

until sufficient material has accumulated for a statistical analysis to be made. This is really what is usually called a "field demonstration" rather than research in the ordinary sense. As several recent projects have shown, it is possible to do this quite effectively without invoking the services of a full-time research worker, provided that fairly extensive technical advice is available at the beginning of the investigation, and a leisured statistician at the end. There is not the same problem of delicate comparison between caseworkers, and so the study can easily be managed by the senior worker in the agency. But there are still important reasons for real co-operation between social worker and research expert, especially during the planning stage. It is by no means as easy as it looks to decide upon the definition of the hypothesis to be tested, and to determine the criteria which are to be employed in the final statistical analysis. Those of you who have felt the backwash of Professor Eysenck's tussle with the psychotherapists about the effectiveness of treatment methods⁹ will see what I mean. But, as I argued earlier, this kind of field demonstration is extremely valuable, from many points of view, if it is well carried out.

I am almost at the end of my paper, and you will surely have noticed that I have said nothing about the contribution which social work research has to make to "pure" theory—to the knowledge of human behaviour which is entombed in the disciplines of psychology, sociology and social anthropology. To the extent that social work has as its object, or as one of its objects, the effecting of changes in human behaviour, it quite clearly constitutes an extremely important source of fundamental information—a kind of laboratory, if you like, for the social scientist. But it is very seldom exploited in this way. Probably the chief reason for this is to be found in the failure of these disciplines, at the present time, to develop theoretical structures which are capable of giving rise to clear-cut predictions about human behaviour in a complex social environment, and consequently to use information gained in such a setting. I shall not presume to speak for the other social sciences, but in social psychology at least energetic efforts are currently being made to remedy this weakness, and reasonably adequate segments of theory are beginning to appear. The most urgent need is for people with sufficient grasp of *both* social work and social psychology to make the transfer of theory from one field to another without grossly distorting it. This is a difficult task; we are all familiar with the caricatures of psychological theory which are sometimes offered to long-suffering social workers, and also, I am afraid, with the wild distortions of social work method which some psychologists appear to cherish.

I have an uncomfortable feeling that I have just given the cue for some of the critical comments which I hope you will make when I sit down. But I would like to make one final remark. The greatest obstacle to the development of the human sciences, particularly social psychology, is the lack of accurate, sophisticated information about the behaviour of

people in the complex, untidy setting of real life, with all its tensions, confusions and uncertainties. Laboratory observations are a pale shadow of this—and that is the reason for the curiously sterile and artificial character of much theorising in social psychology. The trained social caseworker has it in her power to make a tremendous contribution to our knowledge of human behaviour. It will be nothing less than a tragedy for the social sciences if she is diverted from this task. It is imperative that she should demand, and be given, the opportunity and the encouragement to observe, systematise and report the social facts to which only she has access. I believe that in doing so she can make contributions to the developments of her own techniques, and to those of her students and colleagues, which will more than repay the time and effort she has given to research.

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MAINTAINING THE LINKS: OUR ROLE WITH PARENTS

Olive Stevenson

I WONDER how many Child Care Officers here today read in the March edition of *Case Conference* this year Veronica Holder's article—"On our present discontents". I was impressed by this article which touched on many of the underlying stresses in the work of the Child Care Officer today. I want to begin by quoting a paragraph of this article.

The author is suggesting that at the present time Child Care Officers may be subject to new strains which their predecessors escaped.

She says :

I think that these have not been very precisely examined, that we ourselves are only vaguely aware of them and that consequently, when grumbling about the obvious things, long hours, short holidays and not exorbitant pay, we may sometimes be kicking at those less obvious sources of strain. I think that until such stresses and tensions are more clearly identified, any scheme to improve the conditions of social workers will only be partially successful . . .

The "rapid advance in the technique of casework" is one of the areas which Miss Holder goes on to consider and she says of this : "I think it demands better work from us, and it also forces us to be more conscious and more self-conscious of the processes of our work . . ." It is upon this idea that I wish to focus my talk today. I want to think with you about some of the problems which you face as caseworkers with *parents of children in care*.

You may ask—why pick on parents? Is this not only one part of your task? You are right, of course, and my only reason for doing this is to give us time to dwell at greater depth on an aspect of your job which I believe is of great concern to you all. You are wiser than the students whom I interview : when I ask them why they want to become Child Care Officers rather than go into other branches of social work, they reply : "Because I like children". Little do they know at that stage how much time they will spend with adults in their task of serving children.

So today your colleagues, Miss Wilkins and Miss Yelland, have chosen two interviews from their own work to illustrate this theme. They will present these to you in dialogue form as near to the original as possible, and after they have done so, I would like to take up what seem to be the vital issues arising from them. I hasten to add that this will not be a casework supervision! That would be cheeky of me and a rather inappropriate exercise for such an occasion. I want rather to use these records as a springboard, to describe to you what seems to the three of us to be the underlying significance of these interviews.

Miss Wilkins introduces her interview with the following comment

There is no need for me to tell you very much about this record which speaks for itself. But I will set the scene for you.

Mrs. Campbell is 34, of medium height and slim. Her face is pale and her hair dark, her expression usually apathetic and worn. She dresses in a huddle of faded jumpers and badly worn skirts.

The back windows of her house face the cement works and a film of white cement covers everything.

Anthony, the twelve-year-old referred to in the record, attempted to steal fruit from the church at the harvest festival and was committed to care. Toddy, the youngest, who is four, is a determined child with large blue eyes and a charming smile.

