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Discourse, identity and socialisation: a textual analysis of the 'accounts' of student social workers

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This article draws on interview data from student social workers engaged in assessing the needs of adults in Wales, UK. The data were collected as part of a doctoral study conducted by the lead author (Roscoe, 2014), which utilised a form of discourse analysis to explore students' accounts as 'texts'. The concept of 'text' refers to an account, exchange or narrative and can be interpreted at a number of levels (Halliday, 1978). Texts represent personal, occupational and professional domains of meaning, and through textual analysis, we can grasp the way occupational identity and day-to-day practices are constructed through subjective and institutional sets of knowledge, values and beliefs. This article will draw upon Fairclough's (1989) method of critical discourse analysis to explore and interpret student texts and, in doing so, will reveal their multilayered character in respect of cultural, social and political influences.

key words critical discourse analysis • identity • professional socialisation • genres

Professional identity and socialisation – the context

The socialisation of students into academic and professional subjects has been a growing interest of sociologists for a number of decades (see Hall, 1987; Colomy and Brown, 1995; Fargion, 2008). Acquiring a professional identity or persona involves the internalisation of group values and norms that inform an individual's behaviour and self–concept (Clouder, 2003; Adams et al, 2006). A process of time, adoption and change underlies the trajectory from novice to fully qualified practitioner and any associated or contingent claims to being a 'professional' in social work (see Davies, 1968; Moore, 1970). More generally, identity can be understood as a generic process of being and becoming within interrelationships and interdependencies with others (Jenkins, 1996). The self has different social identities that originate from both self–concept and from interaction, whereby the person perceives themselves to be part of a particular social group (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002). Our social and personal identities are neither guaranteed nor ever confirmed and completed (Archer, 2000), but are constantly established through social processes of performance and membership.

Thus, a social work professional identity might never be somehow complete, but instead remains a shifting, changing and sometimes contradictory entity bound up in complex relationships and meanings.

Although there has been much research conducted on professional identity and the socialisation of student nurses, teachers, physicians and academics (see Davies, 1968; Hall, 1987; Du Toit, 1995; Bonsteel, 1997), there has been relatively modest enquiry into the ways in which social work students construct their social work identity, particularly when exposed to the socialising effects of practicums or practice learning placements in local authority settings, these being a key context for student performance and appraisal in the UK. Apart from Fargion (2008), who undertook a qualitative study with students to explore the acquisition of an Italian social work identity, it would seem that the 'organisational socialisation' into state social work has been an underdeveloped theoretical starting point for exploring how the landscape of social work is navigated by students. This article explores how aspects of a social work identity were understood and adopted by students in the latter part (years two or three) of a three-year BA Honours undergraduate programme in Wales. Their accounts of practice, constructed here as 'texts', are explored to reveal not only personal and occupational influences but a wider confluence of socio-political and historical contexts, particularly neoliberal and managerialist influences.

We observe briefly that the neoliberalist ideology of privatisation and marketisation in social and economic policy sits uneasily with mainstream values and practices in social work in the UK and elsewhere (Butler and Drakeford, 2001). Indeed, the emergence of a radical tradition in UK social work in the 1970s and its sustained critique since then of the impact of neoliberal and new public management influences in our human service institutions is a reminder that the vision of social work is perhaps much grander than its current incarnation in typically cash-strapped and strongly hierarchical public services. The introduction of business practices and unitised performance measures in social work to promote service efficiencies has been much criticised for deskilling, undercutting and, in many instances, privatising the social work function and its ethic of care (Gregory and Holloway, 2005; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009; Lymbery, 2012; Houston, 2016). This is by no means a UK phenomenon, but a feature of other advanced economies, whereby the economisation and marketisation of social work and an erosion of citizens' social rights and solidarity has stemmed from neoliberalist economic and social policies (Verbrugge, 2004; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009). It is in this context that the study was undertaken into the ways in which a small sample of students constructed their understandings of the occupational task around assessment and what this revealed about their sense of professional identity and membership.

Working in Wales

At the time of the study in 2011, the students were typically engaged in routine assessment practice with adults likely to be in need of care or support. Students undertook this work using the Unified Assessment tool, a Wales-wide protocol and processing mechanism that all workers use to determine need and eligibility (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002). Their assessment activity drew upon the 'personalisation agenda', which remains the main policy and practice approach for adult social work (Beresford, 2014), being firmly embedded in Welsh and UK law

through the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the UK Care Act 2014. Both Acts and their guidance dictate how social work professionals should apply self-directed, outcome-focused and 'person-centred care' (Department of Health, 2010). This typically takes the form of person-centred models of counselling, person-centred planning and the personalisation of services (Houston, 2016). Thus, the effective assessment of individuals and thresholds for intervention are deemed to be met with the social worker facilitating the oversight of person-centred care (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002). However, there have been criticisms of the variability of assessment practices across the UK, particularly over the nature and volume of information collected via the Unified Assessment tool in Wales (see Sedden et al, 2010). Accordingly, the interviews sought to explore students' understandings of their practices in relation to the assessment task, a task that goes to the very heart of the social work role and identity (Lipsky, 1980). Their accounts were analysed as texts to explore their discursive roots in individual, organisational and institutional practices and identities that help make sense of routine assessment activity. It is towards this notion of the discursive that we now turn.

