

A FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS OF ‘TROUBLED FAMILIES’

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Abstract

The ‘Troubled Families Agenda’ (TFA), a national initiative launched by the UK Government in 2011, aimed to identify and work with families defined by the Government as ‘troubled’, in order to decrease their ‘anti-social behaviour’, help children back into school and support parents into employment. This research, undertaken from a social constructionist critical realist epistemological position, attempted to gain an understanding of the Government’s construction of ‘troubled families’, and to consider what ways of thinking about, and working with, families these constructions might have enabled and silenced. The dataset consisted of: the seven policy and guidance documents available on the Government’s TFA website; five speeches concerning the TFA made by leading politicians; and four parliamentary debate and Commons’ Select Committee report extracts. The dataset inclusion criteria required government policy documents and texts of speeches and debates to have been published between 6th March 2010 and 31st March 2013, and to refer to ‘troubled families’ more than twice. The analysis of this dataset was conducted using a discourse analytic approach, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault. Seven analytic steps were followed, which included repeated readings and coding of the texts. Four dominant governmental constructions of ‘troubled families’ were identified, that of: ‘violent’; ‘workless’; ‘helpless’ families that are ultimately a ‘costly waste of human productivity’.

The Government seems to have presented the TFA as an innovative, benevolent social care agenda. However, at its root, the TFA appears to be driven by neo-liberal economic forces, intent on reducing the cost of families that may have a range of difficulties. The Government seems to have taken a reductive approach towards their construction of ‘troubled families’, allowing families to be produced as homogenous and less complex discursive objects. This has allowed the Government to set simple material outcomes for services to achieve with families that may have a range of complex difficulties. These outcomes neatly connect to the financial models underpinning the TFA, enabling the introduction of financial products, such as social impact bonds, which might allow private investors to exert influence upon the TFA services. The Government appears to be using families who may have a range of difficulties as vehicles to grow the social investment market. It

is argued that this is likely to negatively impact the design of services, which might hinder social and health care professionals' ability to work in a manner that will meet the complex needs of families.

This research calls for the financial models that underpin services to be designed in the best interest of the service users, rather than that of investors and Government. This research also echoes calls for the perspectives and experiences of families with complex needs to be more effectively incorporated into the development of family initiatives, such as the TFA. Finally, this study encourages frontline workers and clinical psychologists to be more aware of the political forces and neo-liberal assumptions that are shaping the services in which they work, if effective forms of resistance are to be made possible.

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1.0. Chapter One - Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to articulate the construction of ‘troubled families’ that has been produced through the Government’s ‘Troubled Families Agenda’¹ (TFA), and to examine the implications of this agenda for families, for the development of social and clinical services, and for society. This academic endeavour has been conducted through a Foucauldian lens². How the term ‘troubled families’ emerged has been considered through the presentation of a brief overview of the changes in political family policy and the zeitgeist since 1945. A closer analysis of recent political documents has been carried out in order for the construction of ‘troubled families’, and processes of governmentality* to be made explicit, which has established the conditions of possibilities* for the social and clinical management of ‘troubled families’.

In this thesis it will be argued that the TFA has not been produced by caring, benign forces, designed to work in the best interests of ‘troubled families’. This will compromise the effective development of social and clinical services. At its core, the TFA is being driven by a neoliberal economic agenda intended to dramatically decrease the cost of ‘troubled families’, and transform them into productive, docile, subjects*. It will be argued that the existence of the ‘troubled families’ is in fact of use to the Government, as ‘troubled families’ are used as a signifier to the rest of the social body* to demonstrate what is perceived to be acceptable, and ‘normal behaviour’. This aids the governing of the population. Finally, it will be argued that the construction and existence of the ‘troubled family’ has been sustained through the Government’s use of ‘troubled families’ to drive forward their social enterprise agenda. This further sustains the existence of ‘troubled families’ as they have become the ‘raw material’ necessary to fuel this industry.

¹ The ‘Troubled Families Agenda’ was produced by the UK Coalition Government who came into power in May 2010 under the premiership of David Cameron.

² ‘Foucauldian lens’ refers to the application of the philosopher Michel Foucault’s principles to this thesis. A glossary of Foucauldian terms has been given in Appendix 1. The first time a Foucauldian term has been used in the thesis, it has been marked with an asterisk to show that further explanation of the term may be found in Appendix 1.

1.1. The Development of the Thesis

The development of this thesis was influenced by a number of factors. Firstly, I have maintained a long standing interest in how families with complex difficulties are understood, spoken about, and treated within our society, and in the psychological impact this can have on family systems and individuals. In the aftermath of the British Summer Riots of 2011³, I was struck by how these events had brought strong political and social discourses* about ‘problem families’ to the fore. It was publicised that the Government had recently launched the TFA. The Prime Minister (PM), David Cameron, announced he was ‘committing £448 million to turning around the lives of 120,000 troubled families by the end of this Parliament’.⁴ There appeared to be little discussion of what was meant by the term ‘troubled family’, or of how services and interventions should be designed.

At this time I was working within a local authority’s (LA) service for Looked After Children (LAC). Social workers and clinical staff often voiced frustration at the service restraints placed on work that could be carried out with families, which often stemmed from different services being commissioned to deal with one aspect of the family. The set up of services inhibited one team being able to work with the whole family, leading to families being engulfed in a complex system of multiple services with different agendas. Clinical psychologists in this service appeared to spend as much time resolving dilemmas between services as they did with the families themselves. While working at this service, I arranged to meet with the newly appointed Troubled Family Coordinator⁵. From this meeting, it was evident that, although it was not clear how, the TFA would greatly affect service provision for families that were currently being worked with. As new services were starting to be developed over the next three years (2012-2015), it appeared important to investigate the political construction of ‘troubled families’, and consider how this might influence families that may have a range of complex difficulties, service

³ Riots broke out in different parts of England during a 5 day period in August 2011, following the shooting of a young man from the Tottenham community in London. For further details see Reicher & Stott, 2011.

⁴ Speech given by the PM on 15th December 2011. Referred to as ‘Krunch Speech, 2011’. See Chapter 2, Table 1.

⁵ This was a new position created by the ‘Troubled Families Agenda’. Troubled Family Coordinators were senior members of staff assigned to roll out the TFA in their local borough.

development, and the wider society. This was the process that led to the development on this thesis.

1.2. Aim of the Research

The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of how ‘troubled families’ have been constructed through current political discourse. This study aimed to identify how processes of governmentality have been enacted on ‘troubled families’. Consideration will be given to how ‘troubled family’ constructions, and enactments of governmentality may have enabled or silenced possible ways of understanding and working with families. Possible clinical and social implications might then be explored. Foucault suggested that power* is intelligible, and susceptible to analysis down to the smallest detail (McHoul & Grace, 1994), and that wherever is at work, opportunities for resisting power are produced (McHoul & Grace, 1994). Foucault proposed that resistance* of power was most effective when it was directed at particular ‘techniques’* of power (McHoul & Grace, 1994). Therefore, gaining a greater understanding of the positioning of ‘troubled families’, and the circulation of power in this context may enable more effective acts of resistance, should the TFA not seem to be in the best interest of families that may have a range of complex difficulties from my perspective as a trainee clinical psychologist.

1.3. Literature Search

Literature searches were conducted between December 2012 and August 2013. EBSCO Host was used to search the following electronic databases: Psych Articles, PsycINFO, Web of Knowledge, PubMed, and Social Care Online. A general library search was also conducted of all the databases, but this produced few useful results. Athens was used to access articles, as was Google Scholar, and Google search. Book searches were undertaken at the University of East London. The dataset was gathered from the website Gov.UK, and through the Government search engineer, Hansard⁶.

⁶ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/>

A range and different combinations of terms were used to conduct these literature searches. These terms included: '*political construction of family/ies*'; '*family policy*'; '*troubled families*'; '*families with multiple and complex needs*'; '*families at risk*'; '*families with multiple disadvantages*'; '*problem families*'; '*problematic families*'; '*dysfunctional families*'; and '*family interventions*'. '*Families with multiple and complex needs*' only produced two results, neither of which were particularly relevant. A search for '*multiproblem families*' generated more results (233 hits from 1945-2013; this range was used for all searches). A combined search was also conducted using the terms '*worklessness*', '*anti-social*', '*education*', which generated 7 hits, none of which were of particular relevance to this study. The vast majority of the literature across different disciplines was qualitative in design. The reference section of articles relevant to this study were examined, which led to other informative sources.

1.4. Setting the Scene

This section has been divided into three parts. Firstly a brief overview will be given of the political context surrounding family policy since the Second World War. The emergence of the term 'troubled family' will then be considered, and finally families that may have a range of difficulties will be discussed in the context of clinical psychology, and the sociological literature.

1.4.1. The Political Context of Family Policy

'Family', within UK law, has been defined as:

'... a social unit where there is a legal or customary expectation by the state of unremunerated family support and caring, specifically:

- *A legally recognised parent-child relationship (whether biological or social) and/or*
- *A legally recognised adult couple relationship'* (Henricson, 2012, p.4).

The family has culturally established and legally underpinned functions of caring and interdependency on which society, as a whole, is thought to be reliant (Henricson, 2012). With these responsibilities, Henricson posited that:

'families need regulation and support, and family policy is critical to delivering that regulation and support in a coherent, fair and equitable fashion'
(Henricson, 2012, p.5)

Consequently family policy may be viewed, through the Foucauldian lens, as a regulatory 'technique of power', as policies can be used as tools to manipulate the conduct of families from a distance (Foucault, 1994).

Through the post-war decades, family policy appeared to have a low profile. Although the welfare state existed, a non-interventionist approach was favoured. Under John Major's Conservative Government, the profile of the family within policy began to rise in the 1990s (Appleton & Byrne, 2003). Anxieties about social fragmentation circulated, as economic recession loomed upon the backdrop of socio-political upheaval, as the country moved from a manufacturing-led economy, to a financial service-led economy. This increased the political focus on strengthening families to improve social stability (Henricson 2012). The Office of National Statistics reported that youth crime figures had increased (Henricson 2012). Parenting programmes began to be developed as they were seen as a way of tackling these issues (Utting et al, 1993).

The election of New Labour into power in 1997, under the premiership of Tony Blair, saw the parent and the child become the predominant focus of family policy. This reflected a mounting body of research across professions promoting early intervention as the new zeitgeist. This led to a dramatic increase in family and parenting services, such as the commissioning of Sure Start children's centres across the country. Through this, and other programmes, the Government was able to extend power further into the domestic sphere, which was intended to 'positively' manipulative relationships and behaviour (Bratich, Packer, & McCarthy, 2003). These ambitious family policy implementations were documented through many publications such as 'Supporting Families' (Home Office, 1998) and 'Every Child Matters' (H.M. Treasury, 2003).

Under New Labour, political discourses predominantly focused on three areas: tackling ‘social exclusion’; providing support for parents, particularly with regards to their ability to parent; and promoting the accountability of parents in relation to their children’s anti-social behaviour (ASB)(Biehal, 2005). Legislation was passed to support these aims, as seen by the introduction of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, and the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act. These pieces of legislation allowed the Government to take action against parents over their children’s anti-social behaviour. One of the dominant constructions of ‘troubled families’ under New Labour has appeared to be that of possessing a predisposition to ASB. From a Foucauldian perspective, Prior and Paris (2005) argued that this construction allowed the Government to significantly extent the state’s ability to intervene with families within the domestic sphere. Critical sociologists, such as Parr (2011) have argued that linking ASB to ‘troubled families’ has enabled the development of a theoretical rationale based on ‘individual deficiencies’. Parr posited that this focus on ASB has led to contextual issues, such as the impact of poverty on parenting and family life, being obscured. In this thesis consideration will be given to whether themes of individual deficit are prevalent in the construction of ‘troubled families’ in current political discourses.

Over the last two decades changes in political ideology and family policy appear to have been predominantly driven by social liberalism (Henricson, 2012). Duncan and Philips (2008) argued that over the years this brought about a drift from relational social aims to the focus being more on personal development and individual self-fulfilment. The protection of human rights became a prominent discourse while New Labour was in power with the European Convention of Human Rights being incorporated into UK law with the Human Rights Act in 1998. Human rights became an academic discipline of its own, and was used as a bedrock of values against which any public administrative measure could be assessed (Henricson, 2012). The discourse of Human Rights impacted on family policy also. Article 5 and Article 16 state that all people should have freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment, and a right to family life, respectively. This has driven local authorities (LAs) to work towards the prevention of child abuse and neglect wherever possible, and to commit resources to family services that facilitate the reunification of children in state care with their families (Henricson & Bainham, 2005).

In May 2010 the Coalition Government came to power. Due to the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats having to form a coalition to secure office, the Coalition Government began with no detailed family policies, and without an agreed political ideology on which to base them. Under the Coalition, family support has been cut in the face of recession, seen in the cuts to the Welfare budget for example, that are in line with neo-liberal ideology. Neo-liberal ideology proposes that:

'...human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The state's role is to ensure the proper functioning of markets, to create them where they do not already exist' (Harvey, 2005, p.2).

The common implications of this ideology are deregulation, privatization and withdrawal, or reduced state involvement from areas of social provision (Harvey, 2005). This has played out in the decommissioning of some family services, such as the removing of ring fenced money for Sure Start children's centres, which has led to the closures of several centres (4children and Daycare Trust, 2011). After the British Summer Riots in 2011, the Coalition reaffirmed their commitment to families, and promised a '*family test*' would be applied to all government policies to ensure no policy was detrimental to families (Cameron, Riot Speech, 2011; see Chapter 2, Table 1). However, there has been little discussion of the constitution of this '*test*', or evidence of its application. The recent Government emphasis on '*whole family*' thinking has provided an opportunity to develop a critical space where the construction of families with multiple difficulties, and their support needs might be examined (Clarke and Hughes 2010, p.528). However, it is yet to be seen how the Government's '*whole family*' thinking will be put into practice.

1.4.2. A brief comment on the construction of policy

Fairclough (2001) proposed that before texts were critically analysed, consideration should be given to their context. In the previous section the historical context from which the TFA emerged has been discussed. The manner in which policy is

constructed will now be considered, in order to provide further understanding of the context of this part of the dataset. This will enable a richer analysis to be conducted.

In the construction of policy, the relationships between politics, government, the management of social life by the state and contestations between different interest groups over the distribution of social goods are at issue (Fairclough 2001). In response to the '*perplexing silence . . . about the social world of the policy-making process*' (Tombs, 2003, p.5), Stevens (2011) described certain factors and power relations that he observed influencing the development of policy, while he was working in this area as a civil servant. Stevens observed that for policy-making civil servants to have done their job, their proposals need to be accepted as government policy. The most important influence on policy acceptance that Stevens observed were the relations between people within government. Stevens (2011) commented that the state is not a neutral arbiter, but the source of many ideas, and the daily life of policy-makers is spent in discussion and argument with other actors within government. To increase the likelihood that proposals would be accepted, Stevens noted that narratives were often crafted into proposals. This provides an example of how 'techniques of power' (deployed here through the development of policy narratives by more junior civil servants) might work 'up the hierachal ladder', shaping the conduct of senior Government officials and ministers (Foucault, 1994). Stevens (2011) proffered that one of the purposes of creating coherent policy narratives was to reduce the role of uncertainty, which was viewed within the civil service as being a barrier to action. Sanderson (2004) described the civil service's treatment of uncertainty in a similar manner.

Emphasis was also placed on the importance of incorporating evidence into the development to policies (Stevens, 2011). However, in the face of vast amounts of relevant and often conflicting research on a particular policy area, civil servants tended to select research that fitted with the ideological story driving the formulation of policy. Personal goals also influenced the policy-making process, as in order to advance their careers, Stevens noted that civil servants tended not to stay in a particular job for more than two or three years. Specialising in a particular area of policy, or using research to challenge the minister's desired political message, appeared to be discouraged, and consequently it was unlikely that civil servants

would have the time or inclination to become familiar with the breadth of research within the area, before moving onto the next job (Stevens, 2011).

Stevens' research (2011, p.10) suggested that civil servants generally had '*a distaste for uncertainty, complexity and contradiction within policy-making circles*', and learnt to avoid such problematic features when constructing policy stories. This is not to say that evidence is deliberately misused, but that civil servants are influenced in their use of evidence by '*the constraints of a particular thought world, whose limits they reproduce in their turn*' (Stevens, 2011, p.10). Power operates through the exclusion of certain ideas and possibilities from those that are considered in taking political action (Lukes, 1974). Therefore it is important to recognise that civil servants, just like the families targeted by the policies they develop, take part in the '*structuration*' (Giddens, 1979) of their social world.

Finally, because government policies are located within a network of social practices, consideration needs to be given not only to how the network of practices might hold together, but also to the gaps and contradictions that might exist within government policies (Fairclough, 2001). Some of the possible contradictions that might be noted within this dataset could be termed as '*dilemmas of ideology*' (Billig 1988, p.25). Within this dataset, it is possible that these contradictions and ideological inconsistencies might be seen in the ways in which the 'individual' and 'the family' are positioned. This will be reflected upon in the final chapter.

1.4.3. The Evolution of the term 'Troubled Family'

Welshman (2011), a historian, has recently written extensively on the evolution of the term 'troubled family', and the concept of the underclass. He noted that social surveys published during the first half of the twentieth century focused on investigating the 'social problem group'. This group seemed to consist of families that behaved in ways that were deemed as unacceptable by society at that time (e.g. family members were not in paid work, were consistently drunk, or involved in criminal activity). During the 1940s the term 'social problem group' appeared to evolve into the term 'problem family' (Welshman, 2011). A government report from 1943 claimed that 'problem families' were:

'...on the edge of pauperism and crime, riddled with mental and physical defects, in and out of the courts for child neglect, a menace to the community, of which the gravity is out of all proportion to their numbers'

(Our Towns report, 1943; cited by Welshman, 2012, p1).

This report has constructed 'problem families' as '*a menace*' to society, on the edge of poverty ('*pauperism*') and '*crime*', and unable to care for their children as they were perceived to be '*in and out of the courts for child neglect*'. Notably, this government's construction of 'problem families' also pathologised them as having mental and physical deficiencies, as they were described in the Our Towns report (1943, cited by Welshman, 2012, p1) as being '*riddled with mental and physical defects*'. Although the language used to describe families that may have a range of difficulties has been toned down, the parallels between the constructions of 'problem families' in 1943, and 'troubled families' today appear to be striking. 'Problem families' was a term used to classify a relatively small sector of society positioned as disproportionately detrimental to society for the size of the group. Similar claims have been made of 'troubled families': '*small number of troubled families are responsible for a large proportion of the problems in our society*' (Cameron, Krunch Speech, 2011; see Chapter 2, Table 1). These historical constructions of 'problem families' appear to have created some of the 'conditions of possibility'* available for the evolution of the term 'troubled family'. How deeply these parallels run will be made explicit through the analysis of current political construction of 'troubled families'.

In the 1950s, the term 'problem family' was adopted by local health departments (Henricson, 2012). This notion of the 'problem family' was taken up into public policy after Sir Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for Social Services, used the term in a speech, and linked it to a 'cycle of deprivation' (Joseph, 1975). Joseph (1975) posited that poverty ran through generations of families due to children inheriting the lifestyles and values of their parents that locked them into a perpetuating cycle of deprivation. This allowed poverty to be constructed as a consequence of 'problem families' 'incorrect' values and poor lifestyle choices, justifying the Government's apparent need to exert power on certain families to reinstate 'correct' values and lifestyle choices. This appears to have created the

'conditions of possibility' necessary for the Government to move policy away from the provision of state welfare, and towards that of moral regulation in the 1980s. Political scientist, Charles Murray has helped sustain these constructions of the 'problem family' through his declaration that an 'underclass' existed that consisted of feckless, work-shy people, whose attitudes were being reinforced by a culture of dependency on the State (Murray, 1994). Positioning 'problem families' in this way maintained that the root of apparent attitudes and behaviours deemed as problematic by the Government could be entirely located within families. Further disciplinary 'technologies of power'* were able to be exercised over certain families, as positioning them as becoming dependent on the State (Murray, 1994), made it apparently logical and reasonable for the Government to scale back welfare to break this 'issue' of dependency.

