

# Opening The Pandora's Box: A Study Of The Emergent Bulgarian Child Maltreatment Discourses

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..... Todor Proykov, June 6, 2008

## **Abstract**

The current study explores the emerging child maltreatment discourses in the Bulgarian public domain and demonstrates how these discourses have evolved, how they relate to certain social practices and how they maintain certain power relations. To achieve this goal, a sample of newspaper articles covering child maltreatment occurrences are studied, using discourse analysis. In addition to those, folklore, literary and autobiographical resources are examined to trace back the origins of the child maltreatment discourses and the overall social construction of ‘childhood’ and ‘parenting’ in Bulgaria. Furthermore, interview fragments with parents and literature resources are used to support and expand the argument.

It is claimed that a number of rooted into the culture and maintained by certain institutions discourses pre-determine how the notion of child maltreatment is constructed in Bulgaria, singling out certain aspects of child maltreatment as dominant and ‘silencing’ others.

Three main discourses of public constructing and speaking of child maltreatment are defined: familial, medical and racist discourses. Those are explored in detail in terms of their origins and pragmatic impact on practice and parallels are drawn to similar discourses in the UK context.

It is claimed that the way in which the concept of the ‘child maltreatment family’ is constructed, contributes to fundamental premises laying the grounds of the way that child protection practice is designed and to some pitfalls to that design.

Chapter 1 examines the research interest of the author and the initial steps in the research design—the research aims and the research questions are explored.

Chapter 2 expands on the design of the study, examining the theoretical and methodological background of of the current endeavour—social constructionism—and discourse analysis is discussed and considered as a research method of choice. A range of methodological decisions are laid out and justified, including the ones

related to the research ethics, the data sampling process and the validity of the current study. Initial appraisal of the data sets collected is provided.

Chapter 3 represents a self-contained genealogical exploration into the occurrences and fragmentations of the Bulgarian childhood and parenting discourses, focusing on particular sets of literary, folklore and autobiographical documents. Aspects of these discourses on parenting and childhood are compared historically to similar discourses from other countries and cultures.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the sample texts' discourse analysis *per sé*. A detailed account is given to examining the mass-media materials closely and eliciting a number of elements, organised around three distinctive dominant discourses: the familial, the racist and the medical. It is claimed that these three discourses organise the public speaking and the construction of the child abuse narratives.

Chapter 5 pulls together the findings from the study of the media stories and the historical/literary documents and expands the argument further, providing also illustrations from a number of research interviews. The three defined as above discourses are explored further.

Chapter 6 summarises the key findings and draws conclusions based on them, and gives the author's perspective about their implication for the child protection practice. Further areas of study are suggested and some limitation of the discourse analysis / social constructionist approach are described.

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# Definitions

- **‘Child maltreatment’.** I choose to refer to all forms of child abuse and neglect using the general term ‘Child maltreatment’. By this I mean any form of treatment of children that is harmful and/or meant to satisfy the needs of the adults first, thus neglecting or jeopardising the physical and emotional needs of children. There were two reasons why I choose the word ‘maltreatment’ instead of the more traditional words ‘abuse’ and ‘neglect’. Firstly, the phrase used in Bulgarian language in the recent years and the one establishing itself as a dominant term is *‘малтретиране на деца’*, which literally translates in English as ‘child maltreatment’. Secondly, I find the term ‘abuse’ discursively and linguistically problematic; when one speaks about ‘abuse of children’, it is implied that there is ‘a proper use of children’, to which the ‘abuse’ is negatively related. Thus, I believe that the term ‘abuse’ is prone to objectify children.
- **‘Roma’ / ‘Roma Gypsies’.** Most of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe have large minorities of Roma. They are the most disadvantaged and oppressed ethnic group in these countries. Roma have come to Europe during the Middle Ages; one of their cultural myths claims that they are descendants of the Indian cast of the brahmins. The racism against the Roma minority is pandemic in Central and Eastern Europe; a lot of the most recent media coverage in the UK related to the Bulgarian and Romanian succession to the UK (late 2006) demonstrates very covert and sophisticated racism towards the Roma, too. The word for Gypsy in Bulgarian language is *‘циганин’*, which is loaded with more negative connotation and is more derogatory than

the English word '*Gypsy*'. However, I chose to use in the current text both '*Roma*' and '*Roma Gypsies*' for better clarity.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Research