I had been visiting for five months at the time of this record. The first time I went after the committal Mrs. Campbell said: "Drop dead!"

as I walked in the door. Weeks later she said: "You know when I told you to drop dead that first time—I was so relieved when you didn't, and just sat there in your old duffle coat . . ." In the beginning Mrs. Campbell was usually wooden and cold. By the time of this interview, things had begun to move.

MISS WILKINS : Hello, Mrs. Campbell.

MRS. CAMPBELL : Hello.

M. W. : May I come in?

MRS. C. : Yes, I suppose so. It's cold in the living room, better come in the kitchen, it's in a muddle.

M. W. : (to child) Hello, Toddy.

MRS. C. : Go out and play, Toddy. He was going to get dressed just when you came. Can't get him to keep his trousers on. (Wild search for trousers.)

TODDY : I never had any trousers yesterday ; where are they?

M. W. : It's nice and warm in here—he doesn't hurt without trousers in here.

MRS. C. : The School Welfare Woman didn't half carry on last week about the two others going to school without their coats. They won't wear them, anyway.

M. W. : If you were here when they went to school, you could see that they wore them.

MRS. C. : I know, I know, but I'm not giving up working whatever you say. He keeps me short, spends it all on horses. I've got no more coal after this anyway until I get my Family Allowance.

M. W. : You're short this week?

MRS. C. : Always am short, I'm fed up. For God's sake, Toddy, stop grizzling. How am I supposed to know where your trousers are? Can't you see I'm talking? Get out. I'm sick to death of it. I nearly went last Sunday. I don't care—they can all be put away.

M. W. : You're feeling pretty bad?

MRS. C. : I'm feeling bloody awful. I hate this house. I hate him. I hate everybody. He'll be sorry if I go. It will serve him right. I'll show him. I'll give him something to grumble about. He's always grumbling. I'll go and that will give him something to talk about. The lads won't care—they always want him and they don't want me. They can get on with it.

M. W. : I think you hate people more than they hate you. Anthony was worried because you hadn't visited.

MRS. C. : I'm not visiting him. What good would that do? You took him away from me at that Court, you can get on with it. I'm not going to see him if he doesn't want me.

MRS. W. : You are worried about seeing him.

MRS. C. : Of course I'm not. All I'm worried about is that he might not want to see me.

- M. W. : Oh, I see.
- MRS. C. : He doesn't think much of me. He never shows it and I get fed up. I wish he'd show it a bit more if he really does want to see me. Anyway, you took him away and you can go and visit him. Perhaps he'll make a fuss of you.
- M. W. : He's awfully like you and you find it difficult to make a fuss of people even when you like them.
- MRS. C. : No, I'm not going, so don't try and make me. I'm no good to him, anyway, I can't take him things.
- M. W. : Giving things doesn't matter much if you go and see him.
- MRS. C. : Toddy, go out and play again. He's always on about something. Always has been.
- M. W. : I was saying that giving things doesn't matter much.
- MRS. C. : I know, I heard you. You don't understand how I feel. I feel awful when I go there. I know you think I'm hard, but I just can't go. I'm afraid he'll say something.
- M. W. : Say something ?
- MRS. C. : He's always saying that he likes his father better than me and I don't see why—I've always done all I can, but it didn't seem to make any difference. He was a terrible baby, always crying. Sometimes I couldn't stop him crying and I felt as though I'd do something dreadful.
- M. W. : Yes, you did have a bad time, didn't you.
- MRS. C. : Bad time ? Nobody knows what I had to put up with. Nobody cared—nobody at all. Nobody cares now. I've never had anyone to help me—I never had a soft time when I was a child. My mother used me to do the housework. I used to have to get up early and do all the housework and my brother didn't do anything. I don't see why I should be expected to do everything for Anthony. I bet you think I'm awful.
- M. W. : You are painting an awfully black picture of yourself. You have been under a lot of pressure. It hasn't been easy for you.
- MRS. C. : I suppose I haven't got much excuse really. I used to think I wouldn't get married because my mother and father used to row so much. Then I met him and married him. He seemed all right when I married him. I can't stand him now. He doesn't even keep himself clean and he is awful. Anthony came straight away. I used to look at him sometimes and think he might die. He was ever such a little baby. He could have died. He didn't know I was thinking that about him.
- M. W. : Anthony is very fond of you. He told me how you used to read him stories when he was little. He liked that and he remembered it.
- MRS. C. : He got better as he got older.
- M. W. : You felt better towards him as he grew up.
- MRS. C. : Yes, I did. Somehow he wasn't so bad. I used to wallop him sometimes—I suppose he has told you.