Discourse studies and social work

Sociologists have long explored discourses in their layered contexts, focusing on how discourse functions to create organisational realities and identities (Mumby and Stohl, 1991; Iedema and Wodak, 1999; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). Discourse is 'that linguistic output, which is produced by human beings when they meet, chat, work and communicate in everyday life' (Yates, 2006: 82). The ways in which people 'talk' and 'interact' produce the objects of our knowledge and the action (or practice) that is informed by that knowledge (Parker, 1998). Discourse contains sets of statements that bring social objects into being and become themselves practices that are continuously created and recreated in patterns of communication (known as discursive practices) (Mumby and Stohl, 1991).

Discourse-analytic studies of workers' 'talk' have more often been carried out in children and families social work (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Riemann, 2005; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006). Pithouse and Atkinson (1988) demonstrated how case talk relied heavily on the structuring of the social worker's narrative. Hall, Sarangi and Slembrouck (1997) argue that such stories involve highly complex structures, which include narrative scenarios and multiple voices. They describe how social workers appropriate a range of 'institutional voices' (such as legal, medical, administrative) to support their practice decisions. Case talk is only one 'type' of discourse, or what Fairclough (2001) calls a 'genre' of talking and interacting, in social work practice. These genres were often embedded in common-sense ideas or lay theorising as opposed to professional theorising (Hall et al, 1999; Riemann, 2005; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006).

Within adult social work, the talk of workers has been subject to similar approaches (Ramcharan et al, 1999; Jones, 2001; Postle, 2001, 2002; Carey, 2008, 2012) but with less emphasis on discourse-analytic traditions. Jones's (2001: 555) study captured the wider effects of managerialism in adult practice, where social work was described mainly as 'a job that you do in boxes, you just tick boxes'. Carey's (2008: 351) study likewise revealed how adult practice was viewed as involving 'too much bureaucracy', with 'limited skill involved'. Carey's (2008) research captures some of the rhetorical

linguistic features in the representation of adult social work that will inform later discussion, such as the recursive nature of occupational talk. Recursive language, defined in this article as routinised language, is related to repeated application or use (Fairclough, 2003). We will explore how the recursive nature of 'talk' in adult social work connects closely with the way in which a social work identity (both personally and professionally) is discursively made sense of. To reiterate, we conceive discursively of talk as 'texts' to be analysed for their multiple meanings and levels of interpretation. Hence, we must recognise the 'intertextuality' of talk (Fairclough, 1989). Intertexuality views a text or narrative not in isolation, but as containing a network of fragments of other texts (Kristeva, 1986). Any account is shaped by prior accounts that inform the current, which implies the insertion of history (society) into a text. This historicity enables the researcher to understand the discourse types or genres available over time within the linguistic territory of adult social work. We now turn to the method of textual analysis used in this study – critical discourse analysis (CDA) – and the sample and settings in which it was deployed.

Methodology

This article focuses on a segment of a doctoral study by Roscoe (2014) comprising a small self-selected sample of seven students in years two and three of their undergraduate BA Honours in social work studies (five females and two males). The students undertook three separate practicums or placements during each academic year of study and for different lengths of time (year one for 20 days, year two for 80 days and year three for 100 days). Ethical approval for the study was granted in 2011 and the interviews were conducted during the year two and three placements. The students are aged between 22 and 43 years; all are given fictitious names. The students participated in interviews lasting an average of 60 minutes, which were fully transcribed. Key topics for conversation included their expectations of social work practice and their experiences with regard to practice learning. The invitation to participate and information about the study were disseminated via their virtual learning environment (VLE) in the university. Detailed textual analysis was conducted manually until thematic saturation was reached (Silverman, 2006). This small number of interviews cannot offer insights much beyond the sample itself; however, it was not a study aim to garner generalisable data on qualifying training, but to explore the utility of applying CDA in order to generate insights into the developing professional social work identity.

The analysis was guided by Fairclough's (1989) method of textual analysis, which examines the use of vocabulary, grammar, pronouns, metaphor/rhetoric and text structure. These elements have been adapted and indexed for social work by Jones (2003: 46) via the seven dimensions laid out in Table 1.

These dimensions facilitated a useful exploratory tool to undertake a textual reading of student social work accounts of adult practice that moved through the following three stages of analysis.