Under Blair's New Labour Government the term 'problem family' was replaced with terms such as, 'families with multiple disadvantage' and 'families at risk' (Cabinet Office, 2006). However Welshman (2011) argued that these New Labour policies still echoed notions from the underclass discourse, most obviously seen through the way the phrase 'cycle of deprivation' continued to be used. Giles (2005) elaborated on similar themes noted in the Government's publication, 'Every Child Matters' (Department of Education and Skills, 2003). This paper proselytised that all parents needed support in their practice, which positioned the Government as needing to create greater access to state guidance and advice on childrearing. Once again this enabled regulatory 'technologies of power' to be extended into the domestic sphere. Giles (2005) argued that although it was emphasised that parenting support was relevant to all, analysis of the 'Every Child Matters' policy *'reveal[ed] a class specific concern with disadvantaged or 'socially excluded' families'*, driven by a moral agenda that sought to regulate and control the behaviour of marginalized families in particular. Giles (2005) saw New Labour's policy discourse of 'social exclusion' and 'support for parents' as reframing issues of poverty and inequality as a moral issue of needing to reconnect 'families at risk' with mainstream values and aspirations. Consequently promoting inclusion translated into the promotion of ethical self-governance, with the aim of encouraging conformity (Giles, 2005). This enabled the Government to work towards moulding 'families at risk' back into docile members of the social body (Foucault, 1977).

The Psychiatric Social Worker, Elizabeth Irvine, wrote in 1954 that, '*problem families were easy to recognise and describe, but surprisingly hard to define*' (cited in Welshman, 2006). From the variety of different ways in which governments have attempted to define and construct families that may have a range of difficulties, these description and definition difficulties seemingly continue. Under the current Coalition Government, families seen as problematic at the political level have been rebranded once again; this time as 'troubled families'. The Government has defined 'troubled families' as '*no adult in the family working, children not being in school, and family members being involved in crime and anti-social behaviour*' (Financial Framework, 2012, p.1; see Chapter 2, Table 1).

1.4.4. The use of the term 'troubled families' in this thesis

Danziger (1997) noted that certain moral challenges are embedded in the very nature of discourse. How the term 'troubled families' is managed in this thesis, and the dilemmas encountered if alternative ways of referring to families are or are not used, does indeed present moral challenges. In this thesis both the term 'troubled families' and the Trouble Families Agenda (TFA) are problematized, yet finding a way to refer to families labelled as 'troubled' in discussion, without producing another reified construct and undermining the argument, remains challenging.

Deconstruction as a form of critique often remains curiously dependent on that against which it defines itself (Danziger 1997). As Hall (1996) explained, this critique might successfully put concepts 'under erasure', demonstrating that they are no longer serviceable or 'good to think with'. However, concepts such as 'troubled families' have not been superseded dialectically with a 'better' way in which to refer to families that might have a range of difficulties. The action of imposing a new term on families perceived to fit a certain criteria will eternally produce a homogenous group of families. This is viewed as potentially problematic, as this can lead to the same 'treatment' being imposed on all families, which might negate the individual needs and perspectives of individual families. There does not appear to be any perfect solution to these difficulties. The merely partial solution that has been decided upon for this thesis is as follows. Depending on the context, two primary ways of referring to families will be used. When referring to how the Government

speaks about families linked to the TFA, the term ‘troubled families’ will be used, with the inverted commas, to emphasise its problematic positioning. Different ways of referring to families linked to the TFA will be used at other points in this thesis. Examples of these phrases are ‘families who may be experiencing a range of difficulties’ or ‘families linked by the Government to the TFA’. In my use of these phrases and my use of the term ‘troubled families’, I am eager to ensure that they are not seen as essentially the ‘same’ group. The dilemmas posed by how to refer to families, and the additional challenges that have arisen from this, will be discussed further in the final chapter, section 4.2.2.

1.5. ‘Troubled Families’ within the context of Psychological and Social Work Literature

In this section an overview will be given of the difficulties experienced in placing the term ‘troubled family’ in the context of relevant academic literature. The application of different psychological theories to ‘troubled families’ will be discussed. Finally, underdeveloped areas of research will be considered, and a rationale and overview of the thesis will be given.

1.5.1. Overview

Several issues were encountered in attempting to review the literature on ‘troubled families’. The multiple ways in which ‘troubled families’ have been constructed and labelled presented the first challenge to conducting a systematic review of the literature. Even between papers that may have referred to families by the same label (e.g. ‘problem families’), there were often differences in how the label was understood, or very little detailed description was given of the type of families the authors were including. For example, the inclusion criteria implied by the term ‘multiproblem families’ was not defined in either Friedlander’s study (2006) on family alliances, or Finkelhor’s research (2008) into the poly-victimisation of families. It was therefore difficult to determine to what extent the findings of such studies might be related. The outcome of these discrepancies was that gaining a coherent picture of the literature on ‘troubled families’ proved problematic. Consequently establishing a broad and credible evidence base on which services might be developed would also presumably be challenging.

In addition to the issues encountered by various definitions and description of ‘troubled families’, and the unclear research inclusion criteria, most of the literature consisted of studies that focused attention on one particular aspect of families. Examples of these discursive objects include: family relations (Friedlander, 2008), where the focus was often on a particular relationship within the family, such as the parent-child dyad; or parenting (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2006); or domestic violence (Minze, 2010). Other areas of the research focused on issues of family engagement with services (Morris, 2010 & 2011), psychological theory that might be applied to ‘troubled families’, and finally, intervention strategies. These areas will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

1.5.2. Services

There is research that has examined the difficulties of engagement between families experiencing complex socio-economic and psycho-social problems, and mainstream services. Within this literature, ‘families with multiple problems’ have often been depicted as being ‘hard to reach’ (Rots-de Vries, 2011). Evidence has shown that these difficulties have been perceived to stem from long histories of interaction difficulties between care systems and families (Ghesquie, 2001; Kaplan, 1984). In Rots-de Vries’ research (2011), educational difficulties encountered by many of the families were linked to parental psycho-social problems, such as: mental health issues; relational problems; domestic violence and substance abuse. Rots-de Vries noted how this type of ‘problem family’ presentation did not fit in with the fragmented nature of care systems, which were designed to respond well to clearly-defined, single problems, that were resolvable in the short-term. The splitting of psycho-social and socio-economic support systems appeared to create great difficulties for ‘troubled families’, partly due to psycho-social care systems often ignoring families’ socio-economic troubles (Reder, 1986; Rothery, 1990).

In a seminal paper by Reder and Fredman (1996), the importance of understanding the history of families’ previous experiences of services, and potential relationships to services, was stressed. This was referred to as a person’s, or family’s ‘relationship to help’. In their paper, Reder and Fredman hypothesised about the multiple factors that might influence a person’s, or family’s engagement with

services. It was argued that a person's early attachment experiences (Bowlby, 1973) might be re-enacted through their relationships with professionals, often with detrimental effects. Reder and Fredman (1996) discussed how people in families will have developed beliefs about what 'help' means, through previous experiences with services, and through a combination of cultural stories and family scripts that might be held. Christie and Fredman (2001) argued that understanding people's beliefs about help might provide crucial information about the barriers that might prevent people from accessing services. Drawing on this research might help services engage with families who may have a range of difficulties. However, gathering the relevant information necessary to map the different experiences that several family members might have had with services may be challenging, particularly with families deemed 'hard to reach' (Rots-de Vries, 2011).

1.5.3. Psychological perspectives on 'Troubled Families'

In this section the current dominant psychological models will be considered in relation to 'troubled families'.

1.5.3.1. Systemic perspective

The current Government's emphasis on 'whole family' thinking might be achieved by taking a systemic approach to 'troubled families', as this psychological approach works with the whole family system. However, those working from this systemic perspective are unlikely to refer to families who may have a range of difficulties as 'troubled'. Systemic theory was partially developed from the perspective that families functioned similarly to homeostatic biological systems that strove to maintain equilibrium (Jackson, 1957). Systemic thinking offers a view of 'problems' as fundamentally interpersonal and emphasises the centrality of relationship. It depicts families as highly complex, dynamic living systems that will attempt to seek ways of functioning that help maintain the greatest level of control (Wiener, 1961). Family members' experiences, identities and behaviours are seen as being shaped by family patterns of interaction (Dallos & Draper, 2000). Systemic family therapy may attempt to disrupt family patterns of interaction perceived as unhelpful, and open out the potential for new patterns, and new ways of interacting to be trialled (Palazzoli, 1980). Systemic thinking often encourages a 'family life cycle' perspective to be

taken towards family work (Carter and McGoldrick, 2004). This entails consideration being given to the particular stage of life a family might be at, providing additional layers of exploration as to why a family system might be perceived as in difficulty. Carter and McGoldrick (2004) also argued that families should be seen as part of the wider system of the community, society, and culture in which they live. Through a Foucauldian lens, adopting a systemic approach to the way in which families with a range of difficulties are constructed and worked with may be seen as an act of resistance against political attempts to pathologise families, as it challenges the notion that the family should be the only site of change, and allows political processes, and wider contextual factors to be considered also. However, there is currently a dearth of well designed large scale studies evaluating the effectiveness of meticulously applying systemic principles to families constructed as ‘troubled’ or ‘problematic’, though multisystemic therapy interventions are being increasing trialled as it will be discussed in the following section.

1.5.3.2. Multisystemic Therapy Interventions

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) has been one of the most evaluated interventions used with families with complex difficulties to date (Cary, 2013). This goal-oriented and practical intervention was designed specifically to tackle issues of anti-social and reoffending behaviours in adolescent, through changing the wider system around the adolescent (Carr, 2006). This intervention involves one therapist working intensely with a family for 3-5 months. MST typically aims to improve caregiver discipline practices, enhance family relations, decrease youth association with peers deemed to be a negative influence, increase positive peer relations, and create a support network of extended family, neighbours and friends to help the caregiver achieve and maintain positive changes (Henggeler et al., 2002). A wide range of tools have been used to achieve these aims, such as social skills training, cognitive behavioural therapy (see section 1.5.3.3), the use of sanctions (such as banning contact between the young person and ‘deviant’ peers), and parenting courses (Henggeler et al., 1998).

More than 15 randomised controlled trials (RCTs) have been conducted on this intervention. Results showed a reduction in anti-social behaviour and offending rates (Henggeler et al., 1996; Borduin, et al., 1995). However, the assumption that MST is

the most effective intervention for families with complex needs has been questioned, after a review of several of the MST RCTs was conducted (Littell, et al. 2009). It was noted that most of the RCTs had been carried out by the developers of MST. Consequently, reports on outcomes may have been biased (Littell et al, 2009). Littell also highlighted that findings that did not support the case for MST had not been published. Finally, it has been noted that little attention has been given to how families experience this intervention (Tighe et al., 2012).

1.5.3.3. Cognitive/Behavioural Perspectives

Cognitive, behavioural, and cognitive behavioural perspectives focus on reducing problematic behaviours and emotions displayed by individuals that might be members of families referred to by the Government as ‘troubled’ (Hollon, & Beck, 1994), particularly within the context of multisystemic therapy as discussed. Different strategies, such as parenting courses, based on behavioural principles have been used with families described as ‘troubled’. Examples of these parenting courses include: the ‘The Incredible Years Programme’ (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2006); and ‘The Positive Parenting Programme, known as the Triple P (Sanders, 1999). Behavioural principles are drawn upon to increase desirable behaviours (e.g. through praise and rewards) and decrease undesirable behaviours (e.g. through ignoring the behaviour, or use of non-physical punishment with children (Carr, 2006). Several of these interventions, (such as Triple P) first emerged at the time when New Labour’s family policies were primarily focusing on parenting and children’s early years. One might see the productive and circulating nature of power here (Foucault, 1980), in the manner in which a little research can be developed into a dominant policy focus, which subsequently stimulates further research and the development of interventions that further maintain and drive a particular policy agenda. This may lead to alternative ways of viewing a perceived problem to be overlooked, such as the lack of consideration that was given to the wider family system during New Labour’s parent/child early intervention zeitgeist (Henricson, 2012).

A large scale study including 6143 parents was conducted to assess how effective the five most implemented parenting courses were (the three mentioned, and Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme, and Strengthening

Family Programme 10-14) (Lindsay et al., 2011). 3325 parents were followed up immediately after completing the courses, and a representative sample of 209 were followed up a year later, using self-report questionnaires sent by post, to assess whether positive changes, (such as improvements in parents' mental health and children's behaviour, and making reductions in 'parenting laxness and over-reactivity' (Lindsay et al., 2011, p.124)) were maintained. The study concluded that parenting courses resulted in statistically highly significant positive and lasting changes. However, it was noted that outcome data were collected from just over half of the originally participants, raising questions as to whether nearly half of the participants had disengaged from the study because the courses were not meeting their family's needs.

1.5.4. Integrative Social Work Models and Critical Debate

Family Interventions Projects (FIPs) were first introduced under the New Labour Government, and became one of the most commonly used models of intervention for 'families with complex needs' (Respect Taskforce, 2006). Again, these interventions often seemed to be aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour. FIPs have drawn on an integrative model of intervention, combining systemic and behavioural approaches (Parrs, 2009). During the interventions, families would be supported to formulate goals focused on reducing ASB. One family worker was required to work intensely with families to gain an understanding of their complex needs, and to develop a support plan in response to these. Workers might give practical help and advice, and at times, use sanctions if families were thought to be non-compliant (Parrs, 2009).

The effectiveness of FIPs has been difficult to quantify due to conflicting evidence. An analysis of several FIP evaluations criticised the interventions for failing to acknowledge the role of mental health and relational issues within families (Gregg, 2010). White et al., (2008) argued that although outcomes might at first appear positive, these gains were lost over time after support was removed. More recently, a large-scale evaluation of FIPs has claimed that FIPs were successful, particularly at reducing ASB and crime (Lloyd, Wollny, & Gowland, 2011). The evaluation report showed that FIPs were less effective at improving education and employment

outcomes. The evidence also suggested FIPs had limited success in improving family functioning (Lloyd, Wollny, & Gowland, 2011).

There has been a great deal of critical debate centred upon FIPs. Garret (2007) strongly criticised the use of FIPs, condemning them for functioning as a punitive and disciplinary mechanism (e.g. the use of sanctions, such as the withholding of benefits) for not co-operating with services. Garrett (2007) depicted these family interventions as using coercion and control to reshape and contain families. Nixon (2007) strongly refuted Garrett's paper, arguing that Garret had based his view on a very selective representation of Nixon et al.'s research (2006, p547), which displayed '*a lack of balance*' in his view. This debate might be seen to exemplify the tensions that arise from the ongoing questions regarding to what extent, and in what manner, might the authorities interfere in family life? Consideration of governmental motivations and desired outcomes behind certain interventions is of particular interest in this thesis.

Flint (2003, p.611) gave a perhaps more nuanced analysis of FIPs than Garrett (2007). Flint argued that FIPs were interesting symbolic representations of welfare regimes in a neo-liberal society. He noted how these interventions had moved away from the deployment of obvious punitive disciplinary mechanisms, in favour of the implication of a more diffuse set of governance 'technologies'* . While Flint (2006) acknowledged that these interventions included coercion, and used the threat of disciplinary action if families did not cooperate, the interventions generally aimed at the promotion of social inclusion, and worked towards better health, education and well-being outcomes for families (Nixon et al., 2006). Nixon (2007) argued that these interventions were not only aimed at controlling and containing families' behaviours, but sought to '*transform 'anti-social' subjects into active, self governing, responsibilized citizens*' (Nixon, 2007). Drawing on the work of Rose (2001), Nixon (2007) made explicit the ways in which the deployment of governmental technologies reflected the new 'politics of conduct' (the way in which governments shape the population's behaviour), where dominant moral discourses have been introduced to reconstruct subjects as active members of responsible communities. Nixon (2007) discussed the application of the normative gaze*, in which 'responsible' behaviour has been linked to shared (i.e. mainstream) values and

expectations. This, Nixon (2007) argued, has been combined with more proactive interventions and the use of sanctions in an attempt to improve the ability of ‘troubled families’ to self-regulate. These may be seen as examples of disciplinary power in action, intended to normalise ‘troubled families’, and mould them into docile governable members of the social body (Foucault, 1977).

Parr (2009) concluded that such debates about the use of FIPs have been valuable, as they have ‘alerted us to the potentially coercive and disciplinary nature of the projects’ in their drive to change, or perhaps civilise, ‘troubled families’ (p.1262). However there should be recognition that these interventions have often been able to provide practical solutions, and systemic support for families with multiple disadvantaged (Parr, 2011). Moreover, Parr (2009) suggested that family interventions have allowed professionals to offer comprehensive and holistic support in a manner often not possible in mainstream clinical and social work practice.

1.5.5. Underdeveloped Areas of Research

Some studies attempted to take a wider perspective towards families with complex needs, and took account of a number of difficulties families might face. Robila and Krishnakumar (2006) demonstrated associations between economic pressure, marital quality, parental depression, parenting strategies and psychological outcomes in children. In particular, economic pressure was shown to be associated with lower marital quality and higher levels of depression in parents. Higher levels of psychological distress and conflict were also associated with frequent use of harsh discipline techniques and poorer psychological functioning in children. However it was noted that psychological functioning in children was accessed using non-standardised measures and narrow measures that only accounted for ‘depression’. The validity of this study was therefore limited, and results would be difficult to generalise. There appeared to be a very limited body of research on families labelled ‘troubled’, where attempts have been made to investigate multiple factors that have positioned these families as problematic. Finally, it was noted by Clarke and Hughes (2010) that the needs of families described as ‘troubled’, and research into their multiple identities was underdeveloped. Little was also known about the families’ perspectives and experiences (Clarke & Hughes, 2010).

To the best of my knowledge there have not yet been any in-depth studies carried out on the Troubled Families Agenda (TFA). However, Professor Ruth Levitas (2012) has written a short paper on this subject, which strongly objected to the distorted way in which the Government has used data to support the TFA. For example, Levitas demonstrated that when the alleged number of ‘troubled families’ was interrogated, the figure was found to be a factoid generated from out-dated ‘*spuriously inaccurate*’ statistics (Levitas, 2012, p. 5) that has depicted ‘*the problem, as always [as being] the behaviour of the poor*’ (Levitas, 2012, p.6). She noted that there had been little mention of issues such as ill-health, poverty and poor housing.

1.6.Rationale for this Research

The British Psychological Society (BPS), the representative professional body of psychologists from all specialisms, claim that psychologists have a role to play in the development of policy and decision-making processes at government level (BPS, 2013). One of the ways the BPS has stated they do this, is by ‘*monitoring (political) activity... which includes parliamentary debate*’ (BPS, 2013a). This ‘activity’ might be construed to include the monitoring of political speeches and the production of policy, which constitutes the dataset for this present thesis. The BPS website states that psychology has a role in helping to ‘*shape society*’ (BPS, 2013a). Indeed, the BPS has recently developed a new webpage called ‘Psychology in the political world’ (BPS, 2013b). The BPS appear to be strongly encouraging psychologists to actively engage in wider issues in society, particularly at the political level.

If, as a profession, we are to act on this claim that clinical psychologists are able to contribute and work at different levels within society, that we have more to give than individual therapy sessions, then we need to demonstrate this. What we choose to research is one of the major ways in which the direction of the profession has been, and will continue to be sculpted. Several clinical psychologists, such as Smail (2005), have argued that, as a profession, we need to broaden our focus. He commented that:

'The societal operation of power and interest is immeasurably more important in understanding human conduct than are the components of personal psychology'

(Smail, 2005, p. 21).

Consequently, it appears not only logical, but crucial that clinical psychologists should place more emphasis on producing research located at the political, policy, and service development level. For it is at this level that political discourses are projected, influential decisions made, and policies developed, from which services are designed and rolled out. It appears important to consider the circulatory and productive nature of power. These processes, as well as the way in which services are set up and function, affect the lived experiences and well-being of all members of our society, especially those deemed vulnerable and/or 'problematic' at the political level.

Increasing our profession's production of this type of research will provide psychologists with a greater understanding of wider political issues and developments that have an impact on society, families, and the individual. Expanding this research base, from the perspective of our profession, may provide a stronger platform from which to influence policy-decisions, and '*shape society*' in the ethical manner desired (BPS, 2013).

The Coalition Government launched its TFA in 2011 (Department for Communities and Local, DCLG, 2011). This agenda was entitled '*helping troubled families turn their lives around*', and appears to be focused on some of the most disenfranchised families in our society (Levitas, 2012). To the best of my knowledge, no in-depth analysis of the TFA has been conducted thus far. Consequently it seems necessary and important for an analysis to be conducted on the TFA, and on the political discourse currently surrounding families that may have a range of difficulties to gain an understanding of its impacts families, clinical and social practice, and our wider society.

This thesis also aims to increase '*sensitivity to ongoing developments in the broader social, political and organisational contexts*', as required by the BPS's Code of

Ethics & Conduct (BPS, 2009, p.16). This may enable us as clinical psychologists to work more effectively with families with multiple and complex needs. It is also hoped that this study will encourage clinical psychologists to work towards shaping current and future policy development and delivery, as well as, where possible, influence societal attitudes towards families that have multiple disadvantages. How the TFA, and the political discourse surrounding ‘troubled families’ will be analysed will be discussed in the Methodology Chapter.