### Questions

“I want to know your opinion ...it is evident that the social services could not intrude in a family where the child is smacked ... but where is the boundary, where is the limit beyond which society shouldn't tolerate ...I somehow know this is a difficult question.” *Mother of two children, Interviewee*

This Introduction aims to explore and clarify several areas. First of all, this is my personal interest and ethical standpoint regarding the current study. I believe that my interest in the area of child maltreatment emerged from my past personal and professional experience, and is determined by my political and ethical worldview. Thus, a reflective exercise is a needed prerequisite of a research endeavour as the current one. Secondly, in the current Introduction I define my research aims and research questions, which set the ground for the current project. An argument will be made here also that any in-depth study into child maltreatment phenomena needs to be grounded in a cultural context. Furthermore, I hope to demonstrate that a research approach to those phenomena, defining them as socially constructed, can be informative and pragmatically useful.

Nigel Parton et al. summarize the social-constructionist approach to child maltreatment in their book *Child Protection. Risk and the Moral Order* (1997) as

“...Not concerned with whether child maltreatment exists or not but how and why condition comes to be viewed as child maltreatment in the first place. Constructionists are concerned with trying to account for the emergence, maintenance, history and conceptualisation of what is defined as child maltreatment and what is defined as child protection work (Parton et al., 1997, p. 70).”

My understanding of the social-constructionist exercise is not in denying the ‘real’ existence of the phenomenon of child maltreatment but in stressing the fact that the latter inevitably exist in a certain cultural and historical context and is defined and perceived on that basis. Neither do I think that social constructionism equals cultural relativism and therefore an *apology* for given practices of child maltreatment, as being culturally specific. On the contrary, I think that any thorough analysis of the cultural context reveals the *limitations* and *inconsistencies* of how certain practices are socially constructed, rather than providing some kind of *justification* for their existence. Therefore, *the social constructionism as a scientific method critically appraises the cultural and historical context*, rather than seeking apologies in this cultural and historical context. I will come back to this argument in more detail in Chapter 2, when I discuss the methodology of the current study.

Adopting a social-constructionist approach to the phenomenon of child maltreatment in Bulgaria has at least two advantages:

1. It helps to understand and analyse better the very recent emergence of the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourse. As with many other social phenomena—like mental health and disability—the communist policy had kept a ‘closed lid’ over the public acknowledgement of child maltreatment, as being allegedly atypical of a ‘socialist society’. It was only very recently—after the major political changes in 1989—that child maltreatment was recognised as existent and constituting a social problem, leading to legislative effort, like the adoption of the Bulgarian Child Protection Act (2000), to structural reform of the public services and to some initial research studies (*Bulletin 1. Children’s Institu-*

tions - *Present and Future*, 2002; *Bulletin 2. Child Protection - Problems and Practice*, 2002). The not-so-straightforward way in which ‘child maltreatment’ found its way in public speaking and the ways in which this public speaking interplayed with the services’ reform can make sense if approached in a social constructionist way, appraising the historical and cultural factors in their complex dynamics. This painful and contradictory emergence of a discourse on child maltreatment is in some ways similar but also very different to the way it had happened in the USA in the 1960s, as described by N. Parton (Parton, 1985).

2. A social constructionist approach to child maltreatment stresses in a particularly strong way the cultural specifics of what is considered child maltreatment and how society responds to this phenomenon (Welbourne, 2002). The pragmatic consequence of such an approach is the claim that no ‘ready-made child welfare recipe’ can be applied to Bulgarian circumstances, without taking into account the cultural conditions and the responsibility of the Bulgarian society itself to find ways to protect its own children. This is not less but even more the case in a globalising world and in an ever-more integrating Europe<sup>1</sup>. Andrew Cooper et al. demonstrate in *Protecting Children: Messages from Europe* (Cooper & Hetherington, 1997) how different European societies’ approaches to the issue of child protection can be and how in Europe a variety and even sometimes contradictory child protection practices exist. A way to make sense of these differences and of the Bulgarian case in particular, is to take a social constructionist approach. I believe that this will prove its pragmatic use in the context of a multi-cultural Europe.