Stage 1: detailed textual analysis

Detailed textual analysis at a micro-level was undertaken to generate thematic insights into accounts. In CDA, micro-analysis is considered abductive, which

Table 1: Seven dimensions of textual analysis

1	**Semiotic choices** (words and their ideological and political significance in social work knowledge).
	Words signify a range of ideas in social work knowledge and will result in ways of (inter)acting, representing a range of cognitive, sociocultural, historical and ideological/political domains.
2	**Grammar** (material verbs: how this represents the role/interaction in social work as genres).
	Verbs uncover the principle of who or what does what to whom? The use of verbs such as 'support' or 'treat' indicate what type of (inter)actions are deemed to take place.
3	**Cohesion** (pronouns: this speaks of the alignment of the social actor's identity alongside others).
	Analyses of pronouns in the use of 'I', 'she', 'he', 'we', 'us', 'they', 'them', 'me', 'our', 'yours' or 'you' show how different identity alignments work in the 'here and now'.
4	**Text structure** (structure of account – higher-order narrative structure).
	Each text has narrative structure-elements or episodes combined in different ways such as the combination of specific genres.
5	**Force of utterance** (use of metaphor or rhetoric: denotes processing of information and performance in communicative aims).
	What the speaker actually wants to achieve in functional, communicative terms – a form of persuading with abstraction.
6	**Coherence** (how the account is coherent with wider ideologies of social work and society/social structures).
	The analyst identifies 'types' of texts (genres) and how these are consumed and reconstituted by social actors (drawn from wider ideological and social forces).
7	**Intertextuality** (texts link to past [history] and present [contemporary] narratives of social work).
	Intertextuality points to the productivity and consumption of texts and the ways in which new discourses can transform prior texts and thereby restructure existing practices.

involves a process of constantly moving back and forth between theory and data (Wodak, 1996). This constant movement continues until dominant themes emerge and involves the rereading of transcripts and segments of text, for example, use of word/verb/metaphor/pronoun choice (see Table 1). Lifting out these segments and aligning them to the most appropriate 'data analysis unit' (Halliday, 1989) facilitates knowledge generation in CDA. For example, certain verb choices and their recurrence might reflect popularised ways of interacting in social work, or represent preferred identities. This micro-textual analysis captures the relational, experiential and expressive values of the social actor. Relational values refer to social relations and relationships, whereby the listener seeks insights into power, tension, conflict and harmony in the interactive arena depicted in accounts. Expressive values depict the ways in which a social actor evaluates the subjects within an account and, in doing so, reveals aspects of identity (self, others, objects) referred to in the account. Experiential values represent knowledge and beliefs that reflect an individual's own world view in the social and cultural world that they are a part of (Fairclough, 2001).

This micro-analysis instigates the second and third stages of analysis, which are more theoretical and based on interpretivist principles in qualitative inquiry. The

researcher aligns the themes/topics identified to their interrelationship with discursive practices (as genres/subject positions) to social practices (orders of discourse), as we outline next.

Stage 2: macro-discursive practices

Within discursive practices, there are 'genres', which are ways of using language in relation to particular forms of (inter)acting in social events. The textual analysis surfaces and locates these genres to explore how these might fit (or not) alongside wider social work discourses (eg administrative–welfare, therapeutic–individualistic). Understood as coherence and intertextuality within the seven dimensions of textual analysis (see Table 1), the researcher analyses which genres are preferred over others and how these are represented as characteristics of social work practices and identity. Attributes of the social actor are implicated, if not emphasised, in their choosing of some genre(s) rather than others (Mumby and Stohl, 1991).