1.7. The Research Questions

The following research questions have been developed to take this study forward:

- 1) How are ‘troubled families’ constructed in political discourse?**
- 2) How is governmentality enacted through the TFA, and to what ends?**

1.8. An Overview of the Thesis

The Abstract has introduced the central argument of this thesis, and given a synopsis of the study. The Introduction has provided the background to this thesis, and summarised its political and academic context. In this chapter, the rationale for this work and the research questions have been presented. Chapter Two, the Methodology, states the epistemological approach taken in this thesis. The analytic method and the chosen dataset will be discussed in detail, and these choices justified. Chapter Three presents the analysis of the dataset. Chapter Four revisits the aims of this study, critically evaluates the work, makes suggestions for future research, and draws conclusions.

2.0. Chapter Two - Methodology

In this chapter, the epistemological position, critical realist social constructionism, taken in this study will be discussed. A Discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian principles was the chosen method used to analyse the dataset. A description of, and the rationale for selecting this method will be given. Finally, the research process will also be clarified.

2.1. Epistemology

The epistemological position taken in this study is reflective of my personal belief in an independent existing reality, with which it is remarkably difficult to have direct perceptual contact. The way this 'reality' is perceived, particularly within the social realm, seems to be continuously shaped by human expectations, personal beliefs, and culture, to name but a few. Drawing on the work of philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1953), language is perceived as a powerful tool through which realities are discursively constructed, whether an individual or society is cognisant of these processes or not. Although language can inform the ways in which social realities are made meaningful, it is constrained by the possibilities and limitations of the material world (Sims-Schouten, Riley & Willig, 2007). Individual realities are thought to exist, to be material, and have tangible effects on the surrounding world (critical realism), but these realities are made sense of through language and discursive constructs (social constructionism). The combination of these perspectives may be classified as a social constructionist critical realist position (Harper, 2011). Whether used in conjunction with each other or separately, it is acknowledged that these terms have been used to describe a range of different philosophical stances. In this study, this position is understood as being ontologically realist, but epistemologically relativist (Harper, 2011).

The critical realism component of this philosophical position means it may be argued that there is a need for analysis to go beyond the specific wording of texts being analysed, because discursive constructions cannot mirror reality, due to the inherent constraints of language in the material world (Sims-Schouten, Riley & Willig, 2007, p.101). Therefore other evidence may be drawn on to support the

analysis in this study, such as material practices, the context surrounding the texts, and the circulation of power. Hook (2001) posited that '*discourse facilitates and endorses the emergence of certain relations of material power... [which] enable certain speaking rights and privileges, just as they lend material substantiation to what is spoken in discourse.*' (p.33). The manner in which discourse may facilitate certain material power relations demonstrates how material practises and discourse are entwined in a complex relationship with one another. Looking beyond the surface of language in this way provides additional layers of interpretation, and also allows what is being analysed to be considered in a broader historical, social and cultural context. These layers of interpretation are used in the analysis to aid consideration of how the term 'troubled family' is made meaningful (Burr, 1998).

The social constructionist component of the philosophical position taken up in this study draws on social constructionist principles posited by Gergen (1985, cited by Burr, 2003). These principles take a critical stance toward taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, maintain that knowledge and social action go together, and that knowledge is sustained by social processes (Gergen, 1985, cited by Burr, 2003, pp.2-5). Therefore social constructionists are interested in how particular terms, such as 'the troubled family', are constructed through discourse, and in how this might lead to the production of taken-for-granted knowledges that enable certain actions to be initiated. It appears critical to remain alert to the processes by which realities are constructed, as these constructions are thought to have far reaching implications for individuals, families, and for societies as a whole. For example, the discourses that have produced the construct of the 'troubled families' will shape the type of services that are subsequently commissioned to intervene in certain families' lives.

2.1.1. The difficulties of holding this epistemological position

The social constructionist critical realist position adopted throughout this study has been criticised for leading to inconsistencies (Harper, 2011). These inconsistencies can be caused by researchers from this epistemological position selectively questioning some phenomena, while reifying others (Speer, 2007). There is also the risk of the researcher failing to go beyond the text being

analysed, resulting in the constructed terms of interest ('troubled families') not being fully explored (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). In this study, an attempt will be made to resolve these potential issues by the real and the socially constructed being understood as neither homogenous, nor dichotomous (Burr, 1998). Instead, phenomena will be treated as simultaneously constructed and real. By taking this position, I am acknowledging that there is a complex, and mutually-sustaining relationship between 'discourse' (seen as projecting/producing 'knowledge') and 'practice' (Burr, 1998; Foucault, 1972; Hook, 2001).

2.1.2. Reflexivity

Silverman (1997) posited that researchers were not neutral observers of data. Nightingale and Cromby (1999) suggested that the inclusion of reflexivity provided a way of explicitly addressing the researcher's contribution and influence on the research process. Willig (2001) divided reflexivity into two categories; personal and epistemological reflexivity. Personal reflexivity refers to considering how the researcher's own values, beliefs, experiences, and interests may shape the research, and epistemological reflexivity refers to reflecting on how the assumptions made in the course of the research influence the analysis. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the epistemological position taken to this research has considerable bearing on the types of research questions asked. My positioning as a critical psychologist, my academic interests in family and social policy have also shaped my research process, as it has led to my belief in a need to challenge taken-for-granted governmental knowledges within these areas (Rabinow, 1997). I also acknowledge that I am not part of a family that would fulfil the Government's 'troubled family' criteria, and I have not had personal experience of opting to, or being forced to have services directly intervene in my family life. Therefore I cannot bring an 'experiential gaze' to this subject matter. I attempted to introduce personal and epistemological reflexivity into this research process by using a reflexive research journal to consider the impact of these factors (Finlay & Gough, 2008). How successful I have been will be revisited in the final chapter.

2.2. Methodology

'Methodology' has been defined as the study of the 'method', or specific technique of data collection and analysis, chosen to direct the research process (Willig, 1999). Methodology, and therefore the whole research process, is guided by particular philosophical assumptions aligned to the selected epistemological position (described in the previous section). Due to my epistemological position, and the type of research questions being asked (see section 1.7), a qualitative methodology seems most suitable. The qualitative method selected for this study was a discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian principles (FDA). This method will be explained in the following section. The selection and use of this method has been influenced by the suggestion that an effective discourse analysis may be produced through the exploration of discursive practices, discursive resources and the discursive constructions that allow various subject positions* and actions to be made possible (Sims-Schouten, Riley & Willig, 2007).

2.2.1. Discourse Analysis informed by Foucauldian principles.

Graham (2005) treated 'discourse analysis' as a flexible term. It has been used to describe a wide range of research practices, with varying epistemological underpinnings (Burr 2001) and analytical practices (Wetherell, Yates & Taylor, 2001). The common theme between differing analytical practices is their rejection of language as being reflective of a concrete 'reality'. Instead, language is seen as the producer of experiences, events and constructs, and as enabling differing subject positions and practices to be taken up. Harper (2006) differentiated between two main types of discourse analysis; that of FDA and discursive psychology (DP). DP is inclined to focus on the 'micro' details of discursive practices, and considers how social interactions are managed through the use of rhetorical devices, for example (Edwards & Potter, 1992). FDA is more concerned with the 'macro' level of discursive resources, and explores the productive functioning of language, which enables possible ways of being that are structured by the available local dominant discourses, and by culture (Willig, 2008). FDA is particularly interested in articulating how power, circulating as knowledge, produces the subject, and its related discursive objects and practices. (Brown & Locke, 2008). FDA considers how privileged discourses are

legitimated, and various subject positions and actions are enabled through discursive constructions (Willig, 2001). FDA also considers the ways in which discourses enable and maintain certain practices and institutions (Willig, 2008). It has been argued that, because there are multiple ways in which language can be used to produce various subject positions, different techniques to analysis discourse may be used (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Therefore, although the 'macro' approach of FDA will be used predominantly in this analysis, this does not negate consideration of some of the micro details of discursive practices, such as the use of rhetorical devices being noted in the dataset.

Discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian principles was developed from the analytic methods the French philosopher Michel Foucault applied to texts. Foucault viewed knowledge* as a product of social historical and political conditions under which statements, for example, come to be seen as 'true' or 'false' (McHoul & Grace, 1993). Statements are not seen merely as units of discourse, but as active and capable of producing specific effects. Foucault proposed that statements should be understood by the rules that govern their functioning. These rules are not purely linguistic or material, but a connection of the two domains that act to constrain and enable what it is possible to 'know'. Foucault (1966) claimed that underlying conditions of 'truth', or 'conditions of possibility' (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008) have existed throughout history, which have constituted the basis of knowledge(s) of the world at different times. At various points, there may be 'epistemic breaks' (sudden shifts) in various discourses, which enable the emergence of new ways of talking and thinking about the world (Foucault, 1966). This leads to the development of different ways of understanding. The present analysis will attempt to trace these processes by conducting a discourse analysis, which applies Foucauldian 'techniques'.

The method of analysis used in this study was specifically a critical realist version of FDA. This method of FDA proposes that material conditions (possibilities and constraints) have individual meaning and provide a context in which the references of certain discourses are recognised by individuals in their talk (Sims-Schouten, Riley & Willig, 2007). Foucault suggested that discourses structure what it is possible to say through systems of exclusion and the silencing of alternative ways of

talking about discursive objects. It has been proposed that in any given context there may exist more than one discourse, with certain discourses being privileged, suggesting that they exist in hierarchical relations with one another (Foucault, 1985). For example, within the context of the Government's TFA, it may not be seen as reasonable or acceptable to suggest that 'troubled families' should not be intervened with. Such ways of thinking may have been silenced by the dominant discourses about 'troubled families', and by the ways in which 'troubled families' have been 'problematized'* (Foucault, 1985).

The examination of how discursive objects are 'problematized' was a particularly important analytic 'tool' for Foucault (1985). By the term 'problematization', Foucault was referring to the way in which practices and discursive objects are made 'problematic', and subsequently knowable and visible (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Foucault perceived the process of problematization to occur at the intersection of different discourse and power/knowledge relations (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Giving consideration to how 'troubled families' have been problematized will allow a critical position to be taken towards the dataset, and may allow the analysis to trace how 'troubled families' are constituted and made governable (Foucault, 1977).

The Foucauldian concept of governmentality will also be used to analyse the dataset. This expansive term refers to the multiple ways in which the state exercises control and power over the body of its populace in an attempt to produce 'docile', 'productive' neoliberal subjects (McNay, 1994, Foucault, 1977, Foucault, 2003a). Foucault perceived members of the social body as being regulated and disciplined* at a distance, so that they might carefully moderate their own conduct and that of others, in seemingly voluntary ways, and in a manner desired by the authorities (Foucault, 2003a). These processes of governmentality are often referred to as 'technologies of power' or 'technologies of self' (Foucault, 1988a, p.18). 'Technologies of power' seek to govern at a distance, while 'technologies of self' are techniques by which humans attempt to regulate and enhance their own conduct through, for example, the adoption of certain ethical principles (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). These processes of governmentality move power from the central authority, in this case the

Coalition Government, and dissipated amongst the population, subduing and shaping individuals' conduct (Foucault, 1977).

However it is important to note that one of the most significant features of Foucault's thesis on power was his emphasis on its productive nature. As Foucault explained:

'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors"... In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth.' (Foucault, 1977, pg. 194)

Foucault challenged the neo-Freudian idea that power acts like a lawgiver that forbids and represses (Foucault, 1994). Resistance was seen as an inevitable product of the deployment of power, and Foucault viewed even mundane acts of resistance as potentially being able to produce profound effects (McHoul & Grace, 1993). Possibilities for resisting power may therefore be identified within the dataset. However, Foucault did not see the deployment of power as necessarily morally objectionable: '*Nothing, including the exercise of power is evil in itself*' (Foucault, 1994, p. xix). These Foucauldian ideas of power will be drawn upon in my analysis of the dataset.

Finally, Foucault rejected the traditional view that power always moved in a top down direction (e.g. from government to family), and instead stated that '*power must be analyzed as something which circulates... it is never in anybody's hands... [but] is employed and exercised through a net-like organization'* Foucault (1980, p.89). Foucault was also interested to show that hierarchical structures of domination within society depend on and operate through more local, low-level, capillary circuits of power relationships; therefore power also "*comes from below*" (Foucault, 1994, xxiv). Therefore, although in this thesis particular attention will be paid to how governmental power is exercised over LAs and 'troubled families', consideration will also be given to how power circulates to shape the conduct of the Government and the wider social body to produce particular outcomes.

One may justify selecting certain Foucauldian techniques and concepts to conduct an analysis on a dataset, as Foucault proposed the analytic techniques used in his books be used as '*a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area...*' (Foucault, 1974, pp.523-524). In this section, analytic 'tools' such as problematization, governmentality, subject positioning, and 'techniques of power' and 'of self' have been discussed, and will be applied to the dataset as warranted. To help consistently apply these tools, a list of questions that could be asked of the dataset was developed. An example of these questions was, 'what subject positions have been taken up, and/or attributed here, and what does that enable or inhibit?' (see Appendix 2 for the complete list). The utilisation of these Foucauldian 'tools' may allow the analysis to capture the more complex and subtle operations of social control and manipulation of behaviour that modern forms of government may embark upon to achieve certain goals, such as the creation of the ideal neoliberal subject (Rose, 1999).

2.3. Procedure

2.3.1. Ethical Procedures

Thought was given to the ethical dimensions of this research by considering questions such as, 'in whose interests the research questions might be?', and 'how the findings of the research might be used by people and institutions?' (Willig, 2001). These ethical dimensions need to be considered as this research could have implications for families described by the Government as 'troubled', and other relevant parties, such as service providers, clinical psychologists, and social workers. No ethical concerns were raised that stopped this research being carried out. This dataset consisted of documents that were already in the public domain. No consideration needed to be given to issues of recruitment, consent, and well-being of participants in this study, as none were needed. Consequently, ethical clearance was also not required.

2.3.2. Data Collection and Inclusion Criteria

To answer the research questions (see section 1.7), a sample of governmental discourse regarding ‘troubled families’ needed to be selected. It was thought that such discourses might be evident in parliamentary debates, in speeches made by politicians leading the TFA, and in the TFA government policies. Therefore, a sample of policy documents, political speeches and parliamentary debates related to the TFA was selected. Due to a change in government, and therefore a possible change in governmental understanding of ‘troubled families’, the dataset were selected from when the Coalition Government came to power on 6th May 2010 under the premiership of David Cameron. The cut off date for the inclusion of documents into the dataset was 31st March 2013. This cut off date was chosen as it was thought that this 22 month time period between May 2010 and March 2013 had generated a satisfactory dataset from which these research questions could be addressed. A cut off date for the selection of documents was also needed to aid progression towards the completion of this thesis in order to fulfil the requirements of the doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology. However, it is acknowledged that the TFA is an on going Government initiative, and consequently the Government is likely to publish other documents that would have met the inclusion criteria for this dataset had this research been conducted at a later point in time.

Parliamentary sources were gathered using Hansard, the edited verbatim online record of all proceedings in both the House of Commons and House of Lords. Using Hansard, the search term ‘troubled families’ generated one hundred and two results. Many of these results had ‘family’ and ‘trouble’ in the text, but were not directly about ‘troubled families’. When the search was reduced to that of debates in the House of Commons, and reports produced by the Commons Select Committees⁷, nineteen results were produced that referred to ‘troubled families’. However, on closer examination of these results, it was apparent that many of these references to ‘troubled families’ were not part of a focused debate on the topic, but a passing

⁷ For an explanation of the Commons Select Committees see:
<http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/committees/select/>

reference to the Troubled Families Unit⁸. These results provided little data for answering the research questions. In order to overcome this issue, it was decided that the inclusion criteria would require there to be more than two references to ‘troubled families’ within a document, speech, or debate for it to be included in the sample. Using this new criterion, three debate extracts, and one select committee report were identified (see Table 1).

The No.10 Downing Street website⁹ was used to select relevant speeches presented in Table 1. The term ‘troubled families’ was put into the website search engine, producing thirty results from all speeches, transcripts, statements and articles. Examination of these revealed that many of the results were from the same sources. Applying the same inclusion criterion, that ‘troubled families’ needed to be referenced to more than twice, reduced the search results to five speeches. A description and the references for these speeches may be seen in Table 1 at the end of this section.

The policy documents included in this dataset were taken from the Government website that presented the TFA¹⁰. It was thought necessary to include all documents on the TFA website, as they were all highly relevant to the research questions. Therefore all seven documents that had been uploaded onto the TFA website by the criteria cut off date of 31st March 2013 were included in this dataset. These seven documents are listed in Table 1.

⁸ The Trouble Families Unit is a team within the DCLG responsible for rolling out the TFA. Please refer to the website in the footnote below for further details.

⁹ The No.10 Downing Street website: (<http://www.number10.gov.uk/>).

¹⁰ www.gov.uk/government/policies/helping-troubled-families-turn-their-lives-around#who-we've-consulted retrieved on 31st March 2013.

Table 1: The Dataset.

Dataset Documents	Published	Reference Codes in Thesis
<i>Policy and Guidance Documents</i>		
‘Monitoring and Evaluation of Family Intervention Services & Projects between February 2007 & March 2011’, Department of Education.	March 2011	Evaluation Report, 2011
‘The Troubled Families programme; Financial framework for the Troubled Families programme’s payment-by-results scheme for local authorities’, Department for Communities and Local Government.	March 2012	Financial Framework, 2012
‘Listening to Troubled Families: A report by Louise Casey CB’, Department for Communities and Local Government.	July 2012	Listening to TF, 2012
‘Working with Troubled Families: A guide to the evidence and good practice’, Department for Communities and Local Government.	December 2012	Working with TF, 2012
‘Cost of working with troubled families’, Department for Communities and Local Government.	January 2013	Cost of wwTF, 2013
‘The Fiscal Case for Working with Troubled families’, Department for Communities and Local Government	February 2013	Fiscal Case for wwTF, 2013
‘Delivery agreement: putting troubled families on the path to work’, Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions.	March 2013	TF path to work, 2013

Table 1: Dataset (continued)

Dataset Documents	Published	Reference Codes used in Thesis
<i>Debate extracts and Select Committee Reports</i>		
Morning session, House of Commons: Column 1104	11 th August 2011	HoC, August, 2011:1104
Morning session, House of Commons: Column 17	5 th December 2011	HoC, December, 2011:17
Afternoon session, House of Commons, topic: Communities and Local Government: Column 543	30 th January 2012	HoC, January, 2012:543
Communities and Local Government Committee – Ninth Report, House of Commons.	20 th February 2012	CLG, 9 th Report, 2012
<i>Speeches</i>		
David Cameron, PM, speech given to the Relate Charity Conference, Lancaster.	10 th December 2010	Relate Speech, 2010
David Cameron, PM, speech after the British Summer riots, given at Whitby, Oxfordshire,	15 th August 2011	Riot Speech, 2011
Eric Pickles, Minister of Communities and Local Government, speech given to the Local Government Association conference, Birmingham.	17 th October 2011	CLGConference Speech, 2011
David Cameron, PM speech to the voluntary organisation, Krunch, in Oldbury, Midlands	15 th December 2011	Krunch Speech, 2011
David Cameron, PM & Eric Pickles, speech given at 10 Downing Street to public sector, and Third sector family workers	28 th March 2012	Downing St . Speech, 2012

2.3.3. Analytic Procedure

My analysis process was informed by Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine's discussion of how to conduct an FDA (2008). However it is recognised that there does appear to be any agreed way of carrying out a discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian principles. To begin with each document in the dataset was initially read once. Comments and thoughts were noted in my reflexive journal. A reflexive journal was used throughout the analytic process to capture comments, any links and ideas triggered from my reading and analysis of the dataset. Each document in the dataset was then read for the second time. This time, possible themes, events, and occurrences were noted on the left hand of the page, and different types of Foucauldian analytic 'tools', such as particular technologies of power, were colour coded and noted on the right side of the paper. The main two research questions, and the list of 'sub-questions' (presented in Appendix 2) were referred to repeatedly during this process to allow Foucauldian analytic tools to be consistently applied to the texts. Extracts of the dataset illustrating my coding and application of the Foucauldian analytic tools to the texts were shared and discussed with my Director of Studies to help ensure a good quality analysis was being conducted.

