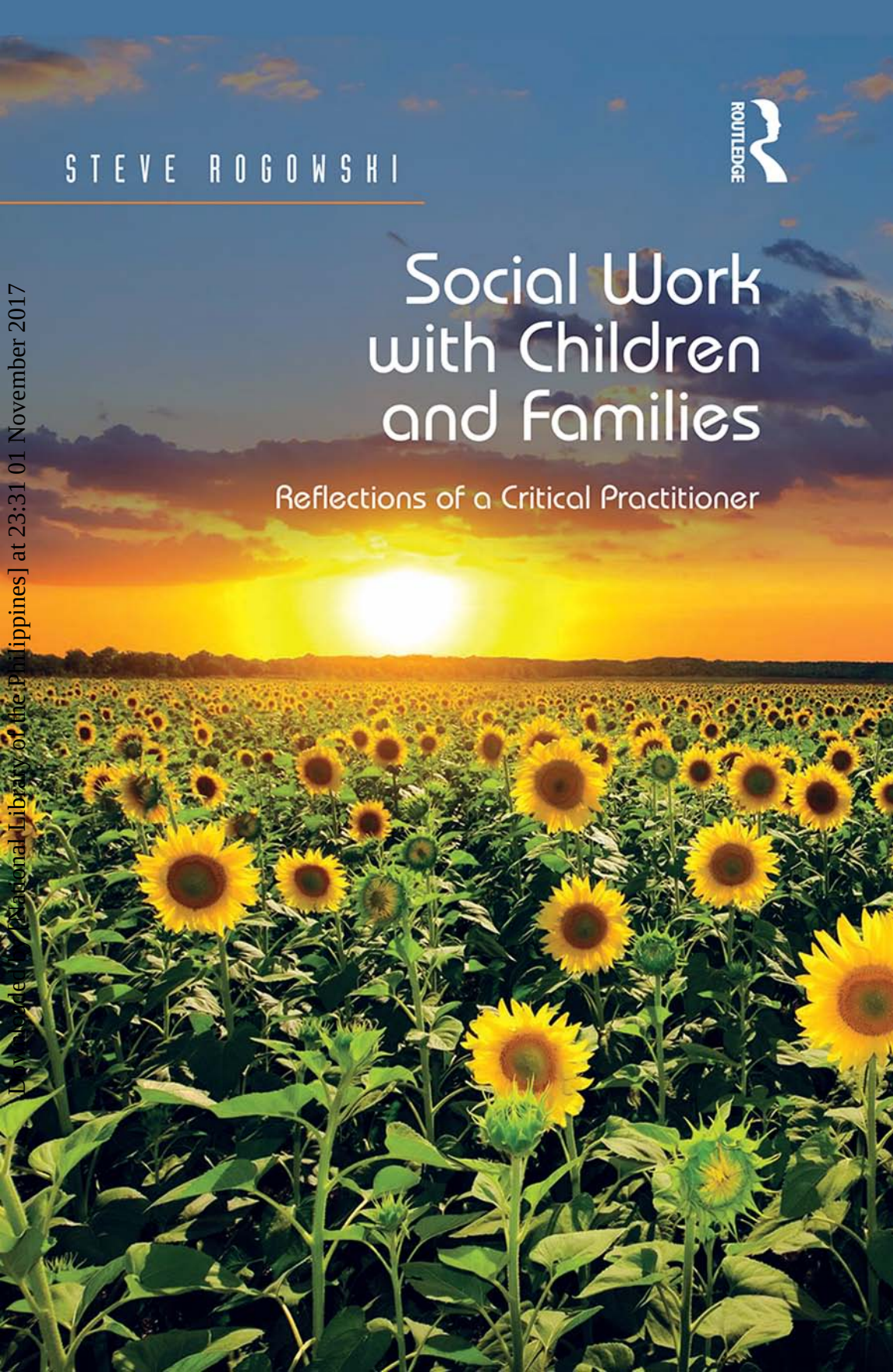

Social Work with Children and Families

Professional social work has changed considerably over the last forty years coinciding with the demise of the social democratic consensus of the post-war years and the emergence and now domination of neoliberalism. Rather than the state through the government of the day ensuring citizens' basic needs were met via the welfare state, the belief in free market economics entails people having to be self-reliant and self-responsible. This has involved social work with children and families moving from a helping and supportive role to one that is more authoritarian, this often involving telling parents to change their behaviour and lifestyle or face the consequences.

This book outlines the development of social work with children and families over the period in question, drawing on the author's unique practice experience and his extensive writings. It charts the highs and lows of social work, the latter including the dominance of managerialism which emphasises speedy completion of bureaucracy so as to ration resources and assess/manage risk. Despite this, the argument is for a critical practice which addresses service users immediate needs while simultaneously aiming towards a more socially just and equal society.

This book is essential reading for everyone interested in social work including academics, students, practitioners and managers both in the UK and overseas. Social care and allied professionals more generally will also find it insightful, as will academics, students and educators of social policy and related disciplines.

Steve Rogowski has almost forty years' experience of social work. On qualifying he worked as a generic social worker for Derbyshire County Council. Since then he has been a social worker with children and families for Oldham Council until March 2014. He has published widely about his experiences in a variety of social work/policy journals and magazines, recently including the odd blog. His books *Social Work: The Rise and Fall of a Profession?* and *Critical Social Work with Children and Families: Theory, Context and Practice* were published in 2010 and 2013 respectively.

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Social Work with Children and Families

Reflections of a Critical Practitioner

Steve Rogowski

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If we have chosen the position in life in which we can most of all work for mankind, no burdens can bow us down, because they are sacrifices for the benefit of all; then we shall experience no petty, limited, selfish joy, but our happiness will belong to millions, our deeds will live on quietly but perpetually at work, and over our ashes will be shed the hot tears of noble people.

Karl Marx, *Letter to His Father* (November 1837)

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Acknowledgements

There are numerous people to acknowledge in a social work career spanning five decades. These include academics such as Peter Beresford, David Smith and David Thorpe from my time at Lancaster University in the 1970s through to Beth Humphries at Manchester Metropolitan University in the late 1990s. Others include, in no particular order, Audrey Mullender, Bill Jordan, Ray Jones, Iain Ferguson and Paul Michael Garrett. It goes without saying that I am especially grateful to David Smith for writing the foreword.

Then there are the many and varied colleagues in social work and allied professions, as well as some important volunteers, with whom I have worked (and sometimes worked against!) over the years. There are far too many to mention, but they will know who they are.

Finally, and certainly not least, there are the countless children and families who have allowed me into their lives, sometimes for brief spells and, at other times, for much longer periods. I am grateful to them for putting up with my occasional intrusiveness but hope they always knew that ultimately I was there to help and support even if, at times, there was an element of control.

Steve Rogowski
Oldham
February 2016

Foreword

As far as I know, there is no one like Steve Rogowski. By this I mean that I can think of nobody else who over almost forty years has practised as a social worker largely in a single area – Oldham in Rogowski's case – while continuing to reflect critically in published work on that practice and its changing political and policy context. In this, (his latest – last?) book, he draws on his unique experience as practitioner and academic writer – of both short personal or polemical pieces and of extended works of scholarship – to offer a powerful historical and analytical critique of developments in social work during his professional lifetime, with a particular focus on his own specialism of work with children and families.

Organised into four parts and nine chapters, the book is helpfully structured and signposted as he guides the reader through the shifting social, political and economic landscape in which he has maintained his efforts to work as a 'critical practitioner'. He describes and analyses social work's highs and lows, concluding with a consideration of possible futures for social work in which, taking the phrase from Raymond Williams, he tries to identify 'resources of hope' in difficult times. His scholarship is evident in the sources he cites, with approval or dismay, which range widely over times and topics, and from high-level social theory to close-up studies of practice. In reflecting on what has changed for social work practitioners and why it has changed, he draws on work in several disciplines – from political philosophy and politics through to sociology and social policy – and on his own impressive bibliography. Crucially for the book's arguments, he consistently illustrates the practical meaning of these changes by detailed and convincing case studies and examples from practice.

Inevitably, it is easier to find grounds for pessimism than for optimism about social work's future in his convincing and up-to-date account of the rise of neoliberalism (and its apparent capacity to survive the global economic crisis of 2008 more or less unscathed) and of the associated processes of marketisation and managerialism. Despite these misgivings, his concluding ideas on what positive social work might look like in the coming years are far from rose-tinted. What he offers is an interesting and thoughtful combination of some traditional social work themes – such as the centrality of relationships, and of care and empathy, in human experience and in the process of helping – together with attention to

structural and contextual pressures and constraints, with suggestions on how to reduce their damaging effects.

Importantly, he is well aware that at times activists and theorists on the political left have been critical of state welfare and of social work, in particular in terms that brought them into uneasy alignment with critics from the political right. He is also clear that at a time when the market economy is becoming a market society, cuts – under the 'alchemy' of austerity – are proposed that would bring state spending in Britain into line with the United States rather than with those more progressive countries of Western Europe. Furthermore, he emphasises that although 'welfare' has become a term of official disparagement and contempt, there is much in social work's history, theory and practice that is worth fighting for and defending. In this book he gives a persuasive account of what that is and how it might be pursued.

David Smith, Emeritus Professor
Department of Sociology
Lancaster University
February 2016

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Part one

Setting the scene

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1 Introduction

Critical reflections on social work with children and families

> What Next After Forty Years of Social Work? Dr Steve Rogowski has decided to retire, or at least take the summer off.
>
> (Saddleworth Independent 2014)

Beginning with this headline and sentence, the local press published an article about my retirement/break from social work in March 2014. It went on that I had (mostly) specialised in work with children and families across five decades including working at various locations in Oldham, a town in the north-west of England, for some thirty plus years. Although my last post was in a centralised town hall office, my fondest memories were utilising community social work methods from a sub-office on a deprived estate in the late 1980s and early '90s. A proactive, preventative service was provided rather than the reactive service that now dominates under the guise of child protection/safeguarding. Dealing with problems/difficulties at an early stage thereby leading to less crisis-orientated work later was the philosophy – something acknowledged by the now sadly deceased local councillor for the area.

However, social work in Oldham was not immune to the ravages of Thatcherism and ensuing Conservative, New Labour, Coalition and now current Conservative governments. As far as social work and social services/care are concerned, processes of privatisation, marketisation, consumerisation and managerialisation slowly encroached (Harris 2014; also see Chapter 7). The latter in particular serves to control what practitioners do and how, this essentially meaning they are now involved in rationing resources and risk assessment by completing bureaucracy speedily. To the extent that any hands-on practice takes place it amounts to assessment, monitoring and review. Such developments have led to what Brid Featherstone and her colleagues refer to as a 'muscular authoritarianism' towards children and families (Featherstone et al. 2014a). This involves telling parents to change their behaviour or lifestyle or face the possibility of their children being removed and placed for adoption. Another way at looking at this is to see social workers are little more than 'community surveillance and rationing officers' (Jones and Novak 2014, p. 66). Such developments, including the fact that in essence I had been swimming against the tide for many years, perhaps took their

toll, hence the decision to retire or at least take a six-month break/'sabbatical' to decide what the next step should be.

The background to my decision goes back many years of course, but more immediately in January 2014 I received an email from Bob Stott after he had read a piece I wrote about the Common Assessment Framework.[1] He is not a social worker, but rather has a background in engineering design and behavioural science. However, his father was a social worker for thirty-five years, so in many ways he grew up understanding the profession, including his father's frustration as to what has happened to it in recent times. What particularly interested me was Bob's focus on the notion of moral distress. Simply put, moral distress occurs when you know the ethically appropriate action to take but are unable to act on it, or when you act in a manner contrary to your personal and professional values; this in turn undermines your own integrity and authenticity. It can lead to burnout and resignation, even in the case of resilient practitioners.

Soon after I received Bob's communication, an example of moral distress happened to me. I was asked to meet police officers at a local hospital concerning child protection issues in relation to a baby girl. A relative was concerned that her parents were interested in voodoo and thought they might have seen the mother give the baby some vinegar two days previously. It was all a bit vague but as the concerns had emerged the previous night, the baby had already been subjected to a medical during the early hours of the morning at the instigation of emergency duty social workers and the police. She was found to be happy, healthy and very well cared for. However, following a subsequent strategy meeting held the next day, a second medical was ordered so that blood tests could be done in order to see whether the baby had been given any vinegar. When I arrived at the hospital, the A&E consultant immediately said that blood tests are only done if there is a medical reason for doing so; if there are no symptoms, there is no need. He added that a small amount of vinegar would be unlikely to be detected given the time lag. However, because of the alleged concerns he referred the matter to paediatric colleagues. Importantly, one of the police officers made the point that if such forensic tests were deemed necessary, they are usually the province of police surgeons.

Somewhat reluctantly the police, health staff and I carried out what had been ordered. Eventually, after waiting several hours, it was decided the best option was for the baby to be admitted to hospital, despite misgivings by all the frontline professionals as well as the baby's grandmother and young cousin, who were present throughout the ordeal. The grandmother also had to stay in hospital overnight with the baby.

As one of the police officers said, referring to the meetings/discussions that had apparently taken place throughout the day (but not involving the frontline staff dealing with the situation), the whole scenario indicated an overzealous approach at best, or a 'they don't know what they're doing' stance. He also commented about all the resources that had been wasted. Another key point is that it was almost as if the baby and family were treated as objects rather than human beings. From a social work perspective, this case highlights an example of overzealous/oppressive practice, one more geared to meeting agencies' needs ('make sure

we cannot be criticised,' or even worse, meet a target) rather than those of the baby and family. It was an example of defensive practice and, as alluded to, the baby, grandmother and cousin had to endure an upsetting, tiresome and stressful afternoon – something which the grandmother pointedly mentioned. Furthermore, the baby had to undergo what all the frontline professionals thought were unnecessary further medical tests and investigations, something which in themselves can be seen as child abuse.

The foregoing indicates that in current neoliberal times moral distress is often caused by having to adhere to detailed procedures or managerial diktats which undermine professional autonomy. As I (only half) jokingly said to colleagues, I have been suffering such distress for much of the last eighteen years or so, particularly since New Labour came to power in 1997 with its reform and 'modernisation' agenda (Rogowski 2010a). In particular, the increased domination of managerialism and associated emphasis on bureaucracy and targets is well founded, and has been the cause of much practitioner demoralisation and disillusionment (Jones 2004).

It was not long after this experience of moral distress that I decided that I had had enough and needed some time out from social work, and handed in my resignation as a result. It is worth noting that I was not the only social worker to leave the local authority at the time; several colleagues went to work for other authorities via social work agencies. As for me, I had spent almost forty years in practice, so I arguably had, as one colleague said, 'put in a good shift'. However, lack of energy as a result of resisting/swimming against the aforementioned tide for many years had seemingly taken its toll.

Echoing earlier comments, one has only to recall that over my social work career Margaret Thatcher and her heirs in all the main political parties have changed the welfare state and social work. The social democratic consensus of the initial post-war years has been replaced by the current neoliberal consensus. No longer has the state, through the government of the day, a responsibility towards ensuring the basic needs of citizens are met by having a role in planning and directing the economy, and the creation of the welfare state. Instead, all the main political parties see the free market as being the best way to achieve human well-being, with the resulting dominant values being individualism and self-responsibility. The welfare state and in turn social work have been subjected to the aforementioned reform and 'modernisation' including the processes of privatisation, marketisation, consumerisation and managerialisation (see, for example, Clarke 2004; Clarke and Newman 1997; Garrett 2003, 2009b; Harris 2003, 2009, 2014; Harris and White 2009a). Privatisation, the involvement of corporate capital in the provision of public services, has been actively pursued. Marketisation, the creation of markets which are seen as dynamic, innovative, and customer-centred ways of delivering welfare, has been encouraged. Consumerisation which positions service users as consumers/customers who are free to exercise choice has taken place. And managerialisation, the belief that more and better management can transform services and organisations, has occurred. At the same time, the level of welfare benefits has declined, and eligibility has been tightened and become more conditional. In

short, the model of social citizenship, based on collectivism, has been dismantled in favour of incentivising work and abolishing so-called welfare dependency.

These changes have profoundly affected the context in which social work is practiced.

New inequalities and vulnerabilities have been created while simultaneously the forms of available social support have been reduced. People in difficulty are now expected to rely on themselves, family, friends or charity (food banks are a prime example) rather than the state through social work. As a result social workers are now largely restricted to rationing increasingly scarce resources and risk assessment/management, rather than providing help and support. In addition, and as mentioned, this changed/reduced role involves the punitive turn of 'muscular authoritarianism' towards families where there are child protection/safeguarding concerns (Featherstone et al. 2014a).

Subsequent musings: rants from an old, burnt-out leftie?

Over the ensuing months (April–November 2014) I outlined my ongoing reflections, thoughts and feelings in the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) monthly magazine, *Professional Social Work*, where I had a 'Time Out' column. It is worth noting some of my musings here.

What I missed about practicing was spending time with children and families, listening to their stories and trying to help them sort out problems and difficulties. Admittedly, this was increasingly difficult because of the managerial pressure to complete the bureaucracy and close the case. For instance, just before I left my job I had a conversation with a single parent who had six children, one of whom exhibited challenging behaviour. At times he would bully and fight with his younger siblings, this occasionally causing bumps and bruises to them. He also had other issues such as hyperactivity, lacking concentration and so on. One of my aims was to ensure appropriate help and support was provided, including making sure that local mental health services for young people became involved. The mother was appreciative of this, as was her son, with her commenting that I listened to her 'not like the others . . . and you do not judge me'. My last thoughts were that the case would sadly go down the child protection/safeguarding route because of her 'failure to protect' the younger children from him. And I use the word 'sad' because of the already referred to authoritarian nature of much child protection practice – telling parents to change behaviours or lifestyles 'or else'!

There were other issues and concerns that merit a repeat here. First, just before I left I had been to a child 'in need' meeting about the problems facing a single parent and her children, and was taken aback by the views of a student social worker. Rather than talking about the difficulties the family faced and how they might be tackled, surprisingly she spoke in a rather derogatory way about the parent. As well as saying many people only want a social worker 'because it's a status symbol', comments included how many children the mother had had, how big her stomach was and that she must be pregnant again. The implication was that if she stopped having so many children all would be well and good. It reminds one of the

1990s when John Major's Tories blamed almost every social problem imaginable on single parents and recommended 'getting back to basics' as a solution. Such views resonate with research that suggests that the emerging generation of social workers tend to be motivated by a perception of the individual being the locus of social problems, this ignoring the structural factors that shape and constrain the conditions of agency (Kirk and Duschinsky 2014).

Second, I referred to service users' 'now you see us, now you don't' experience of social work. This arises because of the emphasis on meeting targets, which means practitioners are eager to visit service users, gather information, complete the bureaucracy and then, more often than not, quickly disappear. Things are left as they are unless serious child protection/safeguarding concerns emerge, in which case there is even more bureaucracy to complete as child protection procedures are followed. The Munro Report (2011) acknowledged that there was far too much red tape and that it was hindering practitioners' ability to do their jobs properly, this being a major contribution to child abuse tragedies. However, apart from the welcome move to a single assessment, rather than the initial/core assessment distinction (see Garrett 2003; Rogowski 2010a), little seemed to be done to address the situation.

Third, not long after leaving my job I met a former social work colleague who had retired from my local authority. She lamented what has happened to social work over her long career, pointing out that now there is little time to engage and build relationships with children and families. Instead, she continued, it was all about finger-wagging, telling parents to 'change this and do that,' otherwise they knew the consequences – losing their children to, more often than not, well-off middle class families. Little or no family support was now on offer, she argued, adding that it is 'the Tories, they just want to save money.' Rather poignantly she referred to how she was in touch with one of the children she had prepared for adoption, saying that what the child missed about childhood was 'being at home with my mum' – obviously regretting being removed from the biological family. Again one wonders if speed in order to meet targets, rather than the real needs of children and families, is now the order of the day. How many more times do we have to hear about the need to speed up the adoption process, even though this is perhaps more about meeting the needs of childless middle class families rather than children?

Fourth, and on a slightly different tack, I was surprised that the social work voice has been silent about the alarming growth in food banks. In May 2014 the Trussell Trust announced that it had handed out nearly a million food parcels during 2013–14 – almost treble the number from the year before – this being despite the fact that many are reluctant to request help because of the attached stigma (Trussell Trust 2014). Benefit payment delays and sanctions were the main reason for this, with having to live on a low income another significant factor. And while a letter to ministers from clergy of the Church of England and other denominations protested and demanded action over food hunger (BBC News 2014), there was silence from social work organisations. This was all the more worrying given that practitioners essentially deal with the casualties of societal arrangements,

and users of food banks are certainly examples of this. Unsurprisingly, the views of the Tory-led government were clear in that there was no evidence of a link between welfare reforms and the use of food banks.

And finally, a major concern was the government's proposals to privatise child protection and other social work services with children, which were quietly announced in May 2014 (Butler 2014). Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, outlined the possibility of outsourcing such services in England to companies such as G4S, Serco and Atos; unsurprisingly this set alarm bells ringing. The key argument against such proposals is that profit-making companies should not be in charge of such sensitive family matters; in addition, that the introduction of the profit motive into child protection may distort the decision-making process. One must also remember the disastrous track record of such companies in previous outsourcing attempts. Importantly, Professor Eileen Munro and other academics were quick to point out that establishing a market in child protection creates perverse incentives for private companies to either take more children into care or leave too many languishing in dangerous situations. Like most social workers, she argued it is the state's responsibility to protect children from maltreatment and that this should not be delegated to profit-making organisations. Fortunately, because of the outcry, the government rowed back on some of these proposals, but expect them to rear their head following David Cameron's general election success in 2015 and ensuing five years of a Tory government.

Interestingly, I was approached by practitioners and other students who were sympathetic to the view that social work today is not the profession they envisaged. One practitioner actually resigned from her post after agreeing with my sentiments that social work values were being compromised by the neoliberal managerial culture that now exists. This was despite my efforts to persuade her to carry on and resist what is happening. An M.A. student then interviewed me about poverty and social work. We agreed that compared with social work's previous activity in this area – ensuring people received their full benefit entitlements, for example – this is far less in evidence today. I recall helping establish a claimants' union in my local area and representing people at tribunals. Nowadays such activity would be unlikely to be tolerated by managers. Despite the fact that the vast majority of children and families that social workers deal with live in (at least) relative poverty, at best all they can expect is to be told to contact Citizens Advice or the local food bank. What happened to social work advocacy in this important area?

But, referencing the Rolling Stones' last single, it was not all 'Doom and Gloom' during my time-out break. On a more upbeat note, I met a man in a local pub who said, 'Don't you remember me? I'm Jason.' He was in his mid-thirties, and it turned out that when he was in his teens he was in care/accommodated, and on one occasion I had taken him to see his father who was in prison. I was covering for his social worker at the time, but he well recalled our long car journey and the fact that 'you treated me with respect and listened to me even though I was a bit of a bugger at the time.' His behaviour and attitude had often been challenging in his teenage years, but he talked fondly of social workers and other staff who

had cared for and 'put up with' him during that difficult period of his life. He was surprised that I was at least having the summer off from work, adding 'I hope you have not jacked it in for good.' Similarly, I met another man in his thirties who said, 'It's Steve, innit? You have not changed. . . . I'm Scott.' I also knew him in his teens because of his offending behaviour and he said, 'We always listened to you. You made us think.' At a time when social work and social workers are often scapegoated for societal ills, it is nice to have this counterposed to the views and experiences of such as Jason and Scott – people who certainly valued their encounter with social work.

Then again, it should also be remembered that notwithstanding the increased challenges and difficulties that confront social workers as a result of changed political, economic and ideological circumstances, some critical and even radical possibilities remain and need to be taken up. When this book appears, it will be forty years since the publication of Bailey and Brake's (1975a) seminal book, *Radical Social Work*. Furthermore, over the ensuing decades and despite the neoliberal onslaught, advances in radical and critical social work theory have continued (see Chapter 5). Drawing on such theoretical insights has been a feature of my practice over the years, one example being that throughout my career I have always tried to resist and avoid the 'rush to permanence' which the adoption process increasingly entails (Rogowski 2013; also see Chapter 8). This has involved approaching what might initially seem as hopeless situations with an open mind and working alongside families on the issues of concern. It is about resisting 'muscular authoritarianism' and working with families in humane ways, including responding to the needs of parents rather than evading this by saying, 'I'm only here for the child(ren)' (Featherstone et al. 2014a). It is worth noting that the number of children I arranged adoption for throughout my career must be in the single figures, and that the vast majority of these were in accordance with the wishes of the child (where appropriate) and biological parents. Nowadays I imagine that many practitioners will arrange that many adoptions in couple of years or so, and a majority of these will be against the birth family's wishes.

Furthermore, critical practice is needed because otherwise social workers will be increasingly locked into a system whereby they become hard-line state agents, the previously mentioned community surveillance and rationing officers, rather than the 'soft cops' of the 1970s. In such a scenario the emphasis would be on working to prop up and ensure the status quo rather than working towards a more just and equal world. My argument is that despite the reduced and limited discretion that practitioners now have, requiring critical thinking and practice remains possible. As I repeatedly return to in this book, it involves working collaboratively with service users on the problems and difficulties of concern, but also working collectively with professional and service users organisations, trade unions and political parties.

Some might describe some of the foregoing as the rants or meanderings of an old, burnt-out leftie, one who is looking back through rose-tinted glasses at how 'old-school' social work used to be. There might be an element of truth in this, but it is hard to disagree with the view that prior to – and even during most of – the

Thatcher years social workers had a degree of professional autonomy and were less tied to bureaucracy, and that more resources were available for service users. There was also far less emphasis on rationing and risk assessment. Surveillance and control were also less prevalent, with more emphasis on the caring and supportive side of social work. Indeed, the 1970s, 1980s and even into the 1990s can be seen as the 'heyday' or the 'zenith' of professional social work (see Rogowski 2010a and Bamford 2015, respectively) – again something that is elaborated on throughout this book.

It should also be remembered that during my period of time out, social work still played an important part in my life. This included reviewing books, assessing and writing articles/papers for various journals, and being contacted by students for help and advice. Then there was the ongoing thinking and writing about this book. However, I guess it will come as no surprise that it gradually dawned on me that writing and commenting on social work and social policy issues might be a way forward rather than a return to social work practice or retirement proper. Incidentally, when I referred to this in my last 'Time Out' column, it was gratifying to see some compliments from Guy Shennan, the chair of BASW, on the latter's website. However, I also kept my options open, so as not to preclude a return to practice if, for example, interesting locum positions turned up or, in a different vein, some research opportunities arose.

More autobiography

Having covered some of the issues that led to leaving my job and contemplating my future, it might be useful to outline my career a little further so as to illustrate my intellectual and social work biography. This biography covers the period from the late 1960s until 2014, and is broadly the period in which we have seen the rise and fall of social work as a profession. In any case, the point is to make myself visible in order to alert the reader to the obvious fact that I am not all-knowing or impartial, and that different interpretations and conclusions about developments in social work can be made. Despite often-made calls for, or claims of, objectivity, we all come to our views based on various assumptions and values, and I want to make mine clear and in so doing I draw on previous work (Rogowski 2010a).

I was brought up in a working class family that had middle class aspirations, something which the current Conservative government in particular is keen to endorse. I went on to Leeds University to study law during the late '60s and early '70s. I engaged in some of the student sit-ins of the time, although I was generally little interested in politics. Most of my student days were spent socialising, drinking alcohol, listening to and watching rock music, and by and large attempting to have as good a time as possible. On graduating I was unsure of what I wanted to do, and spent some months in various casual jobs in factories and department stores. I was struck by the boring and mundane nature of the work that many people are forced into, and it was during this period that a more serious interest in politics developed. I had discussions with friends who had attended what appeared to be more radical universities such as Essex and the London School of Economics.

They had studied what I was beginning to see as more interesting subjects such as sociology, politics and economics. I also came across Miliband's (1973) *The State in Capitalist Society*, which provides an analysis of the capitalist system of power.

In 1973 I joined the civil service as an employment advisor in the then Department of Employment. I was unsure of what I wanted to do in terms of a career, and being convinced that there were others in the same boat, I thought I could do something to help. During my discussions with claimants, the unemployed, or 'jobseekers' and 'customers' as they are now called, I was struck by the various problems many were facing. There were obvious ones, such as those having physical and mental health issues and those with learning needs. Then there were those who simply seemed keen to opt out of the system altogether, not wanting to become engaged in traditional employment. Rather they were content to, for example, squat or live in communes in unoccupied property, existing on benefits and anything else they could make money from. As well as opting out of society, some saw themselves as harbingers of alternative, more egalitarian forms of living. I began to see such views and lifestyles as challenges to conventional, capitalist society.

I was reasonably content in the civil service, but did miss the student lifestyle and the relative freedom and socialising that it brought. Less flippantly, I wanted to do something more in terms of addressing the social problems that I saw on a day-to-day basis as an employment adviser. This is where social work came in, and I went on to complete a Diploma in Social Work (incorporating the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work) at Lancaster University in 1977. It was here that I became interested in juvenile delinquency – as young offending was then called – and its community-based management by means of intermediate treatment (IT).[2]

My interest in Marx also developed with my first social work article appearing, arguing that social workers dealt with casualties of a capitalist system which is dominated by profit and property owning rather than the real needs of people (Rogowski 1977). This was influenced by seminal texts including the previously mentioned *Radical Social Work* (Bailey and Brake 1975a), and *The New Criminology: For a Social Theory of Deviance* (Taylor et al. 1973). These works argue that paradoxically the justification of social work lies in its maintenance of a social and economic system that is the cause of the social ills that it has to confront. In the case of young offenders, for instance, then and now, social work involves ensuring that young people play by the rules of present society without recognising that these rules, and the inequalities of wealth and power involved, lie at the heart of youth crime.

After qualifying as a social worker, my first post was as a generic worker dealing with a range of duties and responsibilities in relation to all service user groups. In addition to casework, I was involved in group and community-orientated work by, for example, organising and facilitating IT groups for young offenders as well as groups for their parents, and group work with single parents (see Chapters 3 and 4, respectively). I went on to complete an M.A. in 1982, the thesis looking at IT and the potential for a radical practice (see Rogowski 1985).

In 1983 I became a social worker for children and families in another local authority where I remained until 2014. As stated, I have always been keen to develop a critical/radical social work practice, and in the 1980s this included group work with parents who had children on the child protection register and with young people who were solvent users (Rogowski and McGrath 1986 and Rogowski et al. 1989, respectively; also see Mullender 1989/90). This was part of attempts to develop community social work strategies on two deprived estates and involved working alongside local people utilising group and community work methods, as well as traditional casework (Rogowski and Harrison 1992; also see Chapter 4).

In undertaking a Personal Social Services Fellowship in the late 1980s, I again looked at the possibilities of developing a radical practice for IT (see Rogowski 1990a, 1990b, 1995). By now radical social work had changed, in that it was not only issues of class that had to be considered but also those of race and gender (Langan and Lee 1989). In addition, there was the influence of the New Right and the move to neoliberalism; as a result social work increasingly had to cope with dramatic changes at the political, economic and ideological levels, as well as in terms of social theory. A key book that looks at such issues, asking and trying to answer the question 'What has become of social work and what are its futures?' was Nigel Parton's (1996) edited collection *Social Theory, Social Change and Social Work*.

During the mid-1990s my thoughts turned to studying for a Ph.D. I was interested in the policy and practice changes in relation to youth crime over the post-war period – simply put, the move from welfare/treatment to punishment – and was curious know what young offenders made of them. My research included a qualitative study which involved semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with young offenders. In brief, the young people saw offending as starting as naughtiness and mischief, prior to 'graduating' to more instrumental offending which was related to motivations of boredom and material gain (Rogowski 2000/1, 2006). They condemned the move from welfare/treatment to punishment, also seeing the youth justice system as racist, sexist and as focussing on young people 'like us', from deprived areas rather than administering justice to all. Young offending, they went on, should be tackled by making school more interesting and relevant, improving recreational facilities and ensuring there were genuine employment and training opportunities. Parents and carers also needed more support and resources. All this, they argued, would mean young offending was seriously addressed. They were concerned with inequality, feeling a more fair, just society would led to less crime. It was from their views and experiences that I argued for a radical/critical practice (Rogowski 2003/4, 2008) as well as a radical/critical social policy (Rogowski 2010b).

As I have written elsewhere (Rogowski 2010a), some of the foregoing may seem rather naive and idealistic because we are now living in neoliberal or even postmodern times. However, I argue we could live in a better, more socially just and equal world, this being what social work – although initially endeavouring to deal with problems and difficulties confronting people on an individual basis – has

to keep in mind. It is the critical perspective referred to earlier, one which acknowledges the strength of Marxist theory. Perhaps social class and the capitalist, now more usually termed neoliberal, political and economic system are not sufficient explanations for inequality and oppression in society (although many would disagree; see, for example, Callinicos 2001, 2003; Eagleton 2011), with other structural factors including race and gender needing to be taken into account. Such a perspective leads to a critical practice which questions dominant ideological assumptions, and aims to understand and change the political and economic context of practice. After all, knowledge is structured by existing social relations and these are oppressive in nature, being rooted in the aforementioned differences in relation to class, race and gender and so forth. Recognising this, while perhaps not making the task any easier, means there is an opportunity to do something about it. A more open engagement with issues of power is therefore necessary so as to open up possibilities of negotiation and transformation.

The book: themes and structure

It is important to emphasise that this book concentrates on developments in the UK, and England in particular. Although the move towards neoliberalism is now a global phenomenon, it is the last four decades of changes in the political, economic and ideological spheres in the UK that I concentrate on, this being the period I have been embedded in social work practice. As stated, the changes have seen a shift from social democracy to neoliberalism, this in turn changing the welfare state and social work. This transformation and subsequent policy and practice developments are the focus of this book (as for welfare and social work's earlier evolution see, for example, McLaughlin 2008; Payne 2005a; Powell 2001; Rogowski 2010a). Interestingly, the period under consideration largely coincides with my life (1950–date) and social work practice career (1975–2014), arguably this providing knowledge, experience and insights that might not be readily available to others, notably those in academia.

In brief, the Beveridge Report (1942) led to the establishment of the welfare state, as well as the government playing a key role in the economy including nationalising key sections of industry (for a full discussion of the development of the welfare state, see Fraser 2009). The aim of the welfare state was to ensure that all citizens' health, education, income maintenance and housing needs were met 'from the cradle to the grave'. As Labour and Conservative governments alternated during the 1950s, 1960s and into the 1970s, differences between them amounted to a little more or less government ownership and economic planning, with the welfare state being accepted. It was within this welfare state ideal that modern social work became firmly established and has largely continued to define itself in this context ever since.

However, the then separation of the various child care, mental health and welfare services proved problematic as the post-war years wore on, with concerns emerging about overlaps or gaps in services and departmental rivalries (Jordan and Parton 1983). Demands emerged for a one-stop service focussing on the needs of

the whole family. In addition, the disparate elements of child care, mental health, welfare and so on were all identified as involving social work. Such factors led to the Seebohm Report (1968) on local authority personal social services, which led to the establishment of local authority social services departments (SSDs) in 1971 to provide a community-based and family-orientated service available to all. It was an ambitious reorganisation that envisaged a comprehensive and universal social work service intended to be the fifth social service on a par with health, education, income maintenance and housing (Jordan 2007).

The 1960s and 1970s were certainly important decades as far as the development of social work is concerned (Rogowski 2010a). For instance, the National Institute of Social Work was established in 1961 aimed at achieving excellence in practice and management in social work. And although social workers already had considerable power and influence in relation to people with mental health difficulties following the 1959 Mental Health Act, these increased in other service user areas. The 1969 Children and Young Persons Act gave increased authority and influence to social workers, as discretion moved to them from the police and magistrates in terms of the disposal of convicted young offenders. The 1969 Act also enabled social workers to remove children from their parents on emergency protection orders with little right of challenge, and care orders could then be sought. The 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act placed the onus on local authorities to identify the needs of the sick and disabled people, thereby opening up a new area of professional competence for social work. Also in 1970, the BASW was formed by bringing together medical social workers, psychiatric social workers, child care officers, moral welfare officers and others (but not probation officers). In 1971 the Central Council for the Education and Training of Social Work superseded the training councils for child care, probation and social work, and introduced the generic Certificate of Qualification in Social Work.

Bearing in mind what is currently happening to social work, it is perhaps difficult to understand the sense of optimism as the new SSDs were established and staffed by enthusiastic, newly qualified social workers (Ivory 2005). As a result there were genuine social work successes during the ensuing period including work with young offenders and community social work during the 1980s and into the early 1990s (see, for example, Blagg and Smith 1989 and Rogowski and Harrison 1992, respectively). There were also important theoretical developments drawing on Marxism, feminism, anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspectives (for a useful overview see Payne 2005b). However, such optimism and ensuing practice and theoretical developments slowly changed following the rise of the New Right which culminated in the election of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister in 1979.

Thatcher's governments resulted in an ideological move to the right and eventually the move to neoliberalism. This led to the questioning and ultimately the demise of the social democratic consensus as classical liberal critiques of state action were applied to contemporary issues of economic and social policy, including preferring market to public sector approaches to welfare (Rogowski 2011b). Thatcher's successor, John Major, continued in this vein as did successive New Labour, Coalition and now Conservative governments, broadly speaking. Social

workers have ever more felt the brunt of this changed climate, experiencing changes in their role including a move from a broad concern with child welfare to a narrower concern with child protection (Otway 1996), as well as their role being deprofessionalised by the rise of managerialism and the 'social work business' (Harris 2003). In addition, the late 2000s saw a financial and economic crisis and ensuing Great Recession result in austerity measures which ever more questioned the whole idea of welfare, including social work. All these issues and developments are the subject of this book.

The book is divided into four parts and draws on some of my previous work, notably *Social Work: The Rise and Fall of a Profession?* and *Critical Social Work with Children and Families: Theory, Context and Practice* (Rogowski 2010a, 2013, respectively). In a sense, it is the third of a trilogy and, in part, a synthesis of the other two. It goes without saying, however, that many of the arguments put forward in those books are developed and taken further here.

This introductory chapter and Chapter 2 form Part One and set the scene, with the latter chapter examining the political, economic and ideological changes involved in the move from social democracy to neoliberalism, particularly as they affected the welfare state and social work. The welfare state has and continues to be dismantled while social work now has a narrower, often authoritarian role. Part Two looks at the high points of social work, with Chapter 3 dealing with the successes in relation to youth crime. The 1980s saw a decline in recorded youth crime, in part related to diversion from the youth justice system and the development of alternatives to incarceration, both of which were innovations led by social work and which are arguably the profession's most significant evidence-based achievements (Haines 2009). Sadly, this success was largely ignored by the governments of John Major and his successors, with social work's role in relation to young offending increasingly sidelined. Chapter 4 deals with social work's successes in relation to community social work. The Barclay Report (1982) was published when Thatcher seemed committed to public expenditure cuts as well as challenging much of what social workers did. However, many saw the focus on community social work as an opportunity, as decentralising and de-bureaucratising services meant social workers could build and maintain closer links with other agencies and local communities. Community social work made inroads in only a few authorities but it did have its successes (Jordan and Parton 1983). Chapter 5 deals with the advances made in relation to social work theory despite the challenges facing social work during the Thatcher/Major era. As touched upon, Marxist, class-based radical social work was complemented by feminist, anti-racist and anti-discriminatory/oppressive perspectives (see Payne 2005b). Critical social work was the eventual result along with the second wave of radical social work in the late 2000s. These and allied theoretical issues are the focus here.

Part Three deals with two of the low points of social work. Chapter 6 discusses the move from a broad concern with child welfare and prevention to child protection/safeguarding. Following child abuse tragedies and the excesses of Rochdale, Orkney and Cleveland, when many children were unnecessarily removed from their families, the 1989 Children Act was introduced. However, and despite some

of its intentions, the Act's implementation confirmed the previously mentioned move away from child welfare per se to a narrower concern with child protection (Otway 1996). Broader child safeguarding issues emerged in the 2000s but child protection remains the priority, with preventative social work now rarely possible. Chapter 7 looks at the growth of managerialism and the social work business. Neoliberalism's focus on public services operating like the private sector involves managers using bureaucracy and performance indicators to ensure that practitioners are reliable and compliant workers who focus on rationing resources and risk assessment/management. The influence of managerialism is epitomised in the rise of the 'social work business' (Harris 2003). Such developments are critically discussed here.

Part Four deals with ways forward for social work especially with children and families. Chapter 8 looks at the possibilities of critical and radical practice, noting that some space can still be found by resilient practitioners, although it is increasingly difficult in neoliberal times because of the domination of managerialism. Practice in relation to child protection, young offending, looked-after children and child sexual exploitation are discussed, this amounting to doing what is genuinely best for children and families, often despite what managerial 'advice' might be. For instance, it is far more than speedily completing bureaucracy aimed at rationing and focussing on risk; rather it entails individual work with service users focussing on help and support, as well as collective strategies which have a view of a better, more socially just and equal world (Rogowski 2013). Finally, Chapter 9 concludes by exploring the future(s) of social work generally and with children and families in particular, one which, especially for critical and radical practice, is uncertain in the globalised, neoliberal world. Some argue we have witnessed the 'rise and fall' of social work (Rogowski 2010a), but this chapter tentatively ends on an optimistic note by again arguing for the continued possibilities of critical practice, whereby resilient social workers act individually and collectively in daily practice to resist and challenge the status quo, thereby envisaging and aiming towards a better world.

Notes

1 The Common Assessment Framework was introduced in 2006 to provide a standardised approach to addressing a child's additional needs.
2 IT was introduced by the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act. Delinquency or young offending was seen as related to deprivation, and the aim of IT was to bring young people in trouble and those 'at risk' of getting into trouble into contact with a healthier environment with opportunities for activities, interests and relationships which had been absent in the past, while enabling them to remain at home. See Chapter 3 for a full discussion.

2 Politics, economics and ideology

From social democracy to neoliberalism

The almost three decades of the social democratic era following the Second World War was an optimistic and prosperous period. As Ken Livingstone (2011) points out, for most Western economies it was the most successful period for gross domestic product growth and, with a strong redistributive taxation policy, this sustained high levels of public and private investment and reduced inequality. In Britain in 1979, the richest 10% of the population was worth four times the poorest 10% (compared to eight times the poorest now), not just because of benign governance but coinciding with the high point of the influence of trade union power over the economy. In addition, the post-war establishment of the welfare state led to great advances in health, education, social security and housing, while employment remained high. The personal social services were also established with the new profession of social work being key in terms of the 'right to, and need for, help [being] specifically tailored to the requirements of individuals, families and community groups' (Stephenson 1986, p. 98).

The 1950s–1970s can be seen as 'the golden age of the welfare state' (Gough 1979, p. x). Keynesian economics provided the theoretical underpinning to high levels of government spending with the welfare state established and accepted by both major political parties of the time, Labour and Conservative. Those on the political left thought the situation could be a stepping stone towards socialism, while those on the right thought socialism could be avoided through the development of welfare state capitalism. Such a convergence of views was the foundation of the social democratic consensus of the period.

The break-up of the social democratic settlement was linked to the financial and economic difficulties faced by the developed Western economies in the early 1970s as a result of the sharp increase in oil prices and resulting economic crisis of 1973. But there were deeper structural problems in the British economy, including a steady decline in the share of the world export of manufactured goods, together with falling investment and productivity, and rising inflation (Ferguson 2008). Those on the political right argued Britain's lack of productivity and lacklustre economic performance were a result of the excessive powers of trade unions. Those on the left argued that the crisis of capitalism reflected changes in the structure of power whereby monopoly and multinational capital eroded Keynesian economic policies and undermined the sovereignty of the state (Holland 1975).

While the left argued for a radical social democratic solution, involving strengthening co-operation between the state and big business, the Conservative New Right saw political and economic developments over the post-war period, including the welfare state, as the problem. They were concerned about the size of the state, the growth of public expenditure and so-called self-serving professionals in the public sector, particularly social workers, deemed to be on the side of the welfare dependent.