Thus, social constructionism is the conceptual foundation adopted in the current research project. This is not to deny the possibility or the potential benefit of other alternative approaches to the problem of child maltreatment in Bulgaria. For

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<sup>1</sup>While I was editing the current Chapter, the BBC re-broadcasted its programme about the dire conditions in which the children in a specific Bulgarian institution lived; the BBC also expressed publicly its disappointment that the response of the Bulgarian government to the programme was rather defensive (Europe.bg, 2007).

example, a positivist, quantitative approach has the potential role in revealing *the scope* of the problem, its demographics and its overall relation to the welfare of the children and indeed, studies like that have started to emerge, commissioned mostly by international organisations and the Bulgarian State Agency of Child Protection (*Bulletin 1. Children's Institutions - Present and Future*, 2002; *Bulletin 2. Child Protection - Problems and Practice*, 2002; *Social Evaluation of Child Welfare*, 2000; Carter, 2000, among others).

However, a positivist approach fails to address the very issue of why child maltreatment is perceived and talked about in certain ways and how these ways relate to the cultural and historical specifics of the contemporary Bulgarian society. Furthermore, a positivist approach cannot tackle the issue of any inconsistencies and gaps, of oppressed or 'silenced' aspects of the child maltreatment discourse in the way that it is socially constructed today.

I will return to this argument yet again in Chapter 2, when the research method of discourse analysis will be discussed in detail.

## 1.1 Research Interest Source and Research Values

The notion of the unbiased objective researcher is probably appealing. However, when one studies social processes and is involved in qualitative research, this ideal is not possible, in my opinion. Every researcher 'introduces his or her own values and politics into the object of study' (Gergen, 1973). One of the main claims of the social constructionism is that

"... Knowledge and social action are inter-related; different descriptions and constructions of the world support particular patterns of social action (and power flows), and exclude others (Burr, 1995, p. 11)."

In a different theoretical tradition—that of cybernetics—a key notion of the *second order cybernetics* is that the 'observer' is part of the 'observing system':

"Second-order cybernetics posits that it is important not only to describe systems (first-order cybernetics), but also to describe the describer



(second-order cybernetics)” (Varela, 1989, p. 16).

The researcher’s introduction of values and even politics into the research process cannot be avoided. When I study the phenomenon of child maltreatment in Bulgaria, I have to bear in mind that I am a product of this society through my early years of socialisation and that I have spent most of my life working and living in Bulgaria. This past experience is prone to have an impact on the way I perceive and conceptualise the ‘social reality’ of child maltreatment and how I interpret it in the current study. I am bound to be biased on the basis of my specific cultural and life experience but this is not all bad news; from research point of view what is important is for one to be aware of his or her biases.

That is why, a way to deal with these possible biases<sup>2</sup> is the reflective research process.

In the case of my ‘preoccupation’ with the issue of child maltreatment, the initial step for me is to explore what are the roots of my interest in this research area. I can identify at least two main reasons for my research interest in the area of child maltreatment, and in more general in the emerging child protection system in Bulgaria.

- On the one hand, I had my experience as a lecturer in a Bulgarian university, and as a student placement supervisor. This experience was mainly in the area of child welfare; most of the placement agencies the University worked with were in the childcare domain. Throughout the years, I had supervised many students and I had been a witness of their powerful emotions, invoked by their direct work. During our supervision sessions, they brought to me repeatedly the trauma and frustration they encountered in practice, which mirrored the similar feelings of the staff groups from the children’s institutions and services. Our supervision sessions were often so much emotionally loaded that the educational task needed to fall in the background because of need to

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<sup>2</sup>I understand that the word ‘bias’ is negatively connoted in the research discourse; some claim that being politically and values biased in the research process is not necessarily a bad, thus needed to be avoided, thing (E.g. Mehra, 2002).

respond of the emotional needs of the students.