An extensive table was created to capture the information generated from the use of each analytic tool, and to help me note and consider the range of material and discursive practises that were operating at the level of the individual, society and institutions. The different ways in which 'troubled families' were constructed in the texts were also recorded in this table. This information was compiled into this table during the third and final reading of the dataset. I read through this table a number of times. Towards the end of this process, I began to establish some coherence to my analysis through choosing and contrasting specific extracts which demonstrated key constructions. I worked towards establishing a structure and a narrative in the presentation of my analysis as I sought to answer my research questions. A list of key constructions of 'troubled families' and prominent processes of governmentality were identified. Silences and contradictory constructions of 'troubled families' were also noted. During this process, four inter-connected constructions in particular were identified, which helped answer

the research question. My decision to stop analysing was primarily driven by time constraints, but also by my confidence that I was able to produce a satisfactory analysis that seemed useful and answered the research questions. At this stage, I began writing up the analysis section, drawing upon my collated sets of extracts to elaborate key constructions and demonstrate their effects through the use of my chosen extracts. I began to link these in with relevant literature.

Due to the large size of this dataset, and the vast amount of material generated by the analysis, steps were taken to guard against the temptation to ‘cherry-pick’ certain elements of the analysis that would neatly fit with an overall narrative. Firstly, I endeavoured to be reflexive in my approach to the dataset (Georgaca and Avdi, 2012), to ensure that I did not develop particular narratives in response to my research questions too early in the research process that may lead me to ‘cherry-pick’ from the dataset. I worked towards there being internal coherence to my presentation of the data (Georgaca and Avdi, 2012). This involved ensuring that a consistent account of my data was presented through the narratives I crafted from my analysis, which could be supported by extracts from a range of different documents from the dataset. I also aimed to be rigorous in my analysis, by paying attention to inconsistencies in the dataset to ensure that these tensions were not being ignored (Georgaca and Avdi, 2012). However, it is acknowledged that researchers are likely to interact with the same dataset in different ways. For example, one researcher may place more emphasis on one aspect of the data than another would. Therefore my personal influence on, and interaction with, the dataset cannot be entirely guarded against (Georgaca and Avdi, 2012).

3.0. Chapter Three - Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter my research questions will be addressed in two separate sections; 3.1 and 3.2.

3.1. Mapping the Construction of ‘Troubled Families’.

3.1.1. ‘Behaviours’ and ‘Irresponsibility’

The Prime Minister (PM) officially launched the ‘Troubled Families Agenda’ (TFA) in his speech to the youth charity, Krunch, on 15th December 2011¹¹. The following extract has been taken from that speech:

Extract 1: *‘We’re talking about behaviour – the behaviour of individuals, the failures of families... and the consequences of that behaviour for society.’*
(Krunch Speech, 2011)

In this extract, as seen throughout this speech, the PM focused on the ‘behaviours’ of ‘troubled families’. The PM utilised a rhetorical strategy here; by positioning the phrases, ‘the behaviour of individuals’ and ‘the failures of families’ together, the content of each phrase has been linked (Potter and Edwards, 1992). This has enabled the PM to imply that these ‘behaviours’ cause the ‘failure of families’. This assumption has been produced as a ‘truth’, creating power, as the PM has been able act on this ‘truth’ (Foucault, 1982). In the latter part of this extract, ‘behaviour’ has been positioned as active, and ‘society’ as passive, in that ‘society’ must receive (passive positioning) ‘the consequences of (the families’) behaviour’ (the behaviour is creating consequences; active positioning). The implication is that these consequences are detrimental to society, and that society (passive), is defenceless against these behaviours. This has allowed the PM to position his acting on particular behaviours of ‘troubled families’ as a rational and moral response (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008), and intervention as necessary to protect society, and to stop the ‘failure of families’ (extract 1). In focusing on ‘troubled families’ behaviours, the PM has defined them by what they do, which has successfully moved attention away from the lived experiences of ‘troubled families’, and other explanations for

¹¹ Referred to as ‘Krunch Speech, 2011’.

'family failure'. 'Troubled families' have been defined by their behaviours throughout the dataset, as expounded below.

The first policy document, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), referred to as the 'Financial Framework, 2012', provided further examples of the ways in which the Government has chosen to focus its gaze on the behaviours of families they have described as 'troubled' (Foucault, 1977). This following extract demonstrates that the Government has, in fact, selected particular behaviours by which to define 'troubled families'.

Extract 2: 'The Prime Minister has confirmed his intention to ensure that 120,000 troubled families are turned around by the end of this Parliament. Troubled families are characterised by there being no adult in the family working, children not being in school and family members being involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.' (Financial Framework, 2012, p.1).

This extract shows that the Government has defined families as 'troubled' by three types of conduct; not working, children not being in school, and by criminal or anti-social behaviour. Defining 'troubled families' in this way implies that the Government has chosen these behaviours because they are the most important and concerning issues for 'troubled families', and '*for society*' (extract 2). This positions the Government as having knowledge (and therefore power, '*as they directly imply one another*', Foucault, 1977, p.27) of 'troubled families', and therefore legitimate authority to act on them. The PM's declaration that 'troubled families' need to be '*gripped*' (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.7) and '*turned around*' (extract 2) implies they are heading in entirely the wrong direction, which provides further justification to act on them. As 'troubled families' have been identified by three specific behaviours, the phrase, '*turned around*', infers that it is these behaviours that are responsible for carrying 'troubled families' in the wrong direction. This positions these behaviours as unacceptable and in need of being stopped. The implication appears to be that if these three behaviours were inverted, families would be '*detroubled*', and therefore successfully '*normalised*'.

A policy document, entitled ‘Listening to Troubled Families’ (herein referred to as ‘Listening to TF, 2012’) constructed ‘troubled families’ as having many more than three issues to solve. The Listening to TF (2012) document contained 16 interview extracts, from interviews Louise Casey, chief executive of the TFA, had personally conducted with the families. In the contents page of this document, Casey listed 13 different problems she perceived ‘troubled families’ to have:

Extract 3:

*‘Intergenerational transmission,
Large numbers of children
Shifting family make-up
Dysfunctional relationships
The anti-social family and friends network
Abuse
Institutional care
Teenage mothers
Violence\Early signs of poor behaviour
School
Anti-social behaviour
Mental-health – depression
Drugs and alcohol’* (Listening to Troubled Families, 2012, Contents page.)

The sheer mass of ‘problem behaviours’ perceived to be displayed by ‘troubled families’, in extract 3, presents a much more complex construction of ‘troubled families’. Questions arise as to why the Government has decided to focus on just three behaviours in extract 2 (unemployment, children not being in school, crime and anti-social behaviour). Why have these behaviours been positioned as most in need of being ‘turned around’ (extract 2), while many of the other issues seen in extract 3 have not been focused upon? This will be considered further.

Unemployment is also a notable exception from the list in extract 3. ‘Troubled families’ did not state that unemployment was a central problem. It is therefore interesting that the Government has chosen unemployment as a main focus of the TFA, when this has not been supported by the ‘Listening to TF’ report (2012). A

Foucauldian perspective would posit that employment and schooling have been prioritised by the Government over other problem behaviours seen in extract 3, because funnelling individuals into school and jobs enables extensive ‘technologies of power’, to be exercised over ‘troubled families’ (Rose, 1999). For example, within the workplace, and in schools, individuals are subjected to ‘technologies’ such as rules and routines. These technologies impact the behaviours of individuals at the micro level. These ‘technologies’ may ‘transform’ and ‘improve’ (Foucault, 1977, p136) individual members of families deemed as ‘troubled’, moulding them into more productive members of the social body (Foucault, 1977).

Analysis of the following extracts will demonstrate how the problematisation of ‘troubled families’ has been extended from ‘troubled families’ behaviours to their attitudes (Foucault 1984). It will be demonstrated how these ‘unacceptable’ behaviours have been positioned as stemming from a culture of irresponsibility. Additional ways in which ‘troubled families’ have been problematised will also be made explicit. For example, in the following extract ‘troubled families’ have been positioned as the cause of many problems within our society:

Extract 4: ‘For years we’ve known that a relatively small number of troubled families are responsible for a large proportion of the problems in our society. Maybe the parents have an addiction or have never worked in their life. Maybe there’s domestic violence. Often the children are completely out of control.’ (PM, Relate Speech, 2010, p. 5)

Extract 5: ‘I want to talk about troubled families... [they] are the source of a large proportion of problems in society. Drug addiction. Alcohol abuse. Crime. A culture of disruption and irresponsibility that cascades through generations.’ (PM, Krunch Speech, 2011, p.3)

Through the use of the words ‘responsible’ (extract 4) and ‘source’ (extract 5), the PM has maintained, in speeches given a year apart, that ‘troubled families’ are the cause of ‘the large proportion of problems in society’ (extract 5). This bold and unchallenged assumption has been presented as a ‘truth’, which has positioned ‘troubled families’ as highly problematic at a political level. The PM has achieved this

by using several rhetorical devices. For example, in extract 4, the PM used consensus in support his account (Edwards & Potter, 1992) by predating his statement with the phrase, '*For years we've known*'. Immediately this has framed his following statements as being grounded in long standing, universally agreed facts, strengthening his account that 'troubled families' cause the large proportion of problems in society. The PM described 'troubled families' with a series of 'problem-behaviours': '*the parents have an addiction... have never worked... the children are out of control*' (extract 4). In extract 5 the PM strengthen this depiction of 'troubled families' by linking them again to '*drug addiction*', '*alcohol abuse*', and also '*crime*'. In the PM's arguably sophisticated oratory style, he has given the impression that each 'troubled family' displays all these behaviours without actually stating any absolutes about the families in either extract. For example, in extract 4, this has been achieved through the repeated use of the word '*maybe*', which have given the PM's statements speculative tone. This strengthens the PM's portrayal of 'troubled families', as his lack of absolutes makes the account difficult to reject (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

The PM extended his discussion of 'troubled families' by describing them as having '*a culture of disruption and irresponsibility that cascades through generations*' (extract: 5). The phrase, '*culture of disruption*', followed the PM's list of problematic behaviours displayed by 'troubled families'. '*Disruption*', therefore, appeared to refer to the negative effects that these behaviours may have on society. The way in which '*and*' has linked '*disruption*' to '*irresponsibility*' in extract 5 implied that there was a relationship between 'troubled families'" behaviours and an apparent '*culture of irresponsibility*'. The PM's declaration that this was the '*culture*' of 'troubled families' implied that these were ingrained attitudes and patterns of behaviours continually learnt by one generation from the last. The PM thus appears to have developed a simple casual pathway that has justified immediate intervention into the lives of 'troubled families'.

Intervention has also been restricted to the level of the family, through strategically positioning 'troubled families' as the source of multiple problems. The circulation of power within this '*way of speaking*' (Foucault, 1972, p. 193) about 'troubled families' has successfully closed down any need for alternative explanations of these

complex societal issues. Yet, psychologists such as Smail (2005) have fervently argued that attention should not be allowed to focus simply on the inner workings of families and individuals. This is because such a focus negates the societal operations of economic and ideological powers that are significantly more important in understanding human conduct and problems within society (Smail, 2005). No room appears to have been left for such explanations to be considered within the TFA.

Thus far, it has been considered how ‘troubled families’ have been constructed as enacting a set of unacceptable behaviours, stemming from an intergenerational culture of irresponsibility. It has been demonstrated how ‘troubled families’ have been blamed for the majority of society’s problems, effectively immobilising any explanations of alternative causal factors that might drive different approaches to policy design.

3.1.2. Labelling the ‘Troubled Family’.

Consideration will now be given to how the term ‘troubled families’ has shaped the construction of families. Attention will also be given to what effects additional labels used to refer to ‘troubled families’ may have had.

In the House of Commons, The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions referred to ‘troubled families’ as ‘*problem households*’ (23 Jan 2012: Column 17). This has moved attention away from the concept of a family consisting of people, and instead depicts ‘troubled families’ as faceless problematic domestic units. This label has enabled parliament to produce ‘troubled families’ as a more simplistic, impersonal discursive object that was easier to contemplate, discuss and manage. This has helped negate the humanity of families that may range complex difficulties, their lived experiences, and their potentially diverse difficulties.

The Coalition Government also used the different labelling of ‘troubled families’ to subtly mock an opposing political party, weakening their credibility, and enabling the Coalition’s political position to be strengthened. Referring to ‘troubled families’, the Prime Minister said: ‘*Officialdom might call them families with multiple disadvantages*’ (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.3). Here, the PM has shown that this label,

used by the previous Labour Government¹², has been replaced with the Coalition's new term: the 'troubled family'. By making this link through the use of the word '*officialdom*', the PM has subtly criticised the previous Labour Government for its high levels of bureaucracy, on which the PM has partly blamed for the on-going existence of the 'troubled family' (see section 3.1.5). This discursive shift, from 'family with multiple disadvantages' to 'troubled family', has inconspicuously relocated the main problem as being held within the family, as opposed to being due to the family's disadvantaged context. This label has allowed the narrow focus for the site of change to remain at the level of the family, its members, and their actions. Levitas (2012) argued that the construct of 'troubled families' discursively collapsed to '*troublesome families*', which fixed attention purely on the apparent negative impact 'troubled families' had on others, which further silenced the voices of families that may have a range of difficulties, and their lived experiences. '*This discursive strategy has successfully fed vindictive attitudes towards people who are poor*' (Levitas, 2012), while simultaneously strengthening the position of those who are in authority and/or are wealthy.

The use of the label 'troubled families' has strongly communicated that there was in existence a discrete homogeneous group of families that all display the same problematic behaviours. The TFA's introduction of this label has reified the concept of the 'troubled family'. The promotion of this 'reality' is powerful, as it will enable thousands of families to be treated in the same manner by the Government; all may be incorporated into the TFA, and subjected to the same interventions, intended to produce the desired governable neo-liberal subject (Rose, 1999).

Consideration will now be given to how the Government appears to have developed four dominant constructions of the 'troubled family'.

¹²The following publication provides an example of Labour's use of the term '*families with multiple disadvantages*' (Social Exclusion Taskforce, 2007). *Families at Risk: Background on families with multiple disadvantages*. London: Cabinet Office.

3.1.3. ‘Troubled Families’ as ‘Violent’.

The British Summer Riots of 2011 arguably provided the Government with a fortuitous opportunity to develop the construction of the ‘troubled family’ in a way that fitted and helped promote the ‘Troubled Families Agenda’ (TFA). At this time, the PM declared a national crisis, and recalled parliament. In the PM’s speech¹³ given to the House of Commons on 15th August 2011, he stated:

Extract 6: ‘We need more urgent action... on the families that some people call ‘problem’, others call ‘troubled’. The ones that everyone in their neighbourhood knows and often avoids... Now that the riots have happened I will... put rocket boosters under this [TFA]’ (Riot Speech, 2011)

By declaring that the TFA would now be rolled out rapidly (seen through the use of the words ‘rocket boosters’; extract 6) because the riots had occurred, the PM has subtly communicated that there was an unequivocal relationship between the riots, and the ‘troubled families’. The PM’s assumption appears to be that implementing this policy quickly, would help deter future civil unrest. The logical progression of this argument positioned members of troubled families as having been the rioters, regardless of the fact that the identity of rioters was not available to the Government at this time. The PM described the rioters (from ‘troubled families’) as ‘thugs’ (Riot Speech, 2011, p.2), successfully portraying ‘troubled families’ as unruly, and violent. In extract 6 the PM stated that ‘everyone in their neighbourhood knows and often avoids’ ‘troubled families’. Depicting ‘troubled families’ as violent has implied that neighbours avoid them to maintain their own safety. As it is commonly seen as part of the Government’s role to ensure the safety of its citizens, this construction of the families has made it reasonable for the PM to call for ‘urgent action’ (extract 6) to be taken on ‘troubled families’. The PM has therefore made it seem logical that he should hasten the implementation of the TFA, to prevent future uncivil unrest, and to subdue violent ‘troubled families’ (Foucault, 1977).

The construction of ‘troubled families’ as ‘violent’ has been reinforced in other parts of the dataset. The Government has achieved this by strengthening the association

¹³ Referred to as, ‘Riot Speech, 2011’.

between the riots and ‘troubled families’. This was demonstrated in a speech made by the Secretary of State for Community and Local Government, Eric Pickles¹⁴. Pickles stated that the country had ‘*a sudden, unwelcome insight* into our problem families during the summer riots’ (CLG Speech, 2011, p.2), implying once again that the ‘troubled families’ were present at, and active partakers in the riots.

It was the alleged violent conduct of ‘troubled families’ that has been positioned as causing ‘*misery in their communities... and... to themselves*’ (CLG Speech, 2011, p.2). A type of self-harm discourse has been touched upon here, which has insinuated that ‘troubled families’ were failing in their ethical duty to self-care (Foucault, 1988). This rendered intervention necessary. Discursively constructing ‘troubled families’ as violent has produced power for the Government to act upon them, as the Government has been able to position themselves as having a ‘...duty to do whatever it takes to fix’ ‘troubled families’ (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.2), to protect society, and to protect ‘troubled families’ from themselves. This has enabled the Government to maintain the focus of power on subduing ‘troubled families’, allowing the wider context of ‘troubled families’ to be ignored.

3.1.4. ‘Troubled Families’ as ‘Workless’

Attention will now be given to how the Government has further problematised ‘troubled families’ by constructing them as ‘workless’. It will be argued that a powerful societal narrative of ‘rights and responsibility’ (Driver & Martell, 1998, p.130) has been utilised to strengthen this construction. The term ‘worklessness’ seems to have been first coined by Davis (1992) in his book describing ‘structural unemployment and ghettoization’ in Los Angles. Within UK policy, the term ‘worklessness’ has been given various definitions. The definition used in this thesis has been based upon that given in a report written on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). This report defined ‘worklessness’ as:

Extract 7: ‘...people of working age who are not in formal employment but who are looking for a job (the unemployed), together with people of working

¹⁴ The speech delivered on 17th October 2011 at the DCLG annual conference will be referred to as the ‘CLG Speech, 2011’.

age who are neither formally employed nor looking for formal employment (the economically inactive).' (Ritchie, Casebourne, & Rick, 2005, p.8).

In this dataset, although the TFA has been designed to include both ‘the unemployed’ and ‘the economically inactive’, it is the latter group on which the Government has focused their political construction of this aspect of the ‘troubled family’. Negative connotations of idleness have been attached to this ‘workless’ depiction of ‘troubled families’ through the deployment of elements of the ‘rights and responsibilities’ moral discourse (Driver & Martell, 1998, p.130). Driver and Martell suggested that the Government has promoted the idea that, since the end of Second World War, Western society has successfully expanded the scope of individual rights, yet failed to extend the *‘corresponding concern of the responsibilities attached to rights’* (Driver & Martell, 1998, p.130). Basing his work on an analysis of DWP documents, Crisp (2009, p.11) argued that the previous Labour Government *‘believe[d] that a cultural propensity to avoid work [was] part of the explanation for high levels of worklessness’*. This depiction of ‘economically inactive’ peoples’ cultural propensity to avoid work seems to have been echoed in the present Government’s construction of ‘troubled families’, for example:

Extract 8: ‘I hate the idea that we should just expect to pay ever larger amounts in welfare... and never expect the recipients to change their lives... the parents never getting a job and choosing to live on the dole.’

(PM, Krunch Speech, 2011, p.9)

Stating that ‘troubled families’ were ‘*choosing to live on the dole*’ (extract 8), has positioned them as making an active choice to receive benefits and not look for employment; a consequence of their apparent belief that they have a right to receive government payouts, without needing to ‘*change their lives*’ (extract 8). No evidence has been provided to support the assumption that ‘troubled families’ hold these beliefs, yet they have been located within ‘troubled families’, and portrayed as immoral through the PM’s use of the word ‘*hate*’ in relationship to these beliefs (extract 8). Through stating that ‘troubled families’ were ‘*never expected... to change their lives*’, the PM has subtly directed criticism towards the previous Government. In extract 9, although the PM’s discussion appears to centre on

blaming the welfare system for ‘encourag[ing] the worst in people’, he has also unmistakably constructed ‘troubled families’ as being irresponsible, lazy, work shy, and badly behaved. This seems to be the PM’s explanation for why ‘troubled families’ were ‘workless’:

Extract 9: *‘For years we’ve had a system that encourages the worst in people – that incites laziness, that excuses bad behaviour, that erodes self-discipline, that discourages hard work... above all that drains responsibility away from the people’.* (Fiscal Case for wwTF, 2013, p.3)

Constructing ‘troubled families’ as ‘workless’, and ‘drain[ed] of responsibility’ (extract 9) has projected an impression that these people do nothing other than ‘sit on the sofa’ (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.5). This construction has produced the ‘conditions of possibility’ (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerine, 2008, p.42) necessary for the PM to be able to state that his intention for ‘troubled families’ was for them to ‘begin productive lives’ (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.8). Again, the statement itself reinforces the positioning of them as currently ‘unproductive’, work-less and therefore lacking in economic value. The Government has particularly encouraged LAs to identify ‘multi-generational workless families’ (Financial Framework, 2012, p.22), showing that the Government viewed many ‘troubled families’ as having chosen to be economically ‘worthless’ for generations.