Stage 3: orders of discourse

CDA relates to how discourse(s) as social practices contribute to systems of knowledge and beliefs and, by extension, the social ordering of relationships. Discourses may be ordered, for example, as mainstream, alternative, marginal or oppositional (Fairclough, 1995). One example of a dominant discourse is the notion of 'troubled families' in the UK, whereas in contrast to social work in Germany, social pedagogy as 'social learning' in the UK is a marginalised discourse.
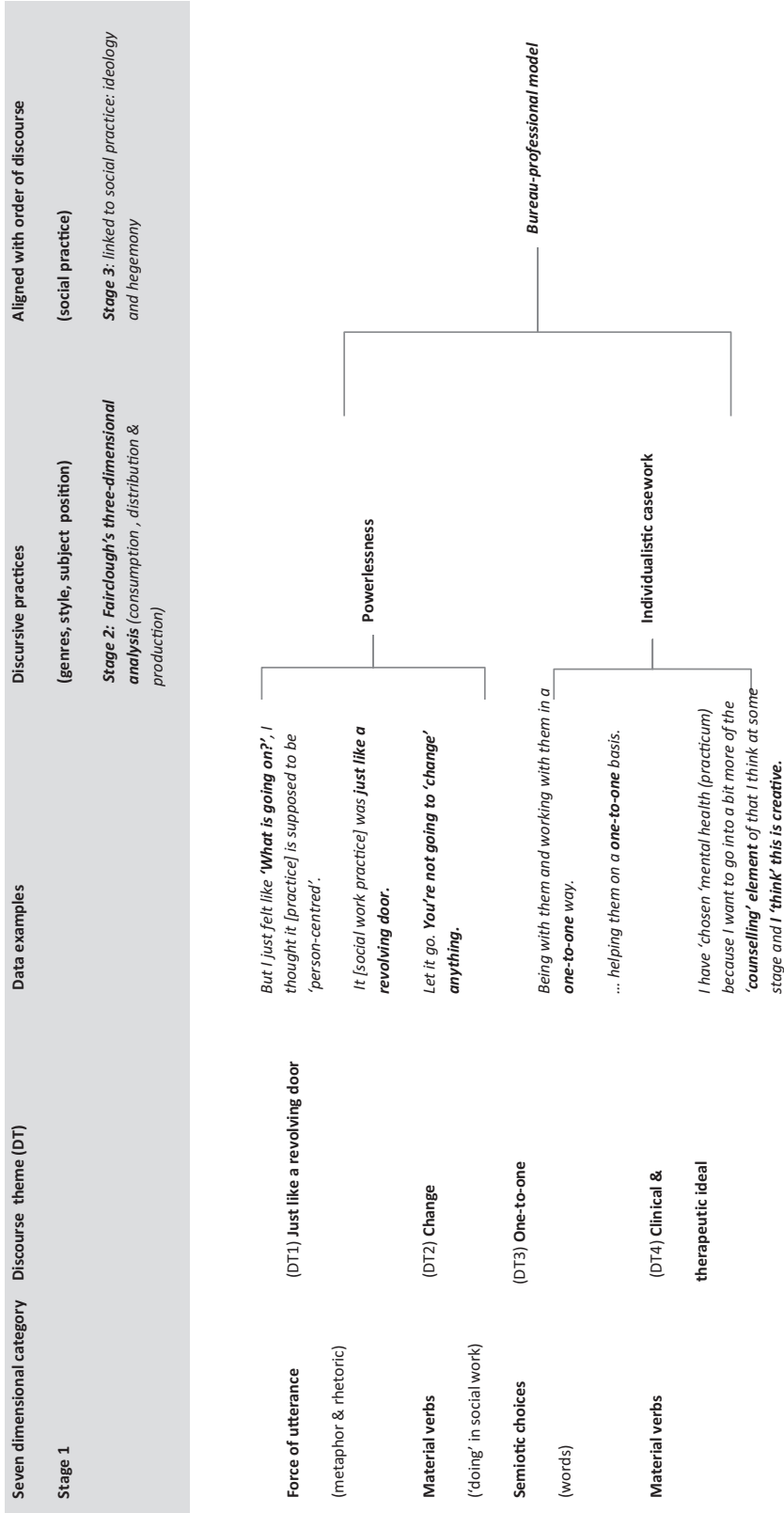
Key dimensions of textual analysis: from micro to macro

Our micro-analysis revealed the ways in which vocabulary, grammar and force of utterance were chosen by respondents when narrating their experience of the assessment task. To demonstrate the application of CDA, we provide four thematic examples from the data that illuminate how the student's phrasing could be correlated to a particular genre (ie a way of interacting and being in social work). This textual analysis reveals aspects or characteristics of social work that are foregrounded over others in the overall text structure (narrative). These genres, act as a scaffold to support a higher 'order of discourse' of social work, which we have located in the analysis as the 'bureau–professional model'. The map laid out in Figure 1 sets out the analytical sequence of our data-driven enquiry. Thus, we start with themes emerging from the data linked to textual categories, which, in turn, are linked to genres and finally to an overarching social practice.

(DT1) Force of utterance: "just like a revolving door"

Within much of the formal codes of social work surrounding assessment, promotional tropes are embedded in policies, such as 'person-centred' practice (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002) and these stand in some contrast to the way in which policy is typically implemented via mechanistic, procedurally driven, screen-based technologies (Madoc-Jones and Parrott, 2008). Tropes are figures of speech, and a rhetorical trope is used to produce a shift in the meaning of words. These are often used in conversation

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Figure 1: Map of the application of Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse

Seven dimensional category	Discourse theme (DT)	Data examples	Discursive practices (genres, style, subject position)	Aligned with order of discourse (social practice)
Stage 1			**Stage 2: Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis** (consumption, distribution & production)	**Stage 3:** linked to social practice: ideology and hegemony
Force of utterance (metaphor & rhetoric)	(DT1) **Just like a revolving door**	But I just felt like '**What is going on?**', I thought it [practice] is supposed to be 'person-centred'. / It [social work practice] was **just like a revolving door.**	**Powerlessness**	**Bureau-professional model**
Material verbs ('doing' in social work)	(DT2) **Change**	Let it go. **You're not going to 'change' anything.**		
Semiotic choices (words)	(DT3) **One-to-one**	Being with them and working with them in a **one-to-one** way. / … helping them on a **one-to-one** basis.	**Individualistic casework**	
Material verbs	(DT4) **Clinical & therapeutic ideal**	I have 'chosen' 'mental health (practicum) because I want to go into a bit more of the '**counselling**' element of that I think at some stage and I '**think' this is creative.**		

to persuade the listener to consider an alternative perspective (Machin and Mayr, 2012). The following interview extracts indicate how students had encountered a clear departure from their anticipated orientation to practice (tropes annotated in bold): "But I just felt like **'What is going on?'** I thought it [practice] is supposed to be person-centred" (Kath, year 2). Here, Kath draws on a rhetorical trope – 'What is going on?' – to emphasise a sense of disjunction between the expected and the actual. This signalling device draws attention to the investment that this student had made in the ideas of 'person-centred' practice and her contrasting experience of a more administrative approach. Phrases like 'person-centred' have long permeated the formal language of the caring enterprise (Rogers, 1959), infiltrating the discursive construction of the professional self. These types of discourse result in producing organisational subjectivities in regard to a performative sense of self and identity vis-a-vis appropriate work; in essence, the good worker does/is 'person-centred'.

Relational values in texts reveal something of the way organisational interaction and relationships construct and determine practice. Thus, in conducting assessments, three students separately referred to practice as **"just like a revolving door"** (Hilary, year 2; Aiden, year 3; Kerry, year 2). This metaphor was deployed to describe the pace of work as problematic and we noted how students shared a sense of being unable to challenge this prevailing experience of practice. This revealed something of the way in which a discursive world of 'student as powerless' becomes normalised through metaphor across the student community (Van Dijk, 2011). For example, Kerry (year 2) described how **"I just kept my head down"** rather than seek some remedy to what was perceived as unsatisfying relationship-based practice. Likewise, Simone (year 3) noted the unappetising choice of having to **"put up or shut up basically"** in relation to her unequal status as a student. It is perhaps unsurprising that students feel the effects of this power imbalance, resulting in a type of discursive practice in local government cultures. CDA makes it possible to explore what kinds of ideas are communicated in rhetorical tropes in order to identify what sorts of genres these metaphors might promote. It is to this point that we now turn.

(DT2) Grammar: effecting change

CDA draws upon Halliday's (1978) notion of functional grammar, whereby material verbs are understood to represent 'action' and 'interaction' and uncover who does what to whom (Fowler, 1987). In our analysis of social work accounts, it was notable that verb choices in relation to 'change' were used to describe a sense of inefficacy in relation to practices they deemed unsatisfactory. When asked if it was possible to engage in a more relational than administrative approach to 'doing' assessments, their responses inferred a shared sense of powerlessness to operate outside procedural frameworks and constraints (verbs annotated in single quotations and word choices in bold): "really negative, as in almost **what's the point? There is no point** because **you can't 'change' anything**" (Simone, year 3); "Let it go. **You're not going to 'change' anything**" (John, year 2).

Halliday's (1978) approach to functional grammar assumes that the choice of verbs we utilise has a material effect or consequence in practice. Thus, in this context, students are deemed, to some extent at least, to orient their practice towards the concept or action that they are describing (Machin and Mayr, 2012). In this example, the students do not consider that they are participants in 'change', in terms of operating

outside local government procedures. In short, they are presenting as individuals and subject positions which imply that they have little in the way of significant personal agency to control their assessment practice, as we explore next.

Discursive practice: subject positions and genres – powerlessness?

Subject positions are neither constant nor static, and it is possible to hold several subject positions within discourses. This means that the students' subject positions will and can change throughout practice and socialisation (Jørgenson, 2003). Yet, the grammatical choices revealed subject positions, metaphors and material verbs that together implicitly point to a genre of powerlessness in the texts. This might well indicate a sense of defeatism for those at the very beginning of professional careers.

These discursive practices in adult social work are not unique to these students or the settings in question, but exist more widely (see Jones, 2001; Carey, 2008, 2012) and have an intertextual historicity, that is, they also belong to the order of preceding discourses about the social care project in the UK and their institutionalisation and normalisation in occupational cultures over time (Fairclough, 1992, 2003). CDA can assist in revealing the ways in which the institutional and political positioning of social work as a technical administrative practice becomes discursively grasped by entrants into the occupation. This sense of disjunction between idealised notions of practice can be detected in the texts, but does not infer that students are simply or passively discovering the discursive power of some prior institutional and totalising view of social work. There is often space for human agency to discursively promote alternative perspectives and strategies in which collective change and progress can be made (Mumby and Stohl, 1991: 317). As we note next, students clung tenaciously to what was a shared and preferred view of what good social work ought to be like.