- M. W. : No, he talks about the good times at home—those are the ones he remembers.
- MRS. C. : It's funny he remembers good things—what does he say ?
- M. W. : Oh, he told me about going to the woods with you in the summer and going to the pictures.
- MRS. C. : Fancy him remembering that. I take Toddy to the pictures sometimes. He keeps on fidgeting. Anthony always kept still. Once he got on a bit he was ever so much better.
- M. W. : I've always felt you got on well with all the children.
- MRS. C. : Oh, I don't know. They don't think much of me. After all, I can't give them much.
- M. W. : You are saying the same as you said before. You're frightened to admit to anything good about yourself. There is a bad side, but there is a good one too.
- MRS. C. : Nothing good about it. I'm fed up with everything. I shall go and leave the lot. Fancy Anthony remembering about picnics and that.
- M. W. : That was the good side.
- MRS. C. : Don't be silly. Want a cup of tea ?
- M. W. : Yes, please. (*Mrs. C. to kitchen to make tea. Returns in few minutes, without tea.*)
- MRS. C. : I'm not going to see him, not if you went on your bended knees.
- M. W. : Pity, he'll be disappointed.
- MRS. C. : No, I can't go, it's too difficult.
- M. W. : How is it difficult ?
- MRS. C. : Well, the buses don't fit in. Anyway, I can't take him anything.
- M. W. : I think you are afraid of the feelings it might stir up.
- MRS. C. : What ? His feelings ? He doesn't care.
- M. W. : No, your feelings. You probably feel mixed up in regard to your feelings about him.
- MRS. C. : You do keep on, don't you ?
- M. W. : Um.
- MRS. C. : Well, I'll go and get that tea. (*Fetches it.*)
- MRS. C. : What was that you were saying ?
- M. W. : I was talking about your feelings being mixed up.
- MRS. C. : I think I could go one evening. What was that about my feelings—I don't know what you mean.
- M. W. : I think you have a job to see yourself as anything good.
- MRS. C. : Well, I'm not much good to him. I had an awful time when he was born. They thought I would die, but I didn't. He was ever such a little baby.
- M. W. : You must have been very frightened. It was rather horrid for you.

- MRS. C. : Yes, they didn't understand how I felt. What do you mean about seeing anything good ?
- M. W. : You have told me a lot of things which you think are bad about you. Anthony told me the good side, so I know there are two sides.
- MRS. C. : Yes, it was funny that he told you he had a nice time at home.
- M. W. : You don't appear to the children as a bad mother.
- MRS. C. : Ah, yes, but what about other people. What about you ?
- M. W. : Most people are a mixture of good and bad.
- MRS. C. : I suppose I could get a bus to W . . . on Saturday. I wouldn't stay long of course. Toddy can come with me. I shan't stay. I don't suppose Anthony will be worried. He doesn't really care whether I come or not.
- M. W. : Yet he does ask when you are coming.
- MRS. C. : Oh, that's just because he wants someone to visit him. Anyone would do.
- M. W. : That's not true, is it ? If it were he would be content just to see me and he isn't. It's you he wants to see.
- MRS. C. : Well, I don't know. I might go, but it all depends on the buses. Is there one ?
- M. W. : Yes, there is one you could catch.
- MRS. C. : I'll see anyway.
- M. W. : I have been thinking about the complaints the school woman made.
- MRS. C. : Now don't you start ; she was bad enough. Just went on and on. (*Screams out of the window*) : Toddy, what are you doing, come in at once.
- M. W. : Do you think you will be able to do anything about the boys going to school with coats ?
- MRS. C. : Don't start nagging. Once you start about a thing you don't let it drop, do you ?
- M. W. : You sometimes don't want to face things that make you uncomfortable.
- MRS. C. : I don't do anything if I'm bullied. Toddy, where are your shoes ? I'm sick of looking for your things. I might give up working after Easter and then I shall be at home when they go to school. Satisfied ?
- M. W. : Well, we'll see.
- MRS. C. : I shall go on Saturday to see him. If he wants to see me, of course.
- M. W. : Yes, he does.
- MRS. C. : I'll ring up to say I'm coming.

Miss Yelland comments :

We now move to the story of a family with which I have been concerned for five years. It is harder to convey to you in one record all the background, not simply of facts but of feelings, when so much has

gone before. The record is further complicated by the different children referred to. Nevertheless this is so typical of the situations we all have to tackle that we thought we would include it today.

Mr. Johns is a little man, thin, and his clothes hang from the shoulders. I try to stand on the step below him during my usual doorstep interviews. He is red faced and his crinkly waved hair is varnished down under his beret as he rides along in the Council road lorry at work.

His wife died in 1958 of chronic bronchitis at the age of forty-one, having borne him ten children, four of whom we are concerned with in this interview. I knew Mrs. Johns for eighteen months before her death : obsessively clean, weighing always under seven stone, slightly hunchbacked with the features of an angry bird and a tongue like a whiplash.

All the children except Donald have so far graduated to Approved Schools when they passed their fifteen plus ; Julia, now seventeen, continuing her education in a senior school following serious larceny on release from the intermediate. Mr. Johns has needed constant encouragement to contact her after his deep rejection of her on her re-committal.

Since his wife's death, except during his sons' leaves, Mr. Johns has gone on living alone in the six bedroomed Council house which has always been so bare as to look as if the family has just moved in or out. At the time of this visit, Donald has just come home from the Army. He hired a car and visited his three sisters fostered in New Town and proposed fetching them all home for the day. The foster mother, Mrs. Hill, told us this. I had visited and said we could not agree to their missing school and suggested postponing the visit for four days to coincide with half term. Mr. Johns was furious. I could not stay to pick up the pieces at the time and therefore wrote making an appointment to call and see him.

CHILD CARE OFFICER : Hello, Donald—is Dad in ?

DONALD : Come on in.

MR. JOHNS : What have you come here worrying me about ?

DONALD : What a welcome.

C.C.O. : I haven't come to worry you, Mr. Johns. I put in my letter there was nothing wrong. Where shall we go ?

MR. J. : Donald, your tea's in the oven. We better go in here. (*In the front room : the fire is on and the chairs arranged.*)

C.C.O. : This is a nice new fire you've got ; how warm the room is.

MR. J. : Well, what have you come for ?