Margaret Thatcher's election as prime minister in 1979 enabled the New Right's ideas to be implemented by introducing monetarism and the eventual hegemony of neoliberalism, including the dismantling of the welfare state. Eighteen years of Conservative governments ended with the general election victory of Tony Blair in 1997. However, far from heralding a new dawn for the social democratic left, broadly it led to a continuation of neoliberalism. New Labour had turned away from the transformative possibilities of the welfare state towards creating a more just and equal society. Instead, as free market ideas and practice had achieved global status Blair, Gordon Brown and others argued they had no choice but to adjust to the changed situation. This included the welfare state having to adapt to the new conditions with, for instance, entitlement to benefits being restricted and becoming more conditional, and all public services needing to be reformed and 'modernised' by becoming more like the private sector. In May 2010 the Conservative-Led Coalition came to power, again pursuing neoliberal policies. The emphasis was on the 'Big Society', with the Great Recession providing an ideal opportunity for this ideology to be pursued by the imposition of austerity. Austerity continues following the Conservative government's general election success in May 2015, with further modernising – although in effect dismantling – of the welfare state likely to occur, this including controlling and restricting the role of social work. It many ways it harks back to the beginnings of social work in the nineteenth century, when individuals had to rely on themselves, their family and networks and, if necessary, the voluntary sector for help and support (food banks are a prime example), rather than the state through social work.

This chapter discusses the post-war social democratic consensus, the subsequent rise of the Conservative New Right and eventual neoliberal consensus embraced by the New Labour governments of 1997–2010, the Conservative-Led Coalition government 2010–15 and the current Conservative government. The impact on the welfare state and social work during these changes are also considered.

Social democracy: the era of progress

The beginnings of social democracy in the UK can be traced to the allied nations conference held at Bretton Woods in 1944 (Lambie 2011). The most influential economists of the time, including Britain's John Maynard Keynes, believed the largely unregulated flows of capital during the previous era of laissez-faire capitalism had led to the crash of 1929, the Great Depression which followed and, indirectly, the Second World War. Such errors had to be avoided, this including a rejection of market liberalism in favour of the state management of capitalism.

Of particular importance was the need for countries to be able to organise their affairs without the disruptive influence of speculative capital movements, with national goals being the priority rather than the financial interests of the few. They also wanted to protect the new and still emerging welfare state from the flight of capital, driven by either by political reasons or to avoid the 'burdens' of social regulation. The intention was to create a stable international system managed by nation-states.

Until the 1970s the Bretton Woods accord led to economic success for the vast majority of people in the industrialised world, not merely the rich and powerful. The welfare state came of age, and trade unions and national economic planning improved job security and standards of living more generally. The state had taken charge of the 'commanding heights of the economy' thereby managing national developmental processes, with key industries in both state and private sectors run by a patrician elite concerned about the wider system of social and national responsibility.

In considering this social democratic response to the aftermath of the Second World War, the relationship between ideology and welfare is important as George and Wilding (1976, 1993) indicate. Their first book refers to the 'reluctant collectivists' of the Conservative Party and the 'Fabian Socialists' of the Labour Party agreeing with each other on many things, including the need for the state to intervene in the free markets in order to mitigate the worst effects of unemployment and resulting social problems. This was the social democratic compact of the post-war years. Their later work refers to the Middle Way (despite some similarities, not to be confused with Giddens's Third Way [for example 1994, 1998, 2000]) and Democratic Socialism, both resonating with such social democracy, and it is worth elaborating a little on these concepts here.

The Middle Way

The Middle Way sits between laissez-faire, free market liberalism and Marxism, and argues 'it is both necessary and possible to graft measures of state welfare on to capitalism and soften its rough edges' (George and Wilding 1993, p. 46). 'One Nation' Conservatives of the 1950s–1970s such as Macmillan and Butler fall into this category, as well as non-Conservatives such as Beveridge and Keynes. They argued the free market was the best way of organising the economy and ensuring freedom, but also it needed to be regulated and have many of its negatives compensated for. They accepted the welfare state and the role the state must play, although queried the nature and extent of this. The relief of distress, for example, was accepted but the pursuit of substantive equality was not.

Rather than seeing the welfare state as the result of working class efforts through trade unions, they argued it was an all-party creation owing as much to Conservatism as socialism. It was seen as a natural product of the relationship between the people and the state in democracies – after all, if the state was not interested in its people, why should the people be interested in the state (Gilmour 1978)? The welfare state was seen as a pragmatic response to social problems relating to such as

health, poverty or old age because not relieving such ills could threaten the social order. As we will see, whereas the Democratic Socialist critique of the market was a general one, the Middle Way critique relates to specific problems.

The Middle Way is an attempt to negotiate a middle path between unregulated capitalism and unrestrained collectivism, whereby unacceptable social consequences of the market have to be ameliorated by state action. There is also a concern with equality of opportunity, if not outcome, a belief in the One Nation and an understanding that there is such a thing as society. From all this, welfare state policies are acceptable as a response to real current ills, when they are geared to improving and making good rather than changing society, and where the mixed economy of welfare involving private and voluntary agencies is encouraged in service provision. In addition, welfare state policies gain particular approval when they are related to promoting the economy because social policy is seen as subordinate to economic policy.

Despite the somewhat reluctant acceptance of the welfare state, the Middle Way is wary about its tendency to expand and drift towards centralisation and planning. Other concerns relate to its use as a tool to create an ideal society, its impact on values such as self-responsibility and self-reliance, and the drive towards redistribution and equality.

Democratic socialism

Democratic socialists saw the welfare state as an important staging post in the transition from laissez-faire/free market capitalism to socialism, with the role of the working class in its creation being crucial. Writers such as George Bernard Shaw, Tawney, Titmuss and Crosland saw it as the outcome of a long process of working class struggle against opposition from the capitalist/ruling class and its allies (George and Wilding 1993). This began during the early days of industrialisation with the formation of trade unions and working class political parties, and it continues. In democratic societies the Fabian view was that socialist change could be done by raising public awareness by research and publication of empirical evidence. Thus, persuasion and pressure led to the creation of the welfare state after the Second World War, this helped by the fact that the ruling class had to concede reforms in order to obtain the co-operation of the working class during the war.

Despite those Marxists who see it as a palliative propping up capitalism, democratic socialists supported the welfare state because it eased suffering and want in society while also acting as a stimulus to the economy – the most obvious example being social security expenditure putting money in the pockets of people, thereby stimulating consumption, demand and production. Then again, expenditure on such as education creates a more egalitarian society given that it includes ensuring the potentialities of all children, irrespective of social background, are attained (Crosland 1956). Altruism is also promoted, with Titmuss (1968, p. 208) citing the National Health Service (NHS) providing free medical care at the point of need to all, as being 'one of the most unsordid and civilised actions in the history of health and welfare policy'. Finally, the welfare state promoted social integration because

universal services do not discriminate for or against one ethnic or socio-economic group, and inequalities are reduced, both vertically and horizontally, between the sick and healthy, the young and the elderly and so on.

There were key differences between democratic socialists and the Middle Way. First, socialist social policy is about equality, freedom and social integration (Titmuss 1968), meaning that services and benefits must be provided primarily on a universal rather than a means-tested basis. This is because means testing is administratively costly and, more importantly, is stigmatising and leads to the poor being seen as second-class citizens, with low take-up rates and poverty traps. Second, democratic socialists were against private provision in the welfare state, particularly in relation to health and education, because it leads to inequality and undermines social integration, and because private provision is far less accountable to the public than are state services.

Democratic socialism is derived from the co-operative stand of Owenism, the technocratic and gradualist influence of Fabianism, the ethical and egalitarian influence of Christianity and, albeit less so, Marxism and the class analysis of society (see George and Wilding 1993, p. 89). Although conflict in society is accepted, gradualism and the parliamentary road are the preferred solutions rather than revolution. A role for the market is accepted but careful regulation is needed to remedy defects such as concentrations of wealth and power which lead to inequality (Plant 1988).

Bureaucratic centralism and social democracy per se dominated democratic socialist thinking for many decades (George and Wilding 1993). The former involves the means of production and distribution being owned by the state and the economy being planned centrally, this adopted by the Labour government after the Second World War. Social democracy is associated with Crosland (1956), who argued the post-war reforms had changed British capitalism for good and no further nationalisations were necessary, with the mixed economy being a sufficient base for left-inclined governments to introduce further measures to equalise opportunity.

This brief discussion of the Middle Way and democratic socialism is not complete in two main ways. First, it does not deal with the New Right critics of the Conservative Party whose ideas gained influence in the 1970s. Second, it does not deal with market socialists of the Labour Party who went on to form New Labour and the 'Third Way'. Both these groups of thinkers and politicians are dealt with in the next section. Despite this caveat, it can be seen that the Middle Way and democratic socialism have much in common, this including an acceptance of the free market or capitalist system while recognising that its defects needed to be remedied and compensated for. It is no surprise that differences between Labour and the Conservative governments over the initial post-war decades were limited to arguments over the extent and nature of state control and planning, with the welfare state being accepted. As outlined in Chapter 1, in this political and economic climate, advances in health, education, housing and social security were made, and professional social work gradually emerged, particularly following the Seebohm Report (1968). In retrospect, these were halcyon days, especially when

compared with the neoliberal times of the present which began with the rise of the New Right, followed by New Labour and neoliberal hegemony.

The New Right, New Labour and neoliberal hegemony

The New Right achieved power in the UK during the 1970s by providing an ideological critique that undermined the political and economic social democratic settlement of the initial post-war years. Similar ideas gained ascendency in the US, and by the 1980s the ideological move to the political right became known as neoliberalism, with its influence continuing to this day on a global basis (Harvey 2007). The New Right and neoliberalism have a market-driven approach to economic and social policy which stresses the importance of private enterprise.

The New Right

Again drawing on George and Wilding (1993), the New Right saw the Second World War as a significant factor in the state's involvement in welfare because of the belief that the collective experience of wartime is possible in peacetime; if government could plan the war it could plan the peace (Barnett 1986). Keynes and Beveridge were two particular targets: the former because of his dislike of the profit motive and for making deficit budgeting legitimate and the latter encouraging the desirability of collective goals and purposes (see Wiener 1981 and Marsland 1992, respectively). Both failed to grasp the nature of Hayek's (1982) 'spontaneous order', namely the market system, which ensures the welfare of members of society by supplying goods and services through competition and discovery. Competitive pressures and market signals were preferred to tax-financed, need-based and producer-dominated welfare systems which lead to inefficient and costly services unresponsive to consumer preferences. The spontaneous order is also seen to promote association and community, and as morally superior to socialism/state provision.

The New Right were against the utopian belief that social problems could be avoided or remedied, rather than being inherent in economic and social life. They felt opponents were ignorant of economics because of their preoccupation with the social. Similar concerns related to opponents' understanding of concepts such as liberty, justice, need and social rights. For instance, liberty is simply the absence of coercion rather than the presence of real opportunities involving the provision of resources and services. Then again, social justice has no real meaning because where outcomes are not intended, as in market relations, you cannot talk of justice or injustice. The New Right relied on ideas that people are fundamentally self-interested, with the forces that dominate individuals and society being economic rather than social. The growth of state intervention is seen as linked to politics being dominated by competition for votes, with public choice theorists emphasising political parties promising more and more – something which also resonates with self-interested public service bureaucrats/professionals (Deakin 1987; Gray 1986). The latter, including social workers, press

the cause of their clients/service users which in turn is their own cause. Finally, the New Right questioned the sociological approach to social problems which stresses social and structural issues rather than personal factors/failings. Such sociological approaches lead to 'solutions' such as the introduction of the welfare state, something which is rejected by the New Right on a number of grounds (see George and Wilding 1993, pp. 20–35).

First, it is impossible to create a comprehensive welfare state because such a project ignores the nature of the spontaneous order while assuming the possibility of rational planning and of a common purpose in society. The spontaneous order asserts that social institutions and social order arise from human action rather human design, this being a miracle of a self-generating, self-renewing system which is seen as superior to any deliberate human construct. Rational planning is questioned because all the relevant facts will never be known in order to plan, and in any case human reason is incapable of constructing and implementing such plans, with would-be social planners failing to appreciate the complexity of economic and social life.

Second, welfare state supporters are seen as having mistaken views of human nature and social order. People are essentially individualistic, only responding to the prospect and possibility of individual reward and punishment. They are not primarily social beings who can be motivated by social concerns and social goals. Instead, risk, uncertainty and the danger of failure are seen as being necessary to human and social functioning.

Third, the welfare state is based on mistaken ideas about welfare. For instance, the New Right are against the emphasis on equality and redistribution rather than on growth and wealth creation. They stress the importance of choice to individual satisfaction and the promotion of individual growth and responsibility, rather than the state, through bureaucrats and professionals 'knowing best'. As a result they are against the state provision of services because it crowds out private and voluntary providers, and they prefer cash being supplied rather than services so as to create a quasi-market. The stress is on responsibilities and obligations rather than rights, with the welfare state as not being seen as a positive force for change in society, instead having negative effects such as trapping people in poverty or stigmatising people.

Fourth, the welfare state is seen as a threat to freedom because more government results in individual freedom and responsibility being eroded. In relation to social justice, for example, as there is no consensus, its pursuit threatens to transform a free society into a totalitarian state (Gray 1986). Indeed, egalitarianism itself is a particular threat to freedom because redistribution is inevitably coercive. State welfare is also a threat because it is monopolistic and entrenches producer power, whereas markets give consumers control over producers.

Fifth, the welfare state is seen as inefficient and ineffective. Again it is the monopolistic aspect of state welfare that comes under attack, because without the spur of competition there is no incentive to innovate or become more efficient. The New Right is particularly critical of bureaucracies and professionals because they are not just disinterested policy implementers; instead they have

a clear interest in expansion. Services are geared to their needs and there are no corrective mechanisms to ensure services change in response to changing needs or deficiencies; in short, 'producer power' rules (Deakin 1987).

Sixth, the welfare state is seen as economically and socially damaging. It is economically damaging because it interferes with the operation of the free market by reducing both the rewards for success and the punishments of failure. It is socially damaging because welfare collectivism destroys independence and self-reliance, together with individual initiative and responsibility. In simple terms, protecting people from unfortunate consequences allows them to be irresponsible beings, which they will be without the disciplines of poverty, unemployment, illness or homelessness (Davies 1991). Other arguments centre on such as the creation of a 'dependency culture' sustained by welfare.

Finally, the New Right sees the welfare state as politically damaging because governments attempt to do things that they cannot, such as eliminating poverty. The resulting failure means a loss of standing and authority. Welfare state policies also lead to the growth of powerful interest groups which seek to determine government policy, examples being anti-poverty, pensioners' and women's groups, as well as producer groups. Governments then become embroiled in a politics aimed at reconciling these groups, losing power and legitimacy in the process.

Turning to the New Right's attitude to welfare and their ideal society, the view is that markets should have a larger role while the state has a reduced and different role. Markets are favoured because they are the best mechanism for discovering and co-ordinating dispersed knowledge and preferences, they provide a wider range of choice, and they do not depend for their success on the beneficent motives of service providers because they compel providers to be sensitive to the needs of users in order to survive in business (Hayek 1982). Other important, and linked, considerations include market provision reducing provider power and, because of competition, reducing the prices of goods and services. Market provision also fits better with the realities of human nature such as people's and society's need for individual responsibility and people's self- and family-centredness. It is also seen as being more democratic because politics is seen as a struggle between powerful interest groups, whereas everyone counts in the market as the consumer rules. Finally, the New Right has little faith in systems and institutions attempting to meet need, instead believing in responsibility being placed with individuals, this being beneficial for both the individual and society.

Despite the undoubted faith in the market, this does not rule out all state action in welfare. For instance, Friedman (1962) sees the state setting out a legal framework for the efficient functioning of the market, as well as paternalist provision for those not able to assume full responsibility for themselves, such as those who are severely mentally ill or have severe learning difficulties. Other guiding principles for the role of the state include it providing residual, safety-net services, and abandoning impossible goals of equality and social justice. The state is envisaged as an enabler rather than a provider, and where public provision is seen as appropriate then internal markets should be established. Further, the state's role should be competitive, not monopolistic, working in partnership with the private

and voluntary sector, with any state provision itself being conditional, not simply a right.

In brief, the New Right and neoliberalism's attitude to social policy, including the welfare state and social work, espouses more involvement of the free market together with less, and different, state involvement – although 'different' state involvement often equates to state interference so that market rules can be imposed on all aspects of social life.

The New Right, the welfare state and social work

Despite the 1979 general election success, initially Margaret Thatcher did not embark on an all-out attack on the welfare state largely because One Nation Conservatives still had some influence in cabinet (Page 2009a). However, the New Right's influence steadily increased during the three Thatcher governments of 1979–83, 1983–87 and 1987–90. There were privatisations of nationalised industries, curbs on trade union power, ongoing cuts to welfare benefits with eligibility tightened, and cuts to housing and education. Sales of council houses occurred, with private landlords and housing associations allowed to take over the running of those remaining. Changes to the NHS included the introduction of private sector–style management, performance indicators and the internal market. The control of local authorities over schools was reduced together with the introduction of national tests which had to be made available to parents, both measures aimed at weakening provider power.

Following the successful resistance to the poll tax, Thatcher was replaced but the John Major governments (1990–92, 1992–97) saw the continued influence of New Right ideas. Citizen's Charters meant providers of public services had to devise performance targets to be scrutinised by independent monitors, deal with complaints more responsibly and provide redress as appropriate. Welfare benefits continued to be targeted for cuts and tightened eligibility criteria. A new, more rigorous, external inspection regime for schools was introduced, and a 'back to basics' campaign introduced based on a populist approach to issues such as crime, health, education and social work to challenge 'out of touch' welfare professionals.

In short, during the Conservative governments of 1979–97 the welfare state was transformed along New Right and neoliberal lines. As Page notes (2009a, p. 128), 'The injection of a private sector ethos into the delivery of public services, improved targeting, cost containment measures and greater "consumer" choice ensured that the welfare state was operating along New Right lines.'

As for social work, in many ways it remained relatively untouched during the earlier years of the Thatcher/Major revolution (Rogowski 2010a). Admittedly, there was an ongoing move away from the generic social work role, and in relation to practice with children and families, fostering and adoption practice was hived off to form separate teams, and workers with young offenders had their own (youth justice) teams, although children and families social workers often played a key role. Overall, however, social workers with children and families saw little difference as far as their day-to-day practice was concerned and, again

as indicated in Chapter 1, significant progress was made in relation to work with young offenders and community social work, and there were advances in theory (see Part Two).

However, into Thatcher's third term and the Major years social work was affected negatively. The introduction of care management under the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act resulted in direct, relationship-based work with adult users being replaced by social workers being embroiled in bureaucracy aimed at rationing resources. Similar negative comments can be made in relation to the changes to education and training by the introduction of the Diploma in Social Work (DSW) in 1989, and in the mid-1990s a social work qualification was no longer required for probation officers (Rogowski 2010a). The DSW essentially allowed employers to shape social work education in their own interests, while the changes to probation training aimed to move from 'soft' social work approaches towards offending to more controlling and punishment-orientated methods.

Despite the changes to the welfare state and social work under the Conservative governments of the late 1980s–1997, there were even more challenges as New Labour swept to power under Tony Blair in 1997.

New Labour, the welfare state and social work

As mentioned, market socialism (see Le Grand and Estrin 1989) was one of three strands of democratic socialism, the others being bureaucratic centralism and social democracy (George and Wilding 1993). It was this version of democratic socialism that was to prevail as New Labour adapted to rather than challenged neoliberal orthodoxy, and it formed much of New Labour's initial ideology, prior to the party's move to the political right under Blair's leadership. Its central claim was that the economic system should be plural in nature, with some enterprises owned by the state, others privately and still others co-operatively.

Market socialism emerged as Labour under Neil Kinnock (1983–92) and John Smith (1992–94) repositioned itself in an attempt to show it was fit to return to office (Page 2009b). This included substantial policy revisions including a retreat from public ownership, a rapprochement with industry, a firm commitment to fiscal and monetary orthodoxy, the abandoning of nuclear unilateralism, the retention of the curbs on trade unions and wanting an overhauled welfare state. These changes were taken further following Blair's election as leader.

Blair and the other modernisers sought to rebrand the party as a non-sectarian party that would appeal to 'middle' England. This involved embracing the virtues of the market, deregulation of financial markets, and a reliance on service sector employment growth. It included abandoning the previous attachment to public ownership, planning and deficit financing, along with state intervention and public spending more generally. This pro-market approach had a relaxed view about inequalities of income and wealth. Further, this economic reappraisal had important ramifications as far as the welfare state was concerned.

Instead of seeing the aim of social policy as challenging market imperatives, New Labour saw welfare policy as needing to support the market system and

contribute to the economic goal of competitiveness in the more open, global economy. There was a concern with people of working age being dependent on benefits, this resulting in encouraging paid work, if necessary by compulsion. This modernisation of the welfare state was required because of defects in the original system relating to 'dependency, moral hazard, bureaucracy, interest-group formation and fraud' (Giddens 2000, p. 33).

Such changes in the economic and social policy spheres amounted to the Third Way, with Giddens (1994, 1998, 2000) proving to be Blair's guru. He argued that the demise of Communism, globalisation, changing family and work patterns, and more diverse personal and cultural identities made the left-right distinction in politics increasingly irrelevant. Instead the Third Way had four core values: the equal worth of everyone, opportunity for all, responsibility and community (Blair 1998). Equal worth equated with social justice being founded on talent and effort and being encouraged in all quarters of society regardless of an individual's background. Opportunity for all was seen as neglected by the right because they focussed on freeing individuals from a coercive state, and by the left who had downplayed the state's duty to promote the responsibility of individuals to advance themselves. Responsibility was connected to rights, in that without responsibility selfishness and greed result. Finally, strong government to promote freedom should not mean that community, including voluntary activity, should be marginalised.

Such New Labour repositioning amounted to veering to the political right and had much in common with New Right/neoliberal thinking. Despite trying to present itself as a progressive, left-of-centre government, at best the Third Way was a softer variant of the New Right. At worst it developed and took further New Right thinking and policy (see Powell 1999, 2002, 2008 for a full discussion of developments under New Labour). Essentially New Labour embraced neoliberalism because at its hegemonic core was a belief in the free market economy as lying at the heart of humankind's well-being (Garrett 2009b). For example, there was a convergence with the New Right on the need for growth and wealth creation rather than an emphasis on equality and redistribution. Or again, the old welfare state was regarded by New Labour as undermining responsibility and creating dependency.

In fact, New Labour's welfare state strategy can be seen as having six interconnected themes (Page 2009b). First, a modern welfare state had to be *active* rather than *passive*. Welfare to work programmes were established for those on benefits who were deemed capable of work, this including young people under 25 years old, lone parents, disabled people and those over 50 years of age. Although involvement was initially voluntary, with advice and information being provided, more coercive measures lay in wait such as being *required* to attend regular work-focussed interviews. Complementary measures were also introduced, these including the statutory minimum wage, tax credits and a child care strategy to increase substitute care for children. Later still, reforms to such as incapacity benefit confirmed the welfare to work ethos.

Second, New Labour rejected the preference for publicly provided welfare services, instead encouraging the private and voluntary sectors noticeably in health,

education and housing. The private finance initiative of the previous Conservative government was expanded, with more private sector contractors financing and building new hospitals and schools and then leasing them back to the public sector. Private sector providers were given a share of NHS funding for routine procedures, and the number of 'independent' state-funded academies and faith schools increased. In relation to housing, a diverse mix of social landlords was increasingly encouraged rather than local authorities being the main provider.

Third was the emphasis on the needs and preferences of service users. Rather than uniform, undifferentiated services, individually tailored services were favoured. Following the 1998 School Standards and Education Act, failing schools could be closed and reopened under a new head teacher and governors, with parents being given a preference as to which school their child should go to. There was an emphasis on reducing waiting times for NHS outpatient and inpatient appointments, and in 2008 patients requiring non-urgent hospital treatments could choose any approved health care provider.

Fourth, there were attempts to extend opportunity by tackling socially constructed barriers to advancement in areas such as education, health and employment. Examples included Sure Start and the Children's Fund (preventative programmes for younger and older children and their families, respectively), a national parenting helpline, and aiming to abolish child poverty and increase the numbers of young people in higher education.

Fifth was the increased role individuals should play in advancing their own health and well-being. It was an emphasis on personal responsibility, with individuals having to understand that rights to state support had to be matched by a responsibility to use such assistance effectively. Individuals were also expected to engage in neighbourly and civic activity because the state was no longer able to provide citizens with a guaranteed level of security and well-being.

Finally, there was an emphasis on quality and performance being improved by rigorous targets being set for service providers, and effective audit and inspection regimes being established. Ofsted's role in relation to education and children's social care was an example, as was the Audit Commission which monitored the overall performance of public bodies including local authorities.

More specifically in relation to social work with children and families, New Labour's attitude towards the profession can be gleaned by the replacement of the Central Council for the Training and Education in Social Work by the General Social Care Council in 2001, and the demise of the National Institute of Social Work in 2003. Then again, New Labour's modernisation and transformation agenda amounted to the increased control and deprofessionalisation of social work because of the dominance of managerialism and concern with the social work business (see, for example, Harris 2003; Rogowski 2010a; also see Chapter 7). Notably a standardised assessment framework was introduced (DH et al. 2000) leading to a focus on speedily gathering information and completing bureaucracy so as to ration resources and manage risk. The framework was soon linked to the introduction of information and communication technology, which meant that practitioners were increasingly tied to their desks completing computer

exemplars. Although 'every child mattering' and child safeguarding subsequently emerged (see Chapter 6), paradoxically it led to the demise of preventative work, with social workers only intervening when there were serious child protection or safeguarding concerns. And as for social work with young offenders, following the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act this was hived off to Youth Offending Teams where the role of social work was reduced (see Chapter 3).

If there was anything positive for social work under New Labour, ironically it related to the tragedy of Baby Peter who died in 2007. This resulted in the establishment of the Social Work Task Force (SWTF) to look at the profession and opened up spaces for a more progressive debate about social work for children and families (Garrett 2009a). For example, there was increased public awareness about the electronic recording system social workers were forced to use including, as alluded to, the inordinate amount of social work time spent on computers and bureaucracy in general. The subsequent SWTF report (2009) echoed much of this, thereby calling into question New Labour's modernization agenda. A Social Work Reform Board was established to improve social work, this including the establishment of a College of Social Work to provide a voice for and raise the status of the profession.

In short, social work did not fare well under New Labour, and any positives that might have arisen from the Baby Peter case were left to David Cameron's Coalition government to implement.

The Conservative-led Coalition and beyond

Following the 2010 general election, the subsequent Conservative-Led Coalition emphasised the Big Society and the devolution of power and control to local and voluntary organisations (Jordan 2010). Correspondingly, there was firm resistance to ensuring the collective good by means of the state. What is more the financial crash of 2007–08 and resulting Great Recession provided an opportunity to impose swinging cuts to public services. As Farnsworth (2011, p. 260) notes, 'the Conservative-led Coalition [was] determined not to let a good crisis go to waste.' The emergency budget of June 2010 led to 'the longest, deepest sustained period of cuts to public services spending at least since World War Two' (Institute of Fiscal Studies 2010), and the pain of the cuts fell disproportionately on the poorest. Bearing in mind the previous increase in public expenditure had been amassed to defend, boost and bail out the private sector generally, and the financial sector specifically, this amounted to a major redistribution of resources from the poorest to the wealthiest in society. It is no wonder that these developments have been referred to as the 'alchemy of austerity' (Clarke and Newman 2012). In short, the Great Recession was used to cut welfare provision and reshape politics so as to cement the whole neoliberal project. The latter statement is particularly pertinent, bearing in mind Cameron's Conservative government was elected in May 2015 on the basis of forthcoming 'deep austerity' including £12 billion in welfare cuts.

I will not dwell on the Coalition's or the new Conservative government's political ideology or philosophy, suffice to say that broadly both accept a continuation

of the New Right's and New Labour's embracement of neoliberalism. It is the furtherance of the 'Conservative Revolution', one which emphasises the free market and favours the rich and powerful, even though this causes insecurity and precariousness for the majority of people in society (Garrett 2009b). There may now be little difference between the major political parties in the UK, but perhaps the most significant one was Cameron's initial emphasis on the Big Society.

The Big Society emphasises 'traditional' values such as freedom and liberty, as well as localism and volunteerism in the hope of empowering social enterprises, the voluntary sector and other elements of civil society to deal with social problems (Jordan 2010). However, surely the idea is little more than a cloak for severe cuts in public spending especially as it is often counterposed to the Big State and has New Right and neoliberal values of self-interest/responsibility to the fore, rather than those of a more collective nature. Simply put, the voluntary sector cannot fill the space left by the dismantling of public services. The notion of the Big Society, together with that of 'Broken Britain', results in policies which represent a form of moral regulation that justifies an assault on the welfare state. Furthermore, savage cuts to public services, as well as the increased emphasis on private sector involvement and marketisation, will result in a bonanza for large commercial firms as well as being a severe blow to the well-being of vulnerable citizens.

The problem is that pruning the state as drastically as the Coalition did leads to a more troubled and diminished society, not a bigger one. The Big Society is more about the 'sink or swim society', and woe betide the poor, the frail, the old, the sick and the dependent in such a scenario. By reducing the size of the state and expecting the void to be filled by the voluntary sector and others, the government simply washed its hands of providing decent public services (again the growth in food banks is a prime example). In addition, the question arises whether the neoliberal financial and economic crisis should be resolved by sacrifices made by those at the bottom of society who played no part in its creation.

As for the welfare state, the Coalition government was active in three areas. First, like its predecessors there was a concern about welfare dependency and the need to tackle the 'culture of entitlement'. Welfare reforms involved contentious changes to various benefits and included the introduction of a 'bedroom tax' for those living in alleged under-occupied accommodation, and a cap on the total amount that could be claimed in benefits. The emphasis was on people making more effort to find work with private companies and charities recruited to do this despite, for example, A4e having been involved in scandals in relation to alleged fraud, while others, notably ATOS, have not been able to fulfil their contracts. The overriding aim was to cut the welfare bill rather than a genuine concern with the welfare of individuals including children and families.

Second, there was the 2012 Health and Social Care Act, which was condemned by virtually all the medical professional bodies as it was going through Parliament. The legislation focusses on promoting patient choice, reducing NHS administration costs, GPs being given powers to commission services on behalf of their patients, increasing the involvement of the private sector, and placing more emphasis on competition. However, major concerns are that it will lead to

widespread fragmentation and work against integration with social care, not to mention the massive cost and destabilisation caused by a major reorganisation at a time of huge financial pressure. Essentially the reforms were about more privatisation and marketisation, and thereby a real threat to the NHS's very existence.

And third, in relation to education an increase in university tuition fees meant that universities were in effect privatised as they will no longer be funded by the state. Education maintenance allowance which supported students in higher education was also scrapped. Both changes can deter those from poorer backgrounds from entering further and higher education and can be seen as a tax on aspiration. Meanwhile, there was the expansion of the school academy programme, and 'free schools' were established whereby parents and other providers can set up schools using government money, although they are independent of local authority control. As with the health proposals, the obvious concern is one of increasing privatisation and the emphasis on competition. Then there has been the Trojan Horse scandal whereby extreme Islamists have covertly tried to take over schools in Birmingham and other areas because academies and free schools are unaccountable.

When it comes to social work, the most significant development as far as children and families are concerned was the establishment of the Munro Review (Munro 2011) in the wake of the Baby Peter tragedy. It pointed out previous reforms led to too much bureaucracy, this hindering practitioners' ability to focus on the needs of children. Instead, it argued for the reduction in centrally imposed targets and bureaucracy with social workers being given more scope to exercise professional judgement. Paradoxically it recommended more 'determined and robust' management to achieve this even though determined and robust managerialism led to social work's crisis. It also goes on to refer to the Hackney reclaiming social work model notwithstanding it is based on a management model developed by business consultants (Goodman and Trowler 2012), one of whom, Isabelle Trowler, is now the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families. The model has an emphasis on all staff sharing the values of the organisation including having a similar 'outlook and approach' to working with children and families. There are two problems with this (see Rogowski 2011c). First, given the aforementioned comments, do we really want more private sector management/business consultants involved in social work? Second, it is almost as if social workers have to identify with the organisation and the way it operates rather than the social justice values of social work. Where, for example, would having to adopt shared outlooks and approaches leave practitioners who want to practice in critical/radical, or even in just more innovative, ways? There has to be some scope for individual social workers, working in collaboration with users, to practice as they see fit.

In any case, although Munro came up with some fine aspirations, resulting action has not lived up to the expectations of practitioners. Although there has been the introduction of a single assessment instead of the initial/core assessments, and although child protection guidance has been reduced, bureaucracy has been increased by the undue focus on risk (Community Care 2012; Rogowski 2014b). Indeed, in a time of austerity we should not underestimate the huge challenges to creating the paradigm shift the review aimed to achieve (Parton 2012).

Although the Coalition was slow to react to Munro there were areas where it was active. The General Social Care Council (GSCC) was quickly earmarked for abolition ostensibly as part of austerity measures. It closed in July 2012 and the regulation of social workers was taken over by the Health and Care Professions Council, although the GSCC's sister organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland remain intact. The key point is that this highlighted the disregard in government thinking about social work, and is also evidenced by its continued questioning of social work education and training which included two reviews as well the introduction of reductive training schemes such as Step Up to Social Work and Frontline for the 'brightest' candidates. However, the end result was a fragmented social work education system which includes underfunded and undervalued mainstream courses.

There were two other areas where the Coalition was active. First, they raised concerns about children allegedly languishing in care and the need to speed up the adoption process, something that was supposedly addressed in the 2014 Children and Families Act. Cameron and other ministers had complained about political correctness, including social workers' fixation with getting ethnic matches, and of not approving people as adopters because of petty factors such as the fact they smoked or were overweight. However, to the extent there may be concerns about adoption delays, echoing Munro, perhaps it is due to the bureaucracy that social workers have to endure.

Second, as pointed out in Chapter 1, in May 2014 the Coalition initially proposed to privatise child protection and other social work services with children (Butler 2014). Although this was quietly dropped, it is likely to resurface under the new Conservative government. In fact, as I write Cameron announced a new child protection task force of government ministers (although representatives from the profession were conspicuous by their absence) to help professionals protect vulnerable children (BBC 2015c). He added that child protection will be a 'big focus' of the new government.

Finally, in mentioning the Conservative government, although it is in its early days already the College of Social Work is to close because government funding is being withdrawn as part of ongoing austerity measures. Yet again, this seems to reflect the government's hostility to the profession, including its wish to develop a 'more skills, less theory' approach to practice.

In sum, and as with New Labour, the welfare state and social work have not progressed under the Conservative-Led Coalition and are unlikely to do so under the current Conservative government. Neoliberalism continues to provide the overriding context for what has and is occurring, and for the foreseeable future the situation is unlikely to change.

Conclusion

The social democratic post-war years sought to reform capitalism and align it to ideals of social justice, this leading to the development of the welfare state and professional social work. The welfare state aimed to ensure all citizens' basic

needs were met, with remaining social problems the preserve of social work. As we have seen, until the early 1970s this social democratic ideal had considerable economic success, with progress also made in the political and social sphere. It was the era when *professional* social work emerged and, over the subsequent couple of decades or so, arguably reached its peak, despite New Right and eventually neoliberal challenges.

The change from the social democracy to New Right ideology and the current neoliberal consensus has had profound effects on social workers and service users. Successive governments, which have involved all the main political parties with the possible exception of the resurgent Scottish National Party, have shown continuities with the policies of Margaret Thatcher. Free market/neoliberal ideology and policies have been to the fore despite such factors leading to the financial crash and ensuing Great Recession. Further, this economic crisis has been used as an opportunity to further dismantle the welfare state, including narrowing and truncating the role of social work, and thereby forcing people to rely on themselves, their own support networks and, if necessary, voluntary organisations. What services remain continue to be privatised and marketised, all such developments linked to the ever more neoliberal, globalised world.

Globalisation may be a contested concept, but has led to a drift by welfare states around the world to neoliberal approaches to economic and social policy (Sykes 2009); it is about welfare retrenchment because of capitalism's dominance (Mishra 1999). Ideologically and practically, resulting policies prioritise economic competitiveness above welfare provision, meaning that aims of equality, redistribution and collective provision are secondary to citizens having to find employment so as to alleviate their own difficulties. It is the approach of the New Right and ensuing governments in the UK, as well as those in most of the world.

As for social work with children and families, Thatcher and her heirs have certainly left a legacy (Rogowski 2015b). The task has increasingly been fragmented and deprofessionalised, with practice now set and controlled by managers at the behest of their political masters. Completing bureaucracy and meeting targets so as to ration services and manage risk are the overriding goals with (authoritarian) intervention only taking place if there are serious child protection issues. Such issues are taken up again in Part Three, but despite this largely depressing scenario, social work has had some successes over the decades, this being what I now turn to in Part Two.

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Part two

The high points of social work

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3 Youth crime and youth justice

As I have often argued (for example, Rogowski 2003/04, 2010b, 2014a), and as far as England in particular is concerned, youth crime is often never far away from the media headlines as politicians try to 'out-tough' each other in their response. The politics of young offending fuels the rhetoric of governments and political parties as they compete to be in tune with the alleged punitiveness of the general public. Since the demise of the social democratic consensus, and despite successful and social work-led diversionary and alternative to incarceration schemes, there has been an increasingly authoritarian response – to condemn more and understand less, as John Major said in the 1990s. This has resulted in 'populist punitiveness' (Bottoms 1995) or 'penal populism' (Pratt 2007), which see varying degrees of punishment and control as key for addressing the problem. Such perspectives are epitomised by the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) following which there was an increasing concern with anti-social behaviour and a 'respect agenda'. This get-tough approach was initially carried out by Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), now commonly referred to as the Youth Offending Service (YOS), in which the role of social work has diminished. Admittedly there has been a welcome decline in the use of custody since the beginning of 2009, but it is premature to see this as evidence of a more tolerant attitude towards young offenders (Bateman 2011). It might simply have more to do with curtailing public expenditure during an era of austerity. Indeed, evidence of a continued hard line towards young people in conflict with the law was David Cameron's enthusiasm for the draconian punishments dealt out to young people following the riots in England during 2011. We also have a continued focus on anti-social behaviour with the introduction of re-branded anti-social behaviour orders in the form of criminal behaviour orders and crime prevention injunctions by way of the 2014 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act. Importantly, all such developments neglect the structural factors relating to such as class, race and gender that deny a large number of young people a stake in society.

The developments in the youth crime and youth justice sphere have paralleled the embracement of neoliberalism by successive governments over recent decades. This ideological move to the political right has involved economic deregulation and welfare retrenchment which have been filled by neoliberal penality and the advance of punitiveness (Wacquant 2009). It is the transmogrification from the

social state to the penal state driven by an underpinning dialectical relationship; the invisible hand of deregulated labour markets, conjoined with the iron fist of a diversifying, expanding and increasingly intrusive penal apparatus. More specifically in relation to young offending, instead of a focus on the deprivation and disadvantage that leads to youth crime, such behaviour is now seen as a matter of opportunity and rational choice with young people being responsible for their actions. This means that punishment is a valid response, both as an expression of society's disapproval and as an individual deterrent (Muncie 2009).

I begin this chapter by outlining the rise of welfare/treatment approaches to dealing with youth crime culminating in the introduction of intermediate treatment (IT) by the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA). Although IT is little known or referred to these days, even in specialist youth crime and youth justice texts, it eventually led to social work's success during the late 1970s, through the 1980s until the early 1990s. Due to the work of pioneers at Lancaster University, it eventually led to the development of diversionary strategies to keep young offenders out of the youth justice system, as well as genuine alternatives to incarceration. In fact, it is hard to underestimate the impact of their seminal book *Out of Care: The Community Support of Juvenile Offenders* (Thorpe et al. 1980), which remained influential until the 1990s. Their research and resulting practice implications were important factors in the reduction of recorded youth crime of the period (Blagg and Smith 1989; Farrington and Langan 1992) and are arguably social work's most significant evidence-based achievement (Haines 2009; Rogowski 2013, 2014a). Next, the chapter turns to a discussion of the punitive turn and resulting move to punishment and control which, although having antecedents in the law and order decade of the 1980s, actually began in the early in the early 1990s and coincided with the development of the 'exclusive society' (Young 1999). In particular, I consider developments under New Labour which have broadly been continued by subsequent governments, which include an actuarial and managerial response to youth crime, as well as a focus on adulteration and (supposedly) evidence-based practice. Finally, drawing on Haines (2009) and Haines and Case (2015), I argue for an approach that puts young people first and reconnects with social work's past success in work with young offenders.

The 'successful revolution'

As Thorpe et al. (1980) note, the nineteenth century opened with punishment being the single approach to youth crime. Welfare arrived by the 1850s, with reformatories and industrial schools being established to rescue young people from prison and other corrupting environments; both eventually became approved schools and then community homes with education. At the century's end treatment had arrived with the emergence of psychiatry, psychology and social work. During the first half of the twentieth century welfare/treatment was increasingly influential, and after the Second World War until the mid-1970s the progressive approach to young offending was to try and eradicate the problems of social and environmental deprivation that engendered crime, and seek to rehabilitate those who still

found themselves in trouble with the law. Such an approach was epitomised by the 1969 CYPA which embodied themes of decriminalisation and service provision, which included IT as a supplement to normal supervision aimed as an alternative to a custodial sentence. This involved an element of de-incarceration, implying that many young people who committed offences would no longer need to receive custodial sentences if new services were developed. It is worth emphasising the three main arguments against custody, namely its inhumane nature, its huge financial cost and its ineffectiveness in terms of reconviction rates.

The 1969 CYPA gave increased power and influence to social workers inasmuch as authority and discretion moved to them from the police and magistrates, particularly in terms of diversion from custody by means of IT at the discretion of the supervisor. However, the incoming Conservative government of 1970 lessened the impact of the Act by refusing to implement important decriminalisation sections intended to raise the age of criminal responsibility and to provide diversionary services through local social work intervention. In addition, attendance centres and detention centres were not phased out.

Nevertheless the 1969 CYPA provided the basic legal and administrative framework for IT. Juvenile delinquency, or young offending as it increasingly became to be called, was seen as related to deprivation, and as commented on in Chapter 1, the aim of IT was to bring young people in trouble and those 'at risk' of getting into trouble into contact with a healthier environment, with opportunities for activities, interests and relationships which had been absent in the past, while enabling the young person to remain at home. Little information, however, was given about the actual form of IT; this led to confusion and a range of interpretations. Some saw IT as merely directing young offenders to attend local youth clubs while others saw that specialist facilities were necessary. Some local authorities, largely as a result of committed, enthusiastic individuals began to develop specialised social work in which small specific groups of young people in trouble or at risk were supervised in the community and gradually phased in to available youth facilities. This latter approach was the one adopted by most IT practitioners in the 1970s (Rogowski 1985).

However, although IT arrived and grew during the 1970s, initially it did not result in a decline in the number of young people being incarcerated, with the reverse actually being true (Thorpe et al. 1980); as IT grew, so did the number of young people being incarcerated. This was because IT was being used (as was the case with some of my initial groups which are discussed later in this chapter) to deal with those who were felt to be 'at risk' of offending because of deprivation, while those young people at the 'heavy end' – the ones who had committed several offences – were increasingly incarcerated. This is an example of bifurcation whereby government policy becomes hard and soft at the same time; some offenders, the heavy end, are subjected to high levels of intervention via incarceration, while those considered at risk are subjected to less intervention via IT. Furthermore, however, if young people who were involved in IT subsequently offended they were that much closer to incarceration, as community supervision was seen as having already failed.

There are two other points to note in looking at the implementation of the 1969 CYPA (Thorpe et al. 1980). First, the new system, IT, was grafted on to what already existed, and those operating both systems – the police, social workers, probation officers and magistrates – made sure that both systems had enough work to do, particularly by identifying a new group of young people, those considered to be at risk, to be the target of the new system. Second, put differently, 'cumulatively . . . disparate bodies of professionals made the wrong decisions about the wrong children at the wrong time' (Thorpe et al. 1980, p. 3). In short, the 1969 CYPA had a net widening effect and it was this Lancaster University–based critique of social work with young offenders that led to the 'successful revolution' in youth justice that occurred in the 1980s despite this being the decade of Thatcherism and law and order (Jones 1989, 1993). Before considering this revolution a cautionary comment is required.