(DT3) Semiotic choices: 'one-to-one' social work

The choice of words in texts represents the underlying ideologies that signify certain kinds of identities and relationships. Thus, CDA offers social work research a focus on the dialectical construction of the personal and professional identity. Here, identity is partly understood to be an effect of discourse, as well as constructed in discourse, and is based on the enactment (or avoidance) of specific roles (Fairclough, 2003). The words that students deploy become a text in which we can 'read' expressive, relational and experiential values. These values relate to identity (personal/professional) and can be understood as ways of being (Archer, 2000). They will signify a range of ideas that can be grasped as ways of performing a particular organisational subjectivity that bears upon a sense of a preferred identity. In signalling aspects of that identity, most students described their discomfort at discovering how everyday work failed to match their expectations (key words/semiotic choices annotated in bold):

> "You just feel like **you're an administrator** and also you feel very much like everything's your responsibility." (Simone, year 3)

> "Well after being there, I felt as if **frustration took over** because most of it was just basically **typing away on a computer, get all the boxes ticked** and doing the assessments to go to the panel." (Hilary, year 2)

Other respondents expressed similar disappointment in discovering that routinised assessment procedures and case administration had impeded their anticipated orientation to practice. Most students shared a view about ideal practice and an attachment to this ideal:

> "I wanted to be able to **work** with people **on a one–to–one** and **'make' things happen** for people really." (Aiden, year 3)

> "**being** with them and **working with them** in a **one–to–one** way." (John, year 2)

> "**doing one–to–one work** with them and **being by their side**." (Hilary, year 2)

> "helping them on a **one–to–one** basis." (Simone, year 2)

The word choices in the preceding quotes suggest how the core activities of social work had been initially understood pre-practicum and revealed a predominance of ideas associated with individualistic approaches to practice. While these might change as the student progresses through their training and practice experiences, they also reveal the expressive values and motivations of students for entering the profession (Machin and Mayr, 2012). None of the students referred to what might be termed collectivist/radical ideas or social pedagogy.

'One-to-one' can locate social work and the focus of practice upon restoring individual/family equilibrium, a form of social maintenance (Howe, 1985). Not dissimilar to the representations of Italian social work, there was an absence of the politically involved practitioner and of an explicit orientation towards social justice in the texts (Fargion, 2008). Here, CDA can assist in identifying a predominance of ideas and concepts derived from the historical discourses of 'casework' in social work, as we shall see later.

(DT4) Individual/therapeutic ideal

The verb choices in the following quotes (annotated in bold and single quotations) revealed idealised forms of practice in contrast to administrative routines. Simone and Aiden spoke of working in a care programme approach in mental health and described it thus:

> "It almost feels more therapeutic. It's like a mixture of almost like a **'counselling'** session with a CBT [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy] session mixed in." (Simone, year 2)

> "I have **'chosen'** mental health [practicum] because I want to go into a bit more of the **'counselling'** element of that I think at some stage and I **'think'** this is creative." (Aiden, year 3)

Verbs can indicate how discourse has not just practical aspects, but cognitive and cultural elements too. Thus, verbs such as 'counselling' suggest something of the

durable and popular nature of this strand of practice, denoting a cluster of desired skills, values and identity (Bull and Shaw, 1992). The individualistic nature of practice surfaced in the texts when students discussed their view of the core purpose of the occupational task. Their resort to simple verb choices such as 'enable', 'support' and 'doing' indicates the role and interaction deemed to take place in the social work relationship:

> "it's **'trying'** to **'keep'** families together, **'support'** things and **'place' 'support'** to them." (Kath, year 3)

> "'**Doing'** very positive things for people to **'enable'** them to progress with their lives." (Joan, year 2)

> "'**Supporting'** people in times of crisis or need**.** Yeah**, 'helping'** people." (Simone, year 3)

While on one level basic and uncomplicated, the choice of verbs denotes a traditional mainstream sense of the occupational mission. Such formulations, in appearing unencumbered by complexity, innovation or radical departure (and no reference to group or community work), do implicitly reveal something of the discursive dominance of individualistic social work, a genre we outline next.