The PM has drawn on discourses of rights and responsibility, and those of productivity and employment, when he stated that ‘*work is at the heart of a responsible society*’ (Riot Speech, 2011, p.14). The political construction of the ‘troubled family’ as ‘workless’ and ‘irresponsible’ has created a conflict between ‘troubled families’ and the PM’s vision for the nation. The PM stated that he had come into politics to ‘fix the responsibility deficit’ (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.1) within society. The Government’s construction of ‘troubled families’ has produced them as the perfect site on which to begin this work of fixing the so-called generational ‘responsibility deficit’. The PM appears to be deploying a ‘technology of self’ here, as managing to increase individuals’ sense of responsibility would result in individuals within society self-governing in a more effective manner.

The governmental construction of ‘troubled families’ as ‘workless’ has been challenged by research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Shildrick et al., 2012). This study investigated the evidence for ‘intergenerational cultures of worklessness’ among families living in deprived neighbourhoods in Glasgow and Middlesbrough, and were unable to locate any such families. Shildrick et al. (2012, p.1) reported that even two generations of complete worklessness in the same family was a *‘rare phenomenon’*. The study showed that families experiencing long-term worklessness remained committed to the value of work, and preferred to be in jobs rather than on benefits. Shildrick et al. (2012) reported that long-term worklessness of parents in the studied families was a result of the impact of the kind of complex multiple problems associated with living in deep poverty. The report concluded by urging policy-makers and politicians to abandon theories of ‘intergenerational worklessness’. However, if the Government were to relinquish this theory, a need would arise for another, and perhaps wider explanation for the predicament of ‘troubled families’; an unattractive possibly, as it may implicate the Government, and point to difficult issues of societal power imbalances and social inequality as possible causal reasons for the difficulties the Government were aiming to address (Smail, 2005).

3.1.5. ‘Troubled Families’ as ‘Helpless’.

Having considered how ‘troubled families’ have been constructed as ‘violent’ and ‘workless’, attention will move to how ‘troubled families’ have also been positioned as ‘helpless’.

The PM claimed that ‘troubled families’ were in need of help with: *‘basic practical things – like getting the kids to school on time, properly fed’* (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.10). ‘Troubled Families’ have been framed as unable to do basic tasks without external help.

The Evaluation Report (2011)¹⁵ described ‘troubled families’ as follows:

¹⁵ See Chapter 2, Table 1.

Extract 10: ‘*around 120,000 families in England – lack the resilience, insight and the capability to overcome problems, or the capacity to find and use the support they need.*’
(Evaluation Report, 2011, p.9)

Here, 120,000 families have been framed as a homogeneous group that all share the same perceived failings; a ‘*lack of resilience, insight and the capability to overcome problems*’ (extract 10). Portraying ‘troubled families’ as being without ‘*insight*’ has implied that they lack knowledge about their own situation. As discussed earlier, what ‘troubled families’ would appear to lack, from the Government’s perspective, is an understanding that their irresponsibility has created their problems. According to Foucault (1977, p.27), ‘*power and knowledge directly imply one another*’. Consequently ‘troubled families’ have been constructed as lacking the power needed to ‘*overcome problems*’ (extract 10), and therefore must be in need of being ‘*helped*’. By stating that the families ‘lack insight’, the Government has subtly claimed it has the necessary knowledge, as it is logically only by having knowledge that the Government can recognise this knowledge deficit in ‘troubled families’. ‘Troubled families’ have also been depicted as being trapped in a ‘*cycle of self-destruction*’ (Working with TF, 2012, p.4), unable to help themselves. The use of the phrase ‘*self-destruction*’ has inferred that ‘troubled families’ alone were responsible for destroying themselves. The theme that ‘troubled families’ are failing in their ethical duty to ‘*take care of oneself*’ (Foucault, 1988, p.43) has again been repeated (first discussed in section 3.1.3). The ‘troubled families’ apparent refusal or inability to self-care has exerted power on the Government, as it must act to care for these families instead (Foucault, 1988b). Intervention into the lives of ‘troubled families’ has been positioned as a non-negotiable moral duty for the Government.

The Government has reinforced this discursive construction of the ‘troubled family’ as helpless, by referring to them as ‘victims’; ‘*victims of the welfare state*’ (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.5). The PM has asserted that the design of the welfare system was also partly to blame for the behaviour of ‘troubled families’ as it ‘*ke[pt] people sealed in their circumstances with a weekly welfare cheque*’ (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.9), without expecting them to change their lives (extract 8). There appears to be a tension in the Government’s positioning of ‘troubled families’ as seemingly

'helpless', yet responsible for their predicament. This tension has perhaps been neutralised by the Government's inference that 'troubled families' have acquired a type of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972) due to the provision of the 'weekly welfare cheque' (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.9). This enables 'troubled families' to still be accountable for their predicament. Positioning the welfare system as partly to blame for maintaining 'troubled families' in '*a cycle of self-destruction*' (Working with TF, 2012, p.4) has also made it reasonable for the Government to claim that the welfare system should be entirely redesigned. The power of these discourses may be seen, as they, in the context of the current global recession, have created the 'conditions of possibility' (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2009) necessary for the Coalition Government to implement fundamental changes to the welfare system through the introduction of the Universal Credit System, in April 2013. This new system has reduced the financial support available to both in- and out-of-work individuals and families to ever-more paltry levels (Judge, 2013).

It has been argued that the PM has successfully constructed 'troubled families' in a way that has allowed him to use them as a vehicle to help promote radical system reform. He has achieved this by positioning them as 'helpless', and a product of the welfare system, while still holding 'troubled families' responsible for their predicament. This part of the Government's discursive construction of the families has highlighted the tension between positioning the families in a way that justifies intervention, while still perpetuating the message that 'troubled families' need to learn '*we are not coming in to rescue you – you need to rescue yourselves*' (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.9).

3.1.6. 'Troubled Families' as a 'Costly Waste of Human Productivity'

Attention will now be turned to what was arguably the Government's overarching construction of the 'troubled family'. It will be seen that 'troubled families' have been produced as a 'costly waste of human productivity'. A cursory glance at the titles of the policy documents may have been enough to see that the perceived financial cost of 'troubled families' has played a prominent role in the Government's construction of them. As the following extract shows, several of the policy document titles relate to expense, finance, and work:

Extract: 11

'The Troubled Families programme: Financial framework for the Troubled Families programme's payment-by-results scheme for local authorities' (March 2013).

'The Cost of Troubled Families' (January, 2013).

'The Fiscal Case for Working with Troubled Families: Analysis and Evidence on the Costs of Troubled Families to Government' (February, 2013).

'Delivery agreement: putting troubled families on the path to work' (March, 2013)

Although the figures reported on the costs associated with 'troubled families' have varied, the message from the Government has been consistent:

Extract 12: *'And let's not forget 'troubled families' cost us a fortune – in benefits, social workers, police time and places in prisons. Indeed, some estimates suggest that just 46,000 families cost the taxpayer over £4 billion a year – that's nearly £100, 000 each'* (Riot Speech, 2011, p.5)

In extract 12, Cameron claimed that some estimated 'Troubled Families' cost taxpayers 'nearly £100,000' per family a year. The Government has clearly constructed 'Troubled Families' as being highly costly. This was a message that the Government was seemingly eager to communicate through the TFA. This message was visible in every part of the dataset, as exemplified by the wide range of extracts used here to demonstrate this construction.

Extract 13: *'The fact that we spend so much money on 'troubled families' already – some £9 billion – I think should incentivise us to think, 'Well can we do something really inventive and creative that will massively cut the cost of 'troubled families' by solving their problems?'* (Downing St. Speech, 2012, p.1)

Extract 14: '*...work focused interventions may only be successful once families have resolved other crucial barriers to working*' (Evaluation Report, 2011, p.94).

Both extract 13 and 14 demonstrate how the Government has positioned solving 'troubled families' problems, primarily as a means of cost-reduction, as a means of increasing the economic productivity of 'troubled families', thus the TFA principally appears to be economically driven, rather than being centred upon the needs of 'troubled families'. The Government has positioned this as reasonable in several ways, firstly by stating that the cost of 'troubled families' had:

Extract 15: '*...result[ed] in disproportionate expense to the public purse... [which has]... place[d] an unacceptable burden on social care, criminal justice, housing, health and education budgets.* (Cost of TF, 2013, p.7)

The troubled families' behaviours have been deemed 'unacceptable', as ultimately they have led to '*an unacceptable (financial) burden*' being placed on Government budgets (extract 15). Thus 'troubled families' have been constructed not only as a costly burden to the Government, but also as a waste of money, human potential, and productivity, as the following extract demonstrates:

Extract 16: '*This waste of human potential is not sustainable and therefore the Government has committed to a renewed drive to deal with troubled families*' (Financial Framework, 2012, p.1).

Having presented 'troubled families' as a '*waste of human potential*', the Government has claimed that this situation is not '*sustainable*', once again justifying their need to act upon 'troubled families'. Pickles echoed this construction of the families in the following extract through his repetition of the word '*waste*':

Extract 17: '*It's a story of futility and waste. Waste of money. Waste of people. And it has simply got to stop. We are going to stop it*' (CLG Conference Speech, 2011, p.1).

The Government's forthright construction of 'troubled families' as a 'costly waste of human productivity' has provided the necessary justification needed to design the TFA around '*mov[ing] them towards economic productivity*' (Cost of wwTF, 2013, p.33).

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated how 'troubled families' have been positioned as 'violent', 'helpless', 'workless', and ultimately as a 'costly waste of human productivity'. This has rendered certain ways of speaking about 'troubled families', and interventions with them possible, while other alternatives have been silenced, as discussed in the following section. Notably, the Government's constructions of 'troubled families' have enabled reducing their economic cost to be placed at the centre of the TFA, and for this to appear reasonable.

3.1.7. Silenced Constructions of 'Troubled Families'

Foucault placed a great deal of importance on examining what was being silenced or downplayed within the public sphere:

'There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses' (Foucault, 1977, p.27)

Foucault viewed silenced voices as an expected feature of any dominant discursive field, and proffered that locating these silences might give rise to counter-discourses, that open up the possibilities for alternative social practices. A departure point for this analysis (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2003) was to reflect upon what themes were perceived to be present in part of the dataset, yet absent throughout the rest.

Unlike the other policy documents or speeches, the Listening to TF (2012), and the Evaluation Report (2011), both depicted 'troubled families' as having many issues that appeared to arise from relational difficulties.

Extract 18: *'Many of the people interviewed were just not very good at relationship – unsurprising perhaps in light of their own upbringings.'*
(Listening to TF, 2012, p.48)

Extract 19: '*81 per cent of all families had a problem with family functioning... The most common problem for families was poor parenting... Other key risk factors for 'troubled families' were relationship or family breakdown...[and] domestic violence...*' (Evaluation Report, 2011, p.3)

Both extract 18 and 19 suggest that maintaining and conducting relationships was difficult for people in 'troubled families'. Within the 'Listening to TF' Report (2012), these 'family functioning' issues may also be seen in the families' discussions of themes such as, 'shifting family make up', 'violence', and 'abuse' (Listening to TF, 2012, pp.47, 53, 55). 'Dysfunctional relationships' was also one of themes noted from the interviews in the Listening to TF (2012) report (extract 3), yet such themes do not appear to have been considered further within the TFA. The same might be said about abuse. Casey reported that the '*most striking common theme*' was the families' description of their experiences of '*sexual and physical abuse*', abuse that Casey claimed went back across '*generations*' (Listening to TF, 2012, p.1). However, although this was perceived to be the '*most striking common theme*' reported by the 'troubled families' interviewed, there has been no reflection of this in the rest of the dataset or in the design of the TFA. Instead, as discussed, apparent issues of 'intergenerational worklessness' have been focused upon. The Listening to TF Report (2012, p.3) also noted that '*mental health problems exist[ed] across the families*', though these perceived problems also have not been addressed by the TFA. Further discussion about 'troubled families'" experiences of relationships, abuse, and mental health would have arguably opened up a more systemic and psychologically-minded approach to the construction of 'troubled families', and to the development of the TFA. Instead, the Government seems to have subtly neutralised these issues, by acknowledging them in a small part of the dataset, but they have then not been addressed in the design of the TFA.

Perhaps these more relationally focussed themes have not been carried forward as they would have diluted the Government's economic focus. Constructing the families in such a manner would have produced 'troubled families' as far more complex discursive objects. This would have made 'troubled families' more difficult to discuss and to govern (Foucault, 1977). Addressing problems of abuse, and relational and

mental health difficulties, would of course be extremely challenging work that would raise further complex debates. This '*practical*' Coalition Government (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.8) does not seem to have had the appetite for this type of work.

3.2. How is govermentality enacted through the 'Troubled Families Agenda', and to what ends?

This section will address the second research question. It will demonstrate how the neo-liberal 'Troubled Families Agenda' (TFA) has been designed to '*deal with*' (Financial Framework, 2012, p.1) this 'costly waste of human productivity'; the 'troubled family'.

3.2.1. The Development of the 'Troubled Families Agenda'

A democratic government produced the TFA. Therefore, one might have expected its development would be rooted, to some degree, in parliamentary debate. However, the subset of the data taken from Hansard dispelled this assumption. There were no debates on the development of the TFA, and certainly none about the meaning of the term 'troubled family'. This suggests that the TFA was developed in parliamentary Select Committees, or through the work of civil servants. No minutes of such meetings were available to the public through Hansard, indicating that the TFA was predominately designed in private. This may have enabled the Government to develop the TFA with little involvement from those that have diverging perspectives and political motivations. Having a group of people with similar motivations, and views on what constitutes a 'troubled family', and what they need, is likely to have limited the possible ways of thinking about 'troubled families' that were available to the designers of the TFA. One can see how power may have circulated through private discussions about 'troubled families', in a way that has given the Government a great deal of control over the type of agenda that has been made possible (Foucault, 1994).

On the occasions that the TFA was discussed in parliament, questions posed generally inquired about '*what progress...had the Troubled Families Team...made'* (Question to Eric Pickles, House of Commons, 30th January 2012, Afternoon session, beginning at column: 17). Parliamentary inquiries into the progress of the TFA appear to have helped developed urgency for MPs leading the TFA to be able

to position themselves as having made progress with the TFA. It is evident how this sense of urgency has enabled power to circulate at a political level, shaping the conduct of certain MPs, such as Eric Pickles. This sense of urgency might be seen as a ‘technology of power’, and it can be traced through the TFA. For example, it appears to have been harnessed as a means to close down discussions about the operationalisation of the TFA, in favour of immediate action. The way in which this has occurred can be observed by tracing the emergence of urgency through the chronology of the development of the TFA, as expounded below.

Although the majority of the policy documents were not published until the beginning of 2013 (e.g. Cost of TF, Financial Case for wTF, Working wTF), the PM first publicly announced his TFA plans in his speech to the Charity, Relate¹⁶ in December 2010:

Extract 20: ‘And today, I can announce a further step we are taking to turn troubled families around...’ (Relate Speech, 2010).

There appeared to have been very little progress made with the TFA over the next year, as acknowledged by the PM after the British Riots (2011); *‘th[e]se [TFA] plans were being held back by bureaucracy’* (Riot Speech, 2011, p.10). This was a useful strategy for the PM to blame slow progress on ‘bureaucracy’, as it enables him to avoid taking responsibility for it. The PM proceeded to declare that he would now, *‘make sure that we clear away the red tape and the bureaucratic wrangling...’* and *‘put rocket boosters under this programme’* (extract 6). In the wake of the riots, these public declarations have positioned the PM and those working for him as directly accountable to the public and to parliament for the progress of the TFA. Therefore, parliamentary inquiries into the progress of the TFA, positioned by our political system as being made on behalf of the public, can be seen as fuelling urgency for the TFA to make good progress. In the following extract, one can see how this urgency has acted as a ‘technology of power’ that has circulated, and enabled opposition and reflective discussion of the TFA to be silenced:

¹⁶ Relate aims to strengthen any relationship through counseling or mediation.
<http://www.relate.org.uk/family-counselling/index.html>

Extract 21: ‘*So be in no doubt – we are in a hurry, we mean to deliver. You don’t need to talk about it or show empathy. I want you to get on with it. And I know local government can get results... We are going to deliver on this. So get moving.*’ (CLGConference Speech, 2011, p.2)

Urgency has been transferred to local authorities (LAs) in the form of strong pressure to act quickly. The use of ‘we’ in the extract above has brought LA and the Government together, positioning both as ‘*in a hurry*’. Pickles has proceeded to transfer more urgency onto LAs, by saying, ‘*I know local government can get results*’ (extract 21). Although this may sound like encouragement, it has positioned the LAs as responsible for doing the necessary work, and for getting the result wanted by the Government. Pickles has increased this sense of urgency for the LAs by telling them to ‘*get on with it... get moving*’ (extract 21). The rate at which results were wanted has left little room for discussion to be had about the design of the TFA. The Government has clearly instructed LAs that they ‘*don’t need to talk about [the agenda]*’ (extract 21). The Government also instructed LAs to keep emotion out of the process, seen in Pickles’ statement that there was no need to ‘*show empathy*’ (extract 21). The insinuation appears to be that showing empathy (i.e. connecting with the families) would impede the delivery of the TFA, and the Government was ‘*in a hurry*’ (extract 21). The circulation of power appears to be exerting pressure on the Government to be seen by the electorate to have rolled out a successful agenda that is ‘*get[ting] results*’ (extract 21) quickly. This might help the Government’s re-election campaign.

A vast body of psychological research would strongly contradict Pickles’ view on empathy, as the ‘therapeutic relationship’, or rapport built between individuals and professionals working with them, has been shown to be a crucial factor in achieving positive outcomes with service users (Blow et al., 2007; Friedlander et al. 2008; Lambert et al 2001). It is ironic, then, that the Government has claimed to be championing ‘troubled families’ (section 3.1.5), when it appears to want to avoid apparent empathising with them, as this may complicate the work, and slow down the delivery of the agenda. Urgency, used as a ‘technology of power’, has seemingly enabled the voices of ‘troubled families’ to be shut out, and any objections from managers or front-line workers to be discouraged.

Urgency has also been created in other ways in the TFA. This may be seen in the use of case studies of ‘troubled families’, reporting experiences of ‘abuse’, ‘violence’, and ‘*institutional care*’ (extract: 3). In Louise Casey’s conclusion of the Listening to TF report, she stated:

Extract 22: The stories laid out here are a compelling argument for the urgency of this programme of work.’ (Listening to TF, 2012, p.64)

Distressing stories about ‘troubled families’ lives have been ‘laid out’ to generate philanthropic concerns about ‘troubled families’. This has indeed created ‘a compelling argument’ (extract 22) for the Government to act quickly to apparently alleviate the suffering of ‘troubled families’. This urgency to act quickly has been transmuted into a power that has discouraged further questioning of the impact of applying the TFA back onto the social body. The circulation of power here has produced an agenda, where the driving force for its development and delivery has stemmed from achieving outcomes, and on ‘get[ting] results’ quickly (extract 21).

Upon examining the development of the TFA agenda, it was apparent that the Government appeared interested primarily in getting ‘results’. Very little attention had been paid to how LAs were expected to achieve the Government’s stipulated outcomes. The first two documents published (Financial Framework, 2012, & Listening to TF, 2012) did not provide LAs with any direction of how to achieve the required results. After LAs and their partners ‘asked for guidance on how to work with troubled families’ (Working wTF, 2012, p.6) the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) produced the Working with TF document (2012). This document claimed to:

Extract 23: ‘...look at academic evidence, local evaluations of practice, what practitioners have told us works in their services and what families tell us makes this work different and successful for them’ (Working wTF, 2012, p.6).

From this apparent meta-analysis, of ‘what practitioners... and families...tell us makes this work... successful’ (extract 23), the report has produced ‘5 family

intervention factors' (Working wTF, 2012, p.14). These factors were thought to capture what might make a piece of work with a 'troubled family' successful. The reference list drew predominantly on government publications, and cited just two academic journals from the discipline of social work. No actual meta-analysis of academic journals that examined the effective elements involved in family intervention work appears to have been done, nor have different family intervention models been considered. However, publication of this 'academic' report might be seen as 'governmentality' in action, as it has allowed the Government to claim 'knowledge' of how best to work with 'troubled families' (Foucault, 1991). Having communicated this 'knowledge' to the LAs on how best to get results with 'troubled families', the Government can continue to hold the LAs solely responsible for achieving the Government's required results. Further consideration will now be given to how the voices of 'troubled families' have been further subjugated in the development of the TFA.