C.C.O. : Well, I thought that it was quite a long time since I had a talk with you about the family ; it's a good many years now since we have been trying to work together, and I thought perhaps I had stopped you in the street and told you things without giving you a chance to say what you feel about it, so I thought I would make an

- appointment to come and see you. And I knew you were upset after I came up about the girls' visit home.
- MR. J. : That's all right, though I didn't see why they couldn't miss a bit of school and I knew they would be disappointed when Donald had built it up in their minds the Saturday that they would be coming home Wednesday.
- C.C.O. : I expect you were disappointed as well as the girls, Mr. Johns.
- MR. J. : No, don't make no difference to me, only I thought they'd be banking on it.
- C.C.O. : Did you have a good day when they came at half-term ?
- MR. J. : Didn't hardly see them ; it was snow and that, that day. Soon as I come home from work I told Donald he had better take them back quick because I didn't know how he'd get over the hill and all.
- C.C.O. : Yes, it was bad weather all that week. Perhaps Donald will be able to bring them down one Saturday while he's home and then you'll be able to see more of them.
- MR. J. : Don't make no difference to me.
- C.C.O. : But it's a long time since they've been home. I know you meet them on the beach sometimes, but I expect it's a couple of years since they've come into this house.
- MR. J. : No, 'tain't long, only about eighteen months, I should think.
- C.C.O. : I expect it was a bit of an event for them, but it's grand you've been able to go up and see them as much as you have.
- MR. J. : Yes, I goes to see them, but I have to do the shopping Saturday morning, and I can't miss work especially.
- C.C.O. : That's what I thought : perhaps if Donald could bring them home one Saturday.
- MR. J. (*diffidently*) : Well, this Saturday we are going to—wherever that place is.
- C.C.O. : To see Julia at the school ? Oh, I am glad.
- MR. J. : Yes, see, Donald went up a fortnight ago and saw her, but I rang up and I got told off.
- C.C.O. : What was it about ?
- MR. J. : Well, see, Donald made arrangements and said he'd be bringing me up in a fortnight, and I thought I had better ring up and see that 'twas all right, and the headmistress was ever so sniffy with me. Said I ought to have given seven days' notice. I got told off.
- C.C.O. : I expect they'll be ever so glad you are coming though.
- MR. J. : Yes, she said she wanted to see me and I ought to have been before, but see, 'tis all very well, you can't just flip up, like if you've not got a car, and I don't know where the place is. I hope I don't get told off.
- C.C.O. : I am sure they'll be very glad to see you, and Julia will too. How did Donald think Julia was when he saw her ?

- MR. J. : He said it was a horrible place.
- C.C.O. : Well, I know the place is lovely, but of course it's pretty strict because it is a senior Approved School. In the other school it was fairly free, but now she's in a senior school of course they've got to be pretty strict. I reckon it will make a lot of difference for Julia for you to go and see her. She was ever so glad when you sent her that crucifix.
- MR. J. : Well, she kept on about it, but I'm not very good at shopping. I goes down and then I forgets, and some of these things cost a lot of money.
- C.C.O. : Oh, she was delighted with it. She's been wearing it every time I have seen her since.
- MR. J. : I hope she'll be glad to see me.
- C.C.O. : Yes, I am sure she will. She's felt a bit cut off from everything and everybody, I think. When did you last see her, Mr. Johns ?
- MR. J. : Oh, when she ran away from that place about last Easter and she walked in here while I was sitting watching the telly.
- C.C.O. : I have only seen her once since Christmas. I don't think she's been very well ! Of course, she has been in hospital.
- MR. J. : Well, it's her nerves, like. They've been giving her tablets, haven't they ? She'll be all right so long as she behaves herself. I hope she'll be glad to see me.
- C.C.O. : I am sure that the school is doing everything they can to help Julia, but she isn't very well. She goes on all right for weeks and then she breaks out again, but I think she's in the right place to get all the help she can.
- MR. J. : I hope I don't get told off.
- DONALD : (*sticking his head round the door*) Which is my supper, Dad ?
- MR. J. : Mine's the small plate ; yours is on the bottom shelf.
- C.C.O. : It's a good smell, Mr. Johns. Who does the cooking ?
- MR. J. : I does all the cooking. I got to, haven't I ?
- C.C.O. : Well, it smells good and I reckon you keep the place grand.
- MR. J. : Well, I got to, haven't I ? She didn't exactly tell me off, but she was a bit abrupt like.
- C.C.O. : Well, I should think it was a genuine misunderstanding, Mr. Johns, and perhaps if you get the chance when you go up you could say that you thought they knew you were coming. All the same, I reckon it was quite good that they didn't bother about the seven days' notice. Perhaps in a few months I might be able to take you up.
- MR. J. : But I can't miss work.
- C.C.O. : No, but perhaps we could go on a Saturday. We'll see how it works out. (*Pause*). I haven't seen the girls in New Town for a long time. How do you think they are ?
- MR. J. : Well, I thought that was really what you had come about. I said to Donald I reckon that's why Miss Y is coming.