Although the 1969 CYPA was only partially implemented it became the scapegoat for the perceived ills of young offending and youth justice in the 1970s, hence a move towards authoritarianism and a preoccupation with law and order (Hall et al. (2013 [1978]). The 1982 Criminal Justice Act (CJA), for example, introduced supervision orders with specified activities clauses which had to be approved by the courts rather than at the discretion of the supervisor, and there was an increased focus on custody with the introduction of experimental 'short, sharp, shock' regimes. However, there was a pragmatic financial interest in keeping young offenders out of custody so custodial sentences could only be imposed if the court was satisfied that no alternative was possible. Even so the 1982 CJA was a move away from welfare/treatment back towards punishment; it represented

> a move away from treatment and lack of personal responsibility to notions of punishment and individual and parental responsibility . . . [it also] . . . represents a move away from executive (social workers) to judicial decision making, and from belief in the 'child in need' to the juvenile criminal.
>
> (Gelsthorpe and Morris 1994, p. 992)

In short, children and young people in trouble with the law were first and foremost *offenders* who had to be punished and controlled, rather than adolescents facing problems and difficulties requiring help and support; the onus of intervention had switched from such young people's needs to their social obligations.

For Hudson (1987) there were three sets of criticism against welfare/treatment, including IT in its initial stages of development, all of which gradually took hold. First, the political left, including social workers and civil liberties critique concentrated on the extent and nature of intervention in young people's lives. For example, the commission of a minor offence could lead to unwarranted 'interference' under the guise of offering help and support. Second, and linked, liberal, due process lawyers were concerned about disparity of sentence when offenders were looked at rather than their offence. Third, the New Right simply argued that welfare/treatment did not work by preventing offending or rehabilitating afterwards, and furthermore it did not deter. A loose and temporary convergence of interests

had therefore grown, leading to the return of punishment with its emphasis on doing justice and the proportionality of punishment to fit the crime, rather than the more grandiose claims of welfare/treatment.

The new orthodoxy

More specifically, however, as far as social work with young offenders was concerned, Thorpe and his colleagues' work came to dominate, this becoming the 'new orthodoxy' (Blagg and Smith 1989). They were influenced by labelling theories (Becker 1963; Schur 1973) and the 'nothing works' thesis (Lipton et al. 1975; Martinson 1974). Labelling refers to the process by which the actions of official agencies, notably the police and courts, towards young people actually confirms the latter in a delinquent identity to which they act accordingly and thereby commit further offences. As for 'nothing works', it is a perspective that took the view that whatever you do to delinquents it has no effect in terms of reducing re-offending. From these two views, Thorpe and his colleagues went on to develop an administrative criminology aimed at systems and youth crime management (Pitts 1988). Briefly, this takes the view that as acts which can be labelled criminal are normal during adolescence and not precursors to adult crime – most young people literally grow out of it – intervention designed to prevent such acts is simply not possible. However, it may be possible to do something about the consequences of such acts and that something is to lengthen the route to custody and to create various diversions along the way by utilising 'ordinary' supervision orders plus those with IT and specified activity components. Systems management and monitoring strategies were also devised to keep young people out of the youth justice system whenever possible. These could also highlight the way in which young black people can become victims of racism in the system as well as revealing the inconsistencies with which young women are treated when compared with young men (Blagg and Smith 1989; Hudson 1987). Along with all this, intensive IT led to alternative to incarceration schemes being developed for heavy end/repeat offenders utilising a 'correctional curriculum' (see Denman 1982; Thorpe et al. 1980). Very simply, the curriculum involved work on a young person's particular offence, including when they committed it, where and with whom. This was then role-played, videoed and used for discussion. Decision-making points are examined with a view to making non-criminal responses if similar circumstances arise in future.

Restorative justice was also an important part of the new orthodoxy. Restorative justice stresses the virtues of a direct encounter between victim and offender as opposed to the abstract and alienating procedures of formal judicial systems (Masters and Smith 1998; Smith 1995). In the UK it originated in the previously mentioned diversionary and alternative to incarceration schemes and includes mediation and reparation. The emphasis is on problem-solving, promoting empathy, expressing care, and reintegrating the offender rather than exclusion. It has much in common with the feminist-based ethics of care (see Chapter 9), the concern being to ensure young offenders come to understand the harm done by their

behaviour and its consequences for themselves and others, this in turn being an important element in their social and moral development. It is about a holistic and reintegrative practice rather than one that excludes.

The rationale for the new orthodoxy includes the fact that much behaviour which is formally penalised is no more than a manifestation of a relatively innocuous working class youth culture. Further, there was no evidence that early social work intervention had any positive effect in terms of preventing or reducing youth crime but rather had the effect of 'up-tariffing' young people when they do offend and hastens their route to incarceration. Interestingly there was little conviction that the correctional curriculum per se influenced offending behaviour, but merely that it was credible to the police and courts and could be used to manage young offenders in the community and avoid incarceration, thereby buying time as the maturation process took its course (Rogowski 1990a). Put another way, the new orthodoxy amounted to 'delinquency management' (Pitts 1988), which involves changing the behaviour of decision makers in the juvenile justice system so as to divert young offenders out of the system wherever possible and to limit the incarceration of those within the system by the development of intensive IT which focusses on offending behaviour.

What actually happened to young offenders and youth crime during the 1980s, the decade of law and order? Despite the punitive measures of the 1982 CJA, the Conservative governments of the 1980s quietly sanctioned and even adopted most of the social work–led initiatives (Haines and Drakeford 1998). As indicated at the outset of this chapter, the result was a significant, sustained decline in recorded crime by young people and a decline in the number receiving custodial sentences. There was also no evidence of net-widening or up-tariffing as intensive IT was being used effectively to target the heavy end offenders (Bottoms 1995). As Farrington and Langan (1992) note, several factors have to be considered in explaining this 'successful revolution' (Jones 1989, 1993). First, there were demographic changes in that from 1981–88 there was an 18% drop in the population of 14–16 year old males. Second, the 1982 CJA introduced community service to 16 year olds and contrary to some expectations this *was* used as an alternative to incarceration. As mentioned, the 1982 CJA had also introduced restrictions on the use of custody as well as another non-custodial sentence, namely the supervision order with specified activities. Third, there was the growth of intensive IT and the change in practice due to the influence of Thorpe and his colleagues. And fourth, diversion from court by cautioning, again linked to the new orthodoxy, led to a decline in the number of young offenders being formally processed.

Mention of heavy end offenders reminds me of my own practice in this area during the late 1970s and early 1980s (see for example, Rogowski 1982). I organised and facilitated IT groups and initially, as David Thorpe's research had indicated, they tended to include many young people who were felt to be at risk of offending rather than those who had committed several offences. As a result, a conscious effort was made to only involve heavy end young people, those who had committed several offences and were therefore that much nearer to being incarcerated. As

well as seeing them individually, group work occurred and involved recreational activities and group discussions, as well as short residential periods away from home, This enabled relationships to develop between the young people and adults (as well as myself and other social workers, such as teachers, careers officers and local volunteers were involved). Importantly discussions took place about their offending behaviour and how this could be addressed, in some ways this being similar to the correctional curriculum. From a more critical/radical perspective (also see Chapter 8) there were also consciousness-raising discussions about possible causes of youth crime and how these could be tackled, including society being organised on more just and equal lines. In particular, I recall facilitating discussion about the youth riots in Brixton and other urban areas during 1981, noting that, like the Scarman Report (1981), political, economic and social factors were at the root of the disorder. On one occasion this discussion occurred when the local police officer attended as a guest speaker; the session proved to be an eye-opener for all concerned.

Into the later 1980s and 1990s, although I was less involved with direct group work with young offenders, I always had a significant number of such young people on my caseload. I well recall that my role as a social worker was significant in terms of managing their offending career so as to ensure their best interests were always at the fore. This involved utilising new orthodoxy strategies wherever possible. For example, I advocated for repeat cautions including the use of 'cautioning plus', whereby the offender might, for instance, engage in restorative justice by writing a letter of apology to the victim or have to do some reparation in order to gain a further caution and thereby avoid a court appearance. If a court appearance was unavoidable, instead of up-tariffing so as to show how serious their offending behaviour had been, down-tariffing was the goal. I recall the case of teenage girl who had assaulted and seriously injured her mother. The police, the school, her solicitor and her mother thought a custodial sentence was unavoidable. Without going into detail about the background to her offence, she had to undertake a psychiatric assessment, and my close liaison with the psychiatrist (what would be called today 'working together') ensured that a non-custodial sentence eventually ensued. Incidentally, I saw her some years later by which time she was a young mother herself, and she was grateful for what I had done, adding that she was reconciled with her mother who was also appreciative that her daughter had not received a custodial sentence.

Importantly, this social work–led success in relation to young offending was acknowledged by none other than the Home Office (1988), which signalled its intention to transfer lessons to policies in relation to offenders more generally. Admittedly there was a concern with the financial cost of incarceration, but this Green Paper recognised that as most young offenders grow out of crime as they mature, they simply need help and encouragement to become law-abiding, also arguing that even a short spell in custody was likely to have deleterious effects by confirming them as criminals particularly because they learn offending skills from other offenders. Although it seemed that the powers that be were listening to what social workers were doing and saying (Smith 1995), such optimism was

short-lived as from 1991 onwards there was a noticeable hardening in official attitude towards young offenders and youth crime in general.

The punitive turn

The rise in punitiveness can be traced back to the urban disturbances of 1991 in areas of Oxford, Cardiff and Tyneside which featured young men in violent confrontation with the police (Bottoms 1995). This allowed long-standing concerns about young offenders to be distorted, exaggerated and presented in the media. Individuals were seen as terrorising communities, with the police and courts being powerless to intervene; eventually 'persistent young offenders' became the moral panic of the day (Hagell and Newburn 1994).

The Bulger case, the murder of a 2 year old boy by two 10 year olds in February 1993, was also important. The media was concerned with how something must be wrong with society in general, and with youth crime and youth justice in particular. Simultaneously, the Conservative government was low in the opinion polls and the police and media were preoccupied with such as car crime in the form of 'ram raiders' and 'joy/grief riders', and with young people who breached bail, the so-called bail bandits. The Conservatives hoped a tough law and order approach would help their electoral chances, and they introduced increasingly punitive sanctions through the 1991 and 1993 Criminal Justice Acts and the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. Significantly, resulting court orders were introduced *not* to help young people who had social problems and had offended, but instead to offer punishment and control in the community (Stewart et al. 1994). Social workers were increasingly put into a position of having to monitor and control of young offenders, and the old compensatory aspects of earlier IT schemes, including advising, assisting and befriending, all but disappeared.

The Labour Party largely followed the Conservatives and despite emphasising being tough on crime as well as its causes, it was the 'tough' aspect that dominated. Essentially the 1990s saw both parties denying the social basis of youth crime, instead emphasising punitive approaches, this being at odds with the UN and European Conventions on the Rights of the Child (Littlechild 1997). Further, New Labour's landslide general election victory in 1997 saw punitiveness continuing. Cautioning was criticised because young people were offending with impunity, and an interventionist approach was advocated to stop tomorrow's career criminals. Such ideas were framed into legislation becoming the 1998 CDA. Key provisions included reprimands and final warnings replacing cautions, and children under 10 could be made the subject of local curfews. Parents of convicted young people could also be made the subject of parenting orders and perhaps have to attend parenting classes. There was a renewed focus on custody, together with an array of other orders. The emphasis was on swift administration of justice, punishment, confronting young offenders with their behaviour and reinforcing the responsibilities of parents. The overall effect of youth justice policy and practice amounted to correctional early intervention, deterrence and punishment (Goldson

1999, 2000; Pitts 2000, 2001). Furthermore, young offenders, and young people in general, continue to be vilified; one has only to recall Blair's enthusiasm for focussing on anti-social behaviour and a 'respect' agenda, followed by the Coalition government's continuation of this by the aforementioned rebranding of anti-social behaviour orders. Such orders continue to be granted for 'sub-criminal activities' which have lower standards of proof than criminal cases and can, when breached, lead to custodial sentences (Squires 2006, 2008), thereby unnecessarily criminalising many young people.

The current punitive response to young offending has coincided with the move from an inclusive to exclusive society (Young 1999). During the social democratic era the concern was to deal with deviant behaviour or 'otherness', in our case young offending, by making the individuals concerned more like us by means of reform, rehabilitation or 'cure'. This has changed with issues of moral blame and recrimination now dominating the political and public discourse, leading to policies which increasingly exclude young people by punitive and thereby exclusionary sanctions. The demonisation of young offenders and young people in general is evidenced by politicians' and the media's frequent references to such as 'hoodies', 'yobs' and 'yob culture'. There is less concern with their needs or rights, instead the focus is on their deeds and risks: young people who offend are increasingly not cast as vulnerable subjects of risks to their welfare but as dangerous or anti-social bearers of risks to the welfare of the community (Goldson and Muncie 2006).

New Labour, as well as confirming the move to punitiveness and penal populism, showed a concern about the difficulties faced by many young people such as educational underachievement and disaffection, family disadvantage and poverty. However, such difficulties were largely blamed on the young people themselves, with them being portrayed as deficient and/or delinquent, as were their dysfunctional families and communities (Colley and Hodkinson 2001). The deep-rooted structural factors such as class, race and gender that profoundly affect young people's life chances were ignored. The expectation was that young offenders, not their social and economic circumstances, must change. And with subsequent Coalition and now Conservative governments preoccupied with implementing savage public expenditure cuts under the banner of austerity, the situation continues.

In pursuing its interventionist, supposed approach to nipping crime in the bud, and its punitive youth justice policy, New Labour discredited the old youth justice system as excusing young offenders' behaviour because of their social circumstances. It aimed to establish a discontinuity with the past by refusing to tolerate such behaviour and those, social workers in particular, who made excuses for it (Home Office 1997). Consequently, 'the heavy baggage of those who operated the "old" system did not need to be unpacked and examined, it was simply left behind' (Haines 2009, p. 296).

The Youth Justice Board was established in 1998 and continues so as to ensure that YOTs/YOS operate as the government wants. This involves an actuarialist and managerialist approach which includes setting objectives, the development of administrative/professional tools and performance measurement, all imposed on

essentially local criminal justice agencies in an ongoing, ever-changing manner. To other factors to consider are adulteration, the ways in which over recent years children have been increasingly treated in a manner similar to the ways adults are (Muncie 2008), and an emphasis on evidence-based policy and practice. Such changes can be contrasted with the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (also see Chapter 6) which aimed to support and promote the quality of children's lives (DfES 2004a, 2004b). This included goals of ensuring that all children have the opportunity to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve social and economic well-being, all of which were incorporated into the 2004 Children Act. Laudable aims they are, but when it comes to young offenders questions are raised about protecting or safeguarding children from, and within, an ever tougher, more punitive youth justice system (Jamieson 2009). At any rate, the ECM reforms, along with wider youth justice changes, at best only tenuously made a positive impact on young peoples' lives, this being whether they had committed an offence or not.

Actuarialism and managerialism

The presence and representation of youth crime are typically characterised by public fears about threat and danger, and there has been a long-standing concern with the methods used to deal with the problem (Smith 2006). Recent developments in policy and practice suggest that there has been a significant shift in the ways these concerns are conceptualised, leading to the actuarialist and managerial approach. It is an approach to crime control and its management which disregards the possible causes of and the meaning or motives behind offending, instead replacing this with an emphasis on minimising *risk* and eliminating threats to social order. It is derived from broader social, political and ideological movements associated with 'modernisation' and the 'risk society' (Beck 1992). The change is from a positive concern with trying to improve things in relation to social problems to a peculiarly negative concern with merely stopping things from getting worse.

Alongside the notion of risk there are two other factors to note. First, the attempt to perfect *scientific* means of quantifying the potential for the commission of offences; and second, the application of *managerial* techniques to control the threat to the community (Hudson 2003). Objectives of reform and rehabilitation become subsumed under mechanical functions such as the measurement and classification of risk and the efficient deployment of resources to minimise the threat of harm. A result is information sharing, and the 'flagging up' of early concerns about children's well-being and/or risk factors have become central to government strategy and policy formation (DfES 2004a, 2004b). Young offending is thereby reframed, this being done by intervention based on a calculative approach to assessing future risks and taking action to minimise this (Smith 2008). What were previously prioritised as welfare needs are only seen as being of interest in terms of the possibility of future offending.

This approach to youth crime and anti-social behaviour was apparent in the approach of New Labour and subsequent governments to preventing offending. It

is based on assumptions about the possibility of quantifying and targeting 'risk' factors. For instance, dispersal orders, whereby the police have the power to disperse two or more people from supposed anti-social behaviour areas, are based on risk estimates and predictions of future behaviour, and do not require substantive evidence of wrongdoing.

Another example of this actuarial and managerial approach was the introduction of ASSET and ONSET tools. The ASSET tool highlights the use of formalised and routinised instruments of assessment for decision making for all young people identified as offenders, at whatever stage they are in the youth justice system. The ONSET tool was subsequently developed for the pre-offending stage. Such tools aim to identify those at risk of offending and the subsequent need for risk control should they do so (Hudson 2003).

There are at least two problems with the approaches outlined. First, actuarialism might achieve symbolic ends in that it creates a sense of reliability and certainty in assessing and intervening with troublesome young people. However, the sense of certainty is illusory in that the procedural and epistemological limitations have to be acknowledged, simply because the indicators of risk are based on subjective and contested judgements (Shaw and Hannah-Moffat 2000). Second, the tools emphasise the negative aspects of children's and young peoples' lives at the expense of 'protective [or more positive] factors' (Smith 2007). Perhaps the best that can be said is that many of the new prevention programmes resemble nothing more than well-established best practice in youth work. But at worst, individualised risk-orientated interventions have criminogenic tendencies in that young people in breach of them become liable to subsequent punitive, even custodial, sanctions.

Adulteration

The most obvious example of adulteration was the abolition of *doli incapax*, the presumption in England and Wales that a child between 10 and 13 years old cannot be legally responsible for their actions. Others include the possibility of imprisoning children from the age of 12 years, and the application of the 'grave crime' provisions to children (Muncie 2008). These latter provisions apply to certain serious offences and enable the Crown Court to impose longer terms of detention up to a maximum that would be available for an adult. Adulteration is linked to responsibilisation and remoralisation because it is premised on young offenders, like adult offenders, being fully responsible for their actions.

Responsibilisation developed alongside a critique of state dependency which served to legitimate withdrawal of the state from universal measures of welfare support including the contraction of conventional child welfare services. Instead it encourages and enforces individuals to take full responsibility for their actions. In the case of youth crime, offending is seen as a consequence of the individual deficits of children and their parents rather than being related to the social problems and inequalities which do actually underlie most young offending (Jamieson 2009).

As for remoralisation, the argument is that in order to prevent the breakup of the moral fabric and cohesion of society, values incorporating the work ethic, 'normal' orderly/hardworking families and respect have to be emphasised (Muncie 2006). This coincides with the expansion of surveillance, correctional and ultimately punitive interventions. What is neglected, however, is the fact that the state and the 'law-abiding' community also have responsibilities including the responsibility to ensure social justice for all members of society.

Adulteration, responsibilisation and remoralisation relate to the current dominant view that child offending is a product of free will and volition, so all such offenders should be made fully accountable. This is despite the obvious fact that this view of the moral culpability of children is problematic because it divorces their behaviour from their material and emotional circumstances which are often severely deprived (Broadhurst et al. 2009). As suggested earlier, such notions are difficult to reconcile with the potentially more holistic and inclusionary aspects of ECM. Indeed, when governments pursue an authoritarian youth justice policy and practice of incarcerating children, and yet have a supposed commitment to safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children, such claims sound hollow. This is particularly so given that governments also 'comprehensively recognise' the personal and financial costs of incarcerating children (Goldson 2006, p. 149).

Evidence-based policy and practice?

New Labour's agenda of modernisation for public services and the welfare state in particular, included an emphasis on policy and practice being based on evidence of 'what works'. This is particularly apparent in their approach to youth justice and young offenders, notwithstanding the difficulties associated with such a proposition (Smith 2004, 2006).

The problem is that the policy and practice formation processes are not as rational as some might have us believe: resource constraints, political ideology and considerations of electoral popularity all enter the decision-making process. As stated previously, a prime example relates to the fact that evidence pertaining to the knowledge, skills and experience of social workers in youth justice prior to the 1998 reforms was totally ignored. The successes relating to the diversion of young people from the criminal justice system and from custody were abandoned, although it is difficult to see that it was based on any kind of evidence. Early intervention was the new goal, meaning that net-widening was actually promoted rather than being something to be avoided (Cohen 1985). New Labour's 'no more excuses' agenda and 1998 reforms were more about the ideological need to be seen to be tough on crime, the preoccupation being on surveillance and control, leading to excessive intervention in the lives of young people and their families. To the extent that New Labour, and indeed subsequent governments, used evidence to shape policy, the best that can be said is that they were very selective (Goldson 2000).

Even if policy makers want to use evidence from research, in a field like youth justice they need to be reminded that they should be wary of expecting universal truths. Instead,

> what they ought to expect are empirically informed ideas about what looks promising, what, if properly implemented (and what 'properly' means should be specified as far as possible) will work, for what people and what purposes, and in what contexts.
>
> (Smith 2006, p. 88)

Putting young people first and reconnecting with the past

Effective work with young offenders begins with what we know about young people, the social and economic conditions that shape their behaviour and the effectiveness of interventions (Haines 2009). The actuarialist and managerialist present, therefore, has to be reconnected to the professionally based past. It goes hand in hand with a principled youth justice which draws on developments in other jurisdictions in the UK, as well as those international treaties and conventions that provide the children's human rights framework. It is a progressive policy and practice based on *genuine* research evidence and practice experience (Goldson and Muncie 2006), rather than successive governments' stress on so-called evidence-based policy and practice.

While there has been 'a pernicious encroachment of increasing punitive responses to young people who offend across all UK jurisdictions' (Jamieson 2009, p. 202), this has not always been the case. For instance, in Northern Ireland the Youth Justice Service's emphasis on preventing offending has prioritised a concern for the child's welfare.

More significantly, the Welsh Assembly has purposively decided to locate youth justice services under the portfolio of Health and Social Services rather than of Crime and Community Safety in order to promote a child centred ethos. What is more, a Children First, Offenders Second (CFOS) model is in used, one which promotes child-friendly, diversionary, inclusive, engaging, promotional practice and legitimate partnership between children and adults which can serve as a blueprint for other local authorities and countries (Haines and Case 2015). Simply put, when children enter the Youth Justice System, they are treated as children first, not offenders first, with their offending behaviour seen as a normal part of growing up. CFOS is a reaction to controlling, punitive and harmful interventions and involves a re-emphasis on diversion out of the formal youth justice system and into positive, promotional interventions. When intervention has to take place, it should be child-friendly and child-appropriate, and should embed a systems management approach to intervention planning that is genuinely evidence-based and achieved through partnership between children, practitioners, policy makers and researchers. This means that assessment and intervention has to involve more consultation with children in the youth justice system, more practitioner

discretion, a more holistic understanding of children's lives, and more appropriate, effective interventions as a result.

Finally, in Scotland there is arguably the most child-centred approach to young offending. Following the Kilbrandon Report (1964), the 1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act introduced the Children's Hearing System to provide a unified response to children who offend and those who needed care and protection. It is premised on the best interests of the child, seeking to offer holistic support and supervision which does not stigmatise children and young people (McAra 2006). Indeed, Scotland's long-standing commitment to welfarism is in stark contrast to developments in England and many other western jurisdictions.

International texts concerning the special treatment that should be given to children, including young offenders, have developed over the last 100 years. For instance, the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child stated that particular attention should be extended to children. Then again, the 1985 United Nations Minimum Rules for the Administration for Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) state that the fundamental aim of the juvenile justice system should be the promotion of the well-being of the juvenile. The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child reinforced this, with Article 2 providing for non-discrimination and Article 3 providing that the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in all actions, courts and law. Such international instruments provide clear guidance in two crucial areas.

First, any reaction to young offending should always be in proportion to the circumstances of both the offender and the offence. This includes restrictions on personal liberty being limited to the possible minimum, and the well-being of the young person should be the guiding factor in their particular case. Second, in relation to custody, the placement of young offenders in custody should be the disposition of last resort and for the minimum necessary period.

The 1998 reforms are hardly in keeping with such international exhortations. Although New Labour was in favour of notions of evidence-based policy on the one hand, this was in tension with a 'consolidating politics of "toughness" on the other', thereby fracturing and distorting 'the broader corpus of policy in relation to children and young people' (Goldson and Muncie 2006, p. 207). This is clearly evidenced by the inconsistency in the 'no more excuses' and ECMs agendas whereby, put simply, young offenders did not seem to matter other than to be censured and punished for their misdeeds. Such a situation certainly does *not* amount to a principled youth justice, one that involves six key points (Goldson and Muncie 2006).

First, policy should deal with the social and economic conditions that lead to youth crime, not least poverty and inequality; it is surely undeniable that the latter are key to understanding the problems both experienced and perpetuated by many children and young people (Dorling 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Second, and linked, the provision of holistic services to meet the needs and promote the well-being of all children and young people must be a priority, including curtailing the youth justice system and redirecting resources to 'children first' or 'in need' services. Third, children and young people should be diverted

away from the youth justice system – the opposite of what is currently occurring. Diversion is consistent with the human rights framework and the more progressive international youth justice systems, but it also an effective strategy in terms of crime prevention. Fourth, in the minority of cases where justice is needed, it should be child-appropriate rather than largely replicating the adult system. Fifth, interventions that are ineffective or violate international human rights obligations, especially incarceration, should be abolished. And sixth, youth crime and youth justice must be depoliticised with a more tolerant response to the phenomenon being required. Rather than demonising children and young people, politicians would be better off engaging in more sophisticated, measured and dignified responses.

In a similar vein is 'normalisation', whereby when working with young offenders the start is thinking about youth, and linking interventions with young people in trouble with the range of provisions or activities that exists for all young people (Haines 2009). Such a normalised and inclusive practice is characterised by three elements: *justice*, not only in a formal, legal sense but in accordance with the principles of natural justice; *participation* of young people in the full range of social and educational provision for youth; and *engagement*, giving expression to the right of young people to make their own choices and decisions, and to be fully involved in all matters concerning them. It involves a critical practice based on the accumulated professional knowledge of the effectiveness of approaches and methods of working with young offenders, one which aims to protect and promote the best interests of the child. All this seems a far cry from the current situation but, as with all critical practice, one must keep long-term goals in mind while celebrating often small and piecemeal successes in the present.

Conclusion

If society cannot guarantee the equal worth of all citizens and the meeting of everyone's basic needs, it cannot expect all citizens to have an equal stake in abiding by the law (Cook 2006). It also cannot dispense justice fairly and augment confidence in the law because criminal and social justice is inseparable. However, we live in a society in which young people do not have a sense of inclusion, of well-being and of social justice. It is a society which has become less tolerant and less just towards its youth. All advocates of the 'new orthodoxy' might not have adopted an explicit radical approach, but they did have a critical perspective, one that would have involved a rejection of the punitiveness of the present. Instead, their emphasis was on working more constructively with young offenders, while perhaps having a vision of a more socially just and equal future. This is certainly what critical practice with young offenders today has to include, and in turn draws on the social work successes of the past and, as indicated in relation to Wales for example, re-engaging with them. All of this has to be placed in the context of international conventions concerning the treatment of young people and the principles set out in these documents. Although this might require resilient individuals determined to resist the neoliberal punitive tide, and some may even see this as

a tall order, resultant practice on such lines is certain to be appreciated by young people and their families.

In any case, most practitioners would tend to agree that it is not enough to deal with individual offenders in an increasingly get-tough way. As my research with young offenders indicated, what leads young people into crime has to be addressed by ensuring, for instance, there are proper and meaningful recreational, educational and employment opportunities for all young people, together with genuine help and support for them and their families (Rogowski 2000/01, 2006). Resultant policies have to be properly financed by such as progressive, redistributive taxation, albeit this is something which seems anathema to neoliberal governments of the present. Ultimately, a more socially just and equal society is required, something which entails some utopian thinking and acting (see Levitas 2011, 2013), and is something to which I return in Chapter 9.

4 Community social work

As Bob Holman (2013) notes, the 1963 Children & Young Persons Act is now rarely mentioned, but over fifty years ago it entrusted to councils in England and Wales the duty of diminishing the need to receive children into care or to bring children before a juvenile court. Before long, social workers were offering advice, counselling and support to parents and children on the verge of separation. Some received limited material help, such as the replacement of a broken cooker, and more immediate support in resisting evictions. The amalgamation of children's departments into social services departments in the 1970s meant contact with a wider range of families and there followed the golden age of prevention. Many councils introduced locally based social work teams in deprived areas where they were accessible to residents, this being particularly so after the Barclay Report (1982) introduced the notion of community social work.

The report was published when the still relatively new Thatcher government was committed to reducing public expenditure particularly as far as the welfare state was concerned, with social services being a prime target. It must also be remembered that the New Right challenged much of what social workers did including their role in creating welfare dependency. However, for many the report amounted to a defence of social work or more appropriately, 'community social work' (Jordan and Parton 1983). At its heart lay decentralising and de-bureaucratising services so that social workers could build and maintain closer links with other agencies and the local community. The New Right argued the impracticality and undesirability of state welfare meeting all needs, instead wanting welfare pluralism or the 'mixed economy of welfare' – statutory, voluntary, informal and private – which would lead to less costly services. Meanwhile, the political left, particularly those who saw public welfare as a method of social control, saw an opportunity to work alongside local people on the issues of concern in more critical/radical ways. In a sense there was a loose convergence of ideas, with both the political right and left questioning the traditional social services department's emphasis on bureaucratic and professional conceptions of service delivery and the centralised hierarchic organisations that had been created to apply them.

As Beresford and Croft (1986) wrote, notions of community involvement, accessibility and participation were to the fore, and they go on to outline five principles of 'patch' which they equate with community social work. First,

localisation is key, this referring to locally based teams and a focus on a limited geographical area, abandoning of assumptions concerning the automatic superiority of the large-scale bureaucracy as the main mode of organisation and a readiness to explore the potential of more decentralised, flexible structures. Second, participatory forms of management and the exercise of a substantial degree of autonomy by community social work teams are advocated. Third, there is a stress on wider roles for all workers and their subsequent integration into community social work teams. This includes a broader, more open definition of professionalism, one which has room to recognise the potential of lay workers within services. Fourth, there is the emphasis on a community orientation whereby as well as closer links and co-ordination between social services departments, other statutory agencies and voluntary agencies in an area, a major theme is using and supporting informal helping networks. And fifth, there is a need for, and right of, the local communities to share in decision making about service priorities.

Although the actual influence of community social work on practice during the 1980s was variable, there were areas where it had an impact and enabled innovative, progressive and even critical/radical practice to take place. Examples include East Sussex (Beresford and Croft 1986); Normanton, West Yorkshire (Cooper 1983); and Islington, London (Joslin 1980). Then there is the team I was involved with in Oldham (Rogowski 1991; Rogowski and Harrison 1992). It is community social work in two of the aforementioned areas that this chapter concentrates on.[1] First, I look at community social work in Normanton, this being an approach which ultimately aims 'to produce a systematic response to individual need which places methods, organization and management in the community arena with the area team occupying the middle ground' (Cooper 1983, p. 162). The focus is on an analysis of a community social work approach to all client/service user groups. Second, there is a description and more substantial discussion of my experiences of community social work with children and families in Oldham (again see Rogowski 1991; Rogowski and Harrison 1992). Both highlight what the possibilities of community social work were, with my experiences in particular refuting the point that community social work and child protection/safeguarding are incompatible. On the contrary, community social work enables practitioners to deal with child abuse at an earlier, preventative stage.

The Normanton experience

Mike Cooper (1983) draws on personal experience to outline community social work in Normanton, an area covered by the then Wakefield Social Services Department. He had long been concerned about 'casework' being seen as the holy grail of social work because of its tendency to ignore environmental, sociological and political influences on behaviour. For instance, focussing on insight into an individual's emotions did little to deal with socially induced difficulties concerning homelessness, unemployment, poverty, alienation and other oppressive external pressures. His previous experience of working with Batley, West Yorkshire Community Development Project (CDP) led to his conviction that social work

could be done from a sociological rather than a psychological standpoint. Simply put, working class communities have less opportunity than middle class ones, and the apparatus of private and corporate industry was not there to develop working class life chances. Broadly, the working class were exploited, at best offered a living wage in good times and just about preventing poverty in bad, while the welfare system was largely designed to alleviate the very worst that could happen to people and at the same time exercised control over deviants. It is no surprise that the development of a structural definition of poverty and dis-welfare, something that became the hallmark of subsequent CDP reports, was no exception in Batley, with Cooper's experience there going through three phases.

First, the crude left analysis fitted in well with his refusal to accept a pathological view of collective (community) or individual failure, with there being two ways to deal with this, namely to educate or politicise the working class as to how the capitalist system operates, and to confront those in authority about the issues. The second phase was the realisation that the situation was far more complicated with, for example, it being far more difficult to mobilise the grass roots in any numbers. In any case, local government was in the throes of reorganisation and its preoccupations were often more corporate and allied to ministerial needs and dictates rather than local people. And the third phase involved attempts to do social work in a statutory agency that could take into account such aforementioned factors while not losing the essentially socialist analysis.

The three phases led to a realisation that what was needed was an organisation that was open to the public and encouraged participation; one that saw individual cases collectively as expressions of failure of the economic and social system and was able to identify causes; and one which would confront authority with clear evidence of this failure. Given that social services departments were there to service the needy, the exposure of need is a legitimate undertaking. It was these experiences and realisations that were taken to Normanton following local government reorganisation in 1974, and this is where, as an area officer with the autonomy to organise his team as he thought fit, Cooper implemented his community social work strategies. These strategies involved three developmental stages, namely the neighbourhood work scheme, the Normanton patch system and the integrated community social work system.

The neighbourhood work scheme

This scheme (Cooper et al. 1975) was based on four fundamentals of the tactical position adopted. First, social services departments were remote and mysterious, particularly after local government reorganisation. Second, most people's problems were minor and could be dealt with by localised provision which included lay people. Third, co-ordination with other agencies at the local level could highlight issues in common and indicate what could be improved administratively and what was for political consideration. And fourth, individualised problems should be collectivised and used to inform both public opinion and any relevant form of authority.

The neighbourhood scheme involved a cautious pragmatic approach rather than a full blown assault on the staff, department or community. Social work assistants and care workers were out-posted into the community, although interestingly many qualified social workers did not think this was part of their role because of their large caseloads. What developed was a tripartite system of social workers, domiciliary workers and out-posted neighbourhood workers. The latter were unqualified (what might be called professional lay people) and had the responsibility for making contact with people who were loosely doing welfare work. They also dealt with what problems they could, referring back any others to the area team on a daily basis. All this served to de-mystify the department, worked at co-ordinating other agency staff and dealt with minor problems using the skills of ordinary people. Importantly the neighbourhood workers quickly became acquainted with caring networks and other professionals in the caring field in their area, and there were no problems of bombardment as regular contact with people meant the amount of crisis work dropped to virtually nil. The problems that did arise related to, for instance, the workers' frustration with social workers who would not take on cases of elderly people even when the case was not straightforward. Or again, other agency workers might expect more from the neighbourhood workers than their salaries or status demanded. As for the area team more generally the neighbourhood scheme brought a community dimension into their consciousness despite being unable to integrate the social workers, domiciliary and out-posted workers. Such issues required a solution, hence the development of the Normanton patch system.

The Normanton patch system

What became clear from the neighbourhood scheme was that each geographical area or patch covered by an out-posted worker had its own local issues – a housing ghetto, play space for children, isolation of the elderly and so on – and each of these required public participation and/or officer or councillor involvement for solution. And closer to home in terms of the area team was the arbitrary artificiality of job breakdown by team job titles. To address such issues the patch system involved a new, more integrated outward-looking model by placing as many workers as possible as near to the public as possible. This involved the area being 'patched' (Hadley and McGrath 1981) by reference to such as population size, local views of what represented a community, referral rates and caseload distribution. The patches were finally decided by number of staff available, these being allocated to the most coherent geographical areas consistent with staff numbers. In the end there were three patches, each headed by a social worker and with two ancillaries.

The notion of patch is important, relating to not only to geography but also to network knowledge, accessibility and familiarity, thereby becoming a local community of interests, relationships and experience, with this network of human interchange potentially involving anyone living and working in the area. The proximity of social services to the local population is sometimes seen as

officialdom becoming more repressive and as leading to conflict as authority is imposed. However, consistency and familiarity of workers mean that services cease to be seen as being provided by a repressive officialdom ('those who are out to get you'); rather such officialdom begins to be regarded as 'those people who can help', this being so even in cases of child abuse.

An important issue was the role of the area team. How far is it a mini-department containing all functions? How much should it become involved in preventative work? What should it do about the effects of shortfalls in resources? The answers to such questions involved two stages. The first stage assumed the area team to be all-embracing, covering statutory functions, community development work and preventative work, and had considerable success. For example, 80% of all referrals were for minor problems and were dealt with speedily by a combination of network and volunteer involvement and inter-agency co-operation. And community development took place in terms of facilitating community groups to provide services and strengthening client/user networks. As for the remaining 20% of referrals – for instance, more complex family and child care work, and mental health issues – in general they were dealt with by social workers although helped by ancillary workers, with cases shared by all patch team members.

The second stage arose as the various staff members had worked out satisfactory responses to the patch approach, this taking some time and involving everyone changing and adapting. It involved a variation from the status quo of a traditional social services department to a 'total team approach with a community orientation' (Cooper 1983, p. 158). The team became a gatekeeper to the community, providing keys to various parts of the welfare system, community networks, ways of helping and ways of getting helped. This includes other professionals, 'amateur' social workers as well as service users. The team was also a resource provider both directly and indirectly, the latter by encouraging community provision. All this helped lead to some positive outcomes, not least the fact that over six years the number of statutory or heavy end cases reduced by half. At the same time the total number of referrals doubled, this indicating closer community contact halved the number of statutory cases while doubling the number of referrals for help.

The integrated social work system

Despite the overall positive experience of Normanton, it was recognised that aspects of specialist casework at one extreme and preventative/developmental work at the other could not be fully met within the existing structure and resources of an area team. What was needed was further stage of development, one that synthesises or integrates specialisms, community social work and community development, this amounting to 'an integrated community social work system' (Cooper 1983, p. 160). Steps towards this included the establishment of a Social Care Assembly for Normanton with a view to bringing more local people into the caring arena and co-ordinating all those working in the field, both professional and lay. And it was drawing on this Normanton experience that led to attempts to develop community social work with children and families in Oldham.

Community social work with children and families in Oldham

During 1986 a review of social work services for children and families in Oldham took place, this involving a working group of which I was a member, and it was led by respected academic Bill Jordan. Like the Normanton experience, the group drew on an earlier 1970s Community Development Project (CDP), one based in the Abbeyhills area of Oldham. Abbeyhills was a large, multiply-deprived estate and the project eventually became a joint venture involving the Social Services and Housing Departments, together with a national voluntary organisation. The aim was to deal with the problems confronting children and families on the basis of more community-orientated work (Rogowski 1991; Rogowski and Harrison 1992).

Apart from drawing on the work of the earlier CDP, it might be useful to mention other influential ideas and values that influenced the working group and me, this having an impact on what was to follow. First, although for a long time social work was synonymous with casework, during the second half of the twentieth century in particular it had become increasingly accepted that people's difficulties should not be seen in isolation but rather should be seen in the context of the local community and ultimately society as a whole. The Seebohm Report (1968) advocated the need for community-based family services and by implication at least foresaw the need to view individual and family problems in relation to community. The Gulbenkian Study Group (1973) went further, arguing that it was important for many people in the caring/helping professions, including caseworkers, to have a specific community orientation in their work. Such a view had been influential in my work in a previous local authority and led to, for example, work in establishing a local claimants' union to ensure such as unemployed and disabled people received welfare benefits advice and representation. Or again, a single parents' group was established to tackle similar issues, as well as those of loneliness and isolation. The Barclay Report (1982) reinforced such views with its emphasis on community social work. In particular, problems and difficulties which affect individuals and families have to be seen in terms of the patterns of relationships and networks which define the social situation of those individuals and families.

Second, social work theory and practice had moved away from a purely casework approach to an understanding that group and community work knowledge, skills and methods could be incorporated into social work. Typically this was termed the unitary or integrated approach (see, for example, Currie and Parrott 1981; Pincus and Minahan 1973). Relatedly, there was the influence of radical social work which initially focussed on class (Bailey and Brake 1975a; Corrigan and Leonard 1978) although later incorporated oppressions based on such as race and gender (Langan and Lee 1989). Such theories see the majority of people who come into contact with social workers as being casualties of a fundamentally unjust economic and political system, namely capitalism, now more often referred to as neoliberalism.

After due deliberation, including discussions/consultations with practitioners and managers, the working group came out in favour of a decentralised locally

based service with a devolution of responsibility, and resulting autonomy, to social workers. It was felt that such a move had several advantages, for example: greater accessibility for residents, other workers and agencies, community groups and organisations; it can lead to the breakdown of the traditional relationship between social workers and the people they work with, the former becoming more approachable; it enables greater understanding of the community, this including networks as well its problems, needs and strengths; and it enables more flexible responses to local needs and problems by utilising case, group and community work skills.[2]

These changes envisaged a change in the style of social work, with a focus on people defining their own needs as opposed to having them defined by experts. People should be seen as having strengths and lacking power rather than having individual or family defects. This change in style of work can also be seen in terms of having less preoccupation with a close, inward looking office-based team but rather more emphasis on going out into the community, meeting a wider range of people, getting to know and strengthen networks, and starting and supporting community groups. There would be less of a defensive, crisis-orientated reactive role, but more of a pro-active preventative stance with more informal work taking place. It was about a move towards more community-orientated ways of working, the integration of case, group and community work methods and skills – in short, community social work.

Community social work involves ways of thinking about people and problems that is fundamentally different to most orthodox social work thinking (Smale et al. 1988). As suggested, social problems are not seen as located in the individual or family but in the patterns of relationship and power which define the social situation of that individual or family. For example, we often hear of the 'problem family' on the 'problem estate', with the problems of the family framed by professionals as problems *in* the family; everything would be alright if, for instance, the mother became more competent and sons more law-abiding. Individual or family pathology is the basis of intervention even though this neglects the patterns of relationships and power which define the family as problematic in the first place. Surely it is these patterns of relationships and power which ought to become the focus of intervention with, for example, work with neighbours to shift blame from the family to the wider social context of the street, the estate and ultimately society as a whole. This involves working with such as tenants groups and relationships between the housing department and residents, and ultimately the relationship between local and central government.

The notion of partnership is a key component of community social work. The identification of needs, problems, resources, methods, priorities and plans of action come via reciprocal relationships between members of the community, be they residents, volunteers, professionals or community groups and organisations. The emphasis is on the strengths and abilities of people to engage in their own problem solving, and aims to enhance rather than take over people's abilities to help each other and resolve problems. This is different to more orthodox social work, which tends to concentrate on doing things to or for people rather than with them, and as such working in partnership can be contrasted with 'treating clients'.

Another key notion is that of the 'network', which in its widest sense means all the contacts a person has. The problem is that many people in our society are in networks that ignore, neglect, reject or persecute them or in some other way cause them difficulty. Depending on how social workers participate in these networks, they may confront or collude with labels placed on people. From this, social problems can be seen as the malfunctioning of networks of people – family, friends, neighbours, other members of the community, professionals and so on – which in turn relates to the failure of society to deal with, for example, problems of poverty and unemployment and the resulting stresses and strains which affect individuals, families and communities. Social workers can become part of the network for a short period but they do not necessarily have to, instead viewing their role as strengthening networks that are already present as well as introducing people to and developing new networks.

Having covered some of the thinking behind community social work, I now turn to the actual team, the area it covered and the way it operated. This is followed by looking at some of its community social work including group and community work, some of the issues we encountered with our agency and an overall evaluation of what we did.

The team and area

The team consisted of two social workers, two social work assistants who job-shared, and a part-time receptionist/clerk/typist. It worked from a small sub-office in a community education centre on the largest council estate in the borough. The estate was built in the 1950s, and the office also covered a smaller council estate built during the 1960s. Both could be characterised as ones of deprivation and disadvantage – poor housing, lack of recreational facilities, unemployment and poverty – and as such there were referrals relating to such as child abuse and family breakdown.

On moving to the centre we immediately changed the way we recorded and monitored our work by making a distinction between our official referrals and our other more informal work, which we termed 'informal enquiries'. The rationale for this was a concern as to whether everyone who approached us should automatically be 'clientised' by referrals being completed and resulting probing questions. Also, less fundamentally, if every enquiry was made an official referral it meant an inordinate amount of time incorporating the information into the administration system.

In changing our method of recording and monitoring we found a dramatic (75%) reduction in the number of official referrals, this totalling only about five per month, with a corresponding trebling in our informal enquiries to over seventy-five per month. This suggests that people seem more able to approach the team for initial help and support, this reducing the number of official referrals which escalate to more serious cases.