Extract 24: '*This report we hope is a good starting place to inform our thinking and policy development – to understand how we may best go about helping change the families for good.*' (Listening to TF, 2012, p.5)

The Government has portrayed itself as being concerned about '*listening to*' 'troubled families', as shown by the Government's chosen title for this document; Listening to TF (2012). The Government claimed that '*listening to*' 'troubled families' was what its '*thinking and policy development*' was based upon (Listening to TF, 2012, p.5). This has allowed the Government to take up an ethical position in relation to 'troubled families', which has given the appearance that the Government's primary motivation behind the TFA was to act in the best interest of 'troubled families', rather than in the Government's. However, simple observation of the chronology of the TFA's development provides an alternative perspective. The interviews for the Listening to TF (2012) report were carried out after the publication of the Financial Framework, 2012. This latter report already stipulated what aspects of 'troubled families' the Government intended to change, and how LAs would be paid for fulfilling these stipulations. The interviews with the families seem to have been carried out as an afterthought, for the Government to be seen to be '*listening*'

to the needs of families. However, the voices of ‘troubled families’ appeared to have made very little impression on the design of the TFA.

The following extract might be seen as confirmation that the voices of the families were not involved in the design of the TFA:

Extract 25: ‘Before the programme of delivery proceeded any further, it was thought important to listen directly to troubled families...’

(Listening to TF, 2012, p.4)

This suggests that the programme had already passed through the development phrase, and was moving into the ‘*delivery*’ phrase (extract 25). It was at this point that the Government appeared to have ‘*thought [it] important*’ to listen, or rather to be seen to be listening, to ‘troubled families’. It seems that including interviews with ‘troubled families’ has allowed the Government to complete a tokenistic service user involvement ‘box-ticking exercise’; not uncommon in social policy research (Beresford, 2002). Moreover, the admission that these interviews did ‘*not [constitute] formal research*’ (Listening to TF, 2012, p.5) might be seen as another indication that little attention was intended to be paid to these interviews with ‘troubled families’. Foucault commented:

‘The problem is to estimate an optimal distance between a decision taken and the individual concerned, so that the individual has a voice in the matter and so that the decision is intelligible to him. At the same time, it is important to be able to adapt to his situation without having to pass through an inextricable maze of regulations’ (Foucault, 1994, p.373)

This balance of achieving ‘*the optimal distance between a decision... and the individual concerned*’, does not appear to have been sought by the Government. As it has been demonstrated, ‘troubled families’ have had very little impact on how they have been construction or on the design of the TFA. Philanthropic forces centred on promoting the well-being of ‘troubled families’ do not seem to have been the driving force behind the TFA’s design.

3.2.2. The Operationalisation of the ‘Troubled Families Agenda’

Attention will now be turned to examining the detail underlying the operationalisation of the TFA. The analytics of governmentality will be used to consider how the TFA, has been implemented using devices and techniques intended to shape the conduct of individuals, families, and LAs to achieve the Government’s desired goals.

The use of rhetorical devices shown in the following extract is one example of how governmentality has been enacted:

Extract 26: ‘We have this really exciting model for Payments by Results. I’ve read it; I’ve had it explained to me, and it’s really cool, and you are going to like it. We have lots of really clever people here to explain it...We’ve got ten authorities already signed up, and I think once you’ve seen it you’ll want to sign up.’ (Pickles, Downing St. Speech, 2012, p.2)

Pickles presented the operationalisation of the TFA as being based on the innovative and ‘exciting model [of] Payment by Results’ (PBR); he described the model as ‘really cool’ (colloquial language) (extract 26). The use of colloquial language seemed to be an attempt to make the model appear accessible and attractive to the LAs. Pickles declared that the LAs ‘are going to like [the PBR model]’ (extract 26), which sounds more like a command than the LAs *must* like it. Pickles has also drawn on the rhetorical device of ‘consensus and corroboration’ (Edwards & Potter, 1992), in stating that ‘ten authorities have already signed up...’ (extract 26) ‘and have already seen the potential for this programme’ (Financial Framework, 2012, p.2). This has positioned the agenda as credible, and so offers further encouragement to the LAs to sign up. It was also observed that the Financial Framework document (2012), aimed at the LAs, has been written in the second person. The use of second person pronouns has been described as ‘a high-involvement strategy’, intended to win the audience over (i.e. persuade LAs to support the TFA) by very direct address (Cook, 1992, p.157).

One of the dominant ideas that appeared to underpin the operationalisation of the TFA seemed to be the neoliberal notion that incentives were necessary to motivate LAs to act on ‘troubled families’ in the Government’s desired manner. The new

results-based funding scheme '*provides an important financial incentive to get to grips... with troubled families*' (Financial Framework, 2012 p.1), demonstrating the assumption that incentives were thought to be important, if 'troubled families' were to be '*gripped*', and changed (Financial Framework, 2012 p.1). Illustrating the productive nature of power once again (Foucault, 1994), this assumption has been constructed as a 'truth', providing the 'conditions of possibility' necessary for a further logical assumption to be made by the Government. The PM argued that '*only the Government has the power... to sort out* ['troubled families']' (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.11), and the reason he gave for this was '*because incentives are a necessary part of the intervention*' (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.11). The PM has made the second 'logical' assumption, that if a certain level of incentives were required, then only the Government was able to provide what was needed. Widespread acceptance of these two assumptions has enabled the Government to embed a business model based on incentives at the root of the TFA. As the theory of behaviourism has argued (Skinner, 1974), the use of incentives or rewards are a highly effective way in which to shape the behaviour of others. An example of this was seen in how incentives were used to entice LAs to sign up to the TFA; Pickles stated that the Government was '*able to offer each [LA] £20,000 [incentive] to help it to prepare for the programme*' (Pickles, Downing St. Speech, 2012, p.3), if they committed to the TFA.

The introduction of incentives has enabled the Government to make meticulous specification about the type of results required to qualify for '*results-based payments*' (Financial Framework, 2012, p.8). As extract 27 demonstrates, the financial mechanisms have been based on highly detailed descriptions of the specific '*unacceptable*' behaviours the Government has chosen to focus on:

Extract 27:

1. Crime/anti-social behaviour

Identify young people involved in crime and families involved in anti-social behaviour, defined as:

- *Households with 1 or more under 18-year-old with a proven offence in the last 12 months,*
AND/OR
- *Households where 1 or more member has an anti-social behaviour order, anti-social behaviour injunction, anti-social behaviour contract, or where the family has been subject to a housing-related anti-social behaviour intervention in the last 12 months (such as a notice of seeking possession on anti-social behaviour grounds, a housing-related injunction, a demotion order, eviction from social housing on anti-social behaviour grounds).*

2. Education

Identify households affected by truancy or exclusion from school, where a child:

- *Has been subjected to permanent exclusion; three or more fixed school exclusions across the last 3 conservative terms;*
OR...
- *A child has had 15% unauthorised absences or more from school across the last 3 consecutive terms...*

3. Work

Once you have identified everyone who meets one or both of criteria 1 and 2, you may identify households which also have an adult on Department for Work and Pensions out of work benefits (Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Carer's Allowance, Income Support and/or Jobseekers Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance)...

All families who meet all of criteria 1-3 in your area should automatically be included in the programme...

4. Local discretion

Use this local discretion filter to add other families who meet any 2 of the 3 criteria above and are a cause for concern. It is up to you to consider with local partners, such as health, police and others what the range of issues is that you will use to prioritise and how to identify the families, but [choose] those who are high cost...’ (Financial Framework, 2012, p.9)

Using this level of detail to problematise and select ‘troubled families’, has transformed them ‘*into a [more] thinkable and manageable form*’ (Rose, 1999, p.22). This has allowed the Government to deploy regulatory ‘technologies of power’, as it has given the Government more control over how the LAs will work on the conduct of the families; a clear example again of how power circulates through networks, and can mould the conduct of the social body (e.g. LA workers, and ‘troubled families’) (Foucault, 1980).

The inclusion of this fourth criterion, ‘Local discretion’ (extract 27), has enabled the Government to deploy further ‘technologies of power’ to achieve their desired outcome of LAs accepting, and implementing the TFA. By including this fourth criterion, the Government has given an element of control over the design of the TFA to the LAs. The LAs have been permitted to use their ‘local knowledge’ to prioritise families they think would benefit from being included in the TFA. As Foucault said:

‘...power must be understood differently than repression, which simply forces individuals to obey: “if power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?” (Foucault, 1978, p.36).

Giving them a perceived degree of control has encouraged LAs to consider in what other ways these ‘troubled families’ were highly costly. This has allowed the Government to exert control over the LAs, as it has brought the LAs into the Government’s way of thinking about ‘troubled families’. The inclusion of a fourth criterion has also enabled the extension of regulatory ‘technologies of power’, as it

has widened the boundaries of families ‘eligible’ (Financial Framework, 2012, p.21) for inclusion in the TFA. Consequently the Government has been able to ‘correct’ the costly behaviours of more families.

It has been seen how the inclusion of the fourth criterion has allowed the Government’s power to reach further into the social body. Other examples of this have also been observed in extract 27. Criterion 3 of extract 27 has included all those on out of work benefits, incorporating those on ‘*Carer’s Allowance, and Severe Disablement Allowance*’. This has again allowed the TFA to widen its inclusion criteria, exerting power on more families. It has also enabled surveillance ‘technologies of power’ to be deployed, and an extensive review of the perceived legitimacy of peoples’ benefits to be undertaken. For example, under the guise of the TFA, the Government has made it appear reasonable that it should review whether the disablement of an individual on severe disablement allowance within a ‘troubled family’ is deemed severe enough to prevent them from doing any sort of work. As discussed, the LAs are being financially incentivised to move people off these benefits, and get them to ‘*progress towards work*’¹⁷ (Financial Framework, 2012, p.22). Therefore, it is likely that the LAs may deem more people as not being in enough need to receive benefits such as carer’s, and severe disablement allowances. It is logical that those least able to articulate their needs are most likely to have their benefits withdrawn. One can see how incentives may have increased the thresholds for receiving benefits, and strongly encouraged LAs to move members of ‘troubled families’ towards work where at all possible.

The speeches given about the TFA have stressed that it would be different from other approaches, as it would ‘*see the family as a whole*’ (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.9). All the required outcomes for ‘troubled families’ have been individualised, and consequently families do not appear to have been viewed as a whole. The Government has stated that the outcomes they required from the TFA ‘*were largely the inverse of the ‘problem criteria*’ (Financial Framework, 2012, p.8). This means that the Government’s aim was for the rectification of ‘unacceptable’ behaviours,

¹⁷ ‘*Progress to work*’ = ‘*An adult in the household has volunteered for the Work Programme or has been attached to the European Social Fund Provision in the last 6 month*’ (Financial Framework, 2012, p.21).

displayed by *individual* family members, e.g. whether an ‘*under 18-year-old* [has not had any] *proven offence in the last 12 months* (extract 27). Through the Payment by Results model (PBR), the Government has been able to deploy surveillance ‘technologies of power’. This has been achieved through the design of this payment framework, as payments are only made if the desired outcomes have been achieved; for example, if a young person has less than ‘*15% unauthorised absences... from school across the last 3 consecutive terms*’ (extract 27). This has enabled the Government to exert power on front line workers, through their managers, so that front line workers work towards changing conduct at the level of the individual within ‘troubled families’. As Foucault claimed, ‘*power only functions in the form of a chain . . . Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization...*’ (Foucault, 1980, p.98). One can see here how power mobilised by the Government has worked through the chain of LA managers, and frontline workers, to shape the conduct of ‘troubled families’.

The ‘result-based payments’ were seemingly given for achieving ‘*the inversion] of the ‘problem criteria*”(Financial Framework, 2012, p.8) set out in extract 27. However, further examination of the details of the payments has shown that the Government has applied more power to changing some ‘unacceptable’ behaviours of ‘troubled families’ than others, as seen in extract 28:

Extract 28:

Result	Attachment fee	Results payment	Total
<p>They achieve all 3 of the education and crime/ anti-social behaviour measures set out below where relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each child in the family has had fewer than 3 fixed exclusions and less than 15% of unauthorised absences in the last 3 school terms; and • A 60% reduction in anti-social behaviour across the family in the last 6 months; and • Offending rate by all minors in the family reduced by at least a 33% in the last 6 months. 	£3,200 per family	£700 per family	£4,000 per family
<p>If they do not enter work, but achieve the 'progress to work' (one adult in the family has either volunteered for the Work Programme or attached to the European Social Fund provision in the last 6 months).</p>		£100 per family	
OR			
<p>At least one adult in the family has moved off out-of-work benefits into continuous employment in the last 6 months</p>	£3,200 per family	£800 per family	£4,000 per family

The table in extract 28 has shown that LAs may work towards '*achieving all 3 of the education and crime/ anti-social behaviour measures*', which must include one adult in the family achieving '*progress to work*' to receive the full payment of £4,000. Alternatively, LAs may work towards getting '*at least one adult in the family... moved off out-of-work benefits [and] into continuous employment in the last 6 months*' (extract 28) to immediately receive the same payment of £4,000 per family. In this latter scenario, payment would seemingly still be given to the LAs, regardless of whether other 'problem' behaviours such as 'anti-social' behaviour, or children not going to school still persisted. Consequently, it would appear much easier, and more lucrative, for LAs to focus on getting at least one member of a 'troubled family' into employment, than concentrating on other issues impacting families. Again the underpinning driving force behind the TFA appears to be to increase 'troubled families" economic productivity.

This argument has been further supported by the Government's most recent policy publication, 'TF path to work, 2013'. In this publication the Government has stated that the LAs will be provided with '*a significant new resource.... fully funded... Troubled Families Employment Advisers*' (TF path to work, 2013, p.1). Although the Government has given the LAs very little direction about the type of services they should be rolling out to meet Government requirements, it has ensured that a member of the team would be a 'troubled families' employment adviser. If employment advisers were directed to do home visits to 'troubled families' as one might expect, then the Government has successfully managed to extend this 'employment and productivity' power into people's homes, intensifying the Governmental gaze* (Foucault, 1977). Furthermore, although it was rarely mentioned in the dataset, it was noted that the TFA had been primarily '*funded by European Social Fund money*' (The Minister of State, DWP, House of Commons, 23.01.12). The focus of this fund was '*to invest in Europe's human capital*'.¹⁸ Economic forces seem to have been driving the TFA, with power being extended from European authorities, dissipated across systems, which has enabled action to be taken on conduct individually and en masse, to increase the economic productivity of the population.

¹⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=35&langId=en>

3.2.3. Data Collection, Surveillance, and Discipline

Data collection and surveillance may be seen as regulatory technologies of power (Rose, 1989). Sanctions, deployed by the Government in the TFA, are examples of disciplinary ‘technologies of power’ (Rose, 1999). Both have been utilised by the Government on ‘troubled families’ and LAs to achieve certain aims. Some examples of how the Government has been able to exercise these regulatory powers over LAs and ‘troubled families’ are witnessed in extract 29:

Extract 29: ‘... the Department for Work and Pensions Ministers have agreed to create a new legal gateway under the regulations of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. This will allow the Department for Work and Pensions to share data with local authorities – without informed consent – for the sole purpose of identifying troubled families.

This extract shows that in the pursuit of meeting its goals, the Government has managed to pass a change in the Law under the Welfare Reform Act 2012. This change has enabled the DWP to share with LAs, and other government departments, individualised data about who is receiving what type of benefits. LAs and the DCLG have consequently been able to gather and use greater amounts of data about individual ‘trouble families’, increasing the Government level of surveillance on them. This knowledge has enabled the Government to target particular families, and not others, through the prioritisation of certain behaviours, such as ‘economic inactivity’. Government resources can therefore be deployed more effectively to shape ‘troubled families’ into productive members of the social body, through, for example, the deployment of ‘employment advisers’ into the homes of ‘troubled families’.

The Government advised LAs to achieve their required outcomes through the implementation of ‘*family intervention*’ (Working wTF, 2012, p.1). The use of a family intervention model, described in ‘Working wTF’ (2012) would allow LAs to have continual access to ‘troubled families’ homes. Workers have been encouraged to adopt ‘*assertive working styles... show dogged persistence* [with ‘troubled families’]’ and ‘*challenge their values and behaviour*’ (Working wTF, 2012, p.19). This has enabled power to be exercised over ‘troubled families’, so preferred values

and ‘acceptable’ behaviours may be instilled. Foucault viewed the production of resistance as an inevitable outcome of the deployment of power (Foucault, 1994). For example, families deemed by the Government as ‘troubled’ might not choose to engage with services. Workers would be able to use sanctions against ‘troubled families’ to counter this act of resistance should they fail to co-operate. These sanctions might be used ‘to encourage [‘troubled families’] to accept help’ (Working wTF, 2012, p.27). Examples of sanctions that may be utilised would be fines, court orders, eviction, parenting orders, and curfews (Working wTF, 2012, p.27). These sanctions may be seen as the deployment of disciplinary ‘technologies of power’ designed to coerce ‘troubled families’, who resist these disciplinary powers through non-engagement, into conforming. Another strategy used as a disciplinary ‘technology of power’ deployed by workers, is that of the ‘*unannounced visit*’ (Working wTF, p.7). A parallel may be drawn here between this and Foucault’s metaphor of the Panopticon* described in ‘*Discipline and Punish*’ (Foucault, 1977):

‘Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary’ (Foucault, 1977, p.201)

Like the prisoner, the ‘troubled family’ would be made aware that they may receive a visit from their worker at any moment during a day. This allows power to be exerted on ‘troubled families’ as they would need to maintain the family and the home in the manner required by the authorities’ workers at all times.

A very similar power has been deployed in the Government’s surveillance of the LAs’ work with ‘troubled families’ demonstrated by the following extract:

Extract 30: ‘*We are asking for self-declarations of these results [with ‘troubled families’] by your local authority and the [Government’s] Troubled Families team will issue results payments on the basis of these declarations. This should be approved within your own Internal Audit arrangements and under the authority of the [LA’s] Chief Executive. In addition, Department for*

Communities and Local Government will carry out a small number of ‘spot checks’ in a sample of areas’ (Financial Framework, 2012, p.10).

The LAs would not know when the DCLG might arrive to carry out a ‘*spot check*’ of their work, and of the payments LAs were claiming (extract: 30). Utilising spot checks is an example of a regulatory ‘technology of power’ in action. LAs would need to have all their work in order, and to be able to substantiate their payment claims to pass a spot check. As seen in extract 30, the Government has made it very clear that all payment claims will be made ‘*under the authority of the [LA’s] Chief Executives*’. Chief Executives would be responsible to the Government, and therefore *liable* for all payment claims. The Government’s positioning of the Chief Executives has enabled the Government to affect the ‘conduct of the conduct’ (Rose, 1999, p.3) of Chief Executives from a distance; an example of the enactment of governmentality.

3.2.4. Financial Mechanisms

Consideration will now been given to how governmentality, ‘*the political art*’ of governing (Rose, 1999, p.6), has been enacted through financial mechanisms in the TFA. The mantra proclaiming the need to ‘*deliver maximum value for money*’ (Financial Framework, 2012, p.10) has been prominent throughout this dataset, as it is throughout our neoliberal society. This view has been combined with the repeated prioritised ‘*desire to spend taxpayers’ money more efficiently*’ (Cost of wTF, 2013, p.6). The Government’s overt ambition that the taxpayer should receive maximum value for money has allowed it to take up an ethical position of acting in the best interests of the taxpayer; a group of people from which ‘troubled families’ were likely to be excluded, due to their ‘worklessness’. The primary deployment of power throughout the TFA consequently appears to be working towards benefiting the taxpayer, not ‘troubled families’.

Social Impact Bonds (SIBs), a financial product developed by the company, Social Finance¹⁹ on behalf of the Cabinet Office, have also been promoted in the

¹⁹ Social Finance is ‘*a pioneering organisation [that] develops financial products that marry the ambitions of investors and the sector*’. They work with the Government to ‘...develop social investment markets’ (<http://www.socialfinance.org.uk/about/vision>)

operationalisation of the TFA seen through the Government's claim that some LAs have '*benefited significantly*' by using SIB (Cost of wTF, 2013, p.9). Both these financial mechanisms, PBR and SIBs, need to have clearly defined outcome measures to determine whether the required results have been achieved, and subsequently whether payment would be made to the service provider. The use of these financial mechanisms therefore discourages attempts to change any issues within 'troubled families' that might be difficult to measure, for example, the quality of relationships. Within the TFA, one can see how this has led to attention being focused on changing discrete behaviours, i.e. whether the child has gone to school or not (extract 27). This use of financial mechanisms may have silenced many complex issues experienced by 'troubled families', as they would be far more challenging to develop into outcomes (or commodities) for which payments may be received. Finally, the Government claimed it had launched an agenda that would '*see the family as a whole*' (Krush Speech, 2011, p.9). However, the Government appears to have encountered an ideological dilemma (Billig, 1988) here. This has been caused by the Government's attempts to adhere to this ideal, while at the same time promoting measurement and monitoring of outcomes for individuals, and not families.

3.2.5. The Social Investment Market

In this final section consideration will be given to how the TFA has been used as a vehicle by the Government to expand the social investment²⁰ market. In 2011, the Government launched a policy entitled: 'Growing the Social Investment Market' (GSIM, Cabinet Office, February, 2011). A document²¹ within the GSIM policy has been entirely dedicated to how social investment might be incorporated into the TFA. This document described applying social investment to 'troubled families' as an '*innovative and exciting project [undertaken to] explore the potential of using Payment By Results (PBR) and Social Impact Bonds (SIB) to address the issues*

²⁰ 'Social investment' is a highly subjective term, with numerous definitions. In this context it refers to private companies investing financially in schemes that are intended to generate social benefit. Investors will often accept lower financial returns in order to generate greater social impact. This definition was taken from the Big Society Capital website: <http://www.bigsocietycapital.com/what-social-investment>.

²¹ Payment by results for troubled families report on the feasibility and design stage', referred to as PBR for TF, June, 2012 (not part of this thesis' dataset).

faced by troubled families' (PBR for TF 2012, p.1). Describing the project as '*innovative*' and '*exciting*' suggested that linking '*troubled families*' to these financial mechanisms was a ground breaking and positive step. The use of these financial mechanisms provided the '*conditions of possibility*' necessary for social investment to be introduced, as they have turned perceived family '*problems*' into commodities that can then be traded. The use of the phrase '*explore the potential*' of using PBR and SIBs has portrayed using these financial mechanisms, and the incorporation of social investment, as a tentative step that the Government was taking to see if these financial mechanisms could be used to '*address the issues faced by troubled families*' (PBR for TF 2012, p.1). However, as seemed in the Financial Framework document (2012) (extract 28), PBR had been decided upon as the financial model to underpin the TFA from its launch. Looking at the chronology of the production of the policy documents, it was also noted that the PBR for TF document (June, 2012) that introduced the concept of using '*troubled families*' to expand the social investment market, was published a month before the Listening to TF report (July, 2012), and 6 months before the Working wTF document (December, 2012). This illustrates that the Government appeared to be more focused on expanding the social investment market, than on researching what work might benefit '*troubled families*' and how this complex work might be achieved. It also illustrates that the Coalition Government have prioritised its neo-liberal agenda of attempting to develop markets where they have not existed before (Harvey, 2005).

The PBR for TF report (2012) covered many issues, such as the technicalities of financial mechanisms, different ways in which they could be modelled, and how investors '*would like to see [these] opportunities put to market*' (PBR for TF 2012, p.15). How these '*opportunities*' (PBR for TF 2012, p.15) might be of particular benefit to '*troubled families*' (rather than to the benefit of '*commissioners, service providers and investors*'²²) has not been discussed. These silences suggest that the impact on '*troubled families*' of adopting these financial processes has been overlooked. '*Troubled families*' consequently appear to have been further subjugated by the mobilisation of these financial processes.

²² (<https://www.gov.uk/social-impact-bonds>; retrieved 17th April 2013).

It was apparent that growing the social investment market has allowed the Government to offset the financial risk of financing services for ‘troubled families’. This has produced the need for LAs to construct highly complicated calculations (often based on assumptions) of how much ‘troubled families’ cost, and how investment into them might produce ‘*savings*’ (Fiscal Case for wTF, 2013, p.5). A great deal of time appears to have gone into developing these figures in order to demonstrate projected direct financial savings; savings referred to as ‘*the holy grail*’ (Cost of wTF, 2013, p.6). Describing making savings in this way implied that this is what the Government was desperately searching for when it mobilised the TFA, rather than improving ‘troubled families’ wellbeing. These financial calculations were also necessary for a business case to be developed and pitched to external investors. Offsetting financial risk to external investors is likely to have enabled investors to exert some power over the design and provision of services. It was noted that this power may be exercised by private sector providers entering the market ‘*who have operational and financial strength but a poor cultural understanding of the complex challenges of family delivery*’ (PBR for TF 2012, p.16). Even though investors may have a poor understanding of the complexities of working with ‘troubled families’, it seems that the Government would still allow them to exert power over the TFA.

Investors have been able to exercise power over the TFA in several ways. For example, it appears to be investors that have dictated that PBR models should have ‘*no more than three or four outcomes*’ (PBR for TF 2012, p.20). It was explained that this was because more outcomes were perceived by investors to over-complicate financial models. Using more outcomes would therefore result in investors ‘*losing confidence*’ in the investment market of ‘troubled families’ (PBR for TF 2012, p.20), and therefore choose not to invest. In effect, investors have stated that they would only be interested in a small number of problems experienced by ‘troubled families’ being addressed, so financial modelling would not become too complex. In line with the requirements of potential investors, the TFA has indeed been designed around achieving two or three outcomes with ‘troubled families’ as seen in extract 28. Potential investors appear to have exercised a subtle, yet pervasive power over the design of the TFA.

3.2.6. Conclusions

In conclusion, in his promotion of the TFA, the PM admonished the previous Government for allowing '*social failure [to] become an industry*' (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.7). However the Government appears to be using 'troubled families' as a vehicle to grow this industry further. It has been shown how the Government has problematised 'troubled families' in multiple ways, selecting particular 'problems', and transforming them into tradable commodities suited to the purposes of this neoliberal Government. It has been demonstrated that the Government's predominant aim is to make financial '*savings*' (Fiscal Case for wwTF, 2013, p.5), and to see if 'troubled families' may be used to expand the social investment market. The tokenistic inclusion of the 'Listening to TF' report (2012), and the (ironic) decision to launch the TFA at a Relate conference (a charity dedicated to improving relationships) has enabled the Government to insinuate that the TFA has accounted for the complexity of problems faced by 'troubled families', such as relationship difficulties. To LAs, and third sector organisations, the TFA may therefore appear to be 'informed' and 'in touch' with the perceived reality of 'troubled families'. The economic drivers behind the agenda appear to have been partially veiled. This has allowed the Government to exert further 'technologies of power' over LAs and third sector organisations, as this careful positioning and presentation of the TFA has made it more likely that LAs will support and consequently implement the TFA.

4.0. Chapter Four - Conclusions and Critique

In this section, the original aims of the study will be revisited and discussed in the context of the analysis. The study will be critically evaluated, and finally, the wider implications for research, policy and clinical services will be considered. Also, Foucault claimed that his theory of power had always implied both the possibility and existence of forms of resistance (Grimsham, 1993). ‘Points of resistance’ that may be taken up against the economic forces driving the ‘Troubled Families Agenda’ (TFA) will therefore be noted throughout this discussion (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p.86).

4.1. Research Questions and Aims Revisited

This study had two primary aims. The first was to explore how ‘troubled families’ had been constructed and problematized by the Government through its TFA, and within a sample of the political discourse surrounding this agenda. The second aim was to consider how processes of governmentality were being enacted in this dataset, and to what effect. It was argued that ‘troubled families’ were constructed to embody different types of ‘unacceptable behaviours’ (e.g. being ‘workless’; see section 3.1.4) that stemmed from ‘troubled families’ attitudes of irresponsibility (e.g. choosing not to get a job, but live on the dole; see section 3.1.4). It was shown how this enabled the Government to position the families as being largely to blame for their predicaments. This enabled the ‘site for change’ to remain predominantly on ‘troubled families’, releasing the Government, and wider societal factors (e.g. social inequality) from being implicated in having any detrimental effects on families. Three of the governmental constructions of ‘troubled families’ were perceived to be that of, ‘violent’, ‘helpless’, ‘worklessness’, with the fourth, and overarching construction positioning ‘troubled families’ as a ‘costly waste of human productivity’. These constructions have enabled specific types of governmentality to be enacted on ‘troubled families’ with the central aim being to reduce their cost, and move them towards employment and productively.

‘Troubled families’ were constructed as ‘violent’ through several methods (see section 3.1.3); an example of which may be seen by the Government implicitly

connecting ‘troubled families’ to the British Summer Riots of 2011. The Government was seen to depict ‘troubled families’ as being feared and avoided by members of the local community. This allowed the Government to position itself as having a moral responsibility to act on, and ‘subdue’, ‘troubled families’ to ensure the safety of society. The Government has constructed ‘troubled families’ as ‘helpless’ entities, unable to do *‘basic practical things – like get the kids to school on time’* (Krunch Speech, 2011, p.10). This perception of their ‘helplessness’ was further advanced by the Government positioning ‘troubled families’ as *‘lacking insight’*, and being *‘unable to overcome their own problems’* (extract 10). This enabled the Government to position itself as having more knowledge of ‘troubled families’ problems, and the necessary solutions, than the families themselves, justifying particular governmental intervention.

It was argued that ‘troubled families’ were also constructed as being ‘workless’ (see section 3.1.4). A discourse of ‘rights and responsibility’ (Driver & Martell, 1998) was mobilised by the Government to position ‘troubled families’ as having an unjustified sense of entitlement, created by the welfare system. It was demonstrated how the Government portrayed ‘troubled families’ as *choosing* to be ‘economically inactive’, and how this allowed the Government to depict ‘troubled families’ as idle and lacking in self-discipline (see section 3.1.4). This again allowed the problem to be located within ‘troubled families’ alone, dissolving the Government and wider society of any responsibility for contextual factors that may be impacting ‘troubled families’ (e.g. poverty; Levitas, 2012). It was illustrated how this provided the Government with the ‘condition of possibility’ (Arribas-Ayllon-Walkerdine, 2008) necessary to declare ‘troubled families’ an unacceptable ‘burden to the taxpayer’. This allowed the deployment of surveillance ‘technologies of power’ on ‘troubled families’ seen, for example, in the change in the law, which has enabled greater amounts of confidential information to be shared between government departments, so that ‘troubled families’ could be identified and targeted (see section 3.2.4).

Ultimately, it was demonstrated that ‘troubled families’ were constructed as a ‘costly waste of human productivity’. It was shown how other problems potentially experienced by ‘troubled families’ were framed as being *‘barriers to work’* (TF path to work, 2013, p.1), underlining the Government’s primary focus that the TFA should

fashion better neoliberal subjects out of ‘troubled family’ members. Perhaps this is reflective of the pervasive western belief in the human need for occupation to achieve happiness (Wilcock, 1993). It might also be seen as a governmental attempt to increase the country’s labour force, and so maximise the UK’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP)²³; politically desirable, as strong economies enhance a country’s power on the international stage, helping to secure access to raw materials and lucrative global markets (Greenwood, 2013; Rose, 1996).

Governmentality was clearly shown as being enacted through the design and presentation of the TFA. For example, three particular ‘unacceptable’ behaviours were selected by the Government for the LAs to ‘fix’, while other problems that the families were portrayed as experiencing, such as abuse and relationship difficulties, were silenced. This allowed the Government to reduce ‘troubled families’ *‘into a [more] thinkable and manageable form’* (Rose, 1999, p.22) making them easier to govern. An example of how the Government deployed regulatory ‘technologies of power’ (Foucault, 1977) was it’s carrying out of ‘spot checks’ on the work of LAs (see section: 3.2.4, where parallels with Foucault’s metaphor of the Panopticon were drawn to explain the exertion of disciplinary power through the governmental ‘gaze’.) These surveillance techniques have encouraged LAs to carefully pursue the TFA in the manner desired by the Government. It was also demonstrated how governmentality was enacted through the incorporation of particular financial mechanisms within the TFA. This has led to the perceived dominant problems in ‘troubled families’ being converted into ‘commodities’ (such as SIB), which the Government may use to expand the social investment market. It seems that the Government has used ‘troubled families’ and social failure as tools to further develop the economy.

These two research questions have been addressed through the presentation of four discursive governmental constructions of ‘troubled families’, and through the extensive discussion of how these constructions have been inter-penetrated by

²³ GDP was an economic measure developed by Kuznet (1955). It attempts to provide a total value for all goods and services produced within that territory during a given year. GDP was designed to measure the market value of production that flowed through the countries’ economies.

'technologies of governmentality' (Foucault, 1982), which has allowed the Government to pursue certain neoliberal goals discussed. The first step of 'resistance' has been to make these constructions, and 'technologies' explicit. Through further discussion, subsequent 'points of resistance' may then be identified (McHoul & Grace, 1993).

4.2. Implications

4.2.1 Constructions of 'Troubled Families' and Future Research

It was striking how constructing 'troubled families' as a 'costly waste of human productivity' in need of being 'fixed' has provided the justification for the overall governmental design and delivery of the TFA. In the current dismal economic climate, with the UK still heavily in debt (Graeber, 2012) at the time this policy was developed, perhaps the TFA was simply a cost cutting exercise, and 'troubled families' have been carefully constructed to align with these goals. The voice of families deemed as 'troubled' appears to have had little impact on the way in which they have been constructed in this dataset. As it has been demonstrated from the analysis, the focus of the TFA appears to be aimed at achieving economic outcomes with 'troubled families'. Once again, outcomes have been based purely upon 'improvements' in the behaviour of *individual* family members, enabling governmental control to be exerted at the 'micro' level of certain families. From my perspective as a trainee in clinical psychology, it is difficult to foresee government interventions having long-term beneficial effects upon the functioning and wellbeing of families deemed as 'troubled', given that their contexts, and the potential complexity of family systems (Dallos & Draper, 2006; Carter & McGoldrick, 2004) have not been fully addressed in the TFA.

As Rose (1999, p.22) remarked, '*attempts at governing are always limited by the conceptual and practical tools... that are available*'. Perhaps the Government's continual focus on the behaviour of individual family members is also reflective of there not being widely accepted outcome measures ('*practical tools*') capable of capturing a diverse range of improvements made within family systems (e.g. improved family relations, family wellbeing, family goals achieved). This appears to perpetuate the gap noted by Parr (2009) between the political rhetoric, which stated

the need to take a ‘whole family approach’, and the reality of the operationalization of the TFA’s design (i.e. intervention enacted at the level of individual). If the Government persists in designing services around outcome measures, resistance (McHoul & Grace, 1993) may perhaps still be mounted by working within these Government parameters. This might be achieved by future psychological research aiming to develop measures that take into account family perspectives²⁴, and a wider range of difficulties that might be experienced by families (Lloyd et. al., 2011). Such a tool may enable the development of less restriction service funding streams, and lead to the provision of better holistic family interventions.

As noted, little attention has been paid to what families deemed by the Government as ‘troubled’ might perceive their most pressing needs to be. Although the TFA did conduct interviews with families it deemed as ‘troubled’ (Listening to TF, 2012), it has been argued that this was a tokenistic gesture, and that this potential ‘data’ has not been treated seriously (see section 3.2.2). Consequently, the perspectives of families have not been incorporated into the dominant ways in which ‘troubled families’ have been constructed. The implication of this is that the differing complexities of each individual family have been erased by the TFA. This may be linked to the complex needs and multiple identities of families being underdeveloped within the research literature (Clarke & Hughes, 2010). As Clarke and Hughes (2010) remarked, surprisingly little appears to be known about families’ perspectives and experiences. Future research should aim to address this underdeveloped area.

Such advances in research may create the ‘conditions of possibility’ (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008) necessary to begin tentatively formulating what the causal factors might be for the predicaments of families with complex difficulties (Johnstone & Dallos, 2006). As discussed, it seems that the Government currently perceives the root cause of ‘troubled families’ problems to be their *‘irresponsibility’* (see section 3.1.1); a claim for which the TFA has provided no supporting evidence. Conducting formal research into the perspectives and experiences of families, and formulating from this what causal factors there may be might enable this simplistic discourse of ‘irresponsibility’ to be challenged. Dallos has voiced support for future research into

²⁴ Drawing on systemic theory that families should be positioned as the experts with regards to their lives, and navigating problems encountered (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992.)

the factors that influence families with complex needs (Dallos, 2013). Pursuing these two directions of research, into the causal factors, and into families' perspectives and experiences, may produce a broader, more insightful, and balanced construction of families with multiple disadvantages, and avoid further production of 'policy-based evidence' (Gregg, 2010). Such research is also needed to provide a better understanding of the everyday lives of families who may have a range of difficulties, which may help people comprehend, or illustrate our failure to comprehend, the impact of unequal class conditions on families (MacDonald et. al., 2005). Embarking on these courses of action may be seen as a way of resisting the neoliberal forces and assumptions shown to be currently shaping the construction of, and interventions into the lives of families that may have a range of difficulties.

4.2.2. Institutional Practices, Service Provision, and the Profession of Clinical Psychology

In this section consideration will be given to how this study might comment upon institutional practices, and inform service provision and the profession of clinical psychology.

It must be acknowledged that the dilemma of how to refer to families linked by the Government to the TFA (discussed in section 1.4.4.) not only continues, but has also produced further challenges for psychologists and services. Without being contradictory, how can one successfully critique the way families are constructed as 'troubled', and fitted into a homogenous group within the TFA, while still wishing to offer help to certain families that may be in need? These tensions are not easily resolved (Danziger, 1997; Hall, 1996). However, an acute awareness of these dilemmas, a commitment to treating them seriously, and taking the decision to describe rather than label individuals, families, and the difficulties they may experience (Rapley, Moncrieff, and Dillon, 2011), might at least be a positive step forward.

The financial models on which services are often designed, where there are different funding streams for particular types of work, make it almost impossible for a 'whole family approach' to be adopted. This is due to institutional practices being strongly influenced by the need to achieve a small number of measurable material

outcomes that trigger payment. As noted within the TFA (Working wTF, 2012, p.10), ‘troubled families’ may have a myriad of different services attempting to intervene in their lives that often fail to communicate with each other. This is due to different services each being focused on changing a one small aspect of a family, an approach that has been shown to have a limited effect (Morris, 2012). The inherent design and integration of traditional services does not appear to have been effectively altered by the TFA. It has merely introduced other agencies into the equation, further complicating the circulation of power ultimately directed towards shaping ‘troubled families’.

It has been suggested that services usually continue to define families by the original reason services engaged with them in the beginning (Parr, 2008). Therefore the Government’s narrow constructions of ‘troubled families’ (‘workless’, ‘helpless’ ‘violent’, and a ‘costly waste of human productivity’) are likely to be perpetuated in future constructions of ‘troubled families’. This may feed into the development of similar types of future family policy, resulting in the continuation of individualist and perhaps less effective interventions being enacted on ‘troubled families’ (Morris, 2012). The evolution of a broader construction of ‘troubled families’ that might be produced from further research may erode the concept of a homogenous group of ‘troubled families’ who have certain overriding problems. It is possible that this may result in an ‘epistemic break’ in the various discourses about ‘troubled families’, that would enable the emergence of new ways of talking and thinking about them (Foucault, 1966). For example, this may lead to a greater appreciation of the need for services capable of working with families on any issue.

I would welcome the development of integrated family services that incorporated as many agencies as possible into one team; a team consisting of social, health, criminal justice, employment and educational link workers²⁵. I would also welcome the development of financial mechanisms and funding streams that are designed to best serve the needs of families who may have a range of difficulties, rather than the needs of investors and the Government (e.g. social impact bonds; see section 3.2.5.). It is acknowledged that developing such funding streams and economic

²⁵ Members of ‘troubled families’ discussed struggling with problems that would come under these sectors (Listening to TF, 2012).

products would be immensely complicated, as would the process of forming the type of multidisciplinary team described. However, progressing in this direction may produce more wide-ranging positive and enduring effects for families with complex needs that would seem a better investment of £448 billion (the budget for the TFA, Krunch Speech, 2011, p.1).

Currently, the 4th Criterion of the TFA (the inclusion of perceived family problems selected at the local discretion of LAs; extract 27) will lead to inconsistencies in the provision of services across boroughs, as it is likely that the LAs will select different additional problems to target²⁶. The inclusion of some families into the TFA will therefore be dependent upon which borough they live in. As noted, the consistent factor amongst ‘problems’ selected by LAs is that they must be viewed as highly costly by the Government. It is questionable whether the inclusion criteria and the aims of services should be so directly driven by lowering the cost of some families, and by attempts to increase their economic productivity. Such driving forces may lead to shallow work being carried out with families with complex needs, that satisfy the Government’s desired outcomes (e.g. increased school attendance, employment, etc.), but fail to achieve long-term effects for families, due to the possibility that underlying issues have not been addressed (Gerhardt, cited in Jackson, 2012). As Smail commented, ‘we are not bound to accept that the ‘real world’ is one in which the ‘bottom line’ defines and determines right and wrong’ (2005, p.v.). It is questionable whether the ‘bottom line’ should be allowed to have such a dominant impact upon, not only the Government’s construction of ‘troubled families’, but also on the way in which it has been allowed to define and determine the provision and aims of ‘troubled family’ services. Questioning the underlying assumptions behind the TFA may be seen as an act of Foucauldian resistance (McHoul & Grace, 1993).

Clinical psychology training includes teaching on social inequality, a wide range of therapeutic models across the lifespan, and clinical work with families, couples, and

²⁶ Confirmed by conversing with different ‘Troubled Family’ teams at the Action for Children breakfast meeting, on 29th June 2013, at 1 Great George St., Westminster, London.

individuals²⁷. This training encourages clinical psychologists to learn to hold in mind, and manage, multiple perspectives (BPS, 2011). Clinical psychologists are therefore well positioned to highlight the silenced constructions of families deemed as ‘troubled’, that may currently be leading to deeper, and more complex problems potentially experienced being overlooked. Gerhardt has criticised the TFA on this premise (Jackson, 2012). Drawing on her extensive clinical experience working with families that would fulfil the Government’s ‘troubled families’ definition, Gerhardt agreed with Casey’s comment that such families were often *‘just not very good at relationships’* (Listening to TF, 2012, p.48). Gerhardt (2003) argued that such problems cannot be seen in material terms (Jackson, 2012). Gerhardt has drawn on neuroscience, psychology, psychotherapy and biochemistry to explain why family members who may be used to violent and abusive interactions might find it harder to consistently love and care for themselves and their children. The TFA has been criticised for its fixation on material outcomes, and for failing to address silenced family constructions, such as how family members relate to each other (Jackson, 2012). Increasing the number of clinical psychologists involved in the TFA may help front line workers be aware of these silenced constructions, which, even within service limitations, may still achieve a more holistic service being provided to families who may have a range of difficulties.

From the perspective of a trainee clinical psychologist, it would appear important for each individual family to be engaged with, and an assessment and formulation completed in conjunction with the family, before deciding upon the desired outcomes, and the type of work to be conducted (Johnstone & Dallos, 2006). As Tolstoy observed, *“Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way”* (Tolstoy, 2000, Anna Karenina, p.1). I would welcome the development of services and funding streams that allow for the different identities and needs of individual families to be recognised and worked with. This present research demonstrates the need for clinical psychologists to seek ways in which neoliberal powers shaping services may be resisted (McHoul & Grace, 1993). One simple ‘point of resistance’ may be for the profession to become more politically aware of the powers shaping the systems and services in which they work. I would argue

²⁷ Ref. for a description of the University of East London Clinical Psychology Doctorate training course: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/06EastLondon.html>

that this thesis also highlights the need for clinicians, particularly those with an interest in systemic working, a political awareness, and an appreciation of the functioning of power within systems, to work towards greater involvement in the development of family policy and service development. This work might be started at the level of clinical psychology training. A greater understanding could be given to trainees of how UK political processes function, and, for example, how one might influence a parliamentary bill or the development of policies under which trainees may have to work. This might encourage greater consideration to be given to the processes involved in policy design and the set up of services, which ultimately shape the type of work and interactions that are made possible with ‘troubled families’.

4.3. Evaluation and Critical Review

In this section, the study will be evaluated and critiqued in relation to the epistemology and methodology chosen, and the quality and the usefulness of the research. In concordance with Freeman et al. (2007), it is thought neither desirable nor possible to attempt to produce and adhere to a set of prescribed standards of what constitutes ‘good’ qualitative work. Such prescriptions may amount to disciplinary action (Foucault, 1979), and constrain rather than improve the generation of knowledge. However, it is thought important to attempt to demonstrate the integrity of the research process, and to address the central question driving this section: why should this work be accepted? (Wallace & Wray, 2006, p.28). In answering this question, I draw on principles that have been described and associated with the production of quality qualitative research by academics such as Georgaca and Avdi (2012) and Harper (2003).

4.3.1. Epistemology and Methodology

The epistemological position I adopted in this research was informed by social constructionism and based upon critical realism. It was based upon critical realism, as epistemologically relativist scholars (e.g. Edwards et al., 1995) have argued that adopting an ontological realism underpinned by an epistemological relativism may lead to philosophical inconsistencies. In line with the work of Parker (1992), a discourse analysis was undertaken from a critical realist stance, informed by

Foucauldian principles²⁸. While conducting my analysis, I attempted to critically reflect on my interaction with the data (Harper, 2003). At times I noticed that I ‘fell out’ of this social constructionist critical realist Foucauldian manner of approaching the data, and inadvertently moved towards a more purely realist position. On one occasion, I wrote a section of my analysis through this ‘realism’ lens, which was promptly highlighted by my Director of Studies. Consequently I re-read parts of Foucault’s work, and more frequently refer to the sub-questions (see Appendix 2) in an endeavour to retain the intended epistemology and methodological interaction with the dataset. This was one way in which I strove to maintain internal coherence (Georgaca & Avdi (2012) in relation to my epistemology and methodological stance.

Qualitative methods, such as Foucauldian informed discourse analyses, have been criticised for being inconsistently applied, lacking predictive certainty, and for requiring a degree of interpretation on the part of the researcher (Willig, 2008). Such criticisms often arise from the distinction made between naïve realist paradigms (drawing on normative, positivist and empiricist assumptions), and the more relativist epistemologies of qualitative research. Researchers adopting qualitative methods may counter a degree of this criticism by rejecting the epistemological premise underpinning such objections. Qualitative researchers may also readily acknowledge, as I do, the influence of their own subject position on their interpretation of the date, and accept that alternative readings of the same data are entirely possible (Willig, 2008). Therefore I acknowledge that other constructions of the ‘troubled family’ might be argued from another researcher’s reading on my dataset. The analysis presented in this study should not be considered as an exhaustive account of the political construction of ‘troubled families’, nor on how the enactment of governmentality may be seen in this context, but rather as one, psychologically informed, representation of it.

As noted by Willig (2008), Foucauldian informed discourse analysis has been criticised for lacking a theory and a process of how to apply this methodology. However, I would reiterate Foucault’s intention of providing researchers with a ‘tool-box’ of ideas through which others may rummage, and apply to their area of research how they wish (Foucault. 1974, pp.523-524). Therefore, I take the position

²⁸ Please refer to the Methodology Chapter for a more detail description of Epistemology position and Method used.

that it is unnecessary to invoke theoretical constructs to account for the production of these constructions of the ‘troubled family’ (Foucault, 1974; Davies and Harré 1999).

Finally, I would like to reflect on the learning I believe I have gained from conducting this piece of research. There are also certain aspects of the research I might have done differently if I was to conduct this research process using FDA again. For example, in selecting my dataset from three relevant sources that allowed the research questions to be sensibly addressed, a large dataset was generated. The analysis of this dataset was laborious. Although I believe my analysis of this dataset was conducted adequately, in hindsight, I would not have included the Parliamentary Select Committee extracts into the dataset.

Before conducting this piece of research, I had very little understanding of how to apply Foucauldian principles to a discourse analysis. Through studying Foucault’s work, and applying his ‘tools’ (Foucault, 1974, p.523) to my dataset, I have been most intrigued by the ways in which power and its effects can be traced through social networks. I have learnt to appreciate the productive nature of power, and how it circulates within networks (Foucault, 1980), rarely moving in merely a ‘top down’ direction. Also, I believe I have become more aware of how power can operate in discourse to produce certain knowledges or ‘truths’. Previously, these were unfamiliar concepts to me.

4.3.2. Quality of the Research

Issues of quality must be considered in relation to qualitative, as well as quantitative methodologies; otherwise qualitative research is left open to the criticism that ‘*anything goes*’ (Burman, 2004, p.2). As the dataset for this study was not generated through interviewing participants, it was not possible to invite feedback on the analysis from participants to check interpretations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I therefore sought to improve the quality of the research by attending to the internal coherence of my analysis (Georgaca & Avdi, 2012). Georgaca and Avdi (2012) described internal coherence as ensuring that a consistent account of the data has been crafted. I therefore aimed to draw widely on the range of documents in my

dataset, and endeavoured to avoid giving too much attention to one aspect of the dataset, at the expense of the rest.

The quality of this research was further improved by the introduction and contemplation of rigour to the research process. Georgaca and Avdi (2012) defined rigour as being attentive to inconsistencies and diversity that arise in the data, rather than ignoring them. For example, while conducting my analysis, I noticed inconsistencies between the messages being seemingly communicated in the political speeches component of my dataset, and that of the policy documents. Noticing, rather than dismissing, what transpired to be a 'rhetorical gap' between the speeches and policy documents, enabled further consideration of the different subject positions being taken up by the Government in these documents, and what this produced. Attention to these apparent inconsistencies in the data enabled a richer analysis to be undertaken. Spencer and Ritchie (2011) described the overarching requirements of rigour as demonstrating appropriate decision-making and thoroughness of conduct. I have provided a step-by-step account of the research process (or conduct) adhered to in Appendix 3. Where possible, I also endeavoured to base the decisions made during the research process on the published work of others (such as my use of the Foucauldian 'tool-box'; Foucault. 1974, p.523). Where this was not possible, I discussed difficult decisions with more experienced qualitative researchers.

One may also improve the quality of qualitative research by giving consideration to the transparency of the research process (Georgaca & Avdi, 2012). Georgaca and Avdi (2012) defined transparency as a detailed explanation of all stages of the research process and the grounding of the analysis in extracts, to allow the reader to judge for themselves. As previously mentioned, I have described each step taken in my analysis in Appendix 3. While conducting my analysis, I also sought to consistently present the extracts of the dataset from which I made interpretations, to enable readers to judge for themselves. Transparency may also be accomplished by the dataset being publically accessible (Lincoln, 2002). My entirely dataset is publically accessible as it consists of documents from the public domain. Consequently readers may check every aspect of my analysis by returning to the original data sources.

The final principle proffered by Georgaca and Avdi (2012) to improve the quality of the research was reflexivity. Georgaca and Avdi defined reflexivity as attending to both the researcher's role in the generation of the research data, and to the nature of knowledge produced. Harper (2003) proposes that a critically reflexive position might be maintained by attempting to adhere to three principles. Firstly, critical attention needs to be given to the practices by which the researcher constructs knowledge in relation to their own historical, professional, cultural contexts. Secondly, researchers should make themselves accountable for their analysis by drawing attention to these contexts; and thirdly, that the likely effects of power being exerted on the research process need to be identified and addressed. I will respond to these three points below.

As discussed in the Methodology Chapter, I acknowledge that my personal context and outlook is greatly affected by my own family history and relationships. I am not a member of a family that would be defined by the Government as 'troubled', nor have I experienced extensive interventions into my family by social or health services. Therefore, I cannot bring an experiential 'gaze' to this dataset (Foucault, 1973). I acknowledge that how I construct knowledge is instead greatly influenced by my training as a critical clinical psychologist. Within this profession, I would argue there is a strong culture of putting the client's or patient's perceived best interests first. Consequently, I acknowledge that when an economic agenda appears to be the dominant force behind the construction of services and the management of people in difficult situations. This is likely to 'clash' with my personal values, influencing my relationship to the data, and the arguments I have constructed. My political allegiances may also have affected my interaction with the data. In an attempt to minimalise these influences consideration has been given to the role my views and ambitions might have had on the research process (Harper & Thompson, 2012). Traditionally, the majority of my family members, including my parents and grandparents, would have aligned themselves with the Conservative party. I do not currently identify myself with any specific political party, though I tend to be more sympathetic towards Left Wing views on social and health issues. I acknowledge that these views may have prejudiced my analysis of the TFA. At the beginning of my analysis of the TFA, I did not have any strong views for or against these policies,

and I did not feel I had any particular political agenda to pursue. However, I did develop some political objections to aspects of the TFA during the analysis process. I attempted to reflect on these objections, and step back from them, in order to give as balanced a representation of the data as I was able to. Finally, during my preparation of this thesis, I have felt fortunate to be part of a society that may criticise the Government without fear of serious reprisals. Therefore I do not perceive such power relations to have had a significant impact on my generation of, and interaction with, the data.

In conclusion, my adherence to each of these principles discussed will also be subject to further scrutiny, as this work is to be examined by two experienced academics. Potential concerns about this research may be discussed in a viva, before any aspect of this work may be published. This process will help ensure the quality of this research.

4.3.3. Usefulness of the Research

I hope that the ‘usefulness’ of this study is, to some extent, self-evident through the discussion of the implications of this research, seen in section 4.2. Also, who decides whether a piece of research is useful or not (Harper, 1999)? I believe front line staff and families defined as ‘troubled’ would be well positioned to evaluate the usefulness of this study’s contribution. These people might be able to consider whether the content of this thesis resonates with their own clinical and personal experiences. The usefulness of this study might also be judged by whether the work is successfully disseminated, and is therefore given the opportunity to have an impact on the development of future family policy, and the development of services. Thus far, I have had the opportunity to informally discuss this thesis with other professionals by attending a ‘Troubled Families’ meeting organised by Action for Children (see footnote 25). Interest in this thesis was generated at this meeting. I intend to disseminate this research effectively, in the hope of creating awareness that the TFA is an economically, not ethically driven agenda, underpinned by dominant discourses and neoliberal assumptions that may negatively impact services, and further subjugate the voices of families who may have a range of difficulties. I believe this study will have been ‘of use’ if it is able to make some small contribution towards redressing power imbalances, and persuading social and

health workers of the need to be more aware of the political and economic forces shaping services and the social body (Foucault, 1977).

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Appendix 1: Glossary of Foucauldian Terms

Conditions of possibility

This term refers to how it has become possible to speak of and act on a particular discursive object in a certain manner (Arribas-Alylon & Walkerdine 2008).

Discipline

Discipline is a mechanism of power, which regulates the behaviour of individuals in the social body. This is done by regulating the organisation of space (architecture etc.), time (timetables) and people's activity and behaviour (drills, posture, movement). It is enforced with the aid of complex systems of surveillance. Foucault emphasizes that power is not discipline, rather discipline is simply one way in which power can be exercised. (Foucault, 1977)

Discourse

Discourse is used in different ways in Foucault's work but at the most basic level he uses the term to refer to the material verbal traces left by history. Discourse has been defined as systems of meaning, or bodies of knowledge, related to interactional and wider socio-cultural contexts that effect social possibilities and exert social control (McHoul & Grace, 1993). Discourses are seen as limited practical domains, which have their own rules of formation and conditions of existence (McHoul & Grace, 1993). In this study, discourse is viewed as being situated more closely to knowledge, materiality, and power than it is to language (Hook, 2001).

Gaze

The French word 'le regard' poses difficulties for translation into English (Foucault, 1973). It can mean glance, gaze, look which do not have the abstract connotations that the word has in French. Foucault uses the word to refer to the fact that it is not just the object of knowledge which is constructed, but also the knower (Foucault, 1973).

Governmentality

Governmentality refers to the ways in which political power is exercised over a population. It is seen as a '*succession of practises, animated, justified and enabled by a specific rationalities*' (Foucault, 1994, p. xxiii). Foucault later expanded his definition to encompass the techniques and procedures which are designed to govern the conduct of both individuals and populations at every level, not just the administrative or political level. (<http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/>)

Panopticon

The Panopticon was a design for a prison produced by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century. It grouped cells around a central viewing tower. Although the prison was never actually built, the idea was used as a model for numerous institutions, including some prisons. Foucault uses this as a metaphor for the operation of power and surveillance in contemporary society (Foucault, 1977, p.201).

Power

Foucault offered several descriptions of power:

1. Power is not a thing that one person can hold, but a relation
2. Power is not simply repressive but it is productive
3. Power is not something that is exclusively localized in Government and the State. Rather, power is exercised throughout the social body.
4. Power operates at the most micro levels of social relations, as well as at the macro level. It is omnipresent at every level of the social body.

(Foucault, 1994; McHoul & Grace, 1993; <http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/>)

Knowledge/Power

One of the most important features of Foucault's thinking is that mechanisms or technologies of power produce different types of knowledge which collate information on people's activities and existence. The knowledge gathered in this way further reinforces exercises of power. Foucault viewed knowledge and power as being intricately interlinked; he suggested that '*knowledge/power... directly imply one another*' (Foucault, 1977, p.27)

Problematizations

By the term 'problematization', Foucault was referring to the way in which practices and discursive objects are made 'problematic', and subsequently knowable and visible (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Foucault perceived the process of problematization to occur at the intersection of different discourse and power/knowledge relations (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008).

Resistance (to power)

Foucault suggests that there are a number of ways in which the exercise of power can be resisted. He argues that resistance is co-extensive with power, because as soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of '*mobile and transitory points' of resistance*... [these may be] *mundane or everyday acts of resistance that can produce profound effects*'. (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p.86). Foucault viewed resistance as more effective when directed at a particular technique of power. Resistance involves 'refusing' these techniques in some way (McHoul & Grace, 1993).

Social Body

Foucault is particularly concerned with the relations between political power and the body, and describes various historical ways of training the body to make it socially productive. The body is an element to be managed in relation to strategies of the economic and social management of populations (Foucault, 1977)

Subject

The subject is an entity which is self-aware and capable of choosing how to act (<http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/>).

Subject Positioning

Discourses not only constitute discursive objects in various ways, but also offer positions from which people may speak 'truth' about objects. A subject position identifies '*a location for persons within a structure of rights and duties for those who use that repertoire*' (Davies and Harré, 1999).

Technology, technique, techne

Foucault developed his concept of 'technology' or 'techniques' from the Greek word 'techne' meaning 'craft' or 'art'. Foucault uses 'technology/techniques' to refer to practical forms of rationality for the government of self or others. These may also be seen as 'truth games' played on a macro political scale, or among local and specific instances of interaction (Arribas-Ayllón & Walkerdine, 2008).

Truth

Truth is a dominant theme in Foucault's work, particularly in the context of its relations with power, knowledge and the subject. Foucault viewed truth as an event, which takes place in history. It is something that 'happens', and is

produced by various techniques. It does not already exist and cannot simply be discovered (McHoul & Grace, 1993).

Appendix 2: 'Sub-Questions' applied to the dataset to aid analysis

What objectives/events/experiences are being referred to?

What kinds of objects/events/experiences are being constructed?

How is language being used here, and to what effect?

What kinds of identities are created?

How does this problematize 'troubled families'?

How are 'troubled families' being made governable?

What are the links between knowledge and power here?

How is the location of morality managed here?

What subject positions have been taken up and/or attributed here, and what does that enable or inhibit?

How might 'technologies of power' or 'of self' be at play here?

How do these constructions create/close off possibilities?

What can/cannot be said in the discourse?

How do discourse constitute the 'same' objects in different ways?

What are the contradictions? How do they constitute different objects?

Which institutions are reinforced/attached when this discourse is used?

How are productive processes being manipulated/transformed?

Who gains and loses from the employment of this discourse?

What possibilities for action are there?

What sorts of power relations are make possible?

How does the discourse connect with others?

How is 'truth' being constructed?

How are people being led to regulate their own conduct?

What are the clinical and social implications?

Appendix 3: Analytic Steps.

Step 1

Each document in the dataset was initially read once. Comments and thoughts were noted in my reflexive journal.

Step 2

Each document in the dataset was read for the second time. This time, possible themes, events, and occurrences were noted on the left hand of the page, and different types of Foucauldian analytic ‘tools’, such as particular technologies of power, were colour coded and noted on the right side of the paper. The main two research questions, and the list of ‘sub-questions’ (presented in Appendix 2) were referred to repeatedly during all readings of the dataset, to allow Foucauldian analytic tools to be consistently applied to the texts.

Step 3

A table was created to capture the use of each analytic tool, the effects of using this tool, and the emergence of possible themes. I also noted the range of material and discursive practices operating at the level of the individual, society and institutions. This information was compiled into this table during the third and final reading of the dataset.

Step 4

I read through this table a number of times. A list of key constructions of ‘troubled families’, and prominent processes of governmentality were identified. Silences, contradictory constructions of ‘troubled families’ were also noted. During this process, four inter-connected constructions were identified, which would serve to address the research question. At this stage, decisions were also made about which constructions were to be included/excluded based on whether they were supported by extracts within and between components of the dataset.

Step 6

I began to establish some coherence to my analysis at this stage through choosing and contrasting specific extracts, which demonstrated key constructions. I worked towards establishing a structure and a narrative in the presentation of my analysis as I sought to answer my research questions.

Step 7

At this stage, I began writing up the analysis section, drawing upon my collated sets of extracts to elaborate key constructions and demonstrate their effects through the use of my chosen extracts. I began to link these in with relevant literature.

Step 8

The overall analysis was systematically refined by integrating and separating out constructions of ‘troubled families’ in order to provide an overall coherence. My decision to stop analysing was primarily driven by time constraints, but also by my confidence that I was able to produce a satisfactory analysis that seemed useful and answered the research questions.