the emergent themes. This process of ordering, sorting and re-sorting enabled me to identify superordinate themes. Up to ten super-ordinate themes were identified.

Appendix 8: Example of IPA analysis

Doctoral Research Interview 3

IPA Analysis

Extract of data in middle column in green –interpretations are normal text if descriptions; italics if linguistic and underlined if conceptual

Themes	Transcript	Initial interpretations
<p>Identity, authority and ownership (shift from I to we)</p> <p>Practical privileging emotional</p>	<p>PD: And a few minutes ago, you asked, erm some very important questions. You said do I have the time, do I have the capacity, do I have the skills? (JENNY hmm) So I'm gonna (JENNY yeah) put those questions back to you (JENNY yeah).</p> <p>JENNY: Erm, I think, yeah, I, I see in social work, I see in my own practice, as much as I don't want to, that there is scope for those things to get lost. I think we, we work, we can get focused on quite practical things, getting done, being done. Erm, maybe those tangible things erm, where we can see what's being achieved, whether it's a family being rehoused or whether it's a new bed being brought, whether it's erm</p>	<p><i>Repetition of I – a struggle to articulate some difficult feelings maybe</i></p> <p>Feelings of guilt or self criticism conflict with principles or values.</p> <p><i>Shift from I to we (other social workers to minimise own feelings of guilt) and then repetition of we – is this signaling discomfort as feelings of inadequacy or feeling judged/exposed by me?</i></p> <p>Talk of doing things, getting them done, practical aspect of social work</p> <p>Principles valuing doing, achieving tasks with tangible outcomes. Examples of tangible sw tasks and their outcomes</p> <p>Acknowledgement that emotional dimension can get lost.</p> <p>Is this a justification or an exploration of the difficult circumstances of the particular visit?</p>

<p>Skills</p> <p>Reluctance to engage in emotions</p> <p>Personal authority</p> <p>Demands of role</p>	<p>influencing where a child goes to school, or erm, and actually those, erm, emotional dimensions, I think risk getting missed. Erm, so like yesterday the practicality of the situation when might I go with the children, I didn't envisage having to go away from that setting, which isn't unachievable, erm to go somewhere else, to go to a park, erm, go, even, you know, to come here, to go to a place where we can safely talk, and be in a safe place. Erm.. the skills side of things, erm, I think that's quite interesting. I think, erm, I think I probably have a concern, erm, about exploring emotions with children and, and knowing where it's going to take you and do you have the, the time, I think, I've come back to time but, to bring them back to a safe space. So, I think it's got to be a session where you there's not a time limit, you know you're not going to be rushing, you know you're not gonna have to be in the moment and yet thinking of the next thing, because that happens. Erm.. so yeah, erm.. don't think the job readily enables workers to, to do those kind of sessions. I think we're working with quite tight timeframes and even this afternoon having said, 'yeah, I'm free', I then get called out for a visit that I have to go and do (PD hm), erm so it's not always easy, to erm, to plan, to plan to not to need to be somewhere (PD hmm), because things come up. Erm,</p>	<p>Hostel where family placed – site of visit.</p> <p>Places to see children and create a safe space Social work office</p> <p>Skills</p> <p><i>Repetition of I and slight inarticulation</i> Concern. Hesitancy at acknowledging something quite difficult. A reluctance to engage for fear of what it might lead to Exploring emotions Where will it take you? <i>Change from I pronoun to you. Is this distancing?</i> Time <i>Pronoun switches back to I</i> <u>Awareness has come back to issue of time that may be a defence in itself and some recognition of this perhaps?</u> <i>Pronoun to you again.</i> Time limit Explanation of the challenge of the role and not having the luxury of time to devote to a child In the moment</p> <p>Justification-like <i>Lack of pronoun</i> <u>A complaint at the job for its limitations on (social) workers of justification of why emotional dimension neglected?</u> <u>Those kind of sessions – othering</u> <i>Use of we again</i> Pressures of the work Evidence to support what she has said about not having sufficient time to plan for such a session Spontaneous, unplanned nature of the work It's not easy to plan in this job <i>Repetition of to and plan suggesting struggle to articulate strong and difficult feelings.</i></p> <p><i>Further repetition of I suggesting struggle to articulate strong and difficult feelings.</i></p> <p>Demonstrating an awareness of the impact of not addressing children's emotions.</p> <p>Sense of guilt of impact of not addressing emotional lives of children.</p> <p><i>Disfluent.</i></p>
--	--	--