Most of the referrals and informal enquiries relate to the main function of the team, that is dealing with the problems confronting the children and families of

the area, but they also included others that had to be passed on to other sections of the department, for example issues facing older people or those with disabilities. The team therefore acted as an access point for other client/service user groups, this being an important function.

Almost 60% of the informal enquiries concerned financial, fuel/energy and housing issues – in short, poverty. Such issues were also major elements in relation to the official referrals which were dominated by child abuse and parent-child conflicts. Finally, in addition to dealing with the informal enquiries and official referrals, the social workers and social work assistants also carried caseloads. As an example, the social workers carried approximately twenty-five cases each, covering such situations as children on the then child abuse register, supervision and care orders, and behaviour and relationship difficulties requiring ongoing social work involvement.

Incorporating community social work methods

The brief discussion of the team's work relates largely to traditional casework issues, and the obvious question arises as to what extent community social work methods including group and community work. At an individual level, there was the example of a single parent with three children, one accommodated on a long-term basis. She was lacking in confidence, was lonely and isolated, and the only contacts she had with people were largely negative. There were also housing and financial problems, and her relationship with her ex-husband was volatile and involved domestic violence fuelled by alcohol. There were arguments with neighbours who made allegations about the care of the children including them being left unsupervised and inadequately fed. She had a deep distrust of health visitors and social workers as a result of her first child being removed, and no contact with school in respect of the eldest child at home with her. Generally there was antagonism to anyone in authority.

A traditional casework approach could have entailed regular formal one-to-one sessions with the mother and her children, largely without reference to the other people she had or could have relationships with, nor to the predicament society had placed the family in. She would have resisted such sessions because of her antagonism towards social workers, and in any case such discussions would have done little to address the real issues including, for example, the fact that the relationships and networks she was involved in were largely negative. In contrast, a community social work approach involves focussing on these relationships and networks with attempts being made to develop and strengthen more positive ones.

An opportunity arose when the school referred one of her children because she had a black eye which 'mummy did'. In the meantime, the education welfare officer had taken the child to hospital and was talking about the possibility of a place of safety order. The mother subsequently arrived at hospital very angry and distressed fearing her daughter was going to be taken away and complaining about permission not being asked for her child to be taken

to hospital. When a member of our team arrived at the hospital the mother's justifiable concerns were acknowledged in a calm, sensitive manner. The child abuse procedures were explained openly and honestly. It emerged the injury had been caused while she was undressing her baby, the daughter misbehaved and she threw one of the baby's shoes at her, this accidentally hitting her in the eye. The mother agreed that her daughter could stay in hospital on a voluntary basis but was worried about the planned child abuse case conference. She wanted to attend the latter and put forward her view that what occurred was a one-off accident which would not be repeated, also acknowledging she was 'stressed' and would accept social work involvement. Sadly, at the time parents were not allowed to attend case conferences, but the social worker encouraged and helped put her views in writing. Eventually the conference decided to place the girl on the child abuse register.

Over ensuing months social work involvement focussed on the issues as defined by the mother: the lack of child care facilities, lack of money, housing repairs, loneliness and isolation, boredom and feelings of depression. Contact was made with the then Department of Social Security, electricity and gas companies, and Housing Department regarding the financial and housing issues. Playgroup places were arranged and the social services hierarchy were made aware of the need for more nursery/playgroup places. A new, more sympathetic health visitor became involved and social work contact with the school ensured that they also had a better, more sympathetic understanding of the mother's situation, with the mother in turn having more trust and confidence in the school. The social worker was already in contact with some of the neighbours, some of whom had similar problems to the mother, and gradually both they and she began to offer mutual understanding and support rather than hostility and anger. Contact was also made with a local community centre, and the mother eventually helped with the playgroup there, later becoming involved with young people who were solvent users and becoming involved in her estate forum (see later). Her concerns about lack of parental involvement in child abuse case conferences were addressed by facilitating her involvement in starting a local Parents Aid group (see later).

Gradually the mother's confidence and self-esteem increased and her drinking decreased. Her children became more happy and relaxed, there were no further injuries and their names were removed from the register. She also contacted her previous social worker who had been involved with her eldest child becoming looked after with a view to obtaining access/contact. Eventually this was granted to her and her ex-husband with whom she had established a more amicable and stable relationship. Finally, she became a member of the management committees of the local community centre and a local women's refuge (see later). In short, in many ways she turned her life around and became a valuable member of the local community in the process.

The aforementioned highlights the value of not addressing peoples' difficulties in isolation, as symptoms of some underlying pathology which needs treating. Rather they have to be seen in terms of patterns of relationships and networks,

and if these are positive then they can be resolved. Advice, encouragement, help and support from local and accessible social workers assisted in this, although this should not detract from the many positive qualities and strengths shown by the mother. In particular, a point she repeatedly made, being local and accessible meant that the social workers were readily accepted as being part of the local community rather than faceless bureaucrats who 'snatch our kids'. Her situation and the way it was dealt with highlights a community social work approach to an individual case, and while some group and community work issues have been referred to, I now look at these further.

First, one of the main problems that residents on one of the estates complained of was young people who used solvents (Rogowski et al. 1989). This came to light following: a survey of the needs and problems of the area, a survey that our team was involved in; a tenants' association, again one we were involved in; and a subsequent public meeting that demanded something that had to be done. A small working group involving ourselves, other professionals and residents was formed to examine the issue. Eventually, it was decided a group work response based in a local youth club aimed at young people who used solvents was the way forward. This was staffed on a rota basis from a pool of professionals, including our team, volunteers and residents. The basic philosophy was to respond to the community's need to do something but in a constructive way. In addition to engaging in recreational activities, it was hoped to develop a rapport with the young people together with offering advice and information, not just about solvent use but also, for example, drug use in general, welfare rights and housing issues, the law and so on. By involving residents it was hoped to break down barriers between them and the 'uncouth yobs' (the young people) so both sides could understand the others' predicament, thereby becoming more tolerant in the process. For instance, it could be pointed out that if young people have bored, aimless lives with little hope for the future other than going on the dole, it is no surprise that some resort to glue-sniffing or other drug use simply to escape from reality. The potential of political and economic dimensions coming to the fore were apparent.

Over the coming weeks and months the group had considerable success. The residents involved certainly became more understanding of the young people and were able to share their experience with such as local schools and parents. We were also able to put parents of other young people in contact with each other, whereby they could talk through the difficulties they were experiencing, enabling them to feel less isolated and avoid their young people from becoming clients/service users. In this way many of the myths and fears surrounding solvent use were reduced. The success of the project can be gleaned from the fact that local churches took a keen interest in the venture and eventually secured funding for two full-time workers to be employed as youth/community workers focussing on solvent abuse.

Second, mention was made of Parents Aid, something which I had developed an interest in after being involved with a group of parents who had children on the child abuse register (Rogowski and McGrath 1986; also see Mullender 1989/90). This group was not aimed at the more usual aim of changing behaviour and

lifestyle; rather the focus was external change and an understanding of the structural pressures such as unemployment, bad housing and poverty that can lead to physical abuse and neglect. It also looked at the increasing bureaucratic, authoritarian and insensitive responses by professionals involved in child abuse. One of the outcomes was a self-help group offering help and support to parents subjected to the rigmarole of child abuse investigations and procedures which can culminate in the removal of children from their families. Despite this being a short-lived venture, the need did not go away and re-emerged in respect of the mother referred to earlier. Encouraged by our team, she went on to raise such concerns by discussing the issues of various agencies, and the local press and radio took this up as she went on to form a local and successful Parents Aid group. Essentially it was a support group for parents who had been or were subject to child abuse investigations.

Third, the team became involved with a local women's refuge began when the refuge itself was in crisis. There were only three members on its management committee, only one full-time member of staff and an occupancy rate of 40%. It was in danger of folding as the council were threatening to withdraw support. A member of our team was already known to the refuge and was asked to join and chair the management committee. Partly because of her links/networks, new members with appropriate expertise also joined the committee. Over the ensuing weeks and months it met regularly and drafted a new constitution, management-worker and worker-resident agreements. Over the period there was a gradual improvement in the refuge's situation, not least because funding from the council was secured, new staff was appointed and an occupancy rate of 100% was achieved. What had been a period of great uncertainty had been turned round so that everyone involved – management committee members, workers and residents – could look to the future with optimism.

Work with such as the solvent users, Parents Aid and women's refuge show the advantage of engaging in something which the narrow casework view of social work is not 'real' social work but rather community work. However, surely there is no clear dividing line between case, group and community work; they are all complementary aspects of social work. If, for example, women and children subjected to domestic violence had nowhere to stay because of the closure of the refuge, it could have led to more children ending up on the child protection register or being taking into care/accommodated.

Finally, mention was made of an estate forum, but in fact both estates we covered had forums, these being regular meetings of residents, local councillors and representatives of various agencies – housing, police, health, education, social services and so on. We were involved in both forums including establishing the aims and objectives of them, these including: to establish links between the community and the various agencies involved with the estate; to enable the community to influence decision making; to break down barriers and improve communication between professionals and residents; to build networks aimed at enabling the community to find solutions to problems; and, importantly, to work with the

community as a whole without *any* form of discrimination including race, gender and class.

One issue to emerge was for social workers for older people to be based or hold surgeries on the estates, largely because of the same reasons we were based there – accessibility, breaking down barriers and dealing with issues at an earlier/preventative stage. This was put to the senior assistant director of social services when she addressed one of the forums. She was sympathetic and agreed to raise it with colleagues, although sadly there was actually resistance from social workers for older people and the idea was dropped.

Another issue was repeated concern from the police, schools and residents, including parents, about a group of young people who truanted, used solvents and generally caused a nuisance/offended. All the agencies tended to work alone in dealing with them: schools suspending/expelling them; police charging them, which could eventually lead to custody; youth clubs banning them; social services perhaps receiving them into care. Arguably a more co-ordinated response was needed, a little like the youth offending teams of today (although with social workers taking the lead rather than being sidelined as they are currently). Discussions took place about developing a group work programme involving all such professionals, as well as arguments put forward for improved services and resources from the agencies concerned.

A final example of an issue to emerge at the forum was concerns related to housing caused by public expenditure cuts leading to a lack of new council housing and difficulties managing what already existed. Sell-offs to private developers, suggestions about tenants' co-operatives, housing associations and the like were all on the agenda. Our team attempted to ensure that residents' views were heard and addressed by our involvement in tenants' associations, advocacy on behalf of individuals as well as encouraging residents to voice their opinions at the forums.

Problems and difficulties with the agency

In pursuing our work, perhaps surprisingly we encountered some problems with our agency. Like Cooper (1983), we heard derogatory comments about 'what are you doing down there?' and 'we are doing the real social work.' This antagonism and suspicion may arise because of the implications for change represented by what we were doing, and perhaps our work was not really understood or acknowledged by colleagues.

It should also be remembered that community social work can lead to conflict because many practitioners come to see themselves as more accountable to the communities they serve rather than agencies that employ them. This can lead to the questioning of the structure, policies, procedures and practices of their agency as well as others. Our involvement in Parents Aid and the latter's aim to involve parents in child abuse case conferences is an example. Another was our enthusiasm for the rest of the department to be reorganised on our lines rather the traditional, centralised, casework-orientated and hierarchical bureaucracy. There was

also some tension between ourselves and colleagues in specialist teams such as youth justice/intermediate treatment and fostering/adoption. Perhaps this is inevitable, as community sensitised social workers are often answerable to residents about the performance of other colleagues, their agency and even the local authority. On occasions we felt responsible for people whom we had referred to other hands for support and who receive poor and ineffective assistance.

One question that we had to address, however, is how far community social work is compatible with social work's statutory role in relation to such as child abuse and young offending. Our view was that such incompatibility is greatly exaggerated. Tensions may arise between social work's controlling/policing role and the local community but the latter is unlikely to object to social work in relation to child abuse and young offending, even to the extent of seeing the necessity at times of taking children away from their families or locking up young people. But if social workers are honest and open about their role these tensions can be eased. We also refuted the argument that community social workers can become too close to local people that they may not be able to adopt a child-focussed approach and thereby fail to identity dangers to children. Indeed, proximity to the community and to people with problems means there is no need to overreact to situations, and genuine serious problems, be it child abuse or other problem areas, soon emerge naturally from the plethora of minor difficulties. This is borne out by the figures quoted earlier, whereby our referrals greatly reduced while informal enquiries greatly increased, this suggesting that prevention works. As residents get to know and trust us, they are willing to come and discuss things at an earlier stage and we in turn get to know them, thereby being more likely to intervene in sensitive, appropriate ways rather than in a heavy-handed manner. Proximity to the community, therefore, enabled us to make careful and balanced judgements as to, for example, whether the full vigour of child abuse procedures need to implemented or not.

Evaluation: client/service user, residents and professional views

It is not often that residents and other professionals are asked for views on the value or otherwise of social work services (Beresford and Croft 1986; Rojek 1989). In an attempt to remedy this we devised a simple questionnaire asking people in our area for their views. The questionnaire covered various issues such as whether it was important to have social workers for children and families on the estate; if so, why; whether people were satisfied with the services provided; and how could they be improved. Over fifty questionnaires were completed, approximately 40% by clients/service users, 40% by residents and 20% by professionals who included local councillors, health visitors, police, teachers and colleagues from within the department. The clients/service users included young offenders, children on the child abuse register and parents of such children, and people who came into our category of informal enquiries. All the respondents were selected on an ad hoc basis from people we normally came into contact with.

The results were revealing, not least the fact that 98% of respondents thought it was important to have us based on the estates. There was a recognition that the

estates were easily identifiable areas of deprivation or, put another way, 'rough areas with bad houses, people with no money, kids sniffing and getting into trouble' and 'a lot of child abuse and ill treatment of children'. Typically reference was made to the help and support social workers provided, with it being pointed out that it was easier to contact them if they were locally based. Being local made them more accessible and approachable because, for example, people could not afford buses to travel far nor did they have phones or money to use public phones. The difficulty of single parents, for instance, having to 'struggle with babies and young children to get to town' was often mentioned.

There was also reference to social workers 'getting to know people and the estate and this can mean you are more helpful'. One respondent referred to the fact that 'a locally based patch team can provide a quick, flexible response which area teams outside the vicinity of the immediate geographical area are unable to.' Others thought that such social workers become identified with the estate and became trusted by residents thereby making people more confident in using social work services, whereas if they were 'placed elsewhere the service becomes both inaccessible and hostile'. Or again, there was the view that if social workers and clients can identify with each other it makes working together much easier 'with trust developing, leading to a better service'.

Linked with the notion of trust, the point was made that many people are not good at expressing themselves, especially when distressed, and if they get to know social workers communication becomes much easier. Stigma was also mentioned in relation to entering

> [an] office which just has social workers [a reference to our base in a community education centre] but by being local and accessible and being seen as individuals rather than bureaucrats representing an agency, social workers become part of the community. They then have an awareness of community needs rather than being outside busybodies who deal with symptoms rather than causes.

Importantly 70% of respondents said they would be less likely to contact social workers if they were based elsewhere and 10% said there would be 'no chance'. And as for respondents' satisfaction with social work services, 36% were 'very satisfied' and 58% 'satisfied'. As for the 6% who were dissatisfied, this dissatisfaction related more to services provided by other sections of the department or other agencies rather than the social work services on the estate.

As for improving the services, many respondents simply said they did not need improving, but for those who did they said more social workers were needed. Interestingly comments were made about practitioners 'having more say in things without having to go and see your bosses. . . . you have done your training and should be able to make decisions.' Comments were also made about 'getting away from dealing with people on a one to one basis' and the necessity for 'more group activities. . . . groups for parents and children with specific problems, young peoples' groups etc.'

Finally, in relation to other client/service user groups, 99% said social workers for these should be based on the estate. For example, in relation to older people it was pointed out that 'they are too proud to beg from people they don't know' and they are 'not going to go to a remote building'. The point was made that

> all client groups would tend to use social work services more if there was the opportunity to see them as their own and if they could have an input into decisions making [this helped by] by social workers being approachable and easily accessible.

Overall, therefore, the views of some of those at the 'sharp end' of social work in Oldham suggested that decentralised, locally based, accessible services with an emphasis on prevention and incorporating case, group and community work was the way forward. Sadly, however, this was not to be. Coinciding with the appointment of a new director and assistant director of social services the department took a different course. Anticipating the introduction of new public management (see Chapter 7), and despite representations from clients/residents, professionals, local councillors and others, the sub-office was slowly closed down and we were incorporated into a more centralised area team. The view that 'nobody knows what you are doing down there' seemed, after all, to have won the day.

Conclusion

Community social work, not least as far as practice with children and families is concerned, involves critical thinking, with practitioners needing to address the connections between theory and practice, as well as having a commitment to social justice (Stepney and Popple 2008). Further, for a brief period it seemed to offer opportunities for those who wanted to work in more critical/radical or even just progressive ways. The experience of such as those in Normanton and Oldham suggests it had much to offer, not least to the deprived children and families of the latter, these being among the prime casualties of what was then the beginnings of the neoliberal consensus of the present. Although community social work did not provide a panacea for all social ills, nor was it at the forefront of fundamental societal change, it had much to offer in meeting the immediate needs of children and families, as well as having the potential of raising awareness and consciousness about the possibilities of a more just and equal world.

Sadly, community social work has largely been eclipsed over recent decades. This coincides with the increased culture of bureaucracy and managerialism (again see Chapter 7), which results in social workers now rarely engaging in such practice. Instead, recent decades have witnessed a move away from a preventative, child welfare stance, instead increasingly engaged in crisis, reactive and often authoritarian work in relation to child protection/safeguarding (see Chapter 6).

But I do not want to end this chapter on such a negative note simply because, repeating comments made in the introduction to this chapter, arguably the case for preventive community social work is returning (Holman 2013). Social workers

are disheartened by bureaucracy and relationships with computers rather than families. Featherstone et al. (2014a) criticise the present model geared to crisis intervention in relation to children who are at risk of abuse. They, like others (for example, Ledwith 2011; Stepney and Popple 2008; Teater and Baldwin 2012) see the value of community-orientated social work, and propose teams based in local communities with service users treated both as individuals and as members of the neighbourhood. This is something I touch on again in Part Four.

Notes

1 It is worth recalling that the community social work referred to in this chapter largely took place in the 1980s, and as such some of the language used may seem somewhat dated. I have updated this when I thought it necessary.
2 Despite all this, our team was the only one to go down the community social work route, perhaps because of the enthusiasm of a colleague who had been involved in the Abbeyhills CDP and my personal commitment to the community social work ideal. Then there was the fact that many social workers were simply resistant to community social work despite the working groups' recommendation – see the later sections in this chapter on 'Problems and Difficulties with the Agency' and 'Evaluation: client/service user, residents and professional views'.

5 On theory

Critical, radical and allied perspectives

The importance of theory and conceptual issues in social work cannot be overstated, simply because *all* our action, whether acknowledged or not, is guided by theory (Rogowski 2013). Social work is not and cannot be common sense, despite what parts of the media and some politicians would have us believe. It is also a contested area because people often do not agree about what social work is or what it should consist of. Similar comments apply to what are, or are not, considered as social problems. Such contestations are related to political, economic, social and ideological factors, the point being that social work, together with the social problems it aims to address, amount to *social constructions.* This is because social work and social problems, rather than being existing realities, emerge from ideas. The idea of social construction derives from the sociologists Berger and Luckman (1971 [1966]), who maintained that in social life, as opposed to the natural world, reality is based on the social knowledge which guides behaviour, despite individuals often having differing ideas. Such knowledge can be seen as historically and culturally specific, with people arriving at their views of reality by knowledge being shared or inculcated through various social processes which eventually make it seem objective or common sense. The influence of the media and education are obvious examples of such processes, although in earlier times religion dominated this process.

In relation to social work, what the profession actually consists of, along with what theories guide and indicate how it should be carried out, emerge from differing ideas, debates and actions. This is why there are different theories and perspectives. Similarly when it comes to social problems, the definitions of these vary over time, this meaning that certain situations may have to be addressed as problematic during one period of history, although accepted as part and parcel of 'normal' life in another. The converse is equally true. It is also crucial to emphasise that theory itself is not a word-game carried out by academics; it is a dimension of action, giving direction and meaning to what we actually do.

The idea of social construction raises some significant issues, but an important point is that arguably Marxism's method of historical analysis and debate is *the* legitimate – or at the very least *a* legitimate – form of study (Rogowski 2013). Despite the collapse of Communism in the USSR and the subsequent triumph of neoliberalism, one has only to look at the work of such as Miliband (for example,

1973 [1969], 1977, 1994) and Hobsbawm (for example, 2011) to see the continued relevance of Marxist theory, even to the extent that it can be argued that 'Marx was right' (Eagleton 2011). Significantly, Marx's work is an important inspiration for social work and its resistance to neoliberalism (Garrett 2010). More broadly, critical theory argues positivist science maintains ruling hegemony by accepting and promoting the present social order. From such a view, all theory, including that of social work, represents ideological positions, ones which are usually in support of the ruling class or elites. The important point about radical, and indeed critical, theory is that it works away at conventional wisdom and practice, and aims to make small steps towards a better, more socially just and equal world.

An example of some of the foregoing is Freudian psychoanalytic theory, which still had influence when I started out on my social work career. After the Second World War the political climate meant that earlier social work practice based on religious or overtly moralistic tones was no longer acceptable. Psychoanalysis resonated with social democratic concerns with social reform, allowed the possibility of everyone achieving citizenship, and broke with some earlier biological theorising on poverty and inequality whereby the undeserving poor were eugenically unfit or biologically incapable of being rehabilitated. Although it provided social work with much needed scientific credibility, from a critical perspective, psychoanalytic theory is particularly individualistic in its focus and has little application when it comes to social change especially when considering the critical/radical turn of the 1960s and 1970s (Rogowski 2010a).

I begin this chapter with a discussion of social work and the critical/radical turn, an era when the theories and research findings from social science were being utilised and adapted so as to construct modern social work's knowledge base (Wootton 1959). I then turn to consideration of broad social work perspectives and related social work practice theory. This encompasses the move from radical to critical social work which occurred between the 1970s and the 2000s (see, for example, Bailey and Brake 1975a and Fook 2002, 2012, respectively). As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, radical social work focussed on class before embracing issues in relation to such as race and gender (Langan and Lee 1989), and re-emerged at the end of the 2000s (for example, Ferguson and Woodward 2009; Lavalette 2011a; Turbett 2014). In pursuing the development of critical social work, I consider critical theory, feminist and anti-discriminatory/oppressive perspectives, empowerment and advocacy (see Payne 2005b). I also comment on what was a key element of radical/critical social work in the UK, namely community development, before outlining Fook's (2002, 2012) critical social work which draws on some postmodern influences. These advances in theory certainly merit being considered as one of the high points of social work.

Social work and the critical/radical turn

During the 1950s and 1960s critical work from sociology and social policy were marginalised on social work courses although, as indicated, psychoanalysis allowed social work to have a semblance of theoretical coherence. Importantly,

only those aspects of the Freudian tradition which reinforced personal and familial pathology as the root of social problems featured on courses, not those posing a more critical psychology such as that of Marcuse (1964) which combined Marxist and Freudian perspectives. However, it was not long before social work education, theory and practice were feeling the impact of the critical and radical currents that confronted many Western societies during the 1960s and early 1970s.

The expansion of higher education saw many social science graduates attracted to social work. They were influenced by the social movements of the time, notably the counterculture and the New Left, as well as their previous education which had exposed them to emerging critical insights in such as philosophy, political science, sociology, social policy and psychology. One result was that they questioned the traditional, individualised tenets of social work associated 'truths' (Jones 1996).

The counterculture and New Left

The counterculture refers to the values and norms of behaviour of many young people during the 1960s and early 1970s which ran counter to the social mainstream. It was their attempt to create a non-materialistic, more expressive and meaningful alternative to consumer society (Tierney 1996). In the UK it was a reaction to the social norms of the 1940s and 1950s leading to a focus on such as women's and gay rights, as well as a permissive attitude to sexual activity more generally. Similarly, the use of recreational drugs and alternative styles of dress was accepted and encouraged. The hippie movement epitomised much of this and led to experiments with alternative ways of living such as communes and exploring spirituality. The Ban the Bomb movement in relation to nuclear weaponry and anti-Vietnam war campaigns were other factors, along with a general questioning of traditional modes of authority. As an example, one has only to recall the often used word 'pigs' in relation to the police. Similar tensions along generational lines occurred in the US, but also included concerns about race relations and resulting support for civil rights. Both countries saw a rejection of mainstream cultures which was also embodied in a new generation of rock and psychedelic music – the Rolling Stones, Beatles, Grateful Dead and Bob Dylan, for instance. However, although the counterculture was critical of, and was a reaction against, consumer society, it largely neglected the political and economic structures that lay at the root of the difficulties it was trying to confront.

The New Left refers to various thinkers and activists of the 1960s and 1970s who became disillusioned with orthodox Communism, particularly as it had developed in the Soviet Union. They were concerned about its authoritarian and centralised nature, as well as about the events in Hungary in 1956 when its revolution was put down by force. The ambivalent response to this event by the British Communist Party exacerbated the situation. The New Left's reaction to such concerns was in contrast to more orthodox Marxist traditions which took a vanguardist approach by focussing on the role of trade unions as representatives of the organised working class. Instead it advocated more democratic and participative

strategies. The Marxist historians E. P. Thompson and Ralph Miliband were influential in the UK along with the work of such as the Frankfurt School, Gramsci and Althusser. For example, the Frankfurt School argued that the view of humankind's relationship with nature that grew out of the Enlightenment was not fulfilling the promise of real human progress. As human beings had manipulated nature, so those with power used technology to manipulate the less powerful, both at the physical and human consciousness levels (Ransome 2010). There was an element of critical pessimism in that there seemed to be no agent for significant emancipatory change. But such a view did not affect everyone – for instance, Habermas managed to retain a sense of optimism. Within a range of social sciences and professions there emerged movements concerned to break with traditional ways of thinking with a view to working towards a more just, equal and fulfilling world. As well as being 'critical' thinkers and practitioners, many also began to use the word 'radical' to underline this break. There were movements in radical education, radical philosophy and radical social policy, for example, as well as radical social work.

Despite their different emphasises, the ideas and values of the counterculture and New Left converged at times, and many students and the wider public became influenced by them. This is particularly relevant as far as the recruitment to the emerging social work profession was concerned. The profession appealed to those who wanted to distance themselves from the worst excesses of the consumerist/capitalist system. Put simply, without totally opting out of society, individuals could avoid being directly involved in the exploitative consumerist/capitalist process while working to mitigate its excesses by being 'in and against the state' (London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group 1980) by pursuing social work as a career. As we will see, such a view was an important factor in the emergence of radical social work.

Critical/radical social science

The critical and radical approaches to the social sciences during the 1960s and early 1970s proved to be significant. Important social policy texts saw poverty, notwithstanding the welfare state, as a feature of capitalism rather than the moral malfunction of particular 'problem' families; critical social psychology and psychiatry as well as in feminist writings questioned the sanctity of the patriarchal family; the new deviancy theorists asked questions about the nature of deviance and the role of the state and state professionals, including social workers, in reproducing deviance. From such diverse standpoints, the mainstream social work view that society, despite its flaws, was concerned about the welfare of all its citizens, was challenged (Jones 1996).

Wootton (1959) was perhaps the first call to arms for critical/radical social workers. She made the point that the root of many social problems was sheer inequality and social justice. It was not enough for caseworkers to help people to change or adjust to their situation by taking responsibility and being self-reliant. She was querying the focus on traditional psychoanalysis which ignored the structural

aspects of social problems, instead arguing it would be far better if social workers were more concerned with ensuring people obtained their rights from the welfare state. However, such a view tended to neglect the fact that despite the introduction of the welfare state in the 1940s and its subsequent successes, the 1960s witnessed the rediscovery of poverty (see, for example, Abel-Smith and Townsend 1969; Titmuss 1968). Efforts to reduce inequalities of income and wealth had not gone far enough. Many of the population were living close to subsistence level, with many impoverished groups remaining, including single parents, the chronically sick and low wage earners. After ten years of government activity to help the lowest paid manual workers, when their earnings were compared to the average weekly earnings of male manual workers in 1973, their situation had remained much as it as it had in 1886 (George and Wilding 1976). Although governments of the day and the trade unions paid lip service to the condition of the low paid, it was never a priority and consequently there had been no inherent trend towards greater equality and income distribution. Furthermore, the distribution of wealth was more unequal than the distribution of income. From a Marxist perspective, such poverty should be tackled by social security benefits being based on the principle of universality rather than insurance or means tests that tended to dominate in many areas (Kincaid 1973).

Apart from the social security aspects of the welfare state, similar criticisms were raised when it came to health, education and housing (George and Wilding 1976) and not always from social policy academics, with, on occasions, governments recognising criticisms. For example, the geographical distribution of health services was extremely unequal, this arising from differences in expenditure in different areas, and the resulting unequal provision of various hospital services and general practitioners. Then again the distribution of teachers and educational books as well as other equipment also varied geographically (Newsom Report 1963; Plowden Report 1967). Finally, although the quality of much housing improved over the post-war years, this was not always the case, and in some areas acute shortages of homes remained. There was also a growth in homelessness towards the end of the 1960s.

When it comes to explaining the failures of the welfare state it is easy to focus on lack of resources and weaknesses in policy and its implementation. There may well have been elements of this, but there is a more fundamental explanation. This involves seeing the welfare state in the political, economic, and ideological and social context of an advanced capitalist economy (George and Wilding 1976). Such a capitalist system requires and generates a particular value system, central ones being self-help, freedom, individualism, competition and achievement. They are the values of classical liberalism and of the current neoliberal consensus, and come into conflict with those needed to underpin a successful welfare state. Values required for the latter are more akin to those of a socialist society: self-help replaced by stressing the need to help others, individualism replaced by a concern with the community at large, competition replaced by co-operation, and achievement being seen in social and communal terms rather than in individual terms. In short, the capitalist economic and welfare state systems require and depend

on very different value systems. Wilensky and Lebeaux (1965, p. 42), writing on developments in the US but their comments being equally applicable to the UK and other countries, wrote that there is 'a constantly moving compromise between the values of security and humanitarianism on the one hand, and individual initiative and self-reliance in the competitive order on the other'.

Despite, the collectivist euphoria that greeted the formation of the welfare state, and notwithstanding its many successes, even its most fervent supporters on the political left continued to focus on its failures. Some argued that while the welfare state went some way to meeting the needs of the working class, it actually propped up and supported the political and economic system that was at the root of the problem (Milliband 1973 [1969]). As a consequence, fundamental changes in dominant social values and in the prevailing system of economic relations were necessary before the welfare state could genuinely hope to solve the major problems of the unjust distribution of resources in incomes, housing, health and education. But it was not only in the area of social policy that the critical/radical currents were moving with Marcuse (1964) and Laing (for example, 1965) producing important insights into psychology and psychiatry, respectively.

Herbert Marcuse was an important influence in the critical psychology movement of the 1960s/early 1970s which looked to social change as a means of preventing and treating psychological ills. Mainstream psychology was seen to fail to consider the way power differences between social classes and groups can impact on the mental and physical well-being of individuals or groups of people. He saw capitalism as pushing workers so hard that they began to see themselves as extensions of what they were producing, cars and hi-fi stereo systems for example. Such one dimensional thought and action led to decreased opposition towards capitalism itself.

R.D. Laing drew on existentialist philosophy and looked at the causes and treatment of mental illness, especially the experience of psychosis. He took the expressed feelings of the individual as valid descriptions of the lived experience rather than symptoms of some underlying disorder. His work, traceable to Marx and the French philosopher Sartre, is linked to the anti-psychiatry movement. This challenged the core values of psychiatry whereby mental illness is a biological phenomenon which neglects the social and cultural dimensions. He stressed the role of society and the family in the development of mental illness, and condemned society for shackling humankind against its will and taking away individual freedom.

Feminist thought, in the form of second-wave feminism, was another significant critical development in the 1960s/early 1970s. The first wave of the nineteenth and early twentieth century focussed on challenging legal obstacles to women's equality such as voting and property tights. The second wave addressed a wider range of issues relating to such as the family, the workplace, sexuality and reproductive rights. For example, Simone de Beauvoir's (1997 [1949]) earlier work gained prominence in the 1960s and argued that women wanted more than to be just housewives and mothers, with both roles amounting to being the 'other' in a fundamentally patriarchal society; women did not want, nor would

they accept, being subservient to men. Then again, Germaine Greer (2006 [1971]) raised concerns about how women's sexuality had traditionally been denied. Such perspectives led to the questioning of the family as always being a safe haven for women and children because of concerns in relation to domestic abuse/violence and child abuse, all of which became a particular concern of social work.

A final aspect of the critical/radical currents that I want to briefly consider is new deviancy theory. It was part of the wider revolt in the social sciences against positivism and its causal-corrective concerns in relation to crime and delinquency. Instead it 'entailed taking into account the subjective world of the actor, seen as the product of meanings constructed through social interaction' (Tierney 1996, p. 127). It was a mixture of various disciplines included the sociology of labelling theory (Becker 1963) together with aspects of Marxism (Quinney 1977). Deviant motivations (relating to poverty and deprivation, for example) and official reactions to deviant behaviour were at the core, this including the fact that such reactions by a range of actors – the police, criminal justice system including social workers and probation officers – can amplify deviance. Perhaps most importantly, there was a move away from the situation where the criminologist or sociologist in effect stood beside the rule enforcers, to one where the stance adopted was either ambivalent or even explicitly on the side of the deviant (Becker 1967).

Having looked at the critical/radical turn and some developments in the wider social sciences during the 1960s/early 1970s which helped create the reaction against psychoanalytically based social work, I now turn more explicitly to social work theory, in particular critical/radical and allied perspectives.

Social work theory

Malcolm Payne (2005b) provides a useful overview of social work theory, helpfully outlining three views of social work. First, reflexive-therapeutic views see social work as seeking the well-being of individuals, groups and communities in society by promoting and facilitating growth and self-fulfilment. Interaction between workers and users leads to both the latter's ideas being modified by the former, as well as users affecting worker's understandings of their world as they gain experience of it. It is a process of mutual influence and is what makes social work reflexive. It expresses in social work the social democratic view that economic and social development should work hand in hand so as to achieve individual and social improvement. Second, socialist-collectivist views see social work as seeking co-operation and mutual support so that oppressed and disadvantaged people can gain power over their own lives. Here elites in society, in Marxist terms the ruling class, are seen to accumulate and perpetuate power and resources in society for their own benefit thereby creating oppression and disadvantage which social work seeks to supplant by more egalitarian relationships in society. It amounts to emancipatory practice because the aim is to free people from oppression by transforming society on more just and equal lines, with planned economies and robust social provision seen as promoting this (Dominelli 2009a, 2009b, 2010). Third, individualist-reformist views see social work as an aspect of welfare

services to individuals in society. These are 'maintenance approaches', as social work concerns itself with ensuring social order by maintaining people during difficult times. This concern with maintaining social order and the social fabric of society reflects liberal or neoliberal political ideology/philosophy whereby free markets and the rule of law are seen as the best way of organising society. All such perspectives are applicable to social work practice with children and families.

The three views of social work means they are often at odds, or offer critiques of the others. For instance, seeking personal and social fulfilment, as in reflexive-therapeutic views, is difficult to reconcile with those of a socialist-collectivist persuasion because the interests of the ruling class work/elites work against those of the poor and oppressed unless significant social change takes place. In addition, merely working within or accepting the current social order, as reflexive-therapeutic and individual-reformist views do, actually supports the interests of those with wealth and power, this being a key point that socialists/collectivists make. As we will see, this is not to say that working within and yet against current society, as is the case with the socialist-collective view, is not without problems and difficulties, with many seeing a gap between the theory and its practical implementation in day-to-day social work. This is what a critical practice continually seeks to achieve.

Despite the three differing views there are also some affinities between them with, for example, reflexive-therapeutic and socialist-collective views being essentially about change and development. It can be argued that at times there is no clear dividing line, with social work practice theories often including elements of each and sometimes acknowledging the validity of elements of the others. Nevertheless, broadly speaking practice theories can be placed within one of these views. Existentialist, humanist (for example, gestalt therapy) and social psychological (for example, solution-focussed therapy) theories are linked with reflexive-therapeutic views, while task-centred theory is linked to individualist-reformist views. Critical social work theory and practice is linked to socialist-collectivist views, an important component being radical social work.

Radical social work

Radical social work draws on Marxist thought (see, for example, Garrett 2010; Marx and Engels 1967 [1848], 1970 [1845–46]) this providing an understanding of the development of welfare in society and of the state. It involves an approach to social work which involves a concern not only with theory but a 'political practice which confronts capitalism with an alternative model of social order' (Leonard 1978, p. xiv). This includes a materialist understanding of society, whereby how the materials of life produced through the economic system is a crucial determinant of the social system in which we live. Importantly, radical social work sees the myriad of problems confronting people in society being defined as social and structural rather than arising from individual failings. Furthermore, inequality and injustice in society arise from people's working class position (Bailey and Brake 1975a) together with oppressions based on race and gender (Langan and

Lee 1989). From this the focus of practice is political action and social change while at the same time attempting to address the immediate needs of service users.

At the heart of radical social work is an antagonism to the neoliberal view that economic markets where individuals compete to accumulate wealth are the most effective organisation for societies. Neoliberals argue that rational individuals seeking to benefit their own economic position thereby contribute to economic growth and social development which benefits everyone in society. However, this neglects the fact that it leads to economic and social inequality, together with the oppression of the poor and disadvantaged more generally. One has only to recall the restricted life chances for those children and families living in deprived areas (see Bradshaw 2011).

The work of Friere (1972) and his notion of *conscientisation* is a significant component of radical social work. It refers to the consciousness of oppressed people being raised by becoming aware of, and resisting, the process of oppression rather than accepting it as inevitable. It is about learning to perceive the real essence of political, economic and social situations and contradictions, and taking action against the oppressive elements of reality (Leonard 1984). Participation in dialogue and praxis, that is implementing theories in practice so that practice reflects on and alters the theory, is important; it is a process whereby people can take action to lose their fear of freedom and some of their powerlessness.

This not to say that radical social work was or is homogeneous because there were clear differences of emphasis. Classical Marxists saw social workers as agents of class control enhancing the oppression by capitalist societies of the working class, although more positive views were also taken. Such views address the contradiction that, while social workers are enforcers of (capitalist) state legislation and policy, equally they have an imperative to protect, support and advocate on behalf of the vulnerable. Then there is the view that social work is an agent of change connecting more general bourgeois society with the representatives, and thus the demands, of the working class. Another, and linked, is that social work is both an agent of capitalist control and yet it can undermine capitalist society by increasing working class capacities to function and also offering some knowledge and power of the state to service users in the working class. The existence of this contradiction in social workers' roles, the argument continues, leads to other contradictions that can eventually contribute to the overthrow of capitalist society (see for example, Bailey and Brake 1975a; Brake and Bailey 1980; Corrigan and Leonard 1978; Rojek et al. 1988).

Perhaps the major current statement of radical, indeed Marxist, social work is Mullaly's *Structural Social Work* (2003). Drawing on Canadian theoretical traditions, it argues that as social problems are inherent in present society the focus of change should mainly be on social structures, not individuals. In pursuing this he compares Marxism's paradigm of political social thought which underlies social work with those of neo-conservatism, liberalism and social democracy. Marxism's class analysis seeks a planned economy based on the collective effort of everyone and, at least for some Marxists, has a progressive view of welfare and social work. Neo-conservatism sees welfare as having a residual role in current

society, while liberalism has an individualistic view of welfare. Social democracy seeks a participative and humanitarian social system and has much in common with Marxism, also having a progressive view of welfare and social work.

When it comes to 'structural' practice, Mullaly highlights a number of examples. First, *consciousness-raising* involves promoting the understanding of dehumanising structures and how to overcome their effects. Second, *normalisation* refers to helping service users to see that their problems are not unique and linking them to others who share them. And third, *dialogical relations* means a dialogue of equals should be maintained, this including the practitioner demystifying their own activities and providing inside information.

Radical social work was influential in the UK for much of the 1970s and into the 1980s, admittedly often more at the level of theory rather than practice. However, this influence waned as the New Right gained power and dominated during the 1980s and 1990s. The collapse of Communism was another factor and led to a re-examination and recasting of radical ideas, including, and as noted, the integration of race and gender issues into the original class-based analysis. There were also other factors to consider as a 'looser', critical theory became incorporated.

However, prior to considering critical theory it is necessary to consider the 'second wave' of radical social work (Ferguson and Woodward 2009; Lavalette 2011a; Turbett 2014). This arose because of the introduction of neoliberal managerial social work which emphasises an increased concern with bureaucracy and targets aimed at rationing resources/services and risk assessment/management, with resulting practice often merely amounting to moral policing. The resultant disillusionment and discontent within social work created a space for the rebirth of radicalism (Lavalette 2011b). The restrictions of managerialism, as well as those arising from marketisation, left many practitioners, in both adults' and children's services, feeling they are no longer able to do the job in the way it should be done (Unison 2009, 2010), this resonating with what academic studies also show (White et al. 2009, 2010). As the Social Work Task Force (2009) noted, the social work profession was not flourishing (see Chapter 2).

Radical social work now helps practitioners frame solutions to the global economic crisis as well as drawing on resources of hope that include a view of a better world. First, echoing aspects of the counterculture and the New Left, the end of the 1990s saw the birth of a new social movement, namely the anti-capitalist or global justice movement. It was against the impact and consequences of neoliberalism including Third World debt, the privatisation of public services and the effect on working conditions as well as on state welfare provision more generally. Then there was the effect of market deregulation on the environment and the plight of refugees across the globe. Resulting campaigns and protests broadened and deepened, merging with, for example, global anti-war and climate change protestors. They questioned Fukuyama's (1993) 'end of history' thesis that there was no alternative to global capitalism, and opened up the possibilities of alternatives. This spawned intellectuals such as Naomi Klein, Alex Callinicos and George Montbiot, who developed critiques of neoliberalism, the meaning of equality and social justice, the environmental crisis and the possibilities of an

alternative world. Protests have included the Occupy movement in New York and London, focussing on the financial/banking sector, its role in causing the world-wide economic crisis and resulting Great Recession, and the fact that ordinary people are paying the price for the catastrophe.

A second resource for hope is revitalising existing collective organisations such as trade unions, as well as social workers and service users coming together so as to campaign on specific social work and service user issues. This latter grouping is evidenced by the Social Work Action Network (SWAN), which works in conjunction with the main trade unions by campaigning and organising conferences. SWAN is committed to anti-racist, anti-oppressive practice and service user engagement, and participates with all movements that aim for a better and more humane world. Importantly, it is engaged in rethinking the radical social work project for the twenty-first century and asserts that 'another social work is possible'; one that rejects managerialism and marketisation, along with social welfare services retrenchment and substantial cutbacks (Lavalette 2011a).

This second wave of radical social work leads one to a more positive view of aspects of critical social work. The focus of critical social work per se was often on identity and difference; admittedly this led to positive developments in relation to feminism, anti-racism and anti-discriminatory/oppressive practice. However, a problem was that whereas commonality provided a basis for joint, collective action, the stress on identity and difference led to a fragmentation which is integral to neoliberal policies which accentuate the belief in individualism. Importantly, these new emphases led to a retreat from class analysis and politics, together with the possibility these offer for collective action. It also meant the sidelining issues of poverty and equality, and the resultant 'politics of redistribution' (Fraser 1997). In practice much of critical social work, at least in its broadest sense, sought to overcome fragmentation and make links between oppression and material inequality. But it is the return of radical social work itself that highlights the continued relevance of class.

Class still matters because of three distinct but related aspects (see Ferguson I. 2011). First, it is a social division and a determinant of life chances. Second, it provides an explanatory framework by helping make sense of both the experience of people who use social work and practitioners themselves. And third, it continues to have the potential to promote social change with the politics of class still having relevance. Such comments certainly resonate with Bailey and Brake's (1975a, 1975b) work and have direct significance as far as current social work is concerned. This is because managerialism can be understood as a class-based project aimed at applying neoliberal ideas and practices to the public sector and 'getting more for less'. Resistance through trade union activity and building alliances with users' groups offers the hope of protecting services and making a new kind of social work.