Discursive practices: genres of individualistic/family social work

Individualistic social work is a genre and, as such, a discursive and social practice in human services in the UK (Houston, 2016). The rise of individualism has been theorised by sociologists such as Giddens (2004) and Beck (2000) in the context of reflexivity, which is considered constitutive of social life and what 'we do' on a daily basis. Thus, contemporary selfhood under consumer neoliberalism is viewed as increasingly asocial and bound up with quests for self-enhancement (Houston, 2016). Thus, CDA enables us to recognise that in every discursive practice, different types of discourses are reconstituted in particular ways (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002). This provides an understanding about how genres are articulated together. For example, our students used the term 'one-to-one' alongside concepts of 'counselling' or to 'change their cognitive processes'. Such terms signify different individualistic/ diagnostic approaches to practice originating from the inception of casework in the UK (Richmond, 1917) and its many manifestations, reflecting wider social discourses (see Payne, 2006). Several authors have noted how strands of ethical idealism (in the form of individualism) underpin liberal welfare regimes and imbue social work's code of professional ethics with its purpose and values (Banks, 1995, Hughman, 2007). We note with Ferguson (2012) that this 'enforced individualism' might have the effect of impeding social justice rather than promoting it.

The words of students, alongside their verb choices, can be viewed as affecting behaviour and action within a social system that originate from historical and societal discourses of casework. This results in the enactment of certain social relations, so by analysing linguistic choices such as 'support' and 'enable', this illustrates how the becoming-subject (student) is always surrounded by pre-existing discourses (casework) and wider intertextual dimensions in his or her understanding of what it is to 'help'.

In essence, the becoming-subject is always interpellated by prior discursive practices due to reliance on a given language to establish reality. This reality also has the potential to limit a student's recognition of their own participation in reproducing ideological formations of what constitutes social work. Thus, CDA has potential to offer social work a form of critical self-consciousness from which to challenge and test the individualistic orthodoxies that continue to determine much of the direction of social work. Critical awareness of the power of discourses can contribute to developing alternative paradigms to practice and radical change (see Hall, 1985; Giroux, 1994) as within the structuring conventions of language, there are always possibilities for alternative constructions, as we will see later.

Order of discourse: bureau-professional model

Some discourses are privileged over others, while some are marginalised or missing altogether. The 'bureau-professional' model of organisation is a prominent feature of contemporary practice alongside individualism in the UK, wherein practice is subject to significant internal/external regulation as a form of managerial control (Carey, 2012; Lymbery, 2012; Houston, 2016). This order of discourse originates from the institutional circumstances that shape discursive practices and local cultures (Fairclough, 1992), and derives from the many reforms of UK social work that have given rise to neoliberalist ideologies towards social care. The students' encounters with neoliberalist ideology and bureau-professionalism (notably, in the word choices in bold in the following quotes) reveal how assessment work was seen as problematic and a matter of ideological contention:

> "It was a **very** – yeah, **bureaucratic** culture. It was **rules, regulations**, **decisions made for you**, you had the **team meetings but they were a complete waste of time**. The amount of **form-filling** and **computer** work that you had to do." (Jane, year 2)

> "**Very power-driven**, I suppose; if you don't sort of **conform** to what you know, what the **policies and their procedures** say then … I suppose you have a problem. Well after being there, I felt as **if frustration took over** because most of it was just basically **typing away on a computer and doing the assessments** to go to the panel." (Hilary, year 2)

> "It's a **top-down bureaucratic perspective** really … I found it was controlled, **managerially controlled**, and it was in that framework." (Aiden, year 3)

These texts are not untypical of discourses of adult services and social work per se, and are directed towards bureau-professional activities. These discourses signify wider struggles for truth in the overall presentation of the social work identity (Lemke, 1995). They also signify the constraints of dominant social practices, which inevitably result in some students experiencing this as a sense of powerlessness.

Yet, students can also structure meanings of practice on the basis of including or excluding certain discourses or moderating their impact (Mayer, 2008). In short, CDA can help locate discourses of resistance and identify how these are crafted

and re-presented in particular ways. While some take the view that discourse can be seen as so dominant that it leaves little space for students to challenge its effects (Ten Bos and Rhodes, 2003), others argue that discourse can be open to agency and intervention (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

Discourses of adult social work are not fixed or immutably given, and are always subject to negotiation through competing meanings (Hall, 1985). Thus, while students were consumed and constrained by the discourse of 'tick-box' practices, there were spaces to assert a more relational-based approach in line with preferred practice ideals:

> "then I had an **assessment to do and when I did a little bit of that, alongside a couple of support visits**, every time I went and did something like that, it **would bring me back up on a high**." (Hilary, year 2)

While students' accounts were typically dominated by frustration, we can see from the preceding quote that the dominant discourse was not totalising for Hilary (or others). While students might enter an already-interpreted linguistic occupational world (Denermark et al, 1997), they soon discover that the world is fallible and open to interpretation and adjustment and that there are often other ways to view events. Such an 'either/or' perspective in the form of 'one-to-one' practice versus bureau-administration' is invariably a matter of both coexisting and both struggling to be accommodated. Thus, rather than view these ideas in opposition, through CDA, we can draw upon a more dialectical approach in which to conceive social work as comprising of contradictions and paradoxes that the student needs to come to terms with. S/he must juggle, if never fully resolve, endorsement to the socially constructed ethics and values of the profession while being located in a neoliberalist state.