- C.C.O. : What did you think it was about, Mr. Johns ?
- MR. J. : Only when I was up there last time, Mr. Hill said: "It's a pity you can't get them billeted in your home town," and I just had the impression that perhaps they wanted to get rid of them, and I said to Donald : " I reckon that's why Miss Y's coming."
- C.C.O. : No, Mr. Johns, I don't think there is anything in this. I put in my note to you that there was nothing wrong, not to worry.
- MR. J. : Oh, I shouldn't worry. If they've got to come away from there, they'll have to come here and make a go of it. I can see them off to school and that, and they'll have to get on with it.
- C.C.O. : Oh, I don't think this is going to happen, Mr. Johns. Let's see now, Dorothy is about fourteen now.
- MR. J. : Oh, gone fourteen ; be fifteen next Christmas.
- C.C.O. : She seems the most sensitive one of the three, as if she needs most . . .
- MR. J. : Looking after like. Yes, and she's got a very sulky temper.
- C.C.O. : Yes, I expect she felt her mother's death a lot.
- MR. J. : That's what's the matter with Julia ; she's the one that felt it most of all.
- C.C.O. : Yes, I am sure you're right. Do you think Julia and Dorothy, were they specially fond of their mother ?
- MR. J. : No, 'twas all the same, they all had the same. We treated them all alike.
- C.C.O. : You see, I think perhaps although Dorothy is getting on now she still needs a lot of mothering like you said. We were hoping that if she could stay where she is for perhaps another couple of years and go out to work, perhaps then she'll get along all right, but she'll need a lot of looking after.
- MR. J. : Well, I said to Donald that's what 'tis, that's what she's coming to see me about. She said in the letter nothing wrong, and I reckon that it wouldn't be anything wrong if they had to come away. I mean I shouldn't worry, they'd all have to come home.
- C.C.O. : Well, I rang the Child Care Officer who keeps an eye on them this morning, and said I was coming to see you, and she didn't say anything about this. So I don't think this is right, Mr. Johns.
- MR. J. : Only I had the impression that perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Hill wanted to get rid of them. I mean they've had them such a long time and perhaps they are getting tired of them, and of course, they'd all have to come home.
- C.C.O. : Mr. Johns, if they did have to leave, and I haven't heard anything, honest, they would still be in the care of the County Council. I mean like, you asked us to look after them and we made the arrangements with Mr. and Mrs. Hill. Just say they couldn't go on looking after them, you could leave them in the care of the County Council and we should find another foster home for them. I mean you know you can withdraw all the children at any time you like,

- but we have worked together all right in the past and we could go on doing this.
- MR. J. : And of course they mightn't want to come home. I mean they've been there a long time now.
- C.C.O. : Oh, Mr. Johns, their home is very important to them. I bet they were delighted to see how well you've kept it all.
- MR. J. : Only I had the impression that Mr. and Mrs. Hill wanted to get rid of them. You said in your note not to worry, and I don't worry 'cos they could all come home ; only when Mr. Hill said that—
- C.C.O. : Well, Mr. Johns, perhaps he was seeing it from your point of view and thought it was a bit hard to be so far away and have that long journey.
- MR. J. : Yes, I goes when I can, only I don't get there till ten to three and I have to leave again at six o'clock. I think the girls are very happy there. I mean they would tell me, wouldn't they, when I take them out, if they weren't.
- C.C.O. : Well, Mr. and Mrs. Hill have looked after quite a few children for us and I think they do their best for the girls.
- MR. J. : Of course, Dorothy needs a lot of looking after ; her nerves are bad, same as Julia's.
- C.C.O. : Yes, it was a very big thing for you all, Mr. Johns, when their mother died. (*Pause*). Well, I shall keep seeing you in the street, Mr. Johns, and having a word with you on the lorry and that, but I think I'll come again in a few months and we can sit and have another talk about them all. I am very glad to have seen you like this and I'll let you know, same as I always have done, if I have any news about the children. But as far as I know they are all going on all right. Well, cheerio and thank you very much.
- MR. J. : Cheerio. And all the best.

Here are two interviews, not, as I have said, outstandingly unusual or dramatic. What do they start you thinking about ? I will tell you what I felt when I read them first. My first reaction was a renewal of feeling—about how desperately we need to understand the state of mind of such parents and the feelings which they arouse in us. In recent years in child care, much is being said about the importance of preserving the bonds between parent and child and it is an aim in which we are generally supported by society. But how can we possibly carry out this task without deepening our understanding of what passes between us and the parent ? There are few better means available than by studying closely the processes of the interview, and it is upon this that I wish to concentrate in the first part of my talk.

Not long ago, many of us might have dismissed Mrs. Campbell as " antagonistic and unco-operative ". What is more, we would have been right ; but such a description takes us no further. It does not take us to the anxieties and fears which lay beneath the truculence—anxieties and

fears which are gradually revealed through the Child Care Officer's work. Mr. Johns, in Miss Yelland's own words to me, might in the past have seemed "irrelevant": here is a man whose wife is dead, who will in all probability never make a home for his children; a man who in his wife's lifetime, I am told, was dismissed by the social workers as a poor husband and father. What happened to Mr. Johns after his wife's death is not for me to pursue here. Did he perhaps find the more feminine role which he took on in the home when his wife died more rewarding? Be that as it may, Mr. Johns has proved himself as an interested father and he matters to his children as our truculent Mrs. Campbell matters to her Anthony.

Either of these parents could, however, be lost to their children for different reasons. Mrs. Campbell because of her doubts about her capacity to be a good mother; Mr. Johns because of his deep mistrust of authority—perhaps feminine authority especially—which makes him readily take offence and withdraw sulkily from situations.

Let us look at Mrs. Campbell a bit more closely. We learn from that interview that Mrs. Campbell is scared—scared in the very deepest part of herself. She is afraid she cannot be a good mother; surely nothing can be more devastating to a woman than this. It was bad from the beginning, because Anthony was puny and he cried a lot—a continual reproach to her. Perhaps she was even afraid that in anger bred of fear she would hurt him. She is afraid, too, that she will be rejected—he prefers his father, he does not want really to see her, so she will get in first; by rejecting him, she will avoid further hurt herself. Haven't we all done this and haven't we heard the small child saying with longing: "And I don't want to play with *you* anyway"?