An example of the continued relevance of class and Marxist ideas more generally is provided by Garrett (2008, 2009c) in relation to the Italian Marxist, Gramsci, and his notion of cultural hegemony. This refers to how modern forms of political and economic power include the active and practical involvement

of hegemonised groups, this meaning that it is actually a form of consent. It occurs because those with power maintain a social order that benefits them by integrating key social beliefs into cultural life through the influence of the media and education. Such a situation can be contrasted with the concept of dominant ideology which is more about a more passive, static subordination involving such as the use of force (Joseph 2006). Garrett promotes a more Gramscian way of thinking about, and acting in, social work, this involving a practice of hegemonic critique which can help free individuals' minds from the distortions of bourgeois ideology.

This is not, of course, to say that resistance to managerialism and neoliberalism is easy, but radical and critical ideas can be pursued in practice by wherever possible working with individual users on issues as defined by them, by building relationships with them, and by always being attentive to their needs and rights. It involves recognising the oppression and discrimination that users continually face. Such practice has to go hand in hand with the more collective strategies outlined previously.

But there is another issue to consider. A concern with values, although essential, is not sufficient merely because the vagueness and ambiguity of words such as empowerment and respect means they can be appropriated by forces which are directly opposed to social work values and objectives (Ferguson 2008). Often, for instance, changes in practice may seem to have a semblance of loyalty to social work values, whereas in actual fact it amounts to doing the bidding of managers and policy makers who have a very different agenda. The concern with values, therefore, has to be underpinned by a critical analysis of the political context in which social work is taking place. In pursuing this, it is possible to assert the possibility of a different, radical or critical, social work (Lavalette 2011a). This is necessary because to do otherwise means we capitulate to a social order based on selfishness, greed and inequality rather than one based on social justice and equality.

Critical theory

Moving to critical theory, during the 1930s–1950s many on the political left in Europe felt that the moment of socialist revolution had passed. The rise of fascism in Germany, Spain and Italy, the totalitarian Communism of Russia, and the Second World War were all factors in this critical pessimism. Many turned away from direct involvement in workers' movements and socialist political parties, turning instead to ideology critique. Rather than a concern with revolutionary strategy and mobilisation, the lines of political engagement moved towards a strategy of exposing the negative ideology of capitalism. Such ideology, as Lenin, Lukacs and Gramsci had recognised, blocked the way for a true understanding of its exploitative nature, so freedom from capitalist oppression required an intellectual analysis of the ideological and cultural superstructures of modern society (see Ransome 2010). The result was the critical theory of the Frankfurt School of Social Research which first opened in 1923 under Max Horkheimer, other leading

members being Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and, later, their second generation representative Jürgen Habermas.

Critical theory aims to understand and be critical of current society with a view to bringing about positive change (Callinicos 1999). It can be counterposed to traditional theory which merely serves to legitimate the status quo. Critical theory strives to imagine alternatives to traditional theory, of getting beyond it so as to look back at social reality from a fresh perspective. With echoes of Marx, it is geared to achieving a superior, more civilised society which is seen as something which humanity should strive to achieve. It is hard to argue against the view that if one cannot envisage a better society than exists at present, then surely humanity has lost something. At critical theory's heart, therefore, in achieving such a goal there lies an 'attempt to achieve a unity of theory and practice, including a unity of theory with empirical research and both with an historically grounded awareness of the social, political, and cultural problems of the age' (Calhoun 1995, p. 13). Adorno and Horkheimer may have become pessimistic about the possibility of human emancipation by the working class, but Habermas, through his theory of communicative action, retained a sense of optimism for what has been and is the emancipatory project of Enlightenment and modernity (Habermas 1981a, 1981b). Communicative action emphasises that dialogue between social actors is fundamentally shaped by their mutual desire to reach understanding and agreement, and this can eventually lead to humankind's emancipation. Importantly, his theory involves the principle of *immanent critique*, the idea that criticisms emerging from within a particular paradigm or cultural tradition demonstrate the capacity of the paradigm to turn its own critical and explanatory power against itself. Despite postmodern challenges such as the questioning of 'grand narratives', and the emphasis on language and identity, Habermas's (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* is an 'extraordinary attempt to pursue the questions which have been constitutive of social theory since Hegel' (Callinicos 1999, p. 287).

In looking at critical theory in relation to social theory more generally, it has had three significant influences (Ransome 2010). First, it emphasises that social theory cannot do without its critical dimension. This is because to understand social reality one must penetrate the surface of things to discover discrepancies between appearance and actuality. In so doing, it is possible to discern those elements of social reality that can lead to the transformation of reality. The second influence is that of the Frankfurt School which legitimated the use of basic Marxian concepts like alienation, reification and praxis for the purposes of ideology critique, rather than as solely tools of revolutionary strategy. Such concepts have been refined for new purposes in the sense that their revolutionary potential is used not to mobilise the revolution, but to revolutionise perceptions of social reality itself. Third, the Frankfurt School, despite its tendency to work in the abstract, also had a grounded dimension by identifying some novel features of modern society as it entered its consumption-orientated stage; one example is an acknowledgement of the role of the mass media in shaping or crafting public opinion.

When it comes specifically to social work, it is Fook (2002) who perhaps provides the most significant attempt to develop critical theory and social work

practice (see later). She provides an analysis of social issues that helps social workers think creatively about their practice and respond to concerns about oppressive practice.

Feminist perspectives

When it comes to feminist perspectives on social work, they focus on explaining and responding to the oppressed position of women in society. This is particularly important because much social work is done with women, and there is a need for practitioners to understand their roles and position. There is also the fact that although most social workers are women, they do not tend to reach the higher echelons of management. Such issues mean that a feminist practice often focusses on collaborative and group work in order to achieve consciousness of the issues that affect women in their social relations within society. There is also an emphasis on dialogical, egalitarian relationships between users and practitioners. Such practice often seeks radical change in societies, along with equality and mutual help and support, although there is also a concern with personal and social growth and development. As a result, the influence of feminist perspectives on practice can embrace socialist-collectivist and reflexive-therapeutic views of social work, this depending on the actual practice emphasis.

Feminist thinking has a has a long history with many differentiated perspectives concerning the political, social, cultural and other forms of domination of women and their social relations by patriarchy, which is a system of thought and social relations that privileges and empowers men (Beasley 1999). It also creates relationships between genders that disfranchise, disempower and devalue women's experience. Although the different perspectives are united by common concerns, they are fundamentally divided in their analysis of the reasons for women's unequal position and in strategies for correcting it.

In fact, five feminisms can be distinguished, and it is worth briefly elaborating them (see Dominelli 2002). First, liberal feminism is concerned with equality with men, of both having the same opportunity in terms of work, caring and family responsibilities. Second, radical feminism focusses on patriarchy, the social system which is characterised by men's power and privilege, and instead emphasises valuing and celebrating the differences between men and women. Third, socialist/Marxist feminism sees oppression as part of social inequality in a class-based structure, with women being seen as helping in the reproduction of the workforce for the benefit of capitalism through their domestic tasks and child care. Fourth, black feminism begins with racism and points to the diversity of women and the different kinds and combinations of oppression which affect them. Finally, postmodern feminism looks at the cultural and social discourses in society that limit conceptions of women and the possibilities for development.

It was in the 1980s that major feminist social work texts began to appear (for example, Dominelli and McCleod 1989; Hanmer and Statham 1999 [1988]). They raised the relevance of feminist thinking on many social work issues such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, as well as examining social categories

where women are strongly represented because of gender difference such as mental health, care givers and older people. More recent work focusses on feminist social work from a socialist perspective (Dominelli 2002), feminism and critical practice (Fook 2002), and feminism and postmodernism (Healy 2000). When it comes to feminist practice, it aims to take place within dialogic, egalitarian relationships whereby women's experience and diversity are shared and valued. There is also a focus on the division and relationship between private experience and public problems, and how social workers' intervention on behalf of the public within the domestic arena can potentially be oppressive. One obvious example is in relation to domestic violence/abuse where there can be a tendency to blame the victim, that is the woman, for failing to protect her children from the possibilities of physical and emotional harm.

Feminist perspectives have had three significant influences on social work. First, feminist, non-sexist, social work is vitally important to many women, also offering lessons to men in understanding and approaching women users. This in turn can lead to new and less judgemental stances towards women's sexuality and lives. Second, feminism has clearly given greater priority to women's issues and makes the important point that there would be social value in replacing patriarchy in social relations. It has also raised the policy context of welfare as it affects women, this being done by its concern for the effects of gender on expectations for caring, and on services for women who suffer violence. Relatedly, there is the emphasis on ethics of care, this taken up in Chapter 9. Finally, the distinctive practice contributions referred to – attending to gender issues, group consciousness-raising and dialogical, egalitarian relationships – have had a significant impact on critical social work practice.

Anti-discrimination/oppression and cultural and ethnic sensitivity

Anti-discriminatory/oppression (AD/O) approaches arose largely as a result of developments in relation to race and gender which have occurred since the 1970s, but they were also influenced by work in relation to gay and lesbian rights, disability, ageing and the like. Feminist perspectives/approaches have been dealt with in the foregoing, so here I look at race and, briefly, the other social groupings.

AD/O and cultural and ethnic sensitivity approaches originate from a concern about racism and ethnic conflict. One has only to recall inner city riots during the early 1980s in England and further riots in Burnley, Oldham and other northern towns in the early 2000s. AD/O theories mainly take a socialist-collectivist view, while sensitivity approaches, although incorporating some structural aspects that are socialist, apply these in a more reflexive-therapeutic way (Payne 2005b). Thus, rather than seeking broader social change, sensitivity approaches seek to make the social order more responsive to the problems that race and ethnicity issues raise. In brief, AD/O perspectives focus on fighting institutionalised discrimination in a society which represents the interests of powerful groups, while sensitivity perspectives advocate positive responses to cultural and ethnic diversity in societies. It is also worth noting that multiculturalism, despite being questioned

by the political right, remains the dominant paradigm; it affirms ethnic diversity and seeks to incorporate this into societies by valuing cultural contributions to the whole.

Racism itself consists of ideologies and social processes that discriminate on the basis of an assumed different racial membership, often based on colour although increasingly focussing on cultural factors. Anti-racism, the precursor of AD/O and sensitivity approaches, can be seen as having five perspectives (Ely and Denney 1987). First, assimilation assumes migrants to a new country will take in the culture and lifestyle of that country, with social and personal difficulties seen as a failure to adapt – blaming the victim, if you will. Second, liberal pluralism focusses on equal opportunities for immigrants. Third, cultural pluralism accepts various ethnic and racial groups, wanting them to be encouraged and valued, with there being a policy of multiculturalism. A problem, however, is the encouragement of different cultures without coming to grips with the element of discrimination which is crucial to developing an anti-racist stance. Fourth, the structuralist perspective sees capitalist societies effecting groups within them differently, with ethnic as well as class division recognised as the basis for economic and social domination of particular groups by the ruling class. Finally, black perspectives emphasise the requirement to include the point of view of black communities themselves. From a critical perspective, structuralist and black perspectives are particularly important in that they involve social workers exploring their own racism, being careful to work with black people in ways which accept their values, moving social work away from controlling to supportive mechanisms, and working in alliance with black communities (Dominelli 1997).

AD/O and sensitivity approaches stress the importance of responding to discrimination and oppression as part of all social work. Dalrymple and Burke (2006) provide a comprehensive account of anti-oppressive practice emphasising an empowering approach, working in partnership with users and minimal intervention. Thompson (2003) provides a theoretical rationale for practice over across a range of social divisions including class, race and gender but also ageing, disability, sexual orientation, religion, language, nation, region, and mental illness and impairment. He sees structural explanations of oppression as central to AD/O, these providing a clear view of the social objectives of such theory, while sensitivity approaches focus on cultural and social relationships as a way of incorporating these issues into other approaches to practice. Both AD/O and sensitivity approaches seek to influence all forms of social work rather than create specific models of practice, although they do see empowerment approaches in particular as a way forward.

Empowerment and advocacy

Empowerment and advocacy relate to critical, feminist and anti-discrimination orientations and aim to enable people to overcome barriers in achieving life objectives and gaining access to services. It is important to emphasise that empowerment is often used by neoliberals to mean placing responsibility on individuals for

providing for their own needs with the aim of limiting state services. One should, therefore, be wary in using the term as it, like advocacy, does not necessarily relate to critical social work.

Despite the caveat, empowerment seeks to help people gain power over decision making and action in their own lives, while advocacy seeks to represent the interests of the powerless to powerful individuals and social structures. Empowerment is geared to ensuring the social justice aspects of social work, with Rees (1991) seeing its objectives being that of social justice, giving people greater security, and political and social equality through mutual support and shared learning. Adams (1996, p. 8) adds that 'Marxist socialist perspectives generally seek empowerment as a means of promoting contradictions in society, with a view to eventually seeking change.'

Advocacy originates from legal skills and involves promoting social change for groups and their causes as well as advocating individually for individuals. Regarding the latter an obvious, example is acting and arguing for peoples' interests in the field of welfare rights (Bateman 2000).

Importantly from a critical perspective, empowerment and advocacy, especially in the form of group work as in, for instance, Mullender and Ward's (1991) self-directed group work model, have the potential to promote solidarity and consciousness-raising (also see Mullender et al. 2013). Such approaches also provide practitioners with useful ideas for including issues of oppression, critical thinking and joint working with users into their practice. Beresford and Croft (1993), for example, show how users can become involved in seeking changes in services through group activity and campaigning. They draw attention to the possibility of seeing power positively, as being available in society for people to use.

Community development

Community development theories (see Payne 2005b) have a theoretical base that is more sociological and less psychological, as well as having links with empowerment and advocacy. Community work is an aspect of this, and involves helping people come together to identify issues of concern and take action to resolve them. It is not necessarily related to critical/radical practice, however, because it can be used by those with power to ensure that people accept the status quo or do what 'authority' deems desirable. However, it does have critical/radical possibilities including aiming to raise consciousness and emphasise equality. Unfortunately, such practices were among the reasons why the community development projects of the early 1970s were wound up (Rogowski 2010a); the government disapproved of practitioners and researchers arguing that multi-deprivation should be redefined and reinterpreted in terms on structural constraints rather than being the result of individual, psychological failings.

Nevertheless, community work theory and practice remained influential in the 1970s until the 1980s, latterly under the guise of community social work (see Chapter 4), although currently it is no longer a significant part of social work in the UK. This is because both the New Right and New Labour were never happy

with semi-autonomous professionals working with residents and helping them to organise in pursuit of their own goals, and engaging in such as tenants/residents groups, squatter groups, estate forums, claimants unions and the like.

Despite its removal from social workers' toolboxes, Henderson and Thomas (2002) provide a useful guide to neighbourhood work and hence community work. They argue that local communities need help to escape from isolation and marginalisation by becoming connected with resources in wider society. As far as it goes this is well and good, although for the critical/radical practitioner the focus becomes one of working with local groups and communities on projects aiming at social change rather than just accepting the current social order (Ledwith 2011).

Critical social work

Perhaps the most comprehensive exposition of critical social work is that of Fook (2002, 2004, 2012), who includes features of critical theory, post-structuralism and postmodernism into her analysis (Payne 2005b).

From critical theory a number of points are incorporated. First, *domination* is created structurally but experienced personally. The powerful may directly exploit people but deceive themselves and others that inequality is unavoidable, this leading to self-defeating behaviour. Second, *false consciousness*, whereby people believe inequalities are natural and again this can be self-defeating. Third, *positivism* is seen as an ideology about how knowledge is created, this leading to passivity because social facts cannot be changed. Instead, critical theory emphasises agency, the capacity to achieve social change. Fourth, knowledge does not reflect external reality but is actively *constructed* by researchers. The emphasis on the causal knowledge of the natural sciences is different from the knowledge of the social world which is created by self-reflection and interaction with others.

The points about positivism and reflection lead to the critical emphasis on awareness and agency. They also explain critical social work's scepticism of evidence-based and other positivist views of social work knowledge.

Fook's analysis starts by acknowledging the impact of globalisation including the 'compression' of the world as a result of economic and technological changes. There are a two points that follow from this. First, welfare states and the idea of *progress* in terms of the public good can be seen as modernist structures that will break down in postmodern global societies. Second, *professionalism* is questioned along with the belief in reason and science being able to advance humankind. This means social work knowledge and skills are devalued, being disaggregated into specific skill sets, and boundaries between social work and other professions are broken down. The focus is on services becoming targeted at specific behaviour and lifestyles rather than there being an emphasis on a more holistic professional social work practice. Management skills are more valued than professional practice with social workers becoming separated from policy, and even practice, development and change. Much of this corresponds with the neoliberal view of,

and influence in, the world or, put another way, it is the cultural logic of late capitalism (Jameson 1992).

Fook goes on to rethink ideas about social work practice in four ways. First, when it comes to knowledge, critical practice questions where it has come from and how it is used particularly by professionals. She advocates a critical reflexive approach challenging domination in social structures, social relations and personal constructions. Second, there is the question of who has power and how they use it. Critical social work analyses and reflects on the power in peoples' situations, trying to reconceptualise it and negotiate experiences of new power relations that are less disempowering. Third, following Foucault's work, discourse, language and narrative are important. Language is not seen as neutral but influences how we think and what we know; the narrative we tell about something chooses between possible alternatives so our discussions convince others that what we say is true. We can rethink all of this and in so doing different interpretations may become true. Fourth, identity and difference are emphasised; instead of thinking in terms of dichotomies (what we are and what we are not) we should see ourselves with more complexity and diversity.

Critically reflexive practice has links with the idea of social construction, and focusses on deconstruction, resistance, challenge and reconstruction (see Fook and Gardner 2007). Resistance and challenge resonate with radical social work, while other key components of critical social work are feminist and empowerment approaches. Of particular importance, is the rejection of the authoritative 'therapist' practitioner in favour of a more complex relationship between social worker and service user that reflects the ambiguities of their relationship. In sum, critical social work is concerned with a practice which furthers a society without domination, exploitation and oppression. It focusses:

> on how structures dominate, but also on how people construct and are constructed by changing social structures and relations, recognising that there may be multiple and diverse constructions of ostensibly similar situations. Such an understanding of social relations and structures can be used to disrupt understandings and structures, and as a basis for changing these so that they are more inclusive of different interest groups.
>
> (Fook 2002, p. 18)

Conclusion

The Thatcherite governments of the 1980s inflicted vastly expensive and socially divisive defeats on many workers, their families and communities in the steel, printing, dock working and, most significantly, mining industries. Social work similarly came under attack from government ministers and the media because of its links with welfare dependency, political correctness, being soft on crime and failures in relation to child abuse (Penketh 2000). Such developments contributed to the gradual demise of radical social work's influence, even though it had helped leave a legacy that included anti-oppressive and advocacy perspectives.

The introduction of managerialism and marketisation by both Conservative and New Labour governments ushered in a form of neoliberal social work which hindered the potential of social work to be a positive force, both at an individual and societal level, and increased the alienation of practitioners. Social workers were increasingly faced with carrying out repetitive tasks aimed at rationing and increasingly risk assessment which clashed with their value base and that of social work (Jones 2004). Indeed, like social work with adults, practice with children and families can now often be 'characterised [as] high-volume, low-intensity practice' (Lymbery and Postle 2010, p. 2510). This helps explain the necessity for critical social work, the revival of radical social work in the late 2000s and the continued relevance of the allied perspectives outlined earlier. But there is another important factor to consider.

It is worth repeating that following the Great Recession, the people who had nothing to do with causing the economic crisis – the deprived and vulnerable, along with those employed in the public sector – are precisely the ones expected to pay the price for the unbridled greed and casino gambling of the few. This has led to the Coalition and now Conservative governments' continuing public expenditure cuts and privatisation policies in relation to health, education and welfare which were no doubt a factor in, for example, the riots of 2011 in London and other cities. What has happened to the oft-repeated mantra of 'We are all in it together'? Such a situation re-emphasises why critical, radical and allied theories and perspectives are needed and where great strides have been made over recent decades.

Such theories and perspectives involves far more than complying with managerial and organisational demands which arise from political, economic and ideological changes over the last thirty years. At a theoretical and conceptual level they highlight important aspects of social and economic life, these including the importance of power, ideological/cultural hegemony, class and status, professionalisation, gender, race and oppression more generally. There is a need, therefore, to promote such as consciousness-raising in relation to social inequalities, political action and social change. Resulting practice helps confront a socially unjust and unequal order by making important theoretical and conceptual ideas available to social work more widely, as well as leading to the development of a specific emancipatory and transformational practice aimed at social justice (Payne 2005b). It is surely no wonder that social work's theoretical developments amount to one of the high points for the profession.

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Part three

The low points of social work

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6 From child welfare to child protection/safeguarding

Recently I wrote about the changing conceptions, policies and practice in relation to social work with children and families in the UK (Rogowski 2015a, 2015b), and I draw on some of that work in this chapter. I make no apologies for also drawing on Nigel Parton's substantial body of work in this area including his most recent book, *The Politics of Child Protection* (Parton 2014b); after all, as I wrote elsewhere (Rogowski 2015c), Parton has been an authoritative commentator on developments in child protection, both in the UK and elsewhere, for well over thirty years. As the book's title and ensuing quote indicates, the main premise of this chapter is that since the 1970s social work has witnessed a move from a broad concern with child welfare and prevention to the current situation where child protection/safeguarding dominates social work with children and families. Indeed, child protection/safeguarding and social work with children and families are now largely synonymous (Parton 2014a), this being something to which I return, but prior to that a little history is warranted.

Social work with children and families where child maltreatment is an issue began in the UK during the late nineteenth century. The 1889 Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act gave National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) inspectors, the precursors of professional social workers, powers to investigate suspected cruelty to children and bring parents before the courts, largely because of neglect (Ferguson H. 2011). This gradually changed from simply punishing parents to a range of intervention practices centring on the home including probation, health visiting and social work. Parents were increasingly approached as individuals who could be reformed and the concept of casework was born, eventually becoming working with parents and children on a therapeutic basis.

Until the 1960s the language used in policy and practice was 'child cruelty', but a new awareness of what was to be termed 'child abuse' emerged through the work of Henry Kemp and colleagues in the US, who coined the phrase 'battered child syndrome' (Kempe et al. 1962). During the 1970s, the term battered child was replaced by 'non-accidental injury to children' (NAI), while child sexual and emotional abuse began to be recognised. In the 1980s 'child abuse' became the generic term to cover physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. Such conceptions have been widened further in the 2000s with, for instance, trafficking

of children recognised as abuse. In the meantime, child abuse was superseded by 'child protection' in the 1990s and complemented by 'child safeguarding' in the 2000s (Hughes and Owen 2009), although through the Coalition years child protection re-emerged as the dominant theme.

As well as changing conceptions of child maltreatment, policies and practices also changed. During the first half of the twentieth century practice was carried out through the notion of 'inspection', and until the end of the Second World War the NSPCC played a key role (Ferguson H. 2011). This changed with the establishment of local authority children's departments in 1948 and social services departments in 1971. These departments had a wider brief than child maltreatment per se with a broader concept of child welfare and resulting preventative social work being to the fore. Practice with children and families involved spending time with them, building up relationships and offering advice, guidance and support on a collaborative basis. However, this changed in the 1980s and 1990s when, despite the notion of partnership with families following the 1989 Children Act, a more authoritarian, punitive approach slowly evolved and continues to this day.

Paralleling the moves to child protection/safeguarding, there has been a retreat from face-to-face practice and corresponding deprofessionalisation of social work because of practitioners having to comply with procedures and bureaucracy, this resulting in most of their time being spent with computers (see, for example, Munro 2011; Parton 2008; Rogowski 2010a, 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014b). As noted in Chapter 1 and more particularly Chapter 2, such changes are related to the retreat from the social democratic consensus of the initial post-war decades and the rise of the current neoliberal consensus (Garrett 2003, 2005, 2009b). Admittedly, the trends referred to are not totally unilinear, but there is surely no doubt about the overbearing influence of neoliberalism. Instead of the state, through the government of the day, playing a key role in ensuring the basic needs of citizens, the free market now dominates with values of individualism and self-responsibility being to the fore. This ideological move has seen social work change from being *the* profession to alleviate social problems by, for example, helping and supporting children and families, to a narrower, truncated role of rationing ever scarcer resources, assessing/managing risk and changing the behaviour and lifestyles of children and families, often in authoritarian and punitive ways (Rogowski 2010a, 2013). No wonder that this ever more restricted and controlling role can be characterised as a low point for social work.

In dealing with the changes that have taken place, this chapter is divided into three sections: the tragedy of Maria Colwell's death in 1973 and its aftermath, the 1989 Children Act and its (lack of) implementation, and developments under New Labour and ensuing Coalition and now Conservative governments.

The Maria Colwell case and its aftermath

During the 1960s and into the 1970s child abuse was essentially seen as a medico-social problem (Otway 1996), the emphasis being on diagnosing, curing and preventing the 'disease' or syndrome, with the aforementioned 'battered child syndrome' being a clinical condition in young children who had received serious

physical abuse from their parents (Kempe et al. 1962). Essentially the problem of child maltreatment was reducible to abusive or neglectful parents who were either very sick or evil and who could characterised as different from ourselves. Doctors and social workers were the ones with the responsibility to evaluate the issue and ensure no repetition, with research focussing on identifying the traits of the 'abusing family' and the practitioner expected to identify these and act accordingly, often by working therapeutically with the family. As stated, during the 1970s non-accidental injury (NAI) to children became the accepted term, prior to the more overarching term of child abuse which encompassed child sexual and emotional abuse.

The tragic death of Maria Colwell, who was killed by her stepfather, and the subsequent public enquiry (Secretary of State for Social Services 1974) was significant. She had been in the care of the local authority in Brighton and was subject to a supervision order when she died at the hands of her stepfather. The authorities were contacted on several occasions about concerns for her welfare and the home was visited by several professionals, but she had a tragic and brutal death. Until this case social work had been given the key role in mediating and resolving the difficult and often ambiguous relationship between the privacy of the family and the public responsibilities of the state so that children could be protected and the privacy of the family was not undermined (Parton 2014b). Maria's death led to considerable media, political and public attention, and proved a watershed in the politics of child protection and children and families social work more generally. The resulting public enquiry in effect saw social work put on trial and found wanting (Butler and Drakeford 2011). The still emergent profession became linked to failure and incompetence in relation to the preventable death of a child, with similar comments applying to the newly established Social Services Departments. As Nigel Parton (2014b) shows, drawing on the work of Stanley Cohen (2002 [1972]) and others, this can be related to the notions of 'folk devils' and 'moral panics'. Such panics emerge in conditions of social crisis when traditional values and social institutions lose their credibility under threat by those designated as folk devils who have a range of anxieties and fears projected onto them. The media plays a central role in creating and sustaining the panic and identifying the group to serve as folk devils. In Maria's case, social workers were the folk devils, the ones to be castigated and vilified: the outgroup challenging the values of mainstream society. However, rather than child abuse per se being the object of the moral panic, it was the operation, procedures and failures of what was to become the 'child protection system'. In many ways the case provides the key reference point for future media coverage of child abuse cases and social work, with the media and political image of social work being inextricably linked with failures in relation to child abuse.

Despite the media and political furore, and while case conferences and child abuse registers were established, the public enquiry confirmed that the role of the Social Services Department – and hence that of social work – was pivotal along with those of doctors and health visitors (Secretary of State for Social Services 1974). It was only in 1976 that the police's role was considered vital as the medico-social model remained dominant, although this was to gradually change as a

socio-legal model came to the fore, one which had an emphasis on investigating, assessing and examining the evidence (Otway 1996; Parton 1985). This change is linked to the criticism of welfarism that developed during the 1970s and deepened into the 1980s (Rogowski 2010a).

The 1970s economic difficulties, linked to the oil crisis of 1973, together with a perceived growth in social disorder and indiscipline (striking trade unions, unruly pupils, growth in crime and so on) undermined the economic and social pillars of welfarism, and the political consensus that supported it (Parton 1996). Being part of the welfarist project, social work came under attack both from the left and, most importantly, from the right. The left, including feminists and anti-racists, were concerned that Social Services Departments were ineffective, distant and oppressive, leaving the user powerless and without a voice. For some, social work was seen as an element of class control, preserving the status quo of capitalist societies by controlling and regulating the working class. Unwittingly, such groups opened up a political space which was to be colonised by the New Right (see Chapter 2), who were against public expenditure on welfare, instead wanting an increased emphasis on self-help, individual responsibility, 'choice' and freedom, together an extension of the commodification of social relations. Significantly they were against self-serving professions such as social work, which were seen as creating welfare dependency (Ferguson et al. 2002). The New Right's view was that people should be responsible for themselves, with the state only intervening as a last resort. It involved a critique of the ability of the post-war welfare state being able to manage the economy effectively in the context of rising unemployment and inflation, and overcome social problems. Difficulties in the economic and social spheres were seen as related, with the market seen as the key institution for the former and the family being the key institution for the latter.

More specifically in relation to social work, there were concerns about poor child care practice and the nature and extent of interventions in people's lives in the name of welfare. First, concerning child care practice, between the publication of the Colwell Inquiry report in 1974 and 1985 there were 29 further enquiries into the deaths of children as a result of abuse (Corby et al. 1998), with there being considerable similarity in their findings. For instance, most identified lack of interdisciplinary communication and too little focus on the needs of the child as distinct fromv those of the parents. Political and media concern increased further in the mid-1980s with public inquiries into the deaths of Jasmine Beckford, Tyra Henry and Kimberley Carlile in different London boroughs. Second, concerning welfare intervention into people's lives, civil liberties lawyers drew attention to the way the administration of justice was unjustly applied in various areas of child welfare and the need for a greater emphasis on individual rights (Morris et al. 1980). Or again, in the 1980s the campaign/support group Parents Against Injustice voiced concerns about the intrusive intervention into families lives by social workers, these being particularly pertinent following the events in Cleveland, Rochdale and Orkney, when many children were (unnecessarily as it turned out) removed from their families as a result of child abuse concerns.

Overall the various child abuse inquiries pointed to deficiencies in policy, practice, knowledge and skills and the way systems performed and interrelated. Social workers were often seen as too gullible and trusting of parents so not intervening to protect children – or, as in Cleveland, they were seen as being overzealous in removing children because of allegations of sexual abuse and not respecting the rights of parents (Secretary of State for Social Services 1988). As well as social work practice, the legal framework was criticised with a new balance needed between 'family autonomy and state intervention but also getting the correct balance between the power, discretion and responsibilities of the judicial, social and medical experts and agencies' (Otway 1996, p. 158).

Eventually, as a result of overwhelming criticism of the processes that sought to transform 'dysfunctional' families to 'healthy' ones, the focus was to change from working therapeutically to protecting children. Furthermore, the language used in this process changed from that of a caring, welfare-orientated profession to that of one more akin to the police, not least the notion of 'investigation'. This can be related to the New Right's view that although they wanted a 'minimal state' in relation to intervening in peoples' lives, when it did intervene it needed to be strong and authoritative. It is in this context that, as Howe (1992) put it, social workers became investigators rather than therapeutic practitioners, managers become designers of surveillance systems rather than consultants, and parents became objects of enquiry; the move was essentially from therapy and welfare to surveillance and control. Lawyers and the courts became crucial, scrutinising social work practice, and in so doing changing attitudes and the course of practice itself. As Parton (1991) points out, policies and practices associated with child welfare and child care, which formed the basis of Children's Departments and the creation of Social Services Departments, were re-designated and reconstructed around the axis of child protection. An important aspect of this change was the 1989 Children Act.

The 1989 Children Act and (lack of) its implementation

The 1989 Children Act aimed to address the wide-ranging disquiet about the practices of social workers, and to a lesser extent, other health and welfare professionals in relation to child abuse. However, it was also informed by research and a series of official reports which aimed to update and rationalise child care legislation, notably the Short Report (Social Services Committee 1984) and the *Review of Child Care Law* (DHSS 1985).

The 1989 Act attempted to encourage an approach to child welfare based on *negotiation* with families which in turn involved parents and children in agreed plans (Parton 2014b). The accompanying guidance and regulations encouraged working in *partnership*, emphasising *support* for families with children 'in need' so as to keep the use of care proceedings and emergency interventions to a minimum. The concept of *prevention* was elevated, the aim being to establish a new balance in policy and practice between 'family support' and what had become 'child protection', an important aspect of this being the introduction of a new

threshold criterion. This criterion had to be met before care proceedings could be initiated, and it was that the child concerned was, or was likely to, suffer significant harm, with harm itself referring to ill-treatment or impairment of health or development. Further, as alluded to, once care proceedings were initiated they were subject to close legal oversight.

In some ways the 1989 Act was welcomed as a progressive piece of legislation, albeit it was introduced in a 'hostile [neoliberal] climate' and its success depended on whether resources would be available for the preventative family support provisions (Frost 1992). Less positively, health and social work experts were seen as being not able to be left to make decisions alone, so under *Working Together* (Home Office et al. 1991) law and order agencies became involved. In addition, social workers had to complete a lengthy comprehensive assessment (the Orange Book), which was introduced in an attempt to improve and clarify the assessment of risk (DH 1988). It was hoped that the rationalisation of inter-agency working and procedures would be matched by developing practice skills in the assessment of individual cases. Importantly, the roles of social workers and the police were merged from the initial strategy meetings to discuss both child care and law enforcement issues and thereafter throughout the whole investigation process. These developments were reinforced by the *Memorandum of Good Practice* (Home Office/Department of Health 1992), since which the social work/police relationship has been central to child protection work despite the dangers of social workers losing their identity and professionalism (Garrett 2003).

Perhaps it is no surprise that the 'hostile climate' proved insurmountable in that the progressive aspects of the legislation in relation to prevention and family support were barely implemented, with anxieties about child protection dominating. Thus, throughout the 1990s practice was largely crisis-orientated and reactive in relation to child protection, and this often involved a more authoritarian and controlling attitude towards families and alienated them in the process. Thus, the *Children Act Report* (1993) pointed out the slow progress in relation to implementing S. 17 of the 1989 Act in relation to children in need. Some local authorities, it went on, found 'it difficult to move from a reactive social policy role to a more proactive partnership role with families' (DH 1994, para. 239).

However, it was *Child Protection: Messages from Research* (DH 1995), which summarised the key findings from a number of government research studies on child protection practices, which opened up a major debate about child protection policy and practice and children's services more generally (Parton 1997). It showed that only one in seven of those referred as children at risk of abuse were ever placed on the child protection register, and fewer than one in twenty-five were ever removed from home as a result. There was also an overall tendency for local authorities to concentrate on investigating whether there was any risk of abuse rather than assessing whether the child was in need. Even those who were registered were provided with little support, and many children who were not registered received even less, despite having difficulties and thereby being in need. The focus on 'forensically driven child protection investigations' meant there 'was a failure to develop longer term co-ordinated preventative strategies'

in relation to family support (Parton 2014b, p. 26). Notwithstanding the stress on 're-focussing', the fact that the research was conducted under the auspices of a right-wing Conservative government might suggest it had more to do with reducing the cost of expensive child protection investigations and resulting care proceedings rather than offering any genuine help and support to children in need. In any case, unlike the aforementioned government publications, it did not have a large impact on practice.

New Labour and beyond

It was under New Labour that government research from the mid-1990s was published (DH 2001), this echoing *Child Protection: Messages from Research.* Importantly it reinforced the message that while there had been some progress, most local authorities had found it difficult to refocus' in the ways that had been suggested. The essential message was to emphasise working with families in ways that would keep children with their families and improve their overall outcomes. These outcomes were formulated widely and included the child's education, emotional and physical well-being, their family ties, and their sense of identity and preparation for the future. Additionally, a new *Working Together* document had been published (DH et al. 1999), one that was different from the 1991 version. Not only was this the first time that the word safeguarding was used in official guidance about child abuse but the subtitle – 'a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' – explicitly framed the issue in terms of local authorities' wider responsibilities towards all children whose health or development might be impaired without the provision of support and services, or who were disabled. Ostensibly to take this forward, a supposedly more differentiated and holistic approach to assessment was introduced.

In fact, New Labour's introduction of the standardised assessment framework (Department of Health et al. 2000) was central to the changes effecting social work with children and families during the 2000s. This framework superseded the Orange Book, the aim being to move from social work focussing reactively in relation to child protection by assessing risk of child abuse and significant harm, to one that was concerned with the possible impairment to a child's development. Its introduction coincided with new information and communication technologies (see later). In particular, it was hoped it would help in the introduction of the Integrated Children's System which was designed to produce a unified approach to collecting and producing management information data for local and central government departments (Cleaver et al. 2008), albeit this goal meant little to practitioners and, more importantly, children and families (Rogowski 2013).

At any rate, the argument was that both safeguarding and the promotion of a child's welfare were seen as ultimately connected aims for intervention, so it was important that access to services was by a common assessment route. The key task was to determine whether a child was in need and how the child and the parents in the context of their family and community environment could be helped. Three dimensions needed to be addressed: the child's developmental needs, parenting

capacity, and family and environmental factors. In addition, the different levels of assessment within the framework had different timescales attached to them. Within a working day of referral there would be a decision about what response was required. If more information was required, an initial assessment had to be completed within seven working days. This addressed the aforementioned dimensions to determine whether the child was in need, the services required, from where and when, and whether a more detailed core assessment should be undertaken within thirty-five working days. In practice core assessments were reserved for more complex and/or child protection cases.

Taken together, the 1999 Working Together (DH et al. 1999) and the assessment framework were more substantial and complex than previous guidance (Parton 2014b), and there are two important aspects to this. First, the objects of concern had widened and, second, the different timescales introduced for different levels of assessment provided key criteria for judging and inspecting the performance of local authorities and their social workers. Admittedly, there was a continued concern to get away from a narrow, forensically driven concept of child protection to the broader notion of safeguarding, even though the latter concept was somewhat wide-ranging and vague (Smith 2008).

Furthermore, a fundamental criticism of the assessment framework is the world view of uncritical acceptance of current economic and social arrangements, these being the unquestioned foundation for familial dynamics and interpersonal relationships. Initially, there was some flexibility for social workers to address this, in that they could use their own narrative to describe and explain the reality of the problems and difficulties facing children and families, but this was vastly reduced by the 'electronic turn' (Garrett 2005). The new information and communication technologies, especially in the early stages of their introduction, involved practitioners in little more than ticking boxes on computer exemplars. It involved a shift from a narrative to a database way of thinking and operating, resulting in social work operating less on the terrain of the social and more on the terrain of the informational (Parton 2008). Moreover, it must be emphasised that following completion of the forms/computer exemplars, unless there were child protection concerns, little actually occurred in terms of family support from social work. As Smith (2008, p. 161) put it, 'assessment processes . . . are being utilised at least partly to justify screening out some needs, and redefining them as someone else's problem, or as insufficiently serious to warrant intervention, or sometimes as just intractable and beyond help.' Such assessments became increasingly underpinned by the functional objective to ration resources, manage risk and police the socially marginalised, rather than what was supposedly intended, namely assessing need and how it should be met. Furthermore, the actual practice in child protection evolved into little more than telling parents to change their behaviour or lifestyle or face the consequences of losing their children to adoption. This is the 'muscular authoritarianism' towards deprived families that Featherstone et al. (2014a) refer and is something to which I return to later.

The child abuse tragedies of Victoria Climbié and Baby Peter Connolly in the 2000s were also significant during the New Labour years, and it is important to look at these in turn.

Victoria Climbié

Victoria, aged 9 years, died at the hands of her 'aunt' and her partner in 2000. She was born in the Ivory Coast and brought to England via France, and in the 18 months leading to her death was known to four different London social services departments, two police teams, two hospitals and an NSPPC family centre. The case had similarities with most of the tragic child death scandals of the previous thirty years (Parton 2004) and her death led to the Laming Inquiry (Laming Report 2003). The inability of agencies to work together was highlighted during the inquiry and the government subsequently published the *Every Child Matters* (ECM) papers (Department of Education and Skills 2004a, 2004b), which eventually led to the 2004 Children Act. 'Child safeguarding' became the new mantra, denoting 'a more systematic and inclusive approach . . . to ensure no child slips through the net ' (Taylor 2009, p. 17). The Act sought to enhance the integration of health, education, social services/care and others by establishing Children's Trusts, this leading to the demise of social services departments in 2006. In the same year another significant change was local Area Child Protection Committees being replaced by local Safeguarding Children Boards. However, it was not until new Working Together guidance was published (HM Government 2006) that safeguarding was actually defined, the definition referring to protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health and development, and ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. Furthermore, the guidance was framed in terms of supporting *all* children and families in terms of the five ECM outcomes of being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic well-being and, particularly, staying safe, which were all seen as key to children and young people's well-being.

While protecting children from maltreatment was seen as important so as to prevent impairment of health and development on its own, it was not seen as sufficient to ensure children were growing up in circumstances that ensured the provision of safe and effective care which could bring about the five outcomes for all children (Parton 2014b). The guidance was all about trying to ensure that all agencies and professionals worked together and fulfilled their responsibilities in relation to prevention and child protection, as well as safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. However, when it came to prevention, it must be emphasised that the actual role of social work was somewhat marginalised, as in practice they only became involved with children and families when there were actual child protection concerns (Rogowski 2015a, 2015b). This narrow and restricted social work role was reinforced by the Common Assessment Framework (CAF; DfES 2006).

CAFs were introduced so that children with additional needs could be dealt with by common assessments carried out by schools, child care providers, children's centres, health services and the voluntary sector. They were to be used when someone working with a child or young person felt that they might not progress towards the five ECM outcomes without additional services. Although

the aim was to improve inter-agency working and avoid families having to repeat themselves to numerous agencies, various problems emerged with this initiative (Pithouse and Broadhurst 2009; Rogowski 2013). First, the focus is on assessment rather than direct help for children and families. Second, for many CAFs are an administrative burden which does not guarantee the provision of any additional services; instead they simply increase bureaucracy and consequently the time spent away from direct work with children and families. Third, parents often found the CAF meetings bewildering and again a form-filling exercise. And fourth, health visitors and teachers, for instance, often did not see it as part of their role to complete these forms, arguing that when they contact a social worker about a child/young person's difficulties/needs, they did not want to be simply told to 'fill in a CAF form.'

In sum, safeguarding had a broad remit, being much broader than child protection, and in a sense was 'everyone's business', something that *Staying Safe* (DCSF 2007) emphasised. However, as Parton (2014b, p. 97) notes in all of the (many) pages of guidance, there was 'no reference to a whole range of community, institutional and social structural factors that impacts on child's welfare'. Furthermore, while the new systems set in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children were far more complex and wide-ranging than the narrower, forensically driven child protection system of the 1990s, child protection was still at the core of the new arrangements. Similarly, local authority children's services and social workers continued to have the lead responsibility for assessing whether a child was in need – albeit this was often interpreted very narrowly (Rogowski 2013) – and which children may be suffering significant harm. As such they continued to play the key role in relation to the statutory responsibilities of the state and the specific operation of the child protection system.

The ECM changes may have been prompted to ensure that the tragedy of Victoria Climbié could not happen again, but they were always likely to be criticised should another high profile child death occur. And as child protection systems cannot guarantee 100% success, such a scenario was bound to occur sooner or later.

Baby Peter Connolly

Baby Peter Connolly died in Haringey, London, during August 2007 while in the care of his mother and two men. During the subsequent trial the court heard that he was used as a 'punch bag', that his mother deceived and manipulated professionals, on one occasion using chocolate to hide his bruises. He was pronounced dead shortly after a hospital doctor failed to identify he had a broken spine. The media response was immediate and highly critical of the services and professionals involved, particularly social workers. For example, one tabloid newspaper, the *Sun*, turned the death of 'Baby P' into 'a campaign of vengeance and vilification directed at those who gave their professional lives to assisting and protecting children' (Jones 2014, p. 1), namely the social workers. Others who had roles in assisting and protecting children, such as those within health services and the police, largely remained on the margins of the story. In addition to the case

seeming to represent what appeared to be wrong with existing child protection policy and practice, and therefore particularly social work, it also came to represent what seemed to be wrong in society more generally. It is no surprise that the government wanted to contain the political fallout from the tragedy, this involving a number of key components. Although these included what turned out to be the unlawful dismissal of Sharon Shoesmith, Haringey's Director of Children's Services, by Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, there were three components that were arguably more measured.