The administrative/welfare approach and its contradictions, inherent in social work, paradoxically provide opportunities for accessing alternative discourses that might also coexist alongside dominant practice genres. CDA, in drawing upon Hegelian dialectics (Lancaster, 1959), can help us view the social work identity as a continual process of opposition, contradiction and reconciliation. Students are exposed to this process and will cognise situations that they are in with the terms that they have available (Casey, 1995; Van Dijk, 2011). Whether they and others in the professional community can challenge these discourses that make possible certain statements and communicational practices while disallowing others is a moot point.

Challenging the orthodoxies through the discursive

A useful framework for shaping professional socialisation in social work education towards a more critical reflective stance can be found in Fairclough's (2005) approach to fostering change in discursive practices. His framework focuses on four key concepts: emergence, hegemony, re-contextualisation and operationalisation. The term 'emergence' is what Fairclough (2005) uses to depict the articulation of new, marginalised or alternative discourses that coexist alongside orders of discourse. For example, some authors argue that a common project is needed for social work at an international level as a way to oppose the hegemony of neoliberal ideologies (see Ferguson and Lavellette, 2004; Lorenz, 2006). Garrett (2012) emphasises utilising Bourdieu's concept of habitus in order to help students grasp how our thoughts and actions are internalised through socialisation and dominant or hegemonic orders of

discourse. Relatedly, Ferguson and Woodward (2009) point out how many social work students will be unaware of the history of some radical movements in Britain, Canada and Australia. In essence, we can interpret these examples as ways in which to foster alternative discourses in order to provide a platform for students to reflect on the social work world in a philosophical, political and historical way (Freire, 1970). This can result in a more varied synthesis of the social work identity through a re-contextualisation of discourses, that is, by putting 'orders of discourse' into their ideological context for students and, by doing so, creating a new critical understanding. We must also remind students that while hegemony creates alienation, the individual worker is still her/his own 'theorist' and is therefore equipped to grasp and resist the forces of hegemony. As educationalists, we can operationalise discourses outside individualism, such as competing perspectives on community (Esposito, 2010), and these can be institutionalised over time. However, the process is conditional upon whether the strategy proposed and incorporated is considered a positive and useful one by the social work educationalist given the current climate of social work practice.

The emergence of discourses that challenge hegemonic practices creates a platform for the critical worker to look closely at the social life of social work, to discover patterns of speaking drawn from social and occupational practices, and to reveal how these represent themselves as a somewhat restrictive set of institutional identities for both the social worker and service user. Identities are accomplished and negotiated and can be resisted in social work practices and institutions. Thus, the role of ideology becomes critical in social work education because it has the potential to suggest alternative 'truths' by critically deconstructing historically conditioned social forces. Without CDA, discourses can reinforce the concealing assumptions of common sense in social work, and so it is vital that common sense or taken-for-granted assumptions are subject to critical analysis (Gramsci, 1971). Hence, discourse is understood as a form of power and a way of socially relating, or, in other words, a material practice (Fairclough, 1992). As Lemke (1995) points out, the social effects of power are multiplied by our hopes and fears, our beliefs and expectations, and our sensitivities and values.

Ideologies in social work characterise the way that certain discourses become accepted over others. CDA can show how these help sustain power relations, such as popularised genres of individualism or casework. These forms of intervention can equally create the view that structural inequalities can be reduced to individual deficits (Scharff, 2011). Thus, CDA methods provide opportunities to analyse what is not said or is marginalised in social work texts. This provides the starting point for an alternative interpretation outlining the ways in which students and practitioners foreground and background certain characteristics and genres of social work over others during professional socialisation.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how identities are produced and used in social work talk and texts. It has illustrated how the social world of social work is presented and encoded in language in particular ways. Our three stages of CDA enquiry have shown that accounts about practice do not simply express feelings, attitudes and judgements, but represent voices from institutional and ideological/historical contexts (intertextuality). In drawing these out, CDA can provide student social

workers with opportunities to grasp how their own representations reproduce the constraining effects of the dominant mode, as well as the means for challenging it (Fairclough, 1989). Such a dialectical approach emphasises how 'social and political change begins with social relations of people's everyday lives' (Hick and Murray, 2009, quoted in Gray and Webb, 2009: 89). CDA reveals the way in which genres shape our processes of socialisation and expose opposing forces and contradictions so that these can become a platform for change in a dialectical approach to social work (Mullaly, 1997). This is because CDA is concerned with exposing ideologies within the texts provided by participants about their physical world, social relations and social identities.

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