What of Mr. Johns? He leaves us in no doubt about some of his anxieties. If we don't get it the first time, we really ought to get it the second or third. "I hope she will be glad to see me," he reiterates about his daughter Julia in the Approved School. He knows he has been angry and rejecting of her and now he fears the consequences. Similarly, he shows us something of his fears of authority when he repeats: "I hope I don't get told off." Miss Yelland said as we talked about him: "you can coax him but if you frighten him he will fight like mad . . ."

Nevertheless, even though we look behind the aggressiveness and see the fear or the anxiety, the aggression is a reality and we must think about this further. I asked Miss Wilkins if she was ever afraid of Mrs. Campbell, who it must be remembered had called upon her to "drop dead" in an early encounter. Miss Wilkins said that she had not ever been afraid. Now you may think—and you may be right—that it would take a lot to frighten Miss Wilkins but I think she put her finger on it when she paused and said with a touch of embarrassment: "You see, I'm her Mum." Mrs. Campbell is testing out what Miss Wilkins will stand. We are told she began with a period of "wooden resent-

ment", so that in a sense what you have heard today represents progress in that some of Mrs. Campbell's aggressive feelings can be openly expressed. I remember once hearing a teacher at a school for maladjusted children complaining that a child had thrown a wet dish cloth and had hit him in the face. "Ah," said the headmistress, with a joyful smile, "but isn't it wonderful he can do this." Not unnaturally the teacher found the remark a trifle irking. Now we have moved a long way from the early days of misapplied and misunderstood Freudian theory when some assumed it would be helpful for us all if we could let our aggression rip and we now know it will only be right for *some* children or *some* adults in *some* rather special situations. The interview with Mrs. Campbell shows us how aggressive feelings can be openly expressed and yet she remains fundamentally sure that the situation is under control—because Miss Wilkins is not afraid. It is in such cases that the parallel with a child inevitably occurs to us: Mrs. Campbell was so relieved that Miss Wilkins did not drop dead, so relieved that she could not harm the indestructible Child Care Officer. There is something primitive and child-like in this, similar to what a toddler must feel in a temper tantrum. Thus the vicious spiral of fear, anger and guilt was broken into and by the end of this interview we see the emergence of more positive feelings. In all this she has been helped, not by facile reassurance, but a deeper kind of reassurance that a good side exists: the bad side is not denied but "Anthony told me the good side, so I know there are two sides."

In some ways, however, Miss Yelland has a harder task with Mr. Johns's aggression in this interview than has Miss Wilkins. It is the sulky, blocking kind which we all know so well. Let me remind you of it.

C.C.O. : I expect you were disappointed as well as the girls, Mr. Johns.

MR. J. : No, don't make no difference to me . . .

C.C.O. : Did you have a good day . . . at half term?

MR. J. : . . . Didn't hardly see them . . .

C.C.O. : Perhaps Donald will be able to bring them down . . . and you'll be able to see more of them . . .

MR. J. : Don't make no difference to me.

C.C.O. : But it's a long time since they've been home . . .

MR. J. : No, 't isn't long, only about eighteen months . . .

How uncomfortable this makes us, doesn't it, and how much more uncomfortable when at the back of our minds we too, as Child Care Officers, have our niggling doubts and fears. As Miss Yelland and I talked about this, Miss Yelland reminded me of what feelings she brought into this interview with Mr. Johns: fear that Julia might not be welcoming to her father who had been cold and rejecting to her of

late and that this might turn the whole situation bad again ; and of course Miss Yelland was feeling a bit guilty and worried that she had not been able to permit the girls to miss school for a trip home. So naturally she came to this interview perhaps a bit over anxious to restore a good relationship with Mr. Johns. Similarly, Miss Wilkins came to her interview aware of the constant pressure by other social workers to "do something about" Mrs. Campbell. It was this which led her to bring up the topic of the boys going to school with coats at the end of the interview.

Thinking like this makes me realise all over again how deeply we must be concerned if we are good Child Care Officers about our powerful position. After all, there isn't anything much more basic, is there, than having the power to give or take away other people's children ? In talking with parents, we will find that our own feelings about this power have considerable effect on our handling of the immediate situation, as with Miss Yelland and Mr. Johns.

I have said that in reality Child Care Officers are powerful people and that we will all mind about this, in one way or another. This leads me to wonder what we seem like to the parents. *Immensely* powerful, I suspect. You may say: "It isn't me, it is the Court, the committee, the Children's Officer", but make no mistake about it, somewhere in the parents' mind (and I suspect somewhere in yours, too) it is *you*. Mrs. Campbell says: "You took him and you can go and visit him." Mr. Johns is probably seeing this Child Care Officer, not simply as Miss Yelland, but as a kind of combined image of all the social workers and powerful women generally—including his wife one may suspect—who had, it is known, exhorted or reproved him in the past. Small wonder he repeats: "I got told off: I hope I don't get told off." Even as he speaks of someone else—in this case the headmistress of the Approved School—perhaps his pious hope that he will not get told off extends also to Miss Yelland.

We expect little children to have distorted or imperfect images of us: I wonder how often we seek to understand the distortions in the parents' images of us. It is an uncomfortable experience for a Child Care Officer to stand in a hall of mirrors and see the numerous variations of herself. Some are, however, more flattering than others; easy enough, perhaps, to accept the image of oneself as a reliable mum with whom a child-like woman can experience a warmth of relationship, which she felt herself to have been denied in her childhood. "I've never had anyone to help me—I never had a soft time when I was a child. My mother used me to do the housework. . . ." It is harder, however, to acknowledge the other side of the coin that just because of the past, we will also be seen as potentially harsh and destructive, as I suspect Mr. Johns might in part see any women social workers who tried to help. I say "in part" because there are always *two* sides to the coin: to put it boldly, and not I think sentimentally, there is always the longing to

find someone who will be concerned, even though there is also anger and resentment.