First, there was a review of child protection in England undertaken by Lord Laming (Laming Report 2009). The review was generally supportive of the post-Climbié ECM changes but felt more needed to be done to tighten up or strengthen what was seen as the core 'business', namely child protection (Parton 2014b). Second, there was a revised Working Together (HM Government 2010) which attempted to respond to the changes in research, policy and practice since the previous document in 2006 (HM Government 2006). However, it followed the proceduralised format of previous guidance, and its length and complexity grew considerably. And third, the Social Work Task Force was established in 2009 to review frontline practice. It recommended an overhaul of social work education and training, called for an assessed and supported year in employment, and argued for a system of Continuous Professional Development and the establishment of a College of Social Work (DCSF 2009a). The report was widely welcomed and was followed by the establishment of the Social Work Reform Board in 2010 to carry things forward, including, for example, the establishment of the College of Social Work.

However, perhaps the key point to stress is that 'many of the procedural and institutional changes that had been introduced over the previous 40 years, particularly those introduced after 1999, had become major problems' (Parton 2014b, p. 103). Importantly, a number of papers based on empirical research were critical of the many information and communication technology systems that had been introduced particularly in relation to the Integrated Children's System (for example, White et al. 2009, 2010). The changes deflected social workers from working directly with children and families by increasing bureaucracy and the need to meet targets, and this increased the possibilities for error (Broadhurst et al. 2010; White et al. 2010). How, for example, can children be protected/safeguarded if little time is spent with them and their families so as to fully ascertain their situation? It was in such situations that practitioners were unable to exercise professional judgement in order to safeguard children and promote their welfare. No wonder that the aforementioned reforms 'had a number of unintended, even dangerous, consequences, and the over-proceduralized, micro-managed and bureaucratized nature of the child protection system seemed to lie at the heart of the problems' (Parton 2014b, p. 103).

The Coalition government responded to this situation with Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, asking Eileen Munro to undertake a review of child protection, one which substituted what seemed to be confidence in systems, for trust in individuals (Gove 2010). Her subsequent report (Munro 2011) was based on the view that professional judgement was crucial to practice rather than

relying on strategies for managing risk which, paradoxically, made it harder for social workers to protect children and do what is best for them. She felt that instead of 'doing things right', namely following procedures, the focus should be on 'doing the right thing', ensuring that children were being helped. In addition, my contention is that with social workers being increasingly e-technicians, processing cases as speedily as possible, the reality is that too often for children and families the social work experience amounts to one-off visits, or at most a few, in order to collect information. Thereafter, apart from possibly outlining what, if anything needs to change, unless there are serious concerns the case is closed. In a real sense, therefore, the focus on procedures, bureaucracy and targets was seen to have reduced the capacity of practitioners to remain child-centred and to work directly with children and families. The most obvious example of some of this was the Working Together document (HM Government 2010), which was fifty-five times longer than when it was first published in 1974. This needed to be revised and shortened, and prescribed timescales for assessments needing to be removed.

The review also contained a number of other significant recommendations. First, it continued to emphasise early help because preventative services did more to reduce abuse and neglect rather than reactive ones. Second, social workers were confirmed as the key professionals and, rather than a reliance on procedures, bureaucracy and targets, their authority and practice needed strengthening. And third, building on the Social Work Task Force (2009) and ongoing Social Work Reform Board (2012): each local authority should designate a principal child and family social worker at the senior management level to represent the views and experience of frontline staff; there should be a chief social worker to advise government and report to Parliament annually on the working of the 1989 Children Act; and there had to be improvements in the education, training, capabilities and professional development of social workers.

The review was widely welcomed by child care/welfare organisations, the relevant professionals and the main political parties, including the Coalition government. And in many ways it confirmed what had been evident since the death of Baby Peter, namely the re-emergence of child protection as a significant government concern with the key role in this allocated to social work (Parton 2011). However, despite the review's emphasis on early help/prevention, one must bear in mind the aforementioned comments in relation to the introduction of CAFs, as well as the fact that 'the five outcomes of Every Child Matters ceased to be the language of choice' within the Coalition government (Bamford 2015, p. 49). Indeed, one could argue that in certain respects the Coalition was only paying lip service in terms of its acceptance of most of the review's recommendations (Rogowski 2015a). Although, for example, a chief social worker for children and families was appointed and Working Together has been shortened (HM Government 2013), little changed as far as practitioners were concerned other than a single assessment replacing the initial/core assessment distinctions.

Another concern that arose under the Coalition government was the increasing use of multi-agency services hubs (MASH). In theory they involve various

agencies – police, social work, health, education and so on – working together to look at issues/concerns in relation to children and families. However, the focus tends to be on child protection/safeguarding and ensuring that procedures are followed and agencies cannot be criticised if things go wrong. Importantly, however, there is less concern with children's and families' needs and how they could/should be met. Furthermore, the MASH initiatives are reminiscent of youth offending teams established under New Labour's flagship 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. Such teams also comprised representatives from police, social work, heath, education and others, but what was the result of their establishment? As discussed in Chapter 3, whereas social work had been successful and pivotal in dealing with young offenders, this professionalism and expertise was sidelined in the new set-up. The police now dominate what occurs in youth justice and the new so-called profession of youth justice practitioner has emerged (Rogowski 2010a). Many youth crime/justice texts now barely mention social work. The real danger is that a similar situation will develop in relation to MASH, with the police's role becoming increasingly dominant.

Reference to the dangers of MASH being less concerned with meeting children's and families' needs is particularly pertinent when one considers child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham, a story broken by the publication of an inquiry report in summer 2014 (Jay 2014), and mirrored events in other areas such as Rochdale and Oxfordshire. Over the period 1997 to 2013, it was estimated that approximately 1,400 children were sexually exploited, mainly by Pakistani perpetrators. There was huge media and political concern about what had occurred, with some blaming social workers and others for being politically correct and not wanting to upset community cohesion. Others saw the police giving CSE a low priority to the plight of sexually active, troubled and troublesome girls (Bamford 2015), this view supported when it emerged that police funds for CSE was diverted to solving burglary and car crime in order to meet government targets (BBC 2015b). Another significant factor was that most social work practice concentrated on looked-after children and child protection, as well as managers' priority being the completion of bureaucracy and meeting targets so as to speedily process cases. It is no surprise that it was difficult for practitioners to build trusting relationships with many of the children and families they came across, this in turn being essential to ensuring issues of concern could be properly addressed.

In a similar vein, during March 2015 there was the publication of a serious case review into CSE in Oxfordshire (Bedford 2015), with David Cameron saying that CSE was a 'national threat' (BBC 2015a). He also put forward the idea that social workers and others could be imprisoned for being in a 'culture of denial' and failing to act. But surely this misses the key point, and one that merits repeating, namely that practitioners' enforced preoccupation with bureaucracy and targets is the real problem. In any case, is criminalising practitioners the way forward in dealing with the issue?

When it comes to the new Conservative government, the possibility of social workers being gaoled remains on the political agenda. Furthermore, £3 million has been made available for Barnardo's to set up a specialist team to deal with

CSE in Rotherham (BBC 2015c), although surely it would have been better to have allocated this to the council so they could strengthen their children and families social work teams.

In brief, following several decades of changing conceptions, policies and practice in relation to child maltreatment, major concerns include the increased bureaucracy and targets enforced by managers, and an authoritarian desire to responsibilise parents regardless of their economic and social circumstances (Taylor 2009). This has coincided with debates about child protection being increasingly politicised, most obviously following the death of Baby Peter Connolly. Parton (2014b, p. 11) characterises this as a growing 'politics of outrage' directed not just at the perpetrators of the crime but also at the professionals, particularly social workers, responsible for the case, together with the operation of the child protection system itself.[1] The concern is not so much about how to address child maltreatment in society but how to improve the child protection system, a debate that now takes place within the context of the authoritarian neoliberal state. Although ideologically neoliberals say the aim is to reduce the size of the state, this only applies to certain areas of operation. Ideas of increased laissez-faire and deregulation to reduce restraints on capital and entrepreneurial activity are embraced, but in relation to the poor and marginalised the state needs to be directive and disciplinary, a shift from the 'nanny' to the 'muscular' state. This can be seen in the way some social work practice involves accosting parents with a 'do this or else' approach whereby they are told to change their behaviour/lifestyle or face the consequences of possibly losing their children to adoption.

Moreover, high-profile public criticisms of social workers have led to a contradictory outcome. Although they have undermined the authority, legitimacy and standing of social work, nevertheless child protection has continually been confirmed as social work's central responsibility. This is despite the profession having been marginalised or excluded from other areas of practice such as probation, work with young offenders, older people and those with mental health issues, as well as from a range of family support and community-based activities. The conundrum is perhaps explained by the neoliberal need for the family to be governed, hence the need for social work, while political outrage at the profession and the child protection system serves to divert attention away from the societal problem of child maltreatment (Parton 2014b).

Conclusion

The changing conceptions, policies and practice in relation to child maltreatment over recent decades have left a social work that amounts to the previously mentioned muscular authoritarianism towards multiply-deprived families (Featherstone et al. 2014a). This is linked to the very intimate relationship that currently exists between social work and child protection whereby the former almost fails to have an existence outside of the parameters of the latter (Parton 2014a). This needs to be seriously questioned because social work is surely far more than a very narrow concern with child protection; the two need to be clearly disaggregated

such that each has a clear existence separate from the other so that more progressive policies and practices can be developed.

Muscular authoritarianism and the intimate linkage of social work with child protection is related to the neoliberal changes which have left us with a transactional form of welfare rooted in market reforms and their embrace of managerialism, centralised bureaucracy, targets and timescales, which emphasises efficiency and a limited form of accountability. It fails to take into account that most families are doing their best in difficult circumstances which are exacerbated by the inequalities, insecurities and general precariousness that results from neoliberalism. It is no surprise that a new, more humane and critical social work practice is needed.

I return to critical, and radical, social work practice in Chapter 8, but at this stage it is worth repeating that it is far more than complying with managerial and organisational demands which arise from the political, economic and ideological changes over recent decades. Importantly, critical and radical perspectives highlight issues such as poverty and deprivation that lead to much child maltreatment, and it is these that have to be addressed. As a result, rather than practitioners doing quick and 'efficient' one-off visits to see if parenting is 'good enough' or whether child protection procedures need to be initiated, what services users value – confirmed by research which tells us what is needed for the good society – is something more humane, caring and time rich (Cottam 2011). Wherever possible the aim should be to work to ensure that children can be cared for safely within families, ones that are supported to flourish and encouraged to be and do the very best they can (Featherstone et al. 2014a). This can help ensure that the social justice aspect of social work is not lost in a child protection project characterised by the authoritarian punitiveness of the present.

Note

1 This is despite research which shows that social workers and other professionals have been relatively successful in dealing with child abuse (Pritchard and Williams 2010). The researchers explored child abuse-related deaths (CARD) and possible CARD rates of children aged from birth to 14 years over the period 1974–2006. It used the latest available World Health Organization mortality data to compare England and Wales outcomes with the other major developed countries (MDC). The results tell a relative success story for England and Wales, whose violent CARD rates of children have never been lower since records began and who have made significantly greater progress in reducing violent possible CARD than the majority of the other MDC. Moreover, England and Wales were only one of four MDC whose CARD deaths, primarily the responsibility of the children protection services (CPS), fell significantly more than 'All Causes of Death', the primary responsibility of medicine. As the authors state, 'This should help to offset some of the media stereotypes and be a boost for the morale of frontline staff of the CPS and the families whom they serve' (Pritchard and Williams 2010, p. 1700). However, as much of the data relates to the pre-managerialist era of the present, it would be useful to compare that more professionally orientated period with the managerial dominated situation of today. Nevertheless, such findings are welcome, given it is usually only the child abuse tragedies that the media highlights.

7 The rise of managerialism and the social work business

In *Social Work: The Rise and Fall of a Profession?* (Rogowski 2010a), there is a chapter on managerialism and the social work business, and in many ways it is no surprise that I revisit these issues here. After all, the influence of managerialism and the development of social work as a 'business' have been and are key features of the neoliberal changes confronting the profession.

Managers have brought about a fundamental transformation in the way welfare organisations carry out government policy, as well as increasing their own power in the process (Clarke 1998; Harris 1998). This is the 'new public management', formally conceptualised by Hood (1991), denoting government policies since the 1980s that aim to modernise and render the public sector more efficient. The basic idea is that market-orientated management of the public sector leads to greater cost-efficiency without having negative side-effects on other objectives and considerations. As for social work, it has resulted in what social workers do being set and tightly controlled by managers, this change reflecting the move away from administering of public services to their management, a process that has been ongoing over recent decades (Harris and White 2009b). It stemmed from the neoliberal view that the market was superior to the state in every way and that public services needed to be managed in ways that were drawn from the private sector. In addition, public sector professionals including social workers could no longer be protected and pampered by the bureau-professional administrative systems of the social democratic welfare state, while there also had to be a rethinking of the view of service users as being passive recipients of professional expertise. Consequently, the extended role and increased power of managers, including their supposed ability to stand up for service users against the assumed entrenched self-interest of professionals, was to undermine the administrative system that had provided the home and base within which welfare state professionalism had thrived.

When it comes to the social work business, its importance lies in the fact that neoliberalism takes the view that public services, including social work, had to become more like businesses and operate in ways that were drawn from the private sector, thereby functioning in a context that was as market-like as possible (Harris 2003). Social work has, therefore, become a business, with the traditional distinction drawn between social work as a non-commercial activity in the public and voluntary sectors of the welfare state, and private commercial activities

driven by the market's profit motive, having largely disappeared. A major thrust, and echoing previous comments, is that welfare state professionals, including social workers, needed to be engrossed in the bracing competitive stimulus of market forces which necessitated managers being the main instrument of affective social policy rather than professionals. One has only to recall the way managers and managerialism now dominate in the public services as a whole but particularly health and social work and social care.

The increased influence of managers, managerialism and the development of the social work business occurred during the rise of neoliberalism under Margaret Thatcher's governments 1979–90 and subsequently endorsed by governments since then (see Chapter 2). Broadly speaking, they all endorsed neoliberal themes and ideas by stressing the primacy of economic competitiveness, the subordination of social policy to the needs of a competitive national economy, the limited or reduced scope for government intervention or direction, and the need to control public expenditure (Harris and White 2009b). Moreover, since the Great Recession the emphasis has been on austerity and public expenditure cuts in order to reduce the deficit, this impacting further on social work and service users including children and families.

In this chapter, I discuss these changes as they affected social work during the Thatcher/Major years, notably the emphasis on markets, the mixed economy and managerialisation, all of which anticipate much of the existing situation. I then look in more detail at managerialism and the social work business. As a consequence of these developments one can easily conclude that that the prospects for meaningful social work, which operates alongside children and families on the issues they face, looks bleak in the neoliberal world we now inhabit and struggle against. It is no surprise that the rise of managerialism and the social work business can be seen as leading to a low point in terms of social work's progress.

Marketisation, the mixed economy and managerialisation

In an intriguing and prescient essay entitled 'After Social Work?' Clarke (1996) discusses and describes the changes associated with the neoliberal assault on welfare in general and social work in particular. He focusses on the social processes and forces which transformed social work in the 1980s and 1990s, all of which remain of considerable influence. The crucial features of all this are marketisation, the mixed economy of welfare and, particularly, managerialisation.

Marketisation refers to the sponsored development of competition in the provision of welfare services together with the introduction of internal markets within public service organisations as a way of making them imitate market relationships. It is related to the moves towards contractual modes of relationship as a key feature of the organisation of service provision as well as the reduction of direct service provision by public institutions. Such market-making processes are linked to a mixed economy of welfare.

The mixed economy is the sustained attempt to shift the balance of provision towards the independent sector of private and voluntary providers.

Simultaneously direct provision through the welfare state becomes less central, this resulting in the blurring of the boundaries between state and non-state welfare provision; activities previously performed by state agencies are contracted out, with private and voluntary agencies being brought into new relationships of partnership with the state, either by regulation or by dependence on it. Also included is the transferring of responsibilities from formal to informal provision, towards 'care by the community', which is essentially part of a wider privatisation of welfare responsibilities including health, education and income maintenance. It is not only older people or those with mental or physical health issues who have to increasingly rely on themselves or their family – and this means usually women – for care. It is also such as troubled and troublesome young people who are increasingly seen as the responsibility of parents with only limited help and support being offered. If this responsibility is not properly carried out, then the interventions that do take place are more often than not punishment orientated. 'Devolving' such responsibilities to the family also redraws the public-private boundary and creates new forms of discipline and surveillance over family life (Donzelot 1979).

Managerialisation involves two related aspects: first, the nature of modes of organisational co-ordination, this referring to the ways organisations are organised and inter-organisational relationships are constructed; and second, the nature of organisational regimes including the patterns of structures, cultures and power within organisations (Clarke 1996). The point is that neither markets nor the mixed economy run themselves because they require agents to make them work, and over recent decades the preferred form of agency is management rather than professionals or administrators. This can be counterposed to bureau-professionalism, the organisational regime of the social democratic welfare state where the dominant mode of co-ordination was rational administration and professional discretion (Newman and Clarke 1994). This embodied the Fabian model of social welfare whereby expertise could be applied to social problems and in so doing alleviate them. Modes of co-ordination included hierarchical authority and collegial relations, and featured claims to distinctive forms of neutrality in the form of bureaucratic rationality and professional knowledge and values.

The rise of managerialisation is linked to the neoliberal reconstruction of managerial power in the 1980s which included the reduction of trade union rights and powers together with the extension of managerial control over how to use workers. Neoliberalism critiqued Fabian organisational patterns of welfare provision by attacks on 'provider power' which included bureaucratic rigidities, inflexibility, professional imperialism, insensitivity to users, the lack of competition, and the 'dogma' of political interference and control. Neoliberals, in power via the Conservative Party, were also able to absorb critiques from the political left, feminists, minority ethnic groups and service users and make them into a relatively systematic articulation which sought to speak for people against the power of the state or, more particularly, for the welfare 'customer' against 'provider power' (Clarke 1994). This was the context in which managerialism gained prominence, something which continues to this day.

Managerialism

There two key interconnected elements to managerialism (Lymbery 2004). First, as already alluded to, it aims to control bureau-professional power within organisations by subjecting them to new forms of regulation through centralised processes of financial control and methods of evaluation, as well as the increased power of the service user, even customer. Second, it involves recruiting organisations to processes of self-discipline characterised by the internalised acceptance of performance targets, increased bureaucracy and financial rationalisations and/or limits.

Since 1979, and increasingly over the last couple of decades, the concept of managerialism has been increasingly prevalent in the public services (Clarke and Newman 1997; Evans 2009; Harris 2003). It is closely associated with the neoliberal critique of the idea of need that underpins professional practice and service provision in the welfare state. Needs are not things waiting to be identified by the competent observer but are related to plans and purposes that are subjectively chosen; viewing needs as objective and distinct from wants, the argument continues, is paternalistic (Barry 1999).

Another factor to consider is that the move to neoliberalism has seen social policy increasingly based on a residual model of welfare. This reflected both an assumption that welfare is primarily the responsibility of the family and community, together with a belief that when the state intervenes it should provide only the basic minimum because welfare provided by the state is oppressive, inefficient and debilitating. Further, a lack of sensitivity to cost and not being responsive to consumers in public services required the injection of market discipline to create efficiency, innovation and effective services. In addition, in contrast to Fabianism, neoliberals argued the state's reliance on professionals and bureaucrats to decide people's needs and allocate support involved both a mistaken faith in professional expertise and an insupportable exercise of power over citizens. It is a result of such arguments that managerialism became particularly influential in two areas of the public services, namely health and social services.

Managerialism's increasing influence is associated with two reports by Sir Roy Griffiths into health and social services, respectively (see Timmins 1996). The first report (Griffiths 1983) recommended a move away from a system of consensus management in which doctors played a powerful role in hospital management alongside administrators. He was concerned about the lack of clear lines of responsibility for management decision making and recommended establishing professional managers, instead of administrators, having responsibility for budgetary control, monitoring performance and quality of service. The government agreed, resulting in managers being recruited both from within and outside the National Health Service (NHS), and management budgets and clear lines of financial accountability were introduced. The second report (Griffiths 1988) was driven by a concern to control rising central government expenditure on residential care through the benefits system. It recommended transferring government spending to local authorities, which should assess whether people needed public

funding, importantly this negating the idea of social services or care as a universal service provided by the public sector. Instead such services were cast in the role of last resort, only to be called upon when the family or community were unable to provide support. The role of local authorities was to manage the market of care by co-ordinating services, both strategically and, in the form of care management, on an individual basis. The overall aim was to limit services within available resources. The report also recommended that local authorities should not be direct providers of services but instead make the best use of private and voluntary organisations so as to widen consumer choice, stimulate innovation and encourage efficiency.

The two Griffiths reports were significant in the advance of managerialism within health and social services, both being indicative of important issues about any critical analysis of managers and managerialism (Evans 2009). The first promoted general management in the efficient running of the health service while the second focussed on structural change in terms of reducing public responsibility for social care. Importantly, however, managerialism has to be understood in terms of the relationship between organisational forms and a particular framework of values; it is not just a technical prescription of how to run an organisation but includes assumptions about the relationship between the state and citizens/customers, the role of public and private sectors, and the virtues of the market. It also conflates a desire for well-run public services with a neoliberal aversion to the nature and role of public provision of welfare.

There is another issue to consider, namely that managerialism can involve different forms in different areas of public service, this being a reflection of the historical and organisational contexts of each service. Thus, the NHS and social services have different organisational contexts and challenges for managerialism because of the very different nature and role of managers in these services. Both have been targets for managerial reform because of the powerful role of professionals in these services, with some even seeing them as sites in which professionals have captured public organisations (Harris 2009), although this is more true as far as clinicians are concerned rather than social workers. In the NHS managers, like the administrators before them, are a distinct professional group, differentiated from the clinicians they manage and largely recruited from the beginning into the administrator/ manager role. In contrast, managers within social services were appointed from among the ranks of the professionals they manage. The different nature of these managers is evidenced by the fact that those in the NHS have extremely limited input into clinical decision making, whereas those in social services have historically had a strong role in case decision making. Consequently, the key point to note is that although managers may be similar in some ways, they can also be different in different contexts. Managerialism may well have common concerns and assumptions, but its focus and impact have to be understood within the specific contexts of operation.

As stated, as far social services/care is concerned, the growth of managerialism occurred against the backdrop of bureau-professionalism, the combination of the organising principles of bureaucracy and professionalism in social services

departments following their establishment in the wake of the Seebohm Report (1968). Such departments, while located in the bureaucratic structure of local authorities, were strongly influenced by professional principles of organisation whereby professional supervisors were supportive colleagues rather than directive managers. This included an emphasis on a significant degree of discretion in the work of professional staff who were trusted by the fellow professionals occupying the significant hierarchical posts within social services departments (Clarke 1996; Harris 2003). Here managers were largely committed to the idea of professional social work, and their rise in the organisational hierarchy was based on professional standing as well as managerial authority.

As Evans (2009) points out, social work's commitment to such as human rights and social justice provide the fundamental milieu within which the 'value talk' of social work is generated and maintained. Within the context of bureau-professionalism, social work and social services expressed these commitments in terms of Marshall's (1996 [1950]) notion of social citizenship. This is the view that in order to achieve full and equal participation in society, all its members have the right to share in the complete social and cultural heritage, and to live the life of a civilised human being according to the standards prevailing in society. Furthermore, to realise this aim within the welfare state, professionals needed discretion not simply to implement policy but also to develop it by translating general welfare rights into particular provision. The advance of managerialism significantly challenged this view, resulting in major changes in the distribution and balance of power within social services and social work, including the displacement of traditional professional concern with need and social citizenship by business concerns of economy and efficiency in service delivery. It amounts to what might be termed the 'fiscalisation' of policy and practice whereby policy and practice decisions are made on the basis of financial concerns rather on social and moral values.

Another way at looking at some of these issues is to see the modes of management and governance in public services as encouraging means to be separated from ends in organisational practices (see Green 2009). 'Quasi-markets', 'competitive tendering', 'purchaser/provider splits', 'management by objectives' and so forth have all contributed to this development, a situation whereby process and compliance, rather than initiative and professional judgement, are to the fore. In our case, social workers are judged favourably by conforming to prescribed targets and their organisation's reputation is judged primarily on meeting similar pre-specified targets and performance indicators. The predominant values in the organisation have become the instrumental goals of demonstrating organisational success or 'getting things done efficiently and effectively', rather than meeting needs, with social workers often having little option but to comply.

Domination or discursive managerialism?

In the context of the advancement of managerialism two broad strands can be discerned, these being the 'domination' and 'discursive' perspectives (Evans 2009). In simple terms, the domination perspective sees managers and professionals as

two distinct occupational groups: managers run organisations with their primary commitment being to the organisation's goals, while professionals and practitioners are the workers within the organisation. Managers are seen to have increased their power within social work and social care, and are preoccupied with the organisation itself and antithetical to practitioners' professional concerns. Their authority is simply based on hierarchical position, which may or may not relate to their professional standing, and enforcing their authority is by means of coercive strategies because practitioners are seen as self-interested workers who must be directed and monitored. They are involved in an endless struggle with practitioners and use a range of techniques such as procedures, performance indicators, budget and eligibility criteria to exert control and achieve organisational goals. Their overriding concerns are the increasing control of professional practice and enforcing organisational aims such as rationing resources (Howe 1991; Jones 1999, 2004). The community care reforms of the early 1990s can be seen as a pivotal point in the shift of power and control from practitioners to managers, with the role of social workers becoming more prescribed and inflexible as a more prominent role was expected from their managers. The Conservative government of the time felt frontline managers could simultaneously regulate the duties of social workers, oversee the stricter eligibility criteria for services applied to service users and thereby, overall, protect finite resources. Twenty years later we have had a Tory-led Coalition and now Tory government arguing public services need to 'do more for less', with this oft-repeated phrase surely not sounding remiss coming from New Labour politicians.

The discursive perspective offers a more optimistic view of the encroachment of the managerial tide. Here, there is not a distinct break from bureau-professionalism to managerialism, with instead a continuation of professional concerns and practices being able to operate, albeit in conjunction with an increasingly powerful managerial discourse. Drawing on aspects of Foucault and postmodernism more generally, the emphasis is on the fragmentary and dispersed nature of power, with the idea of dominance being problematic and the techniques of control more ambiguous than the domination perspective suggests. Managers are not simply seen as being engaged with and committed to a managerial discourse, and neither are practitioners necessarily its passive subjects or immune to it. They are not two distinct and homogeneous groups but rather actors who operate within fields of criss-crossing forces. Consequently, managerialism has not replaced bureau-professionalism but arguably is another organisational stratum laid upon it which may be thick or thin, robust or less so, depending on particular times and in particular circumstances (Clarke and Newman 1997). This discursive view sees organisational and management practices as being able to reflect professional strategies and concerns alongside increasingly influential managerialist ideas and preoccupations, and in so doing new focal points of resistance, compromise and accommodation are produced.

Whatever the merits of the domination and discursive views, there are two important issues in relation to the advance of managerialism. First, social workers are undoubtedly now more subject to the control and direction of managers;

second, managers are now a group which by and large is distinct from practitioners insofar as their commitments and interests are concerned. There has been an increase in the proceduralisation of practice, with practitioners now subject to ever more – and ever more intense – direction and scrutiny (Jones 2004; Lymbery 2004). Although some argue that resulting rules and procedures help ensure good practice and even support expertise, increased proceduralisation also reflects business principles of economy, efficiency and the effectiveness of the organisation itself. Even if at times rules and procedures need interpretation and the application of some background knowledge, hence allowing an element of discretion, few would disagree with the proposition that they amount to an 'iron cage' which limits practitioner discretion. As for managers being a distinct group who have left behind their professional identity to become more business-like by embracing business wisdom and being primarily concerned about the organisation, there is certainly some evidence of this. For example, Clarke (2004) points out that there has been a concerted effort to shift what were professional identities to ones that are organisation-centred; the organisation becomes the point of identification, loyalty and commitment, with externally orientated identities, such as simply being a member of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), being treated as suspect and as a special interest which distracts from the organisation. Finally, one has only to recall that many senior managers in charge of social work do not have a social work qualification. The obvious example of this is that following the demise of social services departments, many of the subsequent heads or senior managers of the subsequent adults' and children's services do not have any experience of social work, although they might be qualified in or have experience with business.

Managerialism in action?

Although managers use a range of techniques, such as the aforementioned procedures, performance indicators, budget and eligibility criteria, to exert control over practitioners, there are more sinister methods. These include bullying tactics and the inappropriate use of disciplinary procedures, and I have been on the receiving end of both.

One manager seemed to feel threatened by my ability to work autonomously with little need to consult. I use the word 'consult' deliberately, as I was far more qualified than him and had much more experience. However, he preferred the word 'supervision', emphasising that he was the manager and that I needed to be closely supervised rather than 'going off and doing [my] own thing'. My workload was slowly increased, derogatory comments were made about me in front of colleagues, and memos were sent querying my practice. Not surprisingly our relationship deteriorated, and we finished up by virtually only communicating in writing. Matters came to a head when I went to the office on a day off to finalise a care plan for court, a plan that he refused to countersign until changes that I disagreed with were made. I contacted senior managers and in essence invoked grievance procedures concerning what amounted to his bullying behaviour. Fortunately, my

concerns were taken seriously and dealt with sympathetically by way of mediation; there was an improvement in the relationship with my manager and the way I was treated, although it was not long after that he left the local authority. As for the care plan, the court went on to approve my version of it.

The point about the foregoing is that I was an experienced, resilient social worker and so able to resist the bullying tactics, although admittedly this would have been far more difficult for a newly qualified practitioner. But the issue to stress is surely that such bullying behaviour has no place in social work. And in mentioning experience and resilience, this was certainly needed in relation to what occurred some years earlier, when I was inappropriately disciplined after having an article published in the social work magazine *Social Work Today* (Rogowski 1994).

The background involved the appointment of a new director and assistant director of social services who were intent on a reorganisation which included the closure of the community-orientated sub-office referred to in Chapter 4. Residents, other professionals and the local councillor were concerned about the plan and its effect on social work services, and letters of protest were written by many of them. Some senior managers saw colleagues and myself as troublemakers because of our alleged instigation and encouragement of all of this. It is no real surprise that they took what they saw as an opportunity to get their own back when my article appeared.

The article used an anonymised real-life case study as an example of working in partnership with children and families, something which, as discussed in Chapter 6, was encouraged by the 1989 Children Act. The case involved a year old baby boy admitted to hospital after apparently choking while his father fed him. Medical investigations, however, revealed that the baby had suffered severe brain damage, probably after being violently shaken on two separate occasions. He would be physically and mentally disabled as a result, although neither parent could offer an explanation for the injuries. Police investigations could not throw any light on what had happened and care proceedings were initiated.

In line with the 1989 Act, I aimed to work in partnership with the family rather than seek adoption or long-term foster care, in the hope of ensuring the baby could be cared for by his family including extended members. The baby's father and his parents soon withdrew from wanting to care for the baby, but the mother and her family continued to offer such care, and co-operated with a lengthy and exhaustive assessment process. The conclusion was that the baby be cared for by his maternal grandparents with his mother closely involved in his day-to-day care. If this proved satisfactory, it was planned that the mother would resume full-time care of her son, with the care order being eventually discharged. In due course this is precisely what happened.

The point to emphasise is that the mother and her family clearly appreciated and understood social work concerns and welcomed being involved and informed as every decision was made. Given the circumstances of what had occurred, they felt there was a genuine partnership in what were, after all, difficult and serious circumstances. However, despite this, and the fact that the case highlighted an example of positive, partnership-orientated practice, following publication of the

article I was charged with gross misconduct over alleged breach of confidentiality. I was immediately suspended, this lasting for several weeks. Colleagues were angry about how management had reacted, this leading to protests at council meetings. Eventually, following a disciplinary hearing I was allowed to return to work, although I was demoted from what was then a level three social worker to level two. Not surprisingly, I appealed against the demotion.

In the meantime, on hearing what had happened, the baby's mother wrote a letter pointing out she had had prior knowledge of the article, was happy with it and saw it as an example of good social work practice, a practice that others could learn from. Two respected academics also provided written statements in support of me. One, for example, pointed out that it is 'difficult to see that the article in question entails a breach of confidentiality as this is usually understood in relation to published work'. The other wrote that the article showed that 'once again he was striving for and achieving the highest professional standards in his practice. . . . there was certainly no breach of confidentiality in the sense in which this would be understood within publishing conventions.' BASW also provided a statement of support and I was represented by Unison. To cut a long story short, I won the appeal, with one councillor telling me in relation to my writing to 'keep up the good work,' and I was reinstated in my original post.

Managerialism then, despite its neoliberal advocates, certainly has its negative aspects, a comment that can equally be applied to the notion of the social work 'business'.

The social work business

John Harris (2003), in his seminal text, *The Social Work Business*, shows how social work has been deeply affected by the imposition of a culture of managerialism. A consequence is that a profound dissatisfaction now exists among social workers about what their jobs now entail, with a growing gap arising between their daily tasks and duties, and the values which brought them into the job in the first place (Jones 2004). It is linked to New Labour's modernisation agenda, a crucial component of which entails 'bringing individuals, communities and institutions, whether professional or governmental into line with the perceived requirements of a globalised world economy' (Ferguson 2008, p. 46). For social work, the creation of the social work business was significant, involving three key elements – the 'universalisation of managerialism' (Clarke 2004, p. 121), regulation and consumerism. There is also the issue of the involvement of private and voluntary sectors in social care to consider.

The universalisation of managerialism

Effective management is seen as the panacea for practically every problem facing public services. Under Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s, public service administrators were supposedly reinvented as dynamic managers, individuals to overthrow bureaucratic and professional barriers to change, thereby

creating a mixed economy of care in which the private and voluntary sectors are increasingly involved. As noted, one result was that senior managers who were former social workers were gradually replaced by people with no social work qualification. As alluded to, it was not just within the hierarchy of public sector organisations that such changes occurred. The 1990 NHS and Community Care Act and subsequent guidance identified assessment and care management as the core social work roles, whereby the care manager assesses need and co-ordinates packages of care in a world where purchasers and providers would no longer be the same people or organisations. The rhetoric referred to 'empowerment', 'choice' and 'needs-led assessment', but the consequence of these developments was the creation of the social work business, and the resulting effect on social work practice was to be far-reaching. As Harris (2003, p. 66) points out, managerialism and the social work business took social work 'away from approaches that were therapeutic or which stressed the importance of casework, let alone anything more radical or progressive. Turning professionals into managers involved making them responsible for running the "business".'

Developments in relation to the social work business continued and intensified under New Labour, with a particular emphasis being on the 'integration of services' so as to place the service user at the centre (Audit Commission 2002). This is reflected in the establishment of various multi-agency structures notably youth offending teams. Then there was the demise of social services departments which were split in two, with children's services in essence working closely with education and adult services with health. There may well be benefits to health, education, social work and other professions working together, such as breaking down cultural barriers and more effective sharing of information. However, a danger is that more powerful professions dominate at the expense of less esteemed and well-organised professions and agencies like social work and voluntary sector organisations. In addition, the loss of an organisational base coupled with a weak professional identity could lead to the virtual disappearance of professions such as social work as pointed out almost two decades ago (Clarke 1996).

The expansion and intensification of regulation

Although the Conservative governments of the 1990s were content to allow managers to bring about transformation in the public services including social work, as we saw in Chapter 2, New Labour was more interventionist. This included a decidedly centralist attitude towards policy making, with responsibility for implementation being 'franchised' to semi-independent organisations which are nevertheless closely regulated and controlled from the centre (Harris 2003). The most obvious example is the role of Ofsted in relation to the merged children's social care and education services. The result of these and other similar organisational changes have been that 'processes of external review, audit, inspection, national standards, as well as performance indicators covering almost every area of work, are now common features of social work and social care' (Ferguson 2008, p. 48).

Scourfield, writing about residential care but with his comments being equally applicable to social work, puts it this way:

> New Labour [and successive governments] clearly believes that, by using regimes of regulation and audit, it can control and work through markets to achieve the dual goals of producing better quality services for consumers whilst, at the same time, putting the service user at the heart of the decision making.
>
> (Scourfield, 2007, p. 176)

These developments took place despite New Labour's general approach to the regulation of business which was regularly described as 'light' or 'soft' touch. One has only to witness, for example, New Labour's attitude to the financial sector, notwithstanding the fact that such an approach to banking resulted in financial chaos and the Great Recession. There are two separate but related reasons why the social work business was treated differently.

First, there is the neoliberal distrust of professions because they are seen as self-serving groupings, and of social work in particular because of its failings in relation to child protection. Then again there is the fact that social workers often ally themselves to those having to depend on an increasingly residual welfare state, thereby being seen to encourage dependency. Greater regulation is required because social workers themselves cannot be trusted to bring about the necessary changes and thereby engage in the modernisation project. However, this argument misses the fundamental point that to the extent that social work may be failing, it is more likely to be related to the imposition of a quasi-business system which subordinates the needs of service users and the knowledge and skills of social workers to the demands of competition within the social care market.

Second, markets and competition in social work and social care are seen as offering the best guarantee of choice and quality, albeit there is a concession to traditional social democratic thought in that some regulation is necessary to ensure that they are working efficiently and to ensure standards are maintained. Simply put, in order to create the 'performance management and audit culture' you need such as national standards, audits, league tables and inspection, although there is little evidence that all this and the resulting naming and shaming leads to an improvement in services (Webb 2006). Rather the converse is nearer the truth: organisations merely adapt to meet their performance targets even though can this lead to poorer services for service users (Harris 2003). One example is the Baby Peter case discussed in Chapter 6: the London Borough of Haringey had received a favourable Ofsted report prior to the tragedy. This relied on quantitative data, for example, how many forms had been filled in within specified timescales, and not enough on the underlying of quality of service provision and practice. Realising that this would be the inspection focus, the borough prioritised its work accordingly. Another example relates to the previously used two-stage initial and core assessment process in relation to children and families. On occasions the number and completion times of these assessments is compared to neighbouring

authorities. Depending on the comparisons it can lead to more or less core assessments having to be completed, this being done not on the basis of complexity or user circumstances or need but on the necessity to be seen in a favourable light in relation to the numbers completed in those neighbouring authorities. A similar point could be made in relation to the numbers of contacts and subsequent referrals that are received; whether or not a contact becomes a referral often depends not on user circumstance or need, but on a comparison with the figures from neighbouring authorities and even by comparison with teams within the same authority. Similarly, whether a home visit following a referral remains just that, or necessitates an initial assessment, can again depend on comparing figures, rather than the presenting situation and the overall facts and circumstances of the particular case.

Webb (2006) points out two other consequences of this 'performance culture'. First, the social work role is increasingly conceived of, and limited to, gatekeeping and the rationing of resources, so that the focus is on higher-level assessment and planning. Little remains of preventative social work, this being the remit of standardised assessment tools, the Common Assessment Framework being a prime example, which 'anyone can do'. Even the higher level assessment and planning is dominated by standardised assessment forms and computer exemplars which contribute to the deprofessionalisation of social work. Second, such a culture changes the relationship between social workers and service users, with the former increasingly concerned about managing budgets and reducing risk; as many social workers have repeatedly pointed out, budgets and paperwork are often to the fore of their work rather than meeting the real needs of people (Jones 2004).

Consumerism and the 'business'

Consumerism is a major aspect of the social work business. It is frequently linked to 'user involvement' or 'user empowerment', although there are two models of this (see Beresford and Croft 1993, 1995, 2004). The first is the consumerist model of user involvement enshrined in the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act aiming to empower users and carers but also providing the statutory basis for the greater involvement of the private sector in social care. The second model is not primarily concerned with users in terms of their relationship with services, but rather as citizens who may, because of such as physical impairment, mental distress or age, make use of health and social care services. It is often referred to as the 'democratic' model of user/citizen empowerment and differs from consumerist models for several reasons: it is a bottom-up approach emerging from collective movements; it is aimed at social change and justice rather than just involvement in services; it has a social ideology rather than an individual or biomedical model of health and disability; and it often involves collective action rather than mere partnership with service providers. The interaction between these models means 'the experience of social work and social services for many service users may be the same or even worse than twenty or thirty years ago' (Beresford and Croft 2004, p. 63).

Even though he is best known as a critic of marketisation, Harris (2003) points to three areas where consumerist approaches have assisted in social development. First, the ambiguity of the language of consumerism and its accurate identification of the lack of user involvement in traditional welfare services has actually encouraged users and carers to become more involved. Second, consumerism's (de)construction of the client/user as customer has led to an emphasis on procedural rights, such as the right to a needs-led assessment, and new forms of redress by complaints procedures. These developments go some way to addressing the detail of the individual experience of the user. Third, there is more attention to individual needs based on individualised assessment rather than the one-size-fits-all approach.

There is no doubt that there have been increased involvement of users and carers in health and social care, and examples can be found in relation to government policy and legislation, service development, research and social work education (see Ferguson 2008, pp. 73–74). The development of procedural rights is particularly welcomed; no one would disagree that those who use or are forced to rely on state-provided services should at least have basic procedural rights such as complaints procedures. However, the point about consumerist approaches leading to assessments and services tailored to individual need requires qualification. Whatever empowering potential such assessments might have had, they were almost immediately constrained by the fact that soon after the 1990 Act was passed, local authorities were allowed to take resource considerations into account when assessing individual needs. Such individualised assessments became less about need and more about the rationing of resources, this situation exacerbated during ongoing austerity measures. A similar comment about rationing can be made to in relation to children's services' initial and core assessments, and now their single assessments. Unless there are child protection/safeguarding concerns, social workers are under pressure to offer little, if anything, other than to signpost to other agencies or say that the continuation of universal services, namely health and education, is all that is required. It is no surprise that families are often likely to feel that their issues and concerns are not being taken seriously by social workers and that they are being fobbed off.

Direct payments (DPs) are another area that has been transformed by the marketisation processes, together with associated notions of consumerism and the business. Introduced in the 1990s for people with disabilities, money is given directly to individuals to buy the support they had been assessed as needing, instead of providing the services. Spandler (2004) asks whether such payments are friend or foe. In fact, they appear to offer an element of choice, control, flexibility and independence, and the focus on choice and control, rather than illness or disability, means they can be seen as embodying a social, rather than medical, model of health and disability (Beresford and Croft 2004). However, there are concerns, particularly as they have been introduced in the context of the social work business, the overriding objective being to reduce public spending and to extend market forces into all areas of health and social care. There is evidence that local authorities have seen DPs as a means of saving money, even to the extent

that cost-cutting has been one of the main attractions of DPs (Spandler 2004). In addition, collective service provision can be undermined by the individualisation of service provision, the latter being a real threat to a healthy and vibrant public sector where best practice and standards are collectively developed.

The most recent development of consumerism in relation to social work and social care is personalisation. It is about ensuring that people are more self-responsible for the services they receive, of them being more of the choosing, deciding and shaping author of their own lives by assessing and managing their own health and welfare. Although superficially attractive, it fails to acknowledge the combination of poverty, multiple discrimination and, often, physical or mental impairment experienced by many users of social work and social care. Furthermore, during an age of austerity with the main political parties intent on reducing expenditure, such policy changes are likely to be experienced as punitive rather than empowering.

Personalisation has also had a negative affect on social work because qualified social worker posts are being replaced by unqualified workers (Rogowski 2009). The rationale for the use of unqualified bureaucrats is that they are cheaper to employ and are easier to manage and control. The real danger, however, is that they will be more willing to tick choice-denying boxes rather than supporting users to achieve the best quality of life open to them, even if it is more expensive for the public purse.

Having looked at how the social work business has changed social work, how has the business and the emphasis on the market changed social care more generally, particularly in relation to privatisation issues and the increased involvement of the voluntary sector?

Private and voluntary sectors and social care

Until the 1980s the private sector only played a limited role in the provision of social care, with there being virtually unanimous agreement that the profit motive should not come into play when it came to meeting people's basic health and social care needs. However, the arrival of neoliberalism changed the situation with, for example, the second Griffiths (1988) report into adult care, recommending the private sector be stimulated and encouraged. The result was that by the end of the 1990s local authority provision of residential and domiciliary care had decreased, while there was with a corresponding increase in private and voluntary sector provision (Ferguson 2008). In relation to children's services, comparable measures occurred in relation to such as the growth of private children's homes and fostering agencies, particularly over the New Labour years. In sum, after successive governments' encouragement of the marketisation and privatisation of residential and other forms of care, it has led, particularly in relation to residential care of the elderly, to the 'caretelisation' of care as large corporate providers increase their share of the market (Scourfield 2007).

Perhaps the rapid growth in the private sector provision of social care might not be a problem if it could be shown that it led to improvements in the quality of life

of those using residential or home care services. However, the reverse seems to be the case (Pollock 2004). In the first place, the larger-scale provision of private residential care detracts from the quality of care and contributes to a sense of institutionalisation. Put simply, economies of scale mean that larger homes with more beds make more profit. Then there is the fact that the emphasis on profit means there is a constant need to drive down costs, with obvious implications for staff wages, workload and training, and in turn the overall quality of care.

In some cases failure to make a profit means homes might have to close, with elderly and vulnerable residents having to leave what may have been their home for years. Marketisation and privatisation processes not only mean that public accountability is diminished, but principles such as consumer choice and user involvement are likely to be compromised by allowing social care to be dictated by market forces. At the very least, the wisdom and morality of placing vulnerable people of any age in homes run by companies whose prime responsibility is to shareholders needs to be questioned.

As well as the expansion of the private sector into social care, there has been even greater involvement of the voluntary sector. This might be less objectionable than the growth of the private sector, but 'in reality the same ideological, legislative and policy drivers are in operation in both spheres' (Ferguson 2008, pp. 59–60). The involvement of the voluntary sector includes the outsourcing of local authority services, the establishing of market/quasi-market mechanisms and the move from unspecific grant to contract as the basis of funding. The result has been that voluntary sector organisations increasingly act like businesses and compete for contracts with the private sector, thereby to all intents and purposes becoming the 'soft face' of privatisation. In relation to children and families, for example, organisations such as Action for Children now undertake family support roles, albeit their workers are often employed on inferior terms and conditions and have fewer training opportunities than directly employed local authority staff.

Conclusion

The market-driven agenda, in relation to social work and social care more generally, undoubtedly intensified under New Labour and subsequent governments despite warm words at times in relation to reducing bureaucracy. Social workers, at the behest of managers, are faced with a culture driven by performance, inspection and targets, which generates huge pressure to achieve the desired paper and electronic outcomes. Various management tools including forms and templates aim to improve professional judgement by standardising responses and limiting the possibility of error. This reflects an adherence to scientific or instrumental rationalism whereby the tools appear to hold out the promise of greater reliability by establishing systematic, objective and uniform practices. However, a practice standardised in this way has a one-sided focus on the bureaucratic elements, neglecting the ways that practitioners operationalise procedure. It pays little attention to the ways informal rationalities and methods, carried out within the context

of a relationship, combine to make up practice, and it also pays little attention to the real needs of users.

The pressure on social workers is exerted by managers who face similar demands to satisfy their political masters. The stress is on encouraging the free market and limiting public expenditure, with budgetary considerations and financial rationalisations dominating decision making, meaning that genuinely meeting the real needs of users becomes a secondary consideration.

It goes without saying that the move to the managerial and social work business is anathema to social work values and its commitment to social justice and social change. It is no wonder that social workers feel disillusioned and demoralised by what has and is happening to their profession. Despite such pessimism, there are voices of hope, ones which continue to see the possibilities of progressive as well as the radical and critical possibilities. It is to these views, notwithstanding the difficulties involved, that I now turn to in Part Four.

Part four

Ways forward

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8 Critical and radical possibilities in neoliberal times

> As a result of neoliberal changes, critical social work faces considerable challenges, but the opportunities that remain mean it continues to play an important part in resisting neoliberalisation, thereby staying true to its emancipatory and social justice potentials.
>
> (Rogowski 2013, p. 51)

As we have seen, a major challenge for social work is the influence of managerialism, which developed as a result of political, economic and ideological changes over the last three decades as neoliberalisation took hold (Rogowski 2010a, 2013), and coincided with marketisation, the commodification and bureaucratisation of the individual and the subsequent demise of relational practice (Ruch et al. 2010). What social workers do, and how, is set by managers who are focussed on ensuring organisational goals are being met, rather than those of service users. This lies at the root of the current crisis facing social work, because the imposition of such neoliberal practice means practitioners can find it hard to resist the negative impact on social work itself and, more importantly, the people they work with. They are now often people-processors, merely filling in assessment and other computer exemplars almost unthinkingly and as quickly as possible to meet targets and performance indicators. To the extent there is face-to-face practice, as opposed to merely information gathering, it is often authoritarian and punitive, amounting to telling parents/carers to 'do this or that, or else!' However, the argument throughout this book is that such current orthodoxy can be countered by resilient practitioners in their individual work with users, by building alliances with other like-minded professionals, and working collectively through trade unions, professional associations and wider social movements. It is about resisting the neoliberal tide which causes so much anxiety and suffering for so many, while simultaneously ensuring those with wealth and power are allowed to continue their exploits largely unabated. An obvious example of the latter is the economic crisis and subsequent Great Recession – both created by the banking/financial sector – which showed the remarkable resilience of capitalist formations, whereby the public and private spheres have been re-combined to bring ever more advantages to those who are wealthy and committed to profit-making (Sinclair

2010). As well as resisting, and having a view of the possibilities of a changed neoliberal world which is at the root of most peoples' difficulties, critical social work is about alleviating individual difficulties in daily practice.

As discussed in Chapter 5, critical social work has continuities with the 'first wave' of radical social work (Bailey and Brake 1975a; Corrigan and Leonard 1978; Langan and Lee 1989) and the 'second wave' of the late 2000s (Ferguson and Woodward 2009; Lavalette 2011a; Turbett 2014). This is complemented by critical social work (Fook 2002, 2012), which is emancipatory in the sense that it is a practice that 'is person centred, empowering, critical of power structures and systems of resource distribution that undermine the well-being of many' (Dominelli 2010, p. 2).[1] It is not simply geared to meeting national guidelines and targets, nor is it about delivering 'joined-up' government. Rather it seeks empowerment for service users, development and social progress for communities, and social justice and equality in society (Adams et al. 2009). While acknowledging that not every act of critical social work will achieve such large goals, it is a practice that has some view of a better world, one that is without power structures that do not meet the needs of everyone. As stated on Marx's epitaph, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.' Social work might not be at the vanguard of fundamental societal change, but critical social work's emphasis on a critical analysis and practice that is person-centred, with work wherever possible focussing on problems and difficulties as defined by service users, makes a small contribution to making the world we inhabit a better place (Rogowski 2013).

This chapter highlights examples of critical practice in relation to four key areas of work with children and families: child protection, young offending, looked-after children (LAC) and child sexual exploitation (CSE) an area which is the focus of current political and media attention. It will come as no surprise that the theoretical issues discussed in Chapter 5 lie behind critical the possibilities addressed here. Another point to note is that aspects of practice highlighted in each of the aforementioned key areas can equally be applied or adapted for use in the others. For instance, self-directed group work and consciousness-raising is mentioned in relation to young offenders and CSE. Or again, the value of relationship-based work is specifically mentioned in relation to young offending and CSE, but it is also a key component of child protection and working with LAC children.

Child protection and the need to resist muscular authoritarianism

At the outset, and as discussed in Chapter 6, it must be repeated that most social work with children and families now relates to protecting/safeguarding children considered at risk of significant harm. Other children and young people who in the past might have been considered 'in need' are often being redefined as having additional needs and dealt with under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), and are unlikely to be offered social work support (Pithouse and

Broadhurst 2009; Rogowski 2013). And in relation to child protection/safeguarding, drawing on another article (Rogowski 2014b) there are two points to note.

First, current practice is based on a 'procedural model' rather than a professional one (Sayer 2008). It can involve contact/referral, initial investigation and assessment, strategy discussion with other agencies – notably the police – more in-depth assessment and a child protection case conference. If there is the need for immediate protection at any stage, the child can be removed from the home. The process involves following detailed procedures, completing bureaucracy within specified timescales, and discussions with managers at every step. It is based on a residual welfare state, where legal and bureaucratic processes dominate, along with the assessment of risk, and resources are devoted to those children considered as most at risk (Stafford et al. 2012). It is also a neoliberal model, one which can be counterposed to more social democratic family support systems that dominate in continental Western Europe. In these countries there are more comprehensive welfare states, and voluntary and collaborative practice focusses on the family unit with resources available to more families at an earlier stage.

The second point to note is the impact of managerialism, bureaucratisation and deprofessionalisation which has led to an emphasis on defensive practice and risk. Defensive practice involves the overriding priority being able to defend the organisation's reputation if things go wrong, this being easier to do if the 'rules' have been followed. As for risk, Beck (1992) shows that society now demands that risks be identified and controlled by appropriate bodies even though there is actually limited capacity to do so. It has now largely replaced need as the principle around which health and social work/care services are organised; unless a child is defined to be at substantial risk of abuse, little or no help or support will be provided by social workers. In addition, risk assessment in itself constrains social work practice, and in turn service users, by privileging notions of predictability rather than the uncertainty and ambiguity of everyday practice (Peckover et al. 2011).

The current emphasis on following procedures and completing bureaucracy amounts to deprofessionalisation under the auspices of managerialism. This situation means that the scope for critical, even less so radical, practice is limited. Nevertheless, resilient practitioners can still find opportunities, this involving, wherever possible, working on the issues of concern on a partnership basis with children and families. It entails working with parents and, if necessary, other relatives, with a practice aimed at genuinely responding to their issues and concerns.

Importantly, as Featherstone et al. (2014a) point out, practitioners need to get away from the 'muscular authoritarianism' that is often inflicted on multiply-deprived families. Such authoritarianism is a child rescue approach, one often lacking compassion and understanding towards parents, paying little attention to the fact that they are parenting in difficult circumstances. As indicated throughout this book, such authoritarianism involves parents simply being told to change their behaviour and lifestyles or face the prospect of having their children removed for adoption. It is a result of the neoliberal imperative to ensure that people, including children and families, are self-responsible, and if for any reason they cannot be, they have to face the consequences.

It is no surprise that many social workers are concerned about current policy and practice in relation to child protection/safeguarding, particularly the fact that social work's concern with social justice is being lost. An example of this is in relation to the previously mentioned, and often unquestioned, child-focussed orientation: put simply, 'all that matters is the child and the parents need to shape up or the child will be shipped out' (Featherstone et al. 2014a, p. 9). An unquestioning application of this orientation can lead to the neglect of children's relationships and networks, as well as the fact that often the whole family is suffering and that simply removing the child will cause additional suffering to all its members. Surely a range of ameliorative options needs to be considered, including addressing the needs of parents/relatives rather than the 'get out' comment of 'I'm only here for the child.' As I recall repeatedly telling one of my colleagues, 'if you can sort out the parents' issues, the family's and children's are likely to be resolved as well. A more humane practice is required, one where children are seen as relational beings, parents recognised as people with needs and hopes, and families are understood as having extraordinary capacities for care and protection. All this can be counterposed to much current practice, where the child is in effect isolated and the parents are the enemies. In addition, much current practice ignores the impact of growing inequality under neoliberalism and the consequences for parental and family stress, childhood and well-being; poverty, after all, is linked to much child maltreatment, in particular physical abuse and neglect (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Instead, what is needed is a genuine emphasis on family support, as opposed to the currently fashionable 'intervention' which censures parents, with such a change resulting practitioners being 'relocated' as agents of such support rather than simply authoritarian control (Featherstone et al. 2014b). The emphasis on support rather than control fits well with a practice that is critical, and hence emancipatory, and I now turn to an example of how this might occur (also see Rogowski 2015a).

A critical case study

John (10 years old) and Lizzie (8 years old) live with their parents. Their father is unemployed and has difficulties with alcohol and cannabis use. Financial problems cause stress leading to arguments between the parents which sometimes lead to violence. The house is often dirty and untidy, and on occasions there is a lack of food. The children sometimes turn up at school late and ill-clad. Despite this, they are happy and healthy and have a close bond with their parents. On one morning, however, they arrived at school upset and distressed, telling a teacher about 'mummy and daddy arguing and fighting', and contact is made with children's services asking for help and support for the family.

At the outset, a key point is whether John and Lizzie's situation should be dealt with as a child 'in need' case or one of child protection because of emotional abuse and neglect concerns. The notion of 'good enough' parenting is an important consideration, especially as the children want to remain at home despite the difficulties.

Following an assessment there are two possibilities. First, the situation being dealt with as a child in need case (this often depending on the view of the manager, who might even deem that the way forward was for the school to simply 'do a CAF'). If the case was dealt with on a child in need basis, short-term intervention involving a family worker might be offered, this focussing on the parents having to tidy their house, stressing the importance of regular school attendance, together with reinforcing social work signposting advice about agencies dealing with benefits, alcohol/drug and domestic abuse/violence issues. Similar signposting advice about counselling for the children might also be given. The case is then quickly closed.

Second, if the case is dealt with as a child protection case, it could lead to a more in-depth assessment, case conference and resulting child protection plan, the latter essentially focussing on what the parents had to do before the plan would cease. This could include the father having to engage with the alcohol/drugs team and anger management, the mother having to see a domestic abuse/violence worker, and both having to keep on top of home conditions and ensure the children were adequately clothed and arrived at school on time. The children could also be expected to undertake counselling. In the background, implicitly or explicitly, would be the threat of removing the children if the plan was not complied with. If the parents 'co-operate' along the lines suggested, the case would be quickly closed; if they did/could not, care proceedings could be initiated. Following care proceedings, adoption could speedily follow.

The aforementioned two approaches to practice, although perhaps not totally without positive aspects, are a form of authoritarian, neoliberal social work. They do not overly concern listening to the children's views, and even less their parents. Rather the goal is to ensure procedures have been followed, to ensure the organisation cannot be criticised and that resources/services are strictly rationed.

A critical approach to John and Lizzie's situation is to argue for the case to be dealt with on a child in need basis, although failing that, one would have to go down the child protection route. However, either situation involves a genuine emphasis on building relationships with the family and working in partnership, at their pace and, as far as possible, on the issues defined by them. Importantly, in both scenarios a more structural view of the family's situation would be taken. Poverty, poor housing and lack of employment opportunities, which can cause parental stress leading to alcohol/drug use and domestic abuse/violence, would all be considered. Consciousness-raising about such issues, as well as ensuring the parents were receiving their correct benefits, are ways forward. Issues around the lack of meaningful employment opportunities and cuts in benefits as a result of the recession, globalisation and the overall neoliberal project are all relevant. Similarly the notion of patriarchy and its relation to domestic abuse/violence would be considered. In relation to John and Lizzie, they would be given time and permission to tell their story, and an overzealous child protection response in the form of removing them would be resisted because they are happy at home overall. Finally, in relation to the father's alcohol and drug use, again an overzealous

response would be avoided, because many substance users have stable habits and can function well as parents.

As well as the direct work with the family and close collaboration with other professionals and agencies about the issues of concerns, a critical approach involves practitioners being involved on a more collective basis with such as political parties, trade unions and professional associations. It could include campaigning for a public health approach for dealing with child maltreatment, something which Nigel Parton (2014b) advocates. Such an approach includes an emphasis on universal primary prevention and 'minimally sufficient' interventions made available to all members of the community. This is linked to a children's rights approach, one which recognises abuse perpetrated by individual adults; it also recognises that collective harm and exploitation can be caused by institutions, harmful policies and laws, conflicts, failure of governance and disruption. Addressing such structural issues means 'a whole range of policies concerned with taxation, welfare benefits, health and crime are important and addressing social inequalities and the distribution of income and wealth are key' (Parton 2014b, p. 193).

Finally, it is worth emphasising, as Featherstone et al. (2014a) do, that that a relational approach to child abuse, as well as welfare more generally, is urgently required. Echoing Cottam (2011), five important principles are outlined. First, and admittedly a difficult task, there is the need to develop humane social work in a society riven by inequalities. This involves the need to cultivate and support approaches to practice that are not just about rescuing individual children from impoverished families and communities. Second, a developmental approach needs to be adopted, one that moves away from individual expert 'screen and intervene' approaches towards more community-based and collective approaches, ones that resonate with aspects of community social work (see Chapter 4). Third, we need to move away from cumbersome top-down systems of command and control, thereby freeing up resources to develop relationship-based services and strategies; again, this has echoes of community social work. Fourth, alternative models of practice are required, ones that involve flexible system models rather than ones that are risk saturated. Fifth, facilitating dialogue with new forms of conversations with families is required, ones that explore such as hopes, fears and desires. All this aims to ensure that children can be cared for safely, as far as possible, with families that are supported to flourish economically and socially.

Young offending: resisting the rise of control and punitiveness

As we saw in Chapter 3 the influence of managerialism on work with young offenders is particularly apparent in the ASSET and ONSET forms which, although aimed at assisting decision making in practice, are by and large a management tool to improve information gathering and to help in the assessment and management of risk (Rogowski 2014a; Smith 2007; Whyte 2009). As John Pitts (2001) argued, such prescriptive form-filling along within a managerial and business ethos has led to the 'zombification' of social workers in youth justice. To the

extent that face-to-face contact takes place between social workers and young offenders, apart from information gathering, the emphasis is on control and punitiveness: if young offenders do not comply with their court order they are simply returned to court and face the possibility of custody. Long gone are the days of the practitioners advising, assisting and befriending young offenders, such practice being an aspect of practice in the more activity-based intermediate treatment schemes of the 1970s and 1980s.

Another concern relates to the establishment of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) following the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. Such teams include representatives of education, health, the police and others, as well as social work, and there is a resultant blurring of roles. This means that social workers have largely lost their professional identity as the unified identity of the YOT or Youth Offending Service (YOS) practitioner has emerged, this resulting in the role and influence of social work diminishing, along with the emphasis on the young person's wider social and economic context. In many youth justice texts (for example, Smith 2007; Stephenson et al. 2007), social work is barely mentioned, while in others (for example, Robinson 2014) it is largely referred to in passing. This indicates that whereas social work *was* pivotal to dealing with young offending, this is no longer the case. The obvious manifestation of this is services for young people in trouble being separated from mainstream children and families social work services (Goldson 2007). What remains of social work in YOTs is increasingly tied to a system primarily concerned with the management of risk by controlling the behaviour of young people who represent a threat to the wider community (Smith 2008). Nevertheless, and despite the managerial constraints on practitioners, some spaces can be found for critical practice and these must be utilised.

These days critical practice may often have to amount to 'quiet challenges' and resistance to discourses and practices orientated towards management and business (White 2009). For instance, one might mystify or conceal knowledge of users in order to acquire resources, this amounting to the manipulation of knowledge and information on their behalf. Or again, one might delay or exaggerate paperwork or assessment plans so that managers are manipulated into taking a particular course of action. Ignoring, bending and re-interpreting rules and procedures also have a role to play. Some might see this as deliberate dishonesty and thus not acceptable, although my view is that it should be seen more in terms of exercising professional agency within highly managerialist environments (Canton and Eadie 2004). In any case, despite such quiet challenges the relevance of more overt critical social work practice remains.

As I have indicated throughout this book, as well as in previous publications, there is a long tradition of radical and critical social work theory, and including such as anti-discriminatory/oppressive perspectives, and empowerment and advocacy (see, for example, Rogowski 2008, 2011b, 2013; also see Payne 2005b). Such theory initially focussed on class in the 1970s, but over the ensuing decades now incorporates race, gender and other oppressions. From these developments, problems confronting young offenders are defined as social and structural rather

than individual, with resulting practice including politicisation and consciousness-raising about the injustices in society. In the past social workers could use group- and community-orientated methods to pursue such critical/radical issues with young offenders (see Rogowski 2003/04), although this is less the case nowadays. However, politicisation and consciousness raising strategies can still be pursued, albeit on an individual basis, by talking with young offenders about the societal, structural issues that lie at the root of crime.

Importantly, work with a young offender has to involve building a relationship with them and their family because relationships are at the heart of good social work (Ruch et al. 2010; Trevithick 2012). Relationships and our dependence on them are inherent in being a person, even though they can be frustrating at times because people refuse to fit in with our wishes all the time. Most people manage these tensions and anxieties by giving and taking, but at times of strain, for example during periods of loss, change and transition, people can struggle. Mention of change and transition is particularly pertinent when it comes to young offenders, as they move from adolescence to young adulthood.

At one level, for example, the extent to which we help young offenders to remain motivated relies on the quality of the relationship that has been established. This involves the practitioner being genuine, warm and empathetic; it is about developing trust and establishing a rapport. As well as using the personal self, it is about the professional self including the use of knowledge and understanding. The issue of *hope* is important in all of this – holding on to a sense of hope in the face of adversity, particularly when the odds are stacked against young people who offend. Or again, there are crucial emotional issues that can direct young people to re-offend, such as their strong need to belong to peers which can include gangs, and the extent to which a *fear of humiliation* and *defeat* directs their behaviour and future prospects. Conversely, other feelings, such as those associated with *self-esteem* and *self-worth* can help them veer away from offending. Exploring such feelings and anxieties is an important aspect of social work and involves combining help/support with a relationship, even a friendship (Beresford et al. 2008). This is particularly important in work with young offenders because it is an area of practice where one cannot get away from issues of social control, although surely one of the central skills of social work is making relationships where control is an issue. In short, the relational practice advocated here concerns finding ways to maximise dialogue, change and an understanding of the root causes of young offending, while simultaneously ensuring that the young person's needs, views and experiences are not ignored.

Over the years I have been involved with many young people who have been offenders. I have met them in custody in all its forms, as well at home and in the office. Initially they can be stand-offish, even frightened and anxious, often answering in monosyllables or even just nodding and shrugging. However, treating them with respect and genuinely listening to their stories enables barriers to be broken down, with rapport being established and hence elements of change in their behaviour and lifestyle becoming possible. This is not to suggest, of course, that it is all about getting such young people to adjust to their socio-economic

circumstances; as alluded to, issues related to social justice and equality have to be at the fore of discussions. For example, I recall working with a young offender about fifteen years ago and recently a colleague had to visit him about other issues. She asked him how he managed to stop offending, and he replied that it was because I had treated him with dignity and respect and had listened to him: 'He made me think and tried to put me on the straight and narrow . . . and understand about things.' Sadly I do not have further details of what he was exactly referring to, but his comments make the point that relational social work has a key role in dealing with young offending.

All the foregoing involves a psycho-social approach which combines attention to individual psychological need with broader socio-economic circumstances. In simple terms, it includes a focus on a young person's motivation for offending rather than simply issues of control and surveillance. It could be pointed out that issues of boredom and material gain could be resolved by ensuring adequate, publically funded recreational, educational and employment/training opportunities were available to all young people. Discussions could turn to the need for social justice and equality in terms of both opportunities and outcomes. Problems and difficulties as defined by young offenders have to be addressed – these likely to include the aforementioned recreational, educational and employment issues. Young people could also be put in touch with groups and organisations which deal with their particular circumstances. Social workers' links with, and pressure on, the managerial hierarchy, along with such as local councillors and MPs, retain its relevance.

There is also potential for engaging in critical practice by working with colleagues who work in organisations and agencies which work alongside, but outside of, YOT/YOS. There are now a myriad of projects focussing on an array of issues which affect young offenders – drugs, crime prevention, homelessness, education, employment, community and neighbourhood regeneration and so on. Admittedly, austerity cuts will impact negatively on such projects but some might emerge relatively unscathed. Practitioners, including social workers, working within such settings perhaps have more scope to use their initiative and hence engage in the type of critical/radical practice advocated here. In addition, even YOT/YOS social workers can be involved, perhaps at a distance, for example in terms of suggesting methods and ways of working. This could utilise a social action approach which in turn draws on self-directed group work (Dearling and Skinner 2002; Mullender and Ward 1991; Mullender et al. 2013). It means contacting young people, talking and listening to them on their own ground. This entails discussion of what the problems are, why they exist and how things can be changed, leading to serious consideration about the real cause of social ills, including youth crime. For instance improved recreational facilities might be a key issue, and this can then be taken up with the local council. The social action approach goes hand in hand with social work practice approaches which emphasise relational work involving values of empathy and respect for persons (Ruch et al. 2010).

Mention needs to be made of restorative justice because it stresses the virtues of a direct encounter between victim and offender, as opposed to the abstract and

alienating procedures of formal judicial systems (Masters and Smith 1998; Smith 1995). It originated in the social work–led diversionary and alternative to incarceration schemes of the 1980s which included mediation and reparation. The stress is on problem solving, promoting empathy, expressing care, and on the reintegration of the offender rather than exclusion. It is about young offenders coming to understand the harm done by their behaviour and its consequences for themselves and others, this being an important element in their social and moral development. It is about a holistic and reintegrative practice rather than one that excludes, and is one which attempts to salvage more meaningful and humane practices from a youth justice system based on punishment and retribution (Whyte 2009).

Finally, as I have written previously (Rogowski 2014a), and again echoing comments made in Chapter 3, the point needs to be made that we live in a society in which young people do not have a sense of inclusion and it is also one that has become less tolerant and just towards them. This is precisely what critical practitioners must bear in mind in their work with offenders. The result is a practice that involves a rejection of the punitiveness of the present, works more constructively, in a relationally orientated way, with young offenders and their families, and has a vision of a more socially just and equal future.

Looked-after children: resisting the rush for permanence

When it comes to LAC children, even though they are a disadvantaged group by their very looked-after status, this can be compounded by their experience of public care, although this should not be overstated (Wade et al. 2011). Even so, some become isolated from their families, with parents feeling devalued and hopeless. Health and education needs can receive little priority, and those leaving the care system are often poorly prepared and ill-equipped for independent living. Such a situation has been linked to the prioritising of child protection and substitute home finding rather than those children who are already accommodated by the local authority (Utting 1997).

There is another important point to note: LAC children can be seen as objects in the sense that they become commodities in the marketisation and privatisation of services. This has again led to a 'procedural' approach to practice, one involving the gathering of information via numerous forms and computer exemplars (Sayer 2008). Such a situation is geared to the needs of the management and bureaucratic culture that pervades social work rather than the needs of children and young people. In particular, one reason for the increased documentation relates to the marketisation and privatisation of foster and residential care provision, with the LAC forms/exemplars providing information which helps in drawing up contractual specifications. Put simply, voluminous details of the difficulties and challenges a young person poses means providers of services can charge more. In addition, it is not surprising given the proliferation of bureaucracy that the social work role has been reduced to little more than completing paperwork/exemplars and undertaking statutory visits aimed at ensuring there are no signs of abuse. LAC children and young people surely expect more from their social workers than this.

Perhaps the most significant result of the procedural approach is that there is no longer an emphasis on the relationship social workers have with children and young people, instead 'success' is measured through performance indicators and targets. Young people bemoan the bureaucratic process taking over, this often resulting in social workers finding it difficult to relate to them. Common complaints include social workers not listening and trying to understand their point of view (Morgan 2006). They do not want social workers who are focussed towards carers or their employers, instead valuing qualities of trustworthiness, availability and reliability. I have often been told by young people that they like social workers who are friendly, approachable, and 'someone who you can have a laugh with'. This resonates with research showing that social workers need to focus their attention on children and young people by engaging directly with them and their parents in sustained, thoughtful, sometimes therapeutic work (Simmonds 2008). Unfortunately, the movement has been in the opposite direction and it is now exceptional for social workers to be engaged in such relational work.

Despite the increased bureaucratisation and proceduralisation of practice, it remains possible to work in more critical ways. An example of this is in the imaginative use of the various forms/exemplars (see Charles and Wilton 2004). Although such tools involve an overly directive checklist approach which is not child-friendly, and is more about data collection and the 'processing' of children, they can be used as a means of purposeful questioning and exploration of aspects of children's lives, and it can be a task which engages children, their parents, carers and significant others in discussion and debate. Such discourse can lead to joint decisions about what action needs to be done, and by whom, and thereby improve an individual's life chances. Practitioners working on these lines emphasise the professional control and autonomy they possess over the process, manner and methods by which the forms are completed. They use them to seize the chance to spend more time with children, this being a means of combating the scant time they usually formally have for relationship building. Importantly, the physical completion of the forms does not become the be-all and end-all, with instead them being used as a means of gathering qualitative rather than quantitative data. Details are collected at the child's pace, and information is set in the cultural and structural context in which they live, identifying resource inequalities in the process. Currently, for example, and subject to the age and understanding of the individual concerned, their particular circumstances could be related to the global crisis of neoliberalism leading to policies and cutbacks which adversely affect the most vulnerable in society. In a different vein, the emphasis is on the interactions themselves, as they are just as important as the gathering of information. All this helps to ensure the child/young person is not exploited, being expected to 'give' while receiving nothing in return; in short the 'secret to liberation from the technical bureaucratic straitjacket and into child centred practice lies in relationship building and effective communication with children' (Charles and Wilton 2004, p. 188).

On a different tack, New Labour and subsequent governments have been keen to increase the number and speed at which LAC children are adopted. In the

background is criticism of the alleged social work obsession with 'same race' placements, despite the fact that there can be damaging consequences for black children placed with white adopters (Small with Goldstein 2000). The idea of securing 'permanence' in a stable, loving home sounds all well and good, but there are difficulties in this 'rush for permanence' (Sayer 2008, p. 140). Arguably, behind it lies a 'new paternalism' which involves helping those children and families in need, but doing this by requiring certain behavioural requirements on the part of parents. It amounts to conditional welfare, this having affinities with developments during the Clinton administrations of the 1990s in the US (Prideaux 2001). Consequently, should birth parents not co-operate with social workers and quickly make behavioural and lifestyle changes, they can 'lose' their children (Garrett 2002). The emphasis on adoption, therefore, might well be more about getting children out of expensive local authority care rather than meeting their needs. Or again, it could be about meeting white middle class couples' needs rather than children's. After all, adoption often involves the transfer of children from poor families, often living on welfare benefits, to wealthier families who are willing and able to bear the full cost of caring for them. It is no surprise that from a critical perspective one should, at the very least, be wary of the rush for permanence and, indeed, at times resist this very process as in the following anonymised case study (which originally appeared in Rogowski 2013).

Resisting the rush for permanence

Michael and Ryan were mixed race half-brothers aged 5 and 2 years old, respectively. Michael was of Afro-Caribbean/white/South Asian ethnicity, while Ryan was Afro-Caribbean/white/Chinese. Their mother, Sara, had left them home alone overnight. The following day neighbours saw Michael banging on his bedroom window saying his mother had died. The police were called and had to break into the house, which was found to be in a chaotic state – there was no heating or food, with dirty clothes and toys scattered everywhere. Michael had tried to tape blankets to Ryan to keep him warm. Both were cold and hungry and had to be taken to hospital, where they soon recovered and were accommodated with foster carers while care proceedings were initiated.

Sara and her partner Ronnie, the father of Ryan, presented themselves at the office shortly afterwards. Ronnie lived in a neighbouring authority, but was in regular contact with the family. Sara did not give a clear explanation as to why the lads had been left, but both she and Ronnie wanted to be assessed in the hope of the lads being returned to their joint care. In considering their request, it is important to emphasise that managers, influenced by the emphasis on increasing the number of LAC children adopted, had already made their minds up that the lads would have to be adopted. However, the social workers involved were more open- minded, one factor being the difficulties of ensuring the children's racial/ethnic/cultural needs were met should adoption be pursued. Perhaps more importantly, they took the view that wherever possible children should be reunited with their parents/family, notwithstanding the difficult presenting situation.

Fortunately, during the various discussions that took place with the management hierarchy, the social workers' views held sway, with an assessment of Sara and Ronnie eventually taking place.

Sara and Ronnie co-operated with the parenting assessment which overall was positive, and they kept to the contact arrangements. As a result it was proposed that the lads be returned to their care. However, on one occasion Ronnie assaulted Sara in front of the lads at a children's centre. Not surprisingly adoption became the favoured option, but Ronnie persuasively put himself forward as a sole carer supported by his mother, Chloe. Meanwhile, Sara dropped out of the care proceedings and, for the time being, the lads' lives.

Chloe was duly assessed and approved as a relative foster carer and the lads moved to her care, while Ronnie underwent further parenting and psychological assessments, together with anger management, all of which were positive. The eventual care order and final care plan saw the lads remaining with Chloe under a care order but with Ronnie closely involved in their day-to-day care and not ruling out the possibility of him eventually becoming the sole carer. By now the whole family were living in the neighbouring local authority but supervised by their 'home' authority.

Michael and Ryan remained settled and thrived in the shared care arrangement involving Chloe and Ronnie. This continued when Ronnie and Sara reconciled and she resumed being involved in the lads' lives. She then became pregnant, and because of the previous child protection concerns the new baby, Lisa, was subject to a child protection plan at birth. She made good progress, but Ronnie and Sara eventually separated because he felt she did not 'pull her weight' in terms of caring for the children. He placed Lisa in the care of Chloe. He continued to play a key role in both her and the lads' care, although again Sara 'disappeared' from all their lives. Despite the continued progress of all three children, the neighbouring authority, in what amounted to defensive practice, initiated care proceedings in respect of Lisa. This dragged on for some time and involved Ronnie and Chloe having to undergo further assessments, which again were positive. As a result a supervision order was eventually made in respect of Lisa, although by now the lads had moved to Ronnie's sole care, supported by Chloe.

The lads continued to thrive in Ronnie's care, and the care orders in respect of them were discharged. The judge noted that Michael and Ryan were making good progress in all areas of their lives, including being in regular contact with Chloe and Lisa.

As far as this family, not least the children, were concerned, and despite the twists and turns along the way, there had certainly been a successful outcome. Furthermore, this had been achieved without recourse to the somewhat draconian, if cheaper, option of having the lads adopted at an earlier stage. It goes to show that working in genuine partnership with children and their families, even if this means swimming against the managerial tide and ignoring short-term targets along the way, can prove to be the best course of action for all concerned. Such outcomes might involve disagreements with some colleagues and managers, but this has always been and remains part of critical social work.

Child sexual exploitation: towards a critical feminist approach

CSE involves a person under 18 years old (the vast majority are female) in an exploitative relationship or context, who performs sexual activity, or has others perform sexual activity on them, in exchange for a commodity, for example, food, alcohol, cigarettes or money (DCSF 2009b). As discussed in Chapter 6, it has moved up the political and child protection agenda following scandals in such as Rochdale, Rotherham and most recently Oxford. Arguably there is an element of 'moral panic' (Cohen 2002 [1972]; Clapton et al. 2013) in some political and media circles, but undoubtedly CSE is an issue that needs to be seriously addressed.

However, what required is far more than the usual mantra of agencies working together and for policies and procedures to be followed. This is often more about a defensive practice so agencies, particularly social workers, cannot be criticised when things go wrong, as well as being about risk assessment/management and rationing resources (Rogowski 2010a, 2013). As well as the danger of social workers becoming docile e-technicians and people-processors (Garrett 2005, 2009b), it is at odds with a critical practice which includes building trusting relationships with young people and their families, and genuinely attempting to address their needs and issues. Such practice is urgently required in the particularly sensitive area of CSE. Further, this amounts to a 'critical feminist practice to support children and families in male privileged, neoliberal and managerialist times' (Cooney and Rogowski forthcoming).

A disproportionate percentage of girls subjected to CSE are accommodated by local authorities, and a significant number enter care due to issues related to the feminisation of poverty and gender inequality, all of which contribute to such as domestic abuse, addiction and parental mental health issues (Cockbain et al. 2014), Practitioners, therefore, should shift their focus from 'child saving' to promote familial resilience and support. One way of doing this is a critical feminist approach to working with families, a practice that recognises the structural aspects of families' environments. Such a perspective involves recognition of the unequal position of women in society and in turn leads to working with them so as to promote resilience by identifying their strengths and abilities, potential for growth and overall capacity as individuals, rather than a deficit perspective of individual pathology (Grant and Cadell 2009).

It is no surprise that feminist perspectives on social work are an important component of such critical practice (Payne 2005b; Rogowski 2013; also see Chapter 5), their focus being on explaining and responding to the oppressed position of women in society. In particular, a critical feminist practice often seeks change in societies, along with equality and mutual help and support, although there is also a concern with personal and social growth and development. There is also an emphasis on dialogic and egalitarian relationships between practitioners and service users whereby women's experience and diversity are shared and valued. This is an essential and important counter to the authoritarian and oppressive relationships which nowadays characterise so many contacts between social workers and

service users. An obvious example of this in relation to victims/survivors of CSE is that the girls are not judged or blamed for their predicament by being seen and labelled as promiscuous or simply making lifestyle choices. Instead, there should be recognition of the impact of a neoliberal society, this including the influence of mass media, social inequality, poverty and an overall sexualised culture which polarises femininity and masculinity (Bailey 2011; Dines 2010). This involves a holistic approach, one which considers key crucial sociological influences that affect identity formation. This is not to say, for example, that the theme of loss within attachment theory, albeit gender biased, goes some way to explain how, for example, LAC girls may form attachments to perpetrators of CSE and become entrenched by way of trauma bonding (Bloom 2003). After all, they have been removed from their family environment and seek comfort and attachment to a perpetrator who initially may show affection and offer security. In addition, their past experiences and the social stigma attached to being LAC children can lead to marginalisation and contributes to them being 'less resilient to the "pull" of exploitative relationships, where autonomy, excitement, gifts and someone who "loves" them appears to be on offer' (Melrose and Pearce (2013, p. 127).

Arguably there are two major influences on girls' lives and in turn CSE, namely social inequality and the sexualised world in which we live. Both impact on gender identity, with this intersectionality, compounded by the age of CSE victims, facilitating its continuation. Importantly, research by Howard League for Penal Reform (2012) emphasises the need to recognise the role that poverty has to play itself in how young women are victimised simply because the vast majority of CSE girls are economically and socially marginalised. Urgent attention, therefore, needs to be given to the structural causes of poverty, the consequences of it and its relationship with child protection including CSE. Berelowitz et al. (2013), for example, show how children who become entrenched in CSE often come from families where there are issues in relation to parental mental health, domestic abuse and substance abuse with, as indicated, these being associated with poverty and social inequality, and resultant parental stress (Katz et al. 2007). Moreover, it is usually lone parents, most often mothers, who are affected by all of this.

PACE (2013) identified that a significant proportion of girls affected by CSE are from families where only one parent and, in most cases the mother, is present. However, the point to make is that you cannot blame lone parents for the CSE of their child, rather there is a need to examine the relationship between family dynamics, the feminisation of poverty, child protection and CSE. Lone parenting in a society riddled with hegemonic masculinity by way of socio-political and media discourse is difficult. Indeed, the social construction of lone mothers as the 'feckless Other' is damaging and harmful as it leads to negative social attitudes, can decrease motivation to self-actualise, and overall decreases interconnectedness between individuals, communities and wider society. It also leads to a situation whereby instead of a focus on poverty, unemployment and resulting stress and frustration, we have a focus on evil children, bad mothers, absent fathers and broken homes (Burman 2008).

Furthermore, the pathologisation of lone parent families as 'defective' is deeply problematic, not least because 23% of all children live in lone parent households which are disproportionately affected by poverty (Gingerbread 2014; Meyer 2013). Although a majority of lone mothers are in work, often this is low paid and on zero-hour contracts, this meaning that, regardless of employment, lone parent families are twice as likely to live in poverty rather than the idealistic, normative nuclear family (Cooper et al. 2014). Likewise, those not in employment suffer the same fate, negatively affected by a welfare system that fails to identify their specific needs and work limitations as a result of gender-blind policies (Smith et al. 2010).

Bearing in mind the aforementioned, what might a critical feminist practice in relation to CSE entail? At the outset previous references to quiet challenges retains its relevance. For instance, you could be dealing with a teenage girl who is continually absconding, staying out overnight, sometimes for days at a time. She also associates with other girls who 'hang around' with or are targeted by older men, who befriend them with a view to sexually exploiting them. In reports written for child sexual exploitation meetings instead of focussing on inadequate parenting, in effect blaming, often lone parent mothers doing their best in difficult circumstances, the practitioner could advocate for more progressive response such as a group work with the girl concerned and her female friends (see later). The behaviour and activities of the girls could also be related to current society which, despite changes influenced by feminist thought, continues to be dominated by men.

In addition, previous comments about the need for practitioners to build relationships with those they work with equally apply to working with CSE girls and their families. In particular, again the issue of *hope* is important – holding onto a sense of hope in the face of adversity particularly when the odds are stacked against troubled and troublesome girls. Do not forget that there are crucial emotional issues – such as the aforementioned feelings of loss after being removed from home, hence seeking comfort from perpetrators who initially show them affection – that can direct such girls to CSE. Exploring such feelings and anxieties is an important aspect of social work and involves combining help/support with a relationship. Such relational practice involves finding ways to maximise dialogue, change and an understanding of the root causes of CSE, while simultaneously ensuring that the needs, views and experiences of girls and their parents are not ignored.

Again a psycho-social approach which combines attention to individual psychological need with broader socio-economic circumstances is important. Consciousness-raising in relation to the stress and strain of living in male-dominated, neoliberal society, together with all the inequality and social injustice this entails, needs to be considered and addressed. And social workers' links with, and pressure on, the managerial hierarchy, along with such as councillors, MPs and other agencies, not least the police, retains its relevance especially in relation to dealing with the perpetrators of CSE.

In addition to working with girls and their families on an individual, casework basis, there are the possibilities arising from group work in the form of the self-directed approach (Mullender and Ward 1991; Mullender et al. 2013), notwithstanding the difficulties in pursuing this method of practice in current managerialist times. It involves practitioners working alongside CSE girls on the issues they face, again by asking the 'what?', 'why?' and 'how?' questions. Consciousness-raising again comes into play with, for example, the group members, who will be at different stages of experiencing CSE, being facilitated to talk about their experiences, being mutually supportive and learning from each other. An obvious example is a girl who had managed to 'escape' her CSE situation telling the other group members how she did this. This could include explaining how the perpetrators, despite their gifts, attention and so on were not 'boyfriends' but simply exploiters. Similarly, such a group work approach could be used with the parents of CSE girls, this again having the potential to provide mutual support and the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences.

As alluded to, the practice examples advocated here face difficulties because of managerial obstacles and demand a less bureaucratic child protection system, one that gives far greater priority to professional discretion and autonomy, something that the final Munro Report (2011) advocated. It is worth repeating that there must be a move away from the muscular authoritarianism (Featherstone et al. 2014a) of neoliberal social work, which simply entails telling parents to change their behaviour and lifestyle or face the consequences. Instead, genuine help and support needs to be given to children and families, this being underpinned by an understanding that most parents are doing their best under difficulties arising from neoliberalism and made worse by austerity measures. And as Stepney (2006) points out in relation to critical practice more generally, a critical feminist practice involves the roles of protection and prevention while embodying possibilities for critical reflection and change. It also provides practitioners with a means for critical engagement with the issues at the root of injustice and exclusion so as to develop more emancipatory approaches which resist pressures for more enforcement and control.

Conclusion

Critical and radical social work have arguably always been stronger on theory rather than practice, and when combined with the difficulties confronting social work more generally by way of neoliberalism and resulting managerialism, this situation is compounded. The reduced and limited discretion that social workers retain must be defended and fought for, this leading to the critical thinking and practice outlined in this chapter, indeed throughout this book. This can mean engaging in seemingly deviant activities, and can potentially come at great cost to individual practitioners, including disciplinary action as happened to me (see Chapter 7), loss of reputation and job loss (Carey and Foster 2011). It is no surprise that while initially the possibilities for such critical and radical practice appear bleak, possibilities remain.

Critical and radical social work is needed because it critiques the present social order and the social control activities of social workers, while simultaneously offering a distinctive analysis of social issues that helps social workers think creatively about their practice and respond to concerns about oppressive practice. The neoliberal form of social work that currently dominates has led practitioners to disillusionment and discontent but in turn has created a space for the rebirth of radicalism (Lavalette 2011a) and critical social work more generally. As utopian as it may seem, critical social work is about small steps towards creating a society in which all humankind's needs are met, and where all are encouraged and enabled to fulfil their potential rather than to be simply workers and consumers.

Critical and radical ideas can be pursued by working with service users wherever possible on issues as defined by them and by being attentive to their needs and rights. It involves recognising the oppression and discrimination that they face, with such practice going hand in hand with more collective strategies by making links with wider social groupings. It is about person-centred work and collective action being used to challenge inegalitarianism, not least because social workers are in a position to influence social change by using what Wright-Mills (1959) described as the 'sociological imagination'. As utopian as it may seem, increasing the collective awareness of the class, gendered and racial injustices that individuals experience across the life course, which are damaging for children, young people and families, could eventually help facilitate the creation of a more just and equal society. These are some of the issues taken up in Chapter 9.

Note

1 I use the term 'critical' social work as opposed to 'radical' social work in this chapter unless specifically referring to the latter.

9 Conclusion

The future(s) of social work with children and families

> The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment of and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.
>
> (IFSW 2000)

The final chapter of *Social Work: The Rise and Fall of a Profession?* (Rogowski 2010a) also began with this definition of social work by the International Federation of Social Workers. It is worth repeating it here simply because it reflects the day-to-day practice of most social workers. It goes on to refer to methods of interventions including such as counselling, group work, family therapy and helping people obtain services and resources in the community. Also included are agency administration, community organisation and social/political action so as to impact on social policy and economic development.