- During 1997-1999, I was directly involved in the creation and running of a local charity that aimed to support the childcare reform in the Bourgas<sup>3</sup> region. Through that, I faced the challenges and resistance that such a reform encountered on both political and organisational level. I became increasingly and painfully aware of the complexity in the ways in which child maltreatment and child welfare were understood by the public and by the policy makers, and how these understandings were deeply culturally and historically rooted. I started to see a pattern in which what appeared on face value as public's or policy-makers' difficulty to speak about these issues was at least partially due to *the lack of a mere language* on which to speak and discuss these issues. For example, during the early 1990s there was not a straightforward Bulgarian word or a phrase, which to notify an entity of 'child abuse' or 'child maltreatment'. It was not before the late 1990s when the Bulgarian 'малтретиране на деца'<sup>4</sup> gained popularity as a phrase notifying this social phenomenon in an allegedly straightforward way.

Throughout this experience and my current reflections on it, I became acutely aware also of the inadequacy of the services and institutions inherited by the Communist system, and also of the fact that it would take a long time before any kind of reforms in the child welfare field could successfully take place<sup>5</sup>.

What is more, I was aware that one of the main obstacles for positive policy and institutional change were the deeply socially and culturally rooted attitudes of the policy makers, managers, professionals and of the public in general. A particularly disturbing aspect of the above attitudes was for example the widely-spread racism towards the Roma Gypsy ethnic minority, whose children were the ones in a most

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<sup>3</sup>A harbour city in the South East of Bulgaria.

<sup>4</sup>Child maltreatment.

<sup>5</sup>Indeed, later in the text I will point out the fundamental nature of the transition that the Bulgarian society had to undertake, and the challenges of transforming all public services from ones created in a planned totalitarian society to a liberal society, where much bigger differences and inequalities among its members exist.

disadvantaged position. This racist attitude was and is still widely spread amongst the members of the wider Bulgarian public; it is shared also by the mass media and by the majority of Bulgarian officials of highest rank. Details on that particular issue will be examined throughout the current research project and I hope to demonstrate that this form of racism imposes one of the major threats confronting the welfare of the children in Bulgaria and the society in general.

The areas of child maltreatment and child protection are bound to be a political issue, just as many other areas of the social welfare domain. Whatever one says about child protection and welfare, one inevitably makes a political statement. In that respect, I am aware that I cannot escape from commenting on political issues in my research.

The dilemma that this entails is how one can aim to achieve scientific objectivity in studying an area that is fundamentally political. My answer to that dilemma is in the need of the researcher to define his or her values as a *preliminary step* in undertaking any social research. This reflexive process and raised awareness can help him or her to deal with their biases. Here by ‘values’ I do not mean the procedural ethical steps and dilemmas that one has to address as part of every research project. Those as a methodological and a procedural matter will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 2.

Below I try to identify my political and ethical stance that informs the way in which I am approaching the Bulgarian child maltreatment phenomenon.

Firstly, I believe that for the last nearly twenty years Bulgaria has been in a process of a painful civilisational transformation and I desire the outcome of that transformation to be for Bulgaria to become an established European liberal-democratic society. Here by liberal-democratic society I don’t make any allusions to existing political parties but rather I mean a society that:

- encourages the autonomy, growth, free initiative and creativity of its citizens and communities;
- celebrates freedom of expression and open debate, and guarantees the rights of various minorities, regardless of whether these are based on race, ethnicity,

religion, social class, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle, etc.

Translating this political credo to the level of the Bulgarian social welfare institutions, I believe that those need a process of deep transformation, too. In my opinion, the Bulgarian public needs and demands social institutions that respect both individual clients and communities, and support them in their natural effort to self-determine and to function autonomously. Such breed of public services need social workers that take decisions autonomously on the basis of their professional expertise, professional judgement and shared ethical code, rather than on the basis of bureaucratic policies and checklists.

Secondly—as mentioned above—I believe that one of the areas of grave concern for the future of the Bulgarian society is the all encompassing racism towards the Roma Gypsy population. On the last Parliamentary elections in the country held in June 2005, a proto-fascist party with clearly anti-Roma agenda won 8% of the national vote. In October 2006, the leader of this party had the potential—thankfully unfulfilled—to become a main contender against the current President on the presidential elections<sup>6</sup>. The widely spread racism is not only part of the overall public attitude but it is also pandemic within social institutions as well (Tomov, 1995).