For in fact we are dealing with parents in a muddle: this is the job and it is as foolish to complain about it as it is for a doctor to complain that his patients are ill. Now and again we meet a parent whose rejection of the child seems total. In such cases we turn to the child and through the positive alternatives in relationships which we offer and through our skill in talking with him, we try to help the child cope with this, the saddest experience of his life. But far more often it is not total rejection by a parent but a terrifying muddle. With such cases, it is upon our skill that the tipping of the scale may depend. We can increase the guilt or fail to alleviate it so that the only possible course for the parent is flight. How easily Mrs. Campbell would take to her heels: how quickly she changes the subject when a sore spot is touched, by screaming out of the window at Toddy, or retreating to make tea. Yet even as she retreats she is longing to be helped. Did you notice that she returns from the kitchen without tea and takes up the theme herself: "I'm not going to see him, not if you went on your bended knees. . . ." She gets the tea and comes back with: "What was that you were saying?" There is a kind of hunger for understanding in all this as there is in Mr. Johns: "I hope she'll be glad to see me. . . ."

All this is time consuming: it is mentally and emotionally fatiguing, as Veronica Holder has pointed out. Leaving aside the question of the parents' rights, both as parents and as human beings with a need to be helped, we know from experience in the last fourteen years that we only pile up suffering for children and problems for ourselves when we leave parents out of account—however unpromising they may seem. *There is no way of avoiding it.* Since therefore this task is integral to our work, we must strive in every way possible to learn more about it. The method of learning which I have just been using is one possibility.

However, I feel that in some ways those who teach and write about casework have failed to help Child Care Officers enough, especially about ways of helping such parents as Mrs. Campbell. I think there has been inadequate recognition by those from whom Child Care Officers seek advice that such people are sometimes at a stage of development which is quite infantile and requires different methods from those, for example, appropriate to a reasonably competent mother attending a Child Guidance Clinic. To an extent modern casework theory has been developed through contact with a different clientele from that of the average Child Care Officer. By this I mean parents who, though disturbed and distressed, are more mature, more responsive, and sometimes more intelligent than those whom the Child Care Officer seeks to help. Furthermore, children's departments cannot choose their clientele. We are beginning to see more writings about the kinds of problem parents with whom you have to deal, attempts to describe them with such words, sometimes imprecisely used, as immaturity; even

better, attempts to show the best ways to help them. I have recently been reading a book by Reiner and Kaufmar, *Character Disorder in Parents of Delinquent Children*, in which the authors have certain ideas about diagnosis and treatment of parents falling into this group. We may not all agree with all of it ; but I thought I would just quote to you a few sentences in order to suggest that there is thought being given to the casework treatment of a particular group of people amongst which I am sure many of your cases can be numbered.

The general and pervasive emotion of these people is fear. . . . This fear is not like the universal fear of new situations which, in the case of the neurotic, is soon dissipated by the reality experience of a neutral or friendly response from the caseworker. In the person with a character disorder, the ghosts of old and fearful relationships are not so easily laid. It needs a long experience of testing out the worker—to find out if his worst fears will be realised—before he is free to allow himself to participate in therapeutic communication. Through his ambivalence and fear, he appears to be blocking the very relationship he so desperately seeks. . . .

Such a general description will be familiar to many of you concerned with parents of children in care. It implies that we have to have, not arrogance as Barbara Wootton might suggest, but the courage to believe that we have *something*—not everything—to offer and that we should persist even in the face of rebuffs. I once heard Dr. Winnicott, whom you have welcomed to these conferences, say: "Life is a question of finding someone who will stand you." For many such people, no one stood them long enough. Can we?

So this then is the point I wish to make—the need for more understanding of the best ways of helping particular kinds of client, not to "type" them, not to take the individuality or the separateness of each human being away—Mrs. Campbell and Mr. Johns will always be unique to Miss Wilkins or Miss Yelland. Yet by studying patterns of need, of behaviour and of mechanisms of defence we can evolve more appropriate casework methods. This I feel to be an urgent need at the present time.

There are two further points in relation to this topic I would like to make for your serious consideration as members of this Association. First, we hear a great deal about training just now, and since I earn my living at it you can't expect me to underrate its importance ! Yet I want to put it to you that training can only be the beginning of a process which must grow and become established in the first job. Such problem parents as Mrs. Campbell and Mr. Johns will always raise anxiety and tension in Child Care Officers ; we all know what happens when anxiety becomes unmanageable. We turn away the same as Mrs. Campbell would ; we turn our backs on the problem. Sometimes just in relation to a particular client, sometimes, fortunately more rarely, on child care altogether. So of some parents we say : "That parent is a wash-out—that parent is impossible to help." It may be true, but it

may also be that we cannot manage or identify the anxiety which they rouse in us.

One of the most important functions of the hierarchy within a children's department should be to provide the support and opportunity for discussion which will enable new entrants to go on growing in understanding. How many new Child Care Officers have a secret drawer in their desk of problems they don't know what to do with ? Sometimes the problem is a trivial one—a question of "know how"—but at other times I think there is an unidentified anxiety lurking behind the reluctance to get on with it. One of the functions of senior staff must be to help the newcomer identify the anxiety in these stressful aspects of the work.