However, again as written in the aforementioned book, there are two points to emphasise about this definition. First, whereas administration is mentioned, managerialism is conspicuous by its absence despite it currently dominating social work in the UK. Second, and linked, following the changes arising from neoliberalism over recent decades, many of the methods of intervention referred to are now rarely used by British social workers (Horner 2009). This is because the purposes and practices of social work are, in part at least, determined by prevailing political ideologies, and as we are living in neoliberal times, this has impacted negatively on social work by restricting and narrowing its role. Neoliberalism has produced an unprecedented centralisation of wealth and power following the institutionalisation of market-orientated ideology in the globalised world, and its underlying values have transformed the basic tenets of social work and undermined its ethical foundation (Reisch 2013). Scientific, empiricist 'objectivity' and an ahistorical orientation to human problems have been promoted as the principal criterion for respected scholarship. A result is that social workers have 'been turned into unreflective people-processors by waves of managerialism over the last 30 years and, more recently, by the intertwining of managerialism with

New Labour's modernisation agenda' (White 2009, p. 129). In this process, they have had to revise their relationship to the state, the market, service users and the community. Despite some warm words about, for example, reducing targets and bureaucracy, under the Coalition government little actually changed for the better and it is certainly unlikely to do so under the current Conservative one.

It would be easy to predict a dismal future for social work but, again referencing the Rolling Stones' single, I do not want to emphasise such a 'doom and gloom' scenario. Like Reisch (2013, p. 67) instead of taking a dystopian view of the profession's future, I tentatively present a more hopeful alternative, arguing that

> while social workers must be rigorous in their analysis of emerging social problems and relentless in their efforts to link these problems to their structural and institutional roots, they must also maintain a sense of possibility based on an awareness of history and appreciation of the collective human capacity to create change.

This chapter begins, like some of the foregoing, by echoing some previous work (Rogowski 2010a) regarding three critical thinkers, all of whom, to varying degrees, manage to retain a sense of optimism. These are Paul Michael Garrett (2003, 2009b, 2013, 2014) on the remaking or transforming of social work with children and families; Iain Ferguson (2008; Ferguson and Woodward 2009) in relation to reclaiming social work together with reasserting a radical approach (also see, for example, Lavalette 2011a; Rogowski 2013; Turbett 2014); and Bill Jordan (2007, 2008, 2010) on social work and well-being (also see Jordan and Drakeford 2013). All provide timely resources of hope. Second, I turn more directly to the future of social work, this time echoing aspects of my concluding chapter in *Critical Social Work with Children and Families* (Rogowski 2013). This includes reference to the increased interest in feminist-based ethics of care, what might come after neoliberalism, critical/radical or utopian social policy, and the future of critical social work with children and families. The central argument is that despite ongoing challenges social work does have a future, but any progressive, including critical and radical possibilities in relation to children and families in particular, will have to be continually fought for.

Resources of hope

By citing Williams's (1988) book title *Resources of Hope*, like him I want to make hope itself practical rather than despair convincing, in current global, neoliberal times. Critical thinking is required to do this, this involving going beyond everyday explanation and unthinking acceptance of 'common sense'. Rather it is an approach which recognises and foregrounds as necessary the structural inequalities that shape human experience and daily life, as well as the recognition that the lives and voices of people are splintered by class, race, gender and so on. So-called common sense is the starting point, not the end point; it is the raw material

embedded in everyday attitudes and is observable in the effort put into constructing and maintaining such attitudes by powerful interests. Critical thinking questions what others do not, thereby challenging common sense and this is something Garrett, Ferguson and Jordan do.

Remaking and transforming social work

Garrett (2003, 2009b, 2013, 2014) provides a sustained, critical account of the changes afflicting social work with children and families as a result of the neoliberal rationality which now dominates. Under the auspices of managerialism, these changes include the 'electronic turn' and the emphasis on completing bureaucracy and targets so as to ration services and assess/manage risk. However, drawing on Marx and his heirs such as Bourdieu and Gramsci, he argues all is not lost.

As we have seen throughout this book, neoliberalisation's impact on social work has been decidedly negative. However, if one turns to theorising neoliberalism more generally, something more positive emerges. This is because neoliberalism, although the dominant common sense or ideology, does contain flaws and inconsistencies. In the first place, whereas the role of the state is to produce conditions conducive to neoliberalism, as Bourdieu (1998) reminds us it is not just simply something that is in the hands of the establishment or, more aptly, the ruling class. This is because the neoliberal state is complex and at times contradictory, thereby including spaces for potential opposition. It may not be completely neutral or completely independent of the dominant sources of power in society, but the more advanced it is, and the greater the social advances it has incorporated, the more autonomous it can be.

There is also a disjuncture between neoliberalism which exists at the ideological or theoretical level and the day-to-day realities (Brenner and Theodore 2002). For instance, there is a disjuncture between the ideology of neoliberalism – a utopia of free markets without state interference – and its practical political operation which has seen an intensification of state interference so as to impose market rules in all areas of social life. In addition, whereas neoliberal ideology sees self-regulating markets providing the best allocation of investments and resources, neoliberal political practice has resulted in market failures with the financial crash of 2008 and resulting economic crisis being the obvious example. One factor is that neoliberals often do not have a blank canvas on which to operate and so falter because they must engage with ingrained cultures which, because they are not in tune with neoliberal common sense, generate resistance. Social workers, along with practitioners in a range of other professional fields, often have a loyalty to the practices and norms of their discipline as well as antipathy towards the forced-upon practices and norms of the market. The resulting tension between a value base reflected in a humanistic code of ethics can lead to opposition to marketisation and privatising of services, together with the development of counter strategies to so-called modernisation.

Indeed, the main political and social struggle of the present is that against the scourge of neoliberalism, notwithstanding the difficulties arising from the

discursive formulation which disguises the true intent of the project. First, there is the massive redistribution of wealth in favour of the rich. Second, and related, there is the insecurity and general precariousness inflicted on the majority of people (Young 2007, Standing 2014), not just in their working lives but also in relation to their experiences of health, education and welfare services more generally. When taxation was more progressive it helped fund a robust welfare state which since the mid-1970s has increasingly been dismissed as a failed experiment that encouraged dependency and could not be afforded. This is despite such services making real and lasting differences in peoples' lives irrespective of their wealth. Since then various neoliberal governments have increasingly encouraged, even pressurised, individuals to become more responsible for themselves and their families. Simultaneously, rather than ensuring all hospitals or schools are of a good standard, these organisations or 'businesses' are forced, through various targets and performance indicators, to compete with each other so as to survive. As for welfare, individuals, or consumers and customers as they are now often referred to, face increasingly intrusive questions and often coercive measures in order to obtain whatever (reduced) services or benefits they might receive.

A feature of such '*conservative revolutions*' (Bourdieu 1998, p. 35, original emphasis) is that present restorations are presented as revolutions, something 'new', 'modern' and amounting to 'modernisation'. The current revolution sanctions and exalts the reign of free markets which, perversely, serve no other law than to make the maximum profit no matter what the costs to fellow human beings. This also fails to acknowledge the inherent dangers of unbridled selfishness and greed which led to the Great Recession. Instead of a narrow and short-term concern with economics itself, there should be far more emphasis on 'economics of happiness' (Bourdieu 1998, p. 40) something which, through Jordan's work, I return to later. Bourdieu (1998, p. 37) is also aghast at the dismantling of the 'economic and social bases [i.e. the welfare state] of the most precious gains of humanity' and also queries what he sees as essentially the falsehood of globalisation. It is often merely rhetoric invoked by governments in order to justify their surrender to financial markets. Efforts of intellectuals and trade unions are seen as a counter to this, as are, for instance, green/environmental, feminist and anti-racist groups (Leonard 1997). What they all have in common is seeing the possibility of a more socially just and equal world.

Turning more specifically to social work, a similar optimism can be found, even if it has to be acknowledged that many social workers feel abandoned, disowned, even disillusioned or demoralised, by having to deal with the 'material and moral suffering that is the only certain consequence' of neoliberalism (Bourdieu et al. 2002, p. 183). More positively, however, there is an important contradiction and with this some hope. This contradiction is that the 'initiative, the inventiveness, if not charisma of those functionaries [social workers] who are the least imprisoned in their function' is the only way that their bureaucracies can actually function because otherwise the bureaucracy would in effect silt up and paralyse itself. Moreover, this contradiction opens up a space where freedom and initiative can be

used for the benefit of users and to 'defend the bureaucracy itself' (Bourdieu et al. 2002, p. 191), this amounting to critical practice.

Seeing modernisation as conservative revolution shows how the struggle against neoliberalism involves a struggle over meaning, with Gramsci's (1979) notion of hegemony (discussed in Chapter 5) being of particular relevance. For a hegemonic project to work, it has to address and respond to people's lived experience of the world, and in relation to Children's Services, for example, Garrett (2009b) shows how appeals have to be made to professional values and intuitions in order to win over people who might have doubts and anxieties. This also requires us to consider the various and potentially opposed future projects, even if there are dominant voices and forces (Clarke 2004). Attention has to be given to words in that there are key words and phrases which can, often without being noticed, contribute to the neoliberal hegemonic order. 'Modernisation', 'transformation' and 'flexibility' are obvious examples, but there are other more welfare-orientated words and phrases such as 'problem families', 'the underclass', 'social exclusion', 'welfare dependency', 'consumer' and 'customer', which should all be investigated and contested.

Despite the emphasis on words and discursive struggle, Gramsci acknowledged the need for a more orthodox politics based on such as political parties, trade unions, professional associations and social groups in which it is possible to create counter-hegemonic strategies aimed at social change. Importantly, it also involves thinking differently and doing things differently so as to oppose neoliberal 'common sense' within social work practice and education (Garrett 2014).

Reclaiming social work

Ferguson (2008; Ferguson and Woodward 2009) also has concerns about the dominance of neoliberalism, how it has changed social work and why the profession should be reclaimed.

An important issue is that rather than wealth trickling down to everyone, neoliberalism leads to greater inequality. Echoing previous comments, under the Thatcher and Major governments inequality not only grew, but there was an actual redistribution from the poor to the rich (Ferguson 2008). Under New Labour, the Coalition and now the Tories, with welfare to work rather than redistribution seen as the answer to the poor, poverty remains significant, particularly child poverty. Contrary to what the main political parties often might think, inequality does matter: on moral grounds because inequality is incompatible with social justice, because of its relation to other forms of unequalness such as health, and simply because inequality can be linked to the exploitation of others.

Another result of neoliberalism, and again resonating with previous comments, is a society in which people feel ever more insecure, not least those without wealth who face a precarious future in the increasingly privatised world. Ironically, given New Labour's emphasis on 'putting children first' or 'every child mattering' (discussed in Chapter 6), the greatest sense of insecurity is faced by children (UNICEF 2007). Interestingly, two of the leading countries of the initial

neoliberal experiment, the US and UK, have some of the unhappiest children in the world.

As for social work, Ferguson (2008; Ferguson and Woodward 2009) takes serious issue with how it has developed as a result of neoliberalism and the associated managerialism, competition and marketisation. Bureaucracy and targets, being care managers and rationers of resources, and increasingly having to be the moral police, all contribute to a profound sense of dissatisfaction among practitioners. They are disenchanted with what their job has become and the increasing gap between day-to-day tasks and the values that brought them into the profession. It amounts to a frustration of

> hopes, beliefs and desires by ideologies and policies which insist that the primary role of social workers is to 'manage' 'high-risk' families or individuals, to ration increasingly meagre resources, and collude in the demonization of groups such as young people and asylum seekers.
>
> (Ferguson 2008, p. 4)

However, with this dissatisfaction the seeds of resistance are sown, and this is not only within those relatively small numbers of radical or critical social workers. Because managerialism and its associated developments undermine *all* forms of social work practice, dissatisfaction and resistance has potentially spread, thereby embracing a larger number of workers. It is also fuelled and strengthened by the emergence of two types of social movements, namely the social welfare and anti-globalisation/capitalist movements. Social welfare movements such as disability and mental health users have challenged traditional models of social work and ways of delivering services while also being at the forefront of resisting attempts to reduce welfare spending. The anti-globalisation movement is against the neoliberal concern with the accumulation of wealth and exploitation of people and the planet, while also reflecting social work values of respect and social justice. It has affinities with radical social work (Ferguson and Woodward 2009), which was discussed in Chapter 5, although it is worth briefly revisiting some of the issues here.

'Pure' radical theory was based on class oppression during the 1970s (Bailey and Brake 1975a), but was complemented in the 1980s and 1990s by those arising from race, gender and other oppressions (Langan and Lee 1989), and by critical and postmodern perspectives linked to these (see for example, Fook 2002, 2012; Leonard 1997). Influenced by various users' movements, they highlighted the oppressions faced not only by women and black people but also older people and those with disabilities and mental health problems. However, whereas commonality provided a basis for joint, collective action, the stress on identity in the 1990s led to a fragmentation which, as part of neoliberal policies, accentuates the belief in individualism. This new emphasis also led to retreat from class analysis and politics, together with the possibility these offer for collective action.

In practice much of critical social work sought to overcome fragmentation and make links between oppression and material inequality. What is more problematic

is the extent to which the more extreme postmodern proponents of critical social work can actually do this. These include postmodernism's radical individualism, which rejects all bases of collective identity, the rejection of structural explanations of poverty and inequality, and its moral relativism which amounts to nihilism (see Ferguson 2008, pp. 115–118). A key failing of postmodernism is that it provides little in terms of practice or a theoretical framework for making links between case/group/community work and wider structural processes. An example is that it is difficult to understand or challenge the withering away of relationship-based social work without relating this within the context of the marketisation and managerialisation of social work.

Importantly, the second wave of radical social work during the 2000s leads to a more positive view of aspects of critical social work together with a reminder of the continued relevance of class (Ferguson, I. 2011). It also deals with the postmodern scepticism of the 'false universalism' of the welfare state rather than Enlightenment's promise of universal emancipation (Callinicos 1999). For postmodernists every universalism is seen as a masked particularism which excludes many, so you are simply left to decide which particularism, or group of particularisms, one prefers. In terms of welfare policy there are inherent dangers with such a view, especially when the idea of welfare itself is under threat. This is because it can allow governments wanting to cut expenditure to play groups off one another as they argue over the limited resources on offer, and it can facilitate a backlash against oppressed groups, for example where genuine demands for affirmative action can be portrayed as being at the expense of the basic welfare needs of the majority. The alternative answer to the failings of the Enlightenment project is to seek *genuine* universality: a social and political order in which *everyone* is included. It is a world where all humans regardless of class, race, gender, age or impairment can coexist on an equal basis, and where their needs are met and their views valued.

As always, creating a better world is always the hardest part of any emancipatory project. But there are challenges to neoliberalism in the form of the anti-globalisation movement and the concern with happiness and well-being (Ferguson 2008). The anti-globalisation movement is considered further later; happiness and well-being are major themes of Bill Jordan's work, to which I now turn.

Social work, welfare and well-being

Jordan (2007, 2008, 2010; Jordan and Drakeford 2013) has never been comfortable with the narrow-market mentality of neoliberalism, arguing for a move from societies organised around economic growth and material consumption to ones focussing on well-being and sustainability. This challenges the assumption that human happiness is based on material circumstances rather than by physical and mental health, and by relationships with others. He highlights the significance of personal relationships, trust and participation needed to sustain a decent quality of life, despite the dominance of the neoliberal economic model. His argument is for well-being to be seen and accepted in terms of its social value and to be incorporated into policy decisions.

Richard Layard (2005), a professor at the London School of Economics – and not a psychologist, surprisingly – has been influential in the well-being debate. He calls for a new approach to public policy which promotes the common good and for a shift to a new perspective where people's feelings are paramount. The promise of neoliberalism has not been fulfilled because although Western 'societies have got richer, their people have become no happier with instead mental illness increasing' (Layard 2005, p. 3).

Jordan (2007) argues Layard's analysis provides an opportunity for the value of social work to be re-asserted. This eschews the perspectives of accountants, managers and government ministers, instead re-emphasising social work concerns with relationships and feelings. The latter are not to be regarded as vague, woolly concepts especially at a time when social work is too closely tied to neoliberal agendas that emphasise individualism, choice and markets, this represented in terms of gains in independence, choice and economic functioning. The well-being agenda reflects a move away from such preoccupations to one more in line with a future consisting of environmental awareness, a revival of respect and mutuality among ethnic diversity, and a vision of our collective quality of life.

The alleged wooliness of concepts such as 'relationships' and 'feelings' might be said to lead to a loss of intellectual and scientific rigour, but this is too simplistic. Social work must stress its value in the emotional, social and communal spheres of life, and the fact that economists have been trying to analyse such phenomena provides an opportunity to treat these dimensions of experience with the same level of explanation as the material sphere (Jordan 2007). The challenge for social workers is to move themselves and users beyond concerns with material consumption and instrumental outcomes.

The value of social work is far more than the neoliberal preoccupation of being able to deliver services to individuals whose well-being is taken to lie in a choice of alternative suppliers or as offering interventions to target specific behaviours. Such a preoccupation emphasises services packaged and delivered to encourage choice, efficiency and effectiveness, and on commissioning under contract so as to allow costs to be accounted and outcomes recorded. This is a very narrow view of how to maximise well-being, implying as it does that services are one-off experiences which can be consumed one after another. Such a regime overlooks the value generated by the 'interpersonal economy' and fails to recognise a number of issues (Jordan 2007). First, social work involves interactions with service users in which emotions such as empathy, trust and respect are involved, these producing much of its value. Second, social workers often deal in long-term dependences, not one-off experiences, and social care itself is not about simply 'independence' but about people's quality of relationships in systems of relationships whereby people give and receive support over many years. Third, social care services create cultures and contexts in which professionals and users make sense of the world and experience it. Anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive approaches come into play so that services are sensitive to gender and ethnic differences and create a diversity of understandings whereby groups are in dialogue about society and social interactions.

In addition, social work practice which focusses on protecting vulnerable individuals, behavioural change and meeting identified need is reconcilable with a concern with an individual's well-being. Statutory social work therefore does have a role if it responds by engaging with users' own understanding of their identities and the quality of their lives. By analysing problems and interventions in terms of the interpersonal economy it can, for example, reduce harmful emotions and actions while enhancing positive ones, improve relations with friends and neighbours, and even lead to activism in a social movement (Jordan 2007).

Furthermore, those who are advocates of evidence-based practice would be hard-pressed to find that recent approaches to service delivery have improved outcomes. One has only to recall the increase in children and young people with emotional and behavioural issues or mental health concerns. Indeed, greater material inequality has been accompanied by increases in behaviour that can be linked to feelings of hopelessness and resistance, with self-harm and anti-social behaviour being prime examples. Technical, 'what works' fixes can hardly be said to have been a success, nor can seeing services as sequential one-off experiences, delivered in occasional packages which themselves can be counterproductive. If one looks at children and young people who are accommodated or need a social worker for help and support, this should not be a series of separate experiences involving different social workers. In the case of having to be accommodated, it can lead to frequent moves with resulting outcomes of educational underachievement, drug use, offending and eventual homelessness. This could be remedied by the creation of social value being achieved by having *positive* and *consistent* relationships and exchanges between adults, not least social workers, and children and young people.

Over all, a concern for happiness and well-being is at odds with governments which adhere 'to an incoherent version of social order, which jeopardises the very fabric of social reproduction' (Jordan 2007, p. 140). Recent governments' over-regulation of welfare and social relations, even to the extent of this being, together with aspects of social work, a tool of oppression, has and will fail. During my lifetime we have witnessed a move from a collectivist welfare state to a competitive individualist society where everyone takes responsibility for themselves. If individuals are unable to do this, they are increasingly dealt with in authoritarian ways. What have been lost in this process are collective measures for social protection which have been sacrificed in order to achieve the goals of more flexible market-orientated systems and people. This may have helped the UK and other countries adapt to the demands of globalisation, but it has gone hand in hand with a diminution in qualities such as mutual respect, acceptance and consideration of others. There may be higher living standards for many, but in terms of well-being it has stalled.

In fact, a social order based on self-responsibility, choice and moving between options looks increasingly unworkable given the social problems – drug and alcohol misuse, poverty, crime, minority disaffection and so on – that afflict large sections of society. Admittedly there is the threat that the instruments of income redistribution and social care (i.e. the welfare state) are now deployed to enforce

a new regime of intensified exploitation at work and welfare discipline in society. However, social work's concern with, and involvement in, the interpersonal economy provides a more promising arena for ensuring a social order in which diversity and freedom are reconciled with respect and belonging. In many ways well-being has entered the public consciousness and social work can play a part in demanding and working for change so as to ensure more communal solutions to shared social issues. After all, the processes by which social work is coming to play a frontline role in the authoritarian aspects of government policy are reversible, and there are opportunities for social work to recapture its emancipatory potential (Jordan 2010; Jordan and Drakeford 2013).

What Garrett, Ferguson and Jordan have in common is a somewhat sanguine view of the future possibilities for social work, notwithstanding difficulties. Garrett is surely correct in much of his analysis in that there are opportunities to challenge neoliberal orthodoxy. Ferguson is right to stress the continued relevance of a radical practice even though the opportunities are more restricted than they were. And Jordan's concern with well-being resonates well with, and provides some opportunities for, critical practice. However, in looking at the future of social work more broadly, what possibilities emerge?

A future for social work?

There is a key problem that confronts social work and hinders its future: all major political parties in the UK, along with most of the governments and the main political parties in the developed (and increasingly the developing) world, accept a consensus that sees neoliberalism (or in more overtly Marxist terms, global capitalism) as the only way forward. Despite the financial crisis and Great Recession, it remains the dominant political and economic system, with resulting policies negatively affecting social work to the extent that the future of the profession is uncertain. Caring and supportive state social work does not fit in with the neoliberal ideology which emphasises people having to take responsibility for their own lives. To the extent that a more substantial role might remain it will be the authoritarian, controlling side. Perhaps over the coming years social workers will increasingly become the acceptable face of the state in saying to children and families that no or minimal services can be offered. People will be expected to stand on their own feet, with social workers only intervening, and then in authoritarian ways, if people become a danger to themselves or others.

In contrast, Bourdieu (1998) speaks out against the new myths of our time, especially those associated with neoliberalism, and offers a passionate defence of the public interest. He argues that the withdrawal of the state from many areas of social life in recent decades has produced growing despair and alienation in the most deprived sections of the population. The dismantling of public welfare in the name of the work ethic, private enterprise, flexible markets and global competitiveness is increasing the misery of those who have suffered most. In standing

up for the interests of the powerless he helps to give a voice to those individuals, groups and social movements whose views are rarely heard.

Ethics of care

In many ways, Bourdieu's views resonate with the increasing interest in feminist-based ethics of care (Barnes 2012; Held 2006; Mahon and Robinson 2010; Robinson 1999, 2010; Williams 2001;), something which is a counterbalance to the stress on the work ethic by Conservative, New Labour and subsequent governments.

Briefly put, a true welfare state aims to reverse the misery of those in poverty, providing protection and security from social and economic risks, and providing citizenship, this involving the state having an important role in addressing the health, education, employment, housing and social needs of citizens to a basic minimal level (see Williams 1989). However, successive governments have retreated from such goals as it is the individual who is supposed to manage their own life. Such a neoliberal view sees an ethic of *paid work* as being the means for citizens to achieve in the aforementioned areas, but surely this view needs to be balanced by a political ethics of *care* (Williams 2001). Importantly, ethics of care are concerned with conditions of vulnerability and inequality, issues which are fundamental to social work.

The ethic of paid work has been central to welfare reforms over recent decades because of the financial imperative to get people off welfare and into work, and the moral imperative to turn people into better citizens because it is the route out of dependency into independency. However, despite the centrality of the work ethic, care has become an increasingly important analytic referent in social policy, and increasingly significant in various policy-relevant debates. One has only to recall discourses in relation to the 'mixed economy of care', community care, young carers, the treatment of looked-after children and children in care, what constitutes good parenting, the care of older people, and the need to recognise care responsibilities in employment-based work-life balances. The focus has been, and is, on what care means, its uses and abuses, what it costs, how it is supported, and how and who delivers it. The key point is that policies associated with care have the potential to be innovative but, most importantly, they can be used to create greater equality provided that the political values that support policies are made clear.

In brief, ethics of care can influence public democratic practices and our understanding of citizenship because care is not just a moral concept but a political concept that can help rethink humankind as interdependent beings (Sevenhuijsen 1998; Tronto 2010). Importantly, it is not merely a parochial concern of women or those 'at the bottom of the economic pile', but a central concern of human life; this is why political and social institutions need to reflect this. It is also a social process engendering important elements of citizenship, as the moral qualities involved in care – attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness – can be seen

as civic virtues. Care can, therefore, provide a lens through which to make judgements about collective commitments and individual responsibilities.

Williams (2001) outlines eight issues for an ethics of care, all of which warrant brief elaboration here. First, care is a meaningful activity that binds us all, in that everyone is involved whether it is the care of oneself and/or others. Second, in giving and receiving care we learn the civic virtues such as responsibility, tolerance for human limitations and frailties, and acceptance of diversity, all suggesting that it is part of genuine citizenship. Third, an ethics of care demands interdependence as the basis of human interaction, with independence being about the capacity for self-determination rather than the expectation of individual self-sufficiency. Fourth, moral worth is attributed to key positive caring dimensions of caring relationships such as dignity and the quality of human interaction whether based on blood, kinship, sexual intimacy, friendship, collegiality, contract or service. Fifth, the question who is benefiting from existing care policies and who is not needs to be asked, this emphasising a stance antithetical to inequalities in care giving and receiving, whether related to gender in particular but also class, race, age, sexuality and religion, among others. Sixth, the false dichotomy of carer and cared for, and the relations of power inherent in this, need to be challenged. This means those who have traditionally been without a voice in the social processes of care – for instance, disabled and older people, children and unpaid carers – have to be fully included, thereby recognising the importance of an inclusive citizenship. Seventh, quality, affordability, accessibility, flexibility, choice and control are the keys to service provision. Finally, care is not only personal but an issue of public and political concern whose social dynamics operate at local, national and transnational levels.

All these areas are interlinked and have different emphases for different people. Some may find relationships at work key to their personal well-being, while others want quality time with their children to provide the revitalisation qualities which are inherent in personal time. The important point, moreover, is to prioritise the opportunities to give and receive care, and to normalise responsibilities for giving care and support as well as needs for receiving care and support. Such a stance goes a long way to balance the fixation with the ethic for work, but how realistic is it in current neoliberal times? This is one of the questions I now turn to.

After neoliberalism?

During the Great Recession, Labour's Ed Miliband spoke about the need for a 'moral' and 'responsible' capitalism. Such comments chime with the anti-globalisation/capitalism protests which began in the late 1990s in Seattle and other cities and have been ongoing ever since, notably the Occupy movement in London, New York and other cities. These popular protests are rightfully concerned about inequality, corporate greed and social injustice, including neoliberalisation subverting nations' ability for self-determination, having a disastrous environmental impact by exhausting natural resources, and the increased exploitation of people.

Talk of morality and responsibility in relation to capitalism raises significant questions, particularly as to whom the responsibility is owed. Is it merely to shareholders and those few individuals at the top of global financial and business enterprises, or consumers and wider society? The again, some might see mention of morality and responsibility in relation to capitalism as an oxymoron; although you may be able to find examples of 'caring' capitalists, the essence of the system is exploitative simply because it is aimed at creating maximum profits and leads to vast increases in inequality. Such issues have led to questioning of the neoliberal project (for example, Noble and Hendrickson 2011; Robinson 2010). However, one must be cautious in heralding the demise of neoliberalism simply because neoliberal ontological categories and normative dispositions have been remarkably resilient during and since the recent neoliberal debacle. Nevertheless, at least questions are beginning to be asked about the global dominance of neoliberal ideology.

During the 1980s the Thatcher and Reagan governments in the UK and USA ushered in neoliberal, free market policies (see Chapter 2). Following the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 there was an increased rhetorical and policy commitment to the values of neoliberalism, including the need to encourage the globalisation process. The West, through the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization, foisted 'structural adjustment' and 'stabilisation' policies which favoured multinational corporations; meanwhile, social provision for health, education and welfare had to be scaled back (Robinson 2010). One has only to witness what has happened to Greece and other southern European countries as a result of the eurozone crisis, with public spending on welfare massively cut and public services privatised. As Naomi Klein (2008) shows, this is an example of how catastrophes or 'social shocks' can be exploited by the powerful for political motives to force through economic restructuring so as to aid the neoliberal cause. And closer to home, in the UK we have seen how the Great Recession enabled deep austerity to be pursued, now intensified under the current Tory government, for the same ends.

However, there are two significant problems with such neoliberal 'solutions'. First, it is futile to view the unfettered free market as being somehow able to replace the state and provide for the needs of its citizens. Over recent decades, poverty and immiseration have increased in many counties and the market has not been able to provide services or meet the needs of people like a robust welfare state did (Harvey 2007). Second, the de-regulation of the market turned to disaster in 2008 when the system of economic control by the capitalist class imploded and the Great Recession ensued. Even before then, millions of people in the developing world were falling deeper into debt and poverty while people in the developed world were losing their homes, jobs and the safety net of a decent welfare state. This resulted in feelings of anxiousness and insecurity for many. In the title words of Jock Young's book (2007) they were experiencing 'the vertigo of late modernity'.

Although academics, global protest movements and perhaps public opinion more generally are questioning neoliberalism, what is less evident is a clear

indication of what would fill the void on the way to, and after, its downfall. In short, what will or should take neoliberalism's place, and how do we get there? The answer to such questions has always been a problem for critics of current societal arrangements, whether they are unreconstructed Marxists, feminists, anti-racists or those (including postmodernists) concerned with managing the diversity of identities and resulting myriad of claims and counterclaims for disability and cultural rights, sexual choices, religious freedoms and so forth. It ought to go without saying that there is no blueprint as to how a future society should be organised other than it should include notions of social justice and equality for *all*. This is where critical/radical or Utopian social policy comes in.

Towards a critical/radical or utopian social policy

Critical social policy engages with the age-old project of modernity, namely emancipation, of ensuring all of humankind's needs are met, and ensuring equality and social justice for all (Rogowski 2010a). Drawing on Marxism and aspects of feminism, anti-racism and postmodernism, there are two moral obligations to consider, namely to difference and solidarity (Leonard 1997). An obligation to difference means a responsibility to otherness, to the diversity of subjects, communities and cultures, and recognition of the value of the Other. It is in tension with the obligation to solidarity, of mutual interdependence. They must be continually balanced against each other because an unrestrained emphasis on difference leads to cultural exclusiveness, restricted identities or intense individualism, while unrestricted solidarity can lead to domination and homogenisation. It leads to policies and practices which recognise individual difference but engages in discourses on the similarities between subjects confronting problems of, for example, identity or material survival – similarities which may be embedded in common experiences of class, gender and race as well as other identities.

Furthermore, if one thinks about future policy there are two ways of doing this (Levitas 2001, 2011, 2013). First, and most common, is the method of extrapolation, the identification of key trends in the present and their projection forwards. The concern is with what is probable and possible, perhaps desirable, moving in small steps from where we are. It is rooted in the present, accepting the contours of present society, notably global neoliberalism/capitalism, the inequalities of the market and so on. The concern is with recapitulation as much as projection and extrapolation. Second, however, and radically, is the utopian method which enjoins us to first think about where we want to be and then how to get there.

As indicated, work and the work ethic are central themes to the current neoliberal consensus. There has been no attempt to build a consensus in favour of redistribution, reducing inequality, more progressive taxation or collective protection against risk. Successive governments' visions of the good society is a meritocracy where people do paid work, capitalism is allowed to run its course and there is no need to worry about incomes at the top. The rich deserve their wealth and are not resented, and the poor have abolished themselves by working in such as McDonalds and call centres on zero-hour contracts.

The point of the utopian method, however, is that we stop and think where we are trying to get to, and for critical/radical theorists a starting point is the (admittedly problematic) concept of human need; what is necessary for a decent livelihood and decent life for all (Doyal and Gough 1991). For example, Gorz (1999) argues for a break in the wage relation and a move beyond a wage-based society, advocating a basic income for all. A combination of basic income, decent public services and ecologically sustainable urban regeneration would make 'inclusion' a more meaningful term because it would entail greater equality. It is not reinventing and extending redistributive policies of social democracy (although that would be no bad thing), not even rethinking what constitutes work, but abandoning the work ethic itself; work can no longer be central to individual life projects. This resonates with Jordan's (2010) call for a basic or citizen's income so as to achieve improvements in equality and social justice.

A neglected area, however, and one that can be counterposed to the work ethic, is the aforementioned feminist-based ethics of care. Importantly, care ethics disrupt the dominant individual and society dichotomy by denying the ontological distinction between individuals and society, instead providing a view of creating ties rather than building bridges between individuals and society (Robinson 2010; Sevenhuijsen 2000) As we saw, care ethics emphasises the universality of the need to give and receive care, and critiques the near-universal undervaluing of the practices and labour of care and those who perform them. This is especially relevant given that practices of care are the basic substance of morality, involving recognition of responsibilities to others and understanding the nature of those responsibilities.

In moving forward, there two questions that need addressing. First, how could all the changes outlined be afforded? Redistribution is one answer, this being across the life cycle and/or between groups of wage earners. Additionally, certainly much more could be demanded from the transnational corporations, with nation-states acting collectively rather than competitively to limit flows of capital and stop colluding with the fiction that neoliberal globalisation is a natural process (Montbiot 2000). These might be transitional demands, as the kind of society eventually envisaged is incompatible with neoliberalism, but if acted upon and implemented would enable the real needs of children and families to be met.

The second question arises from the fact that to pursue much of this the power and resources of the state are needed. But how can a weakened state, as a result of the power of international capital, and deeply implicated in the political economy of neoliberalism, serve such an emancipatory purpose? In the context of the economic power of capital and with established political parties bending over backwards to work at its behest, prospects look bleak. However, perhaps a search for solidarity on basic economic and social issues while retaining a commitment to diversity is a way forward (Leonard 1997). The new social movements focussing on identity politics, local community action and single-issue alliances could become an organised solidarity based on a common interest in the development of policies which benefited all identities. The anti-capitalist/globalisation protests, including Occupy, are practical examples of an organised solidarity happening.

Utopian as it may seem, such movements could lead to the establishment of a new kind of political party, one where member organisations join together not to obliterate their separate identities, but to express them, at least in part, through solidarity. Such a party could be described as a 'confederation of diversities' (Leonard 1997, p. 177), one which might well implement policies on the lines outlined, thereby contributing to social justice and equality for all.[1]

Furthermore, there are alternatives to the pessimistic analysis of neoliberals that the welfare state must be cut back and better alternatives are the market and self-interest. Such a policy direction neglects the poor and vulnerable, while there is an alternative based on the work of Peter Townsend which would lead to a less fractured, more socially just society (Walker et al. 2011). The key elements of this 'manifesto for social justice' are:

- An adequate income, sufficient to allow people to live decently and with dignity, in work, out of work, in childhood and in old age;
- A concerted attack on damaging social divisions in society – based for example on class, race, gender, and location – which result in exclusion, ill-health and premature death;
- A universal child benefit and a universal basic pension paid at a level that enables full participation in society;
- A new welfare state, at the heart of British life, aimed at nurturing the self-realisation of everyone, providing support when needed across the life course, and actively preventing poverty, inequality, ill-health and exclusion;
- An international welfare state in which rich nations redistribute large portions of their income to the poorest.

The manifesto does not simply state the case for social justice and list demands for policy action; it demonstrates the affordability of these basic demands. First, it rebuts the claim of that bailing out the banks meant that Britain was broke, showing that the debt threat has been blown out of proportion with the size of the public sector not out of step with other major European countries. It also highlights alternative sources of revenue so as to avoid public spending cuts, such as closing tax loopholes and taxing vacant housing. Second, it points out that social justice in Britain depends on a fair, more progressive tax system. Above all, the manifesto for social justice is realistic and realisable if policy makers reject inequality and choose to promote opportunities for every person to live a decent and fulfilled life.

The future(s) of critical social work with children and families

The future(s) of social work with children and families cannot be detached from the 2008 financial and economic crisis which resulted from three decades of neoliberalism (Garrett 2012). One scenario is that practice might not be unambiguously progressive and might be rooted in a defence of professional privilege, one which leads to the often authoritarian neoliberal practice of the present. On

the other hand, it may be grounded in a set of values and code of ethics which are potentially oppositional to neoliberalism. In either case, social work may have to be prepared for a 'long war', as neoliberalisation continues to try and enforce change that might take years, even decades, to become embedded (Clarke 2004). An example of this is the current welfare discourse relating to how social work needs to be modern, this entailing its current restricted and controlling aspects (Garrett 2009b). In brief, the neoliberal aspiration is to try and create, within each individual worker and new entrant to the field, a new sense of professional milieu or habitus conducive to neoliberalisation (also see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). It is about changing hearts and minds so as to facilitate neoliberalisation.

As argued previously (for example, Rogowski 2010b, 2013), and throughout this book, a key problem in the post-socialist era (Fraser 1997) is the largely global consensus concerning neoliberalism. This involves a social policy and welfare state dominated by an economic agenda aimed at achieving maximum possible entry to the labour market to offset present social welfare costs and future health and pension costs (Spratt 2008). To the extent that Western governments have responded to the recent financial and economic crisis, it amounted to propping up the system at the root of the problem, namely neoliberalism itself. But do we really want a society consisting of individual consumers responsible for satisfying their own needs by making economical choices in the marketplace? After all, this produces a highly individualised vision of society, one that disregards issues of social justice and equality (Holland et al. 2007; Newman and Clarke 2009).

The impact of such market rule and neoliberalisation has led to the managerialism which controls social workers and resources so as to ensure parents are made self-responsible for their children. Put simply, the caring and supportive side of social work does not fit in with neoliberal ideology. Any element of care might be limited to being a navigator, helping users choose what service they require; using current jargon, signposting might be the future of social work. To the extent that a more substantial role might remain – and indeed, probably does – it will be the authoritarian, controlling side, something that has increasingly been in evidence over recent decades.

In future there may be opportunities for less qualified support, care and other workers – quasi-social workers, if you will – to carry out what were social work responsibilities and roles, with the Troubled Families Programme being an example of this. However, such workers will have less knowledge and understanding about the real situation of the people they are dealing with and their own position in the process of managing and controlling children and families who are essentially casualties of current societal arrangements. From its very beginnings, social work has attempted to challenge the status quo, and to do this knowledge and understanding are required. It is precisely because of this knowledge and understanding that social work has been able to highlight inequalities and oppressions in the present neoliberal society. It is also because of this that as far as politicians and the media are concerned, social work is either vilified following a child abuse tragedy, or sidelined and ignored.

Perhaps all that can be expected over the coming years is that social workers will become even more the acceptable face of the state in saying that no or minimal services can be offered. Going further, as Dominelli (2009b, p. 23) puts it, the profession could be confined 'to the dustbin of history as irrelevant or parasitic'. Similarly, Cree (2009) points out social work is at the crossroads and can either fight to hold onto its nascent professional status in the face of the encroachment of other professional groupings and managerialism, or retreat and accept the status quo.

Students and newly qualified social workers might find the foregoing somewhat disheartening, while more experienced practitioners and academics are likely to find a ring of truth. However, I do not want to leave the reader with such a gloomy scenario. There are more positive views of the situation; one only has to bear in mind the earlier discussion about ethics of care, what is to come after neoliberalism, and critical/radical/utopian social policy. Then there are the critical and radical practice possibilities as outlined in Chapter 8 (also see, for example, Rogowski 2011b, 2013). Such practice amounts to challenges and resistance to managerial and business-orientated discourses and practices. An obvious example is just to ignore managerial 'advice' and continue to work in real partnership with users on the issues of concern. Or again, 'old' radical social work concerns with such as politicisation and conscientisation can still play a part, despite postmodernist assertions which challenge the basis of overarching truths. It is still possible to work with users on an individual basis with the aim of developing an understanding of the underlying causes of the problems and difficulties they face, namely the neoliberal system we currently live under.

As well as practitioners working on an individual basis with users in progressive, critical and radical ways, there is also a role for collective action. Such action entails social workers asking: 'How will we sustain out historic commitment to social justice in the context of the present neoliberal regime?' (Reisch 2013, p. 80). This means acting with professional associations and such as the Social Work Action Network, the radical/critical campaigning organisation which aims to develop strategies to resist managerialism and neoliberalism. Trade unions, of course, can and do assist in such collective processes, as do political parties and broader social groupings, not least the anti-globalisation movement, which is significant because of its ability to bring together disparate groups to challenge the neoliberal world. Such 'unity in diversity' (Leonard 1997, p. 177) helps in challenging and resisting ongoing neoliberalisation.

Conclusion

Neoliberalism has led to nation-states becoming market states which have little concern with collective provision or social justice, instead merely wanting to extend opportunities so that individuals can take care of their own needs and responsibilities through work (Bochel 2011). It is the embracement of the free market and has a very narrow and restricted notion of what of what the possibilities of societal advancement could be. Such possibilities include the collective

meeting of everyone's basic needs in a society where the overriding goal is social justice and equality, rather than self-interest and self-responsibility. This view of the future may be idealistic, even utopian, because the rich and powerful, by acting through the state, endeavour – usually with success – to determine the direction society takes, one that favours their interests and desires. But all is not lost.

Over recent neoliberal decades social work's potential to be a force for progressive policy and social change might have been has been significantly eroded. Similarly, welfare services more generally have and are continuing to change, with a smaller role for the state and a larger role for the private sector, social enterprises and the voluntary sector. Social workers have to contend with pressure to get more for less, more and quicker paperwork being completed with fewer, and increasingly less qualified workers. If any intervention takes place it is often authoritarian and punitive, although children and families increasingly have to rely on their own resources and contacts.

Nevertheless, critical social work with children and families remains possible. It is about a 'politics of practice' (Dominelli 2010, p. 172), which includes work with service users as well as acting collectively with others so as to challenge inegalitarian social relations. Issues of recognition, representation and redistribution are involved. Recognition focusses on the strengths of service users. Representation helps individuals and communities to represent their views and aspirations to the powers that be. Redistribution is about ensuring that resources, in both the UK and globally, are distributed equitably. Notions of mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity, all of which can be associated with an ethics of care, what may come after neoliberalism, and critical/radical/utopian social policy are to the fore. In addition, and resonating with Haines's (2009) argument in relation to social work with young offenders (see Chapter 3), social work with children and families needs to reconnect with, and build upon, the past successes it has undoubtedly had. This is something which Featherstone et al. (2014a) also allude to when reimagining child protection and their resultant advocacy of community social work (see Chapter 4). If social work does this, resultant critical practice can challenge the managerial-dominated, authoritarian and neoliberal social work of the present. This might be easier said than done at times, but opportunities and possibilities remain, will hopefully endure and urgently need to be taken up.

Note

1 Interestingly, as this book was being completed there was Jeremy Corbyn's stunning victory in the Labour Party's leadership contest, one based on policies well to the left of the neoliberal policies pursued by all the main political parties in the UK over recent decades. What occurred resonates with the success of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, and surely shows what the possibilities might be.

Afterword

As this book was being finished, the situation for social work with the children and families in Oldham, and, more importantly, what help and support such service users can expect, seems even more uncertain. Notwithstanding the many concerns about Ofsted and the way it carries out its inspections, it reported that the council was not providing 'good protection and help for children, young people and families' (OEC 2015, p. 9). When one considers that in 2012 services were judged to be 'good', this is a sad state of affairs.

What does seems certain, this confirmed by what erstwhile colleagues have told me, is that austerity measures are taking a serious toll. With ongoing expenditure cuts from a right-wing, neoliberal Conservative government under the banner of austerity, one that continues to espouse marketisation and managerialism, the latter emphasising rationing services to only those considered at serious risk, the current situation in Oldham is no surprise. Indeed, as I write, the leader of Oldham council had referred to the serious difficulties it faced because of 'money [being] cut in half by government' (OEC 2015, p. 9). Moreover, there is the fact that, despite the Munro Report (2011), practitioners remain tied to their desks speedily completing bureaucracy in order to meet targets, this greatly hindering their ability to help and support children and families. Moreover, the situation in Oldham is replicated in many councils over the UK, particularly in England.

However, as argued throughout this book, thankfully there are, despite challenges, opportunities for resistance to the neoliberal tide, one of which is a critical social work that envisages and aims towards a more socially just and equal world.

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