The institutional discrimination against the Roma Gypsies on all social levels maintains the vicious circle of their majority living in misery and desperation. Roma Gypsy children are not surprisingly the very social group that has suffered mostly in the period of transition from Communism. In accordance with the idea of positive discrimination, I think that the anti-discrimination-against-the-Roma principle should become a deliberate and conscious policy in all spheres of public life in Bulgaria, opposed to the currently widely spread denial of the problem and hidden institutional racism. I remember in the year 2000 I spoke to the manager of a Child Protection Department in Bulgaria, who told me that there was no hope for Roma Gypsy children because it was ‘a genetic thing with the Roma Gypsies to abuse their children’.

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<sup>6</sup>The most recent tendency since 2006 is for this party’s political influence to gradually decline

The above ethical—and indeed political—reflections on my experience present a preliminary step that puts the current research project in a context. I am aware that reflection is a continuous process but not an one-off act and that I will return to these issues repeatedly in the course of the analysis.

The above deontological exercise is an essential part not only in social research but in social work as a profession. Some authors—like Anne Freed (Freed, 1995)—claim that social work is defined not so much by a common body of theoretical knowledge or practice methods but rather by a common set of value statements.

This appraisal of my experience and values set the rationale for defining the research aim of the current study, namely what I hope to achieve through carrying out this project.

## 1.2 The Research Goal

My anecdotal experience makes me believe that the Bulgarian society only very recently started to increase its awareness of child maltreatment as a widely spread social phenomenon. There are various reasons that could be suggested for that, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. I believe that one of these major reasons was the concealment of this problem by the Communist tradition and quite likely by historical traditions much preceding Communism.

One particular area, where child maltreatment has been and is still concealed is the family. In my conversations with child and family workers I was told that it was only after family breakdown that evidence of child maltreatment had been disclosed by family members. This might possibly show how important the role of family secrets is, how taboo is to disclose those and the challenge that the child protection system will face to tackle child maltreatment in family environment<sup>7</sup>.

Secondly, my experience in directly working with children and in supervising

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<sup>7</sup>I am aware here that I need to be careful jumping into any major claims on the basis of that evidence. My experience working in the area of supervised child contact in the UK shows that it is not uncommon for various false allegations to be made after a family break up and in the process of custody disputes.

students' practice showed that often we as practitioners did not have the proper language and words to make sense, and to communicate stories of child abuse in a straightforward way. That challenge was in a striking contrast with what I discovered later in the UK, where mentioning of the phrase 'child abuse' was usually met from the opposite side with an alleged understanding of what exactly was meant by that.

Therefore, the **main research goal** of the current project is to explore the nature of *child maltreatment* as a socially and historically constructed reality in the Bulgarian context, focusing primarily on child maltreatment occurring in *family environment*. Approaching the study of child maltreatment from this particular perspective will provide the child protection workers and the policy-makers in Bulgaria with a better understanding of the complex social nature of child maltreatment and will hopefully bring an insight for practice. Furthermore, an exploration and raising the awareness of child maltreatment as *a socially constructed reality* opens the door of cross-cultural—particularly cross-European—appraisal, which I think will be increasingly important in the context of the future EU policies.

The rationale behind my focus of the *family environment* as the primary research area is based on the following reasons:

- My anecdotal evidence of the 'secrecy' of family life in the Bulgarian context and the cultural tradition dictating the inappropriateness of disclosing family matters to people outside the family.
- Institutional care and institutional abuse had been already in the spotlight of many media coverage and policy actions—including the aforementioned BBC programme. My aim is to raise awareness about child maltreatment in areas outside the focus of current public attention. I think it is justified to assume at this stage that child maltreatment—as well as domestic abuse in general—has the highest probability to occur in family environment between family members.

- The third reason is purely pragmatic. Focusing on child maltreatment in one particular domain such as the family contributes to my research project being more manageable and potentially more methodologically sound.

When setting my research goal in such a way, I also believe that an intensive study of the emerging public child maltreatment discourses will provide a good basis for successful and culturally relevant child protection practice in all its aspects: prevention, balancing of risks, rights and opportunities in decision-making, and dealing with the consequences of child maltreatment. Studying the ways in which child maltreatment is socially constructed will highlight also ‘blind’, or avoided aspects of the child maltreatment phenomenon, as well as will help to provide an insight on the complex interplay between public expectations, family realities and child protection duties.