Secondly, I want to refer to the theme of your conference—"Social Work and Social Research". I am sure that it is no accident that you have chosen this topic this year. It represents not only the recognition in the child care service of the urgent need for more knowledge, but also I think a greater willingness to act. Yet we know, as Dr. Trasler has so ably pointed out, that scientifically acceptable research is difficult in such a field as the care of the deprived child. To isolate factors, to provide control groups, such everyday techniques of orthodox scientific investigation bristle with difficulties for us. There is therefore a danger that workers in the child care field may turn away from "this research business" and see it as a job for the experts. This to an extent it is, but may I remind you that *discovery* begins by perceptive rescrutiny of familiar phenomena. Whether we are speaking of Newton's watching the apple drop, which millions of people had seen before, or Freud looking anew at the age-old symptoms of mental illness, the same is true. They looked upon the familiar, freshly and independently. It is true that this is only the beginning and that controlled study must follow : it may be true, too, that children's departments are not crammed full of Newtons and Freuds ! But I would like to remind you of a saying of Einstein's : "A theory can be proved by experiment ; but no path leads from an experiment to the birth of a theory." You, and only you, can give the trained research workers the ideas which it is worth proving or disproving.

Let me end, therefore, with a few suggestions. First, I believe that the individual Child Care Officer can initiate investigation on a small scale by looking anew at some limited aspect of the work which is of special interest. Of course it will be biased and subjective ; of course it will need following up more systematically, but it is a beginning. I am not suggesting an elaborate project ; simply a gathering together of information with more detailed recording than is usual. It might be most helpful if advice were asked at the beginning concerning the information which it would be desirable to obtain if it were to be analysed more systematically later by those specially qualified. For example, what do we know of the life histories of parents and children in the family where

one particular child seems rejected and the others all right? What common factors in a group of such cases might be revealed if we had to start with just a few dozen such histories. I recently read an article by Winifred Barnes in *Case Conference* on "Prematurity and Maternal Attitudes". A friend who chairs co-ordinating committees commented recently that she had noticed in a number of the cases discussed of this special kind of rejection that the children had been premature. These two things started me wondering how relevant failure to establish the very early mother-baby relationship might be to our understanding of this kind of rejection. To take another example, is there any work about the subsequent effects on parents of prison sentences for neglect of their children? There is a pamphlet published by the I.S.T.D. on *Cruel Parents* but this deals with the early history of such parents, not with the effect of sentences.

I should add that I discovered this pamphlet quite by chance at a Conference, which brings me to another point. Your publication *Child Care News* has done excellently in bringing new books to your notice. But I fear that still much more work which would be useful to you and appears in journals or pamphlets never reaches you. Is there something more which should be done to make available to you all lists of useful publications and to ensure easy access to them in a busy life? Lastly, I would leave you with the thought that the Association itself may well come to feel that to sponsor or initiate research is a vital part of its contribution to the improvement of child care in this country.

In this talk, I have suggested to you three ways in which the demands of work with parents can be better met and better coped with; firstly, by a deeper understanding of the processes of your interviews and I have tried, with the help of Miss Wilkins and Miss Yelland, to illustrate this; secondly, by greater support for new entrants to the service; and thirdly, by study and research at all levels.

Ladies and gentlemen, you may have noticed that this talk is sprinkled with a confusing mixture of "you" and "we" in my references to the child care service. I noticed this when I read it through and decided to leave it as it was. Perhaps it would be fair to say that the pronoun "you" represents my fears and the pronoun "we" my hopes. For it is my hope that there will be mutual enrichment between those who teach and research and those who practise, and that we may indeed regard ourselves as united in the desire to serve deprived children better.

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**CRIME, CAUSE AND TREATMENT:
RECENT RESEARCH AND THEORY**

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MOST people have the impression that crime in general and juvenile delinquency in particular has increased rapidly during the last few years and is today a very serious problem indeed. Is this impression correct? If so, what can be done about it? Certainly the number of "crimes known to the police" was, indeed, in 1959 (according to the most recent figures available, given in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"¹) the largest ever recorded in our history.

But as Huff² points out in his admirable textbook "How to lie with statistics", averages and relationships, trends and graphs, are not always what they seem. There may be more than meets the eye or there may be a great deal less. Huff records that the official figures for encephalitis in the Central Valley in California in 1952 showed triple the figure for the worst previous year. Many alarmed residents "shipped their children away. But when the reckoning was in, there had been no increase in deaths from sleeping sickness. What had happened was that the state and federal health people had come in in great numbers to tackle a long standing problem, and as a result of their efforts a great many low grade cases were recorded that in other years would have been overlooked, possibly not even recognised." Can there be a similar phenomenon underlying crime statistics?

In considering this, it is useful to examine rather more closely the background of the figures for crime. It is, of course, immediately apparent that the police do not become aware of crimes by some mysterious process of "knowing"; nor do they get to know about them by direct observation if the criminals are able to avoid it. Crimes "known to the police" are usually reported to them by the public, most frequently by the victim. This means that an event must first of all be *defined by a member of the public* with no special legal knowledge as a crime, *and* as a crime such as to justify his telling the police about it. Now the legal definitions of "crimes" are clear enough but extremely wide in scope. For example, the value of a stolen article is not relevant to the legal definition of larceny; robbery with violence may involve nothing that the lay citizen would classify as violence at one end of the extreme limit of the definition, while at the other end the worst possible headline story would fit the same legal category.

Few children have not been fortunate at some time in finding some small coin or other apparently discarded article which they have retained and in consequence are guilty of larceny by finding. On the other hand, vandals could do very considerable damage to your car, but