<p>Difficult feelings</p> <p>Guilt</p> <p>Projection of feelings</p>	<p>but I, I what, I think I have concerns, and I think I can see this maybe the reason why older young people, whereby if emotions aren't dealt with, at the time that they arise, and you know, and in quite close timeframe to have the behaviours having occurred and they been experienced directly or observed by the young person, or maybe even heard about, then those things just stay inside and you</p>	<p>Young person</p> <p>Stay inside you</p> <p><u>Could be talking about herself as well as young people</u></p> <p>Emotions that are in you</p> <p>Just full of emotions</p>
--	--	--

Appendix 9: Examples of evidence for Super-ordinate themes

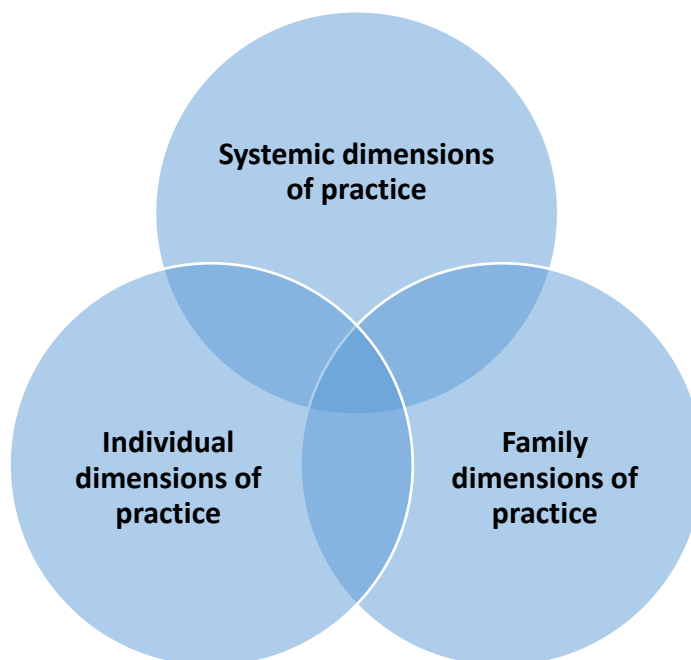
Reviewing & developing themes**Interview 4 Family 5**

Theme	Illustrative Extracts
The multi-dimensional role of practice	<p>There's quite a lot of things that need to be managed to ensure that Amber is safe in the middle of it all. So there's the Nan's house, Grandad's coping strategies, Dad's behaviour, contact with family members, and school and it's about managing kind of all of them to ensure Amber is safe in the middle of it rather than take her out of that and so it's hard, it's a hard juggling act and there's a lot of different kind of micro bits that need to be looked at. P17-18</p> <p>I don't want to be someone who she's scared of or that thinks 'm watching her...I think that's quite scary... just about reinforcing our support role rather than our authoritative role p34-35</p> <p>I have to look at everything and I can't do everything. It's impossible. P57-8</p>
The emotional dimensions of practice	<p>I think that my life experiences kind of give me some insight into what children might be experiencing as well or what parents might be experiencing. P 6</p> <p>Often we go out... and it's about our agenda, so we're going out and we're kind of writing and often we're not noticing what the child wants to speak about...so we've got a new form whereby we will give the child an opportunity to be part of that meeting. P23</p> <p>I had this case in R&A and took it through CIN and that's why I wanted to keep the case because the issues are around her fractured relationships... so another social worker having to build that relationship again could be quite tricky p32-33</p> <p>I feel overwhelmed... I'm worried because I don't think there are enough resources in place that</p>

	<p>we can access for Amber that are intensive enough. P36</p> <p>I want to maintain her at a happy level but I know that a lot of the things that I'm going to be speaking about are gonna raise her anxiety or make her act out afterwards so I worry a lot about that and my intervention can make it worse sometimes. I'm not a psychotherapist or psychologist....so I worry that I don't know enough about her mental health and my impact on that...SO that's my main worry. Is that I'm gonna trigger something or I'm gonna upset her, make things worse. P39</p> <p>I feel very sad for Amber. I feel very worried that I'm not gonna make it okay for her, because I think that it's I think there's a lot of things that need to be done that I can't do and I'm worried about making her feel worse. P47-8</p> <p>I can ask how they're feeling, what they would have liked to have happened....so talk about kind of their feelings and the impact... but to go any more into that, I don't think I'm trained enough to dig more into emotions and feelings. P49-50</p> <p>I accept that I can't know everything ...and I'm not an expert in everything but I do know that I can refer to other people that are experts in particular things. So that's how I cope with it really. P57</p>
<p>Systemic dimensions of practice</p>	<p>There is an eighteen month waiting list for any (CAMHS) work to be done so we are funding a play therapist to be placed in the school to work with [child] ...to try and find a play therapist as there aren't any around in our area. P16</p> <p>Unless there's a kind of crisis I don't think there's enough planning to my visits and preparation as in to what I want to get out of it p28</p> <p>Before she came into our team she was level 3, under the radar, statutory and a lady was doing life story work with her and for some bizarre reason, it coming into level 4, that life story work stopped, half way through, so that was One of the risks I identified was that it had to continue. P33</p>

	<p>We used to have a social worker based in CAMHS on secondment but that's gone now. P47</p> <p>[Supervision] it's kind of every month, if you're lucky. You can go and speak to the manager if something sort of burning but everything, I'm worried about everything and I take it home and if I'm honest, I keep it confidential with my husband, my husband hears my worries. P48-9</p> <p>I've done some direct work training but that's more about the practical activities you can do with children...it's all very well taking sand box in and having your things and saying let's talk about and you can play with that and we can talk, so what do you do with that information. I'm not trained to evaluate the information that I'm given. I don't think I've had that kind of psychological training ...I can only think of what I think as a person, as a social worker.... And I think that's quite dangerous ground because it might not be what they were thinking p51</p> <p>I don't think I have time to go into, do as much work with young people as I need to. I have like half an hour, hour max...all those different issues going on for Amber, it will be impossible for me to focus on one all the time and cover everything. P56</p> <p>We've got loads of direct resources but time constraints mean that we can't always do it. P60</p>
--	---

Appendix 10: Overarching themes and sub-themes from IPA



The systemic dimensions of practice

- **'It's a juggling act' - Multiple dimensions of the social work role**
 - Evidence and the legal arena
 - Ethical practice
- **Children**
 - Outcomes for children
 - Child abuse & safeguarding issues
 - Family dynamics
 - Presenting issues
 - Case characteristics

The family dimensions of practice (Engagement, communication, the impact of the work)

- **Importance of relationships**
 - Working relationships
 - Feelings about endings & leaving
- **Tensions & challenges**
 - 'Everyone hates social workers'
 - Barriers to effective practice
- **Emotional dimensions of practice**
 - Communication and emotions

- Working with emotions
- Feeling out of depth

Individual dimensions of practice

- **Personal risk and distress;**
 - Anxiety
 - Worries & stresses
- **Training confidence and Skills to practice**
 - Motivations to become a social worker
 - Previous experience
 - Qualifying training
 - Post-qualifying training & CPD
 - ASYE
 - Skills and confidence
- **The needs of social workers**
 - Supervision and support
 - Containment
 - Peer support
 - Reflection
 - The team
- **The impact of being observed**
- **Thoughts about own practice**
- **Resources**
- **Miscellaneous**