The achievement of the research goal is sought through an intensive exploration of how Bulgarian society constructs the concept of child maltreatment on different levels: media, professional jargon, social policy and law, and family discourse. These will be explored through specifying a set of research questions.

### 1.3 The Research Questions

The main research question that needs to be answered in order to achieve the goal of the current study is the following:

*How does Bulgarian society construct the concept of child maltreatment and how does it relate to it?*

I define certain aspects of that major question in a set of sub-questions that are more manageable to be answered in the context of the study:

- What is the public/media discourse of child maltreatment and how is it constructed?
- How has the child maltreatment discourse emerged and what is its internal structure; what is its relation to other processes in Bulgarian culture and history?

- What is its fragmentation and what are unspoken (Foucault, 1969/1989)—silenced—aspects of that discourse?
- What is the link between the child maltreatment discourse as it emerges in Bulgaria and the historical evidence of this process in other countries—particularly the UK?
- How do the family narratives relate to the public/media discourse on child maltreatment?

From this set of sub-questions it becomes evident that I define a further limitation in my study, namely my focus on public/media discourse. Apart from the pragmatic reasons related to clearer methodology and making my project more manageable, this is related also to my understanding of the decisive influence that public discourse has on child protection practice not only in Bulgaria; this has been no doubt the evidence in the UK, too (Parton, 1985; Parton et al., 1997; Preston-Shoot & Agass, 1990, among others).

Further arguments for prioritising the media discourse as the focus of the study will be provided in Chapter 2, when discussing research methods.

## 1.4 Research Tasks

In order to seek answers to the above questions, there are several areas in which research inquiry is needed:

- An overview of the social and cultural context of the child maltreatment discourse. Discourses do not emerge in ‘empty space’; they are positioned in a specific cultural-historical reality. Therefore an integral part of the current study is a historical and cultural enquiry, in which I refer to a range of historical written documents.
- A study of the existing research methods used as a part of the social-constructionist approach. There is a range of qualitative methods utilised by the social



constructionists—most of them comprising various forms of discourse analysis or deconstruction. However, they range from the broader socio-political stance of authors like Foucault (Foucault, 1969/1989) through precise procedural methods, like the one developed by Ian Parker (Parker, 1992) to purely linguistic or conversational methods of analysis, for example, Derek Edwards' approach (Edwards, 1996). Thus, examining the various methodological options for the current research project and designing precise methodological procedures determines, if not necessarily the validity of the study, at least its pragmatic and political value.

- Gathering of evidence and literature on how the child maltreatment discourse has emerged and developed in other European societies. In that respect, particularly useful is reviewing the UK literature on the history and development of the child maltreatment discourse and the child protection policy. Some comparative studies from other European countries are identified as well. All these European perspectives are viewed from a social-constructionist and discursive perspective, and are included as a part of the discourse analysis in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

The completion of the defined as above tasks constitute an integral part of the study and determine the structure and the contents of the following two Chapters.

I explore first the methodological options and aim to design a method to help me seek the answers to the research questions in a consistent way.

After that, in Chapter 3, I look at the broader cultural context in which the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourses emerge.

## Chapter 2

# Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This Chapter is dedicated to the design of the current study. A number of needed methodological choices are made, which I hope I manage to justify. These include the range of research methods to be used, the various pools of data to be explored and sampling methods to collect data sets. This decision-making process is informed by the research questions, as defined in Chapter 1 and aims to identify what research design or research methodology will serve the best in answering these questions. Of course, the other important premise is purely pragmatic—what is realistic to achieve within a scope of a PhD thesis.

This Chapter provides also a critical exploration of the theoretical base of the research methods of choice. Last but not least, I look at a range of studies in the area of child maltreatment and child welfare that use similar research approaches as mine.

### 2.1 The Social Constructionist Approach

Some initial arguments for the use of a social constructionist approach were provided in Chapter 1. Since my interest is in the area of how meanings are constructed socially and how they determine practices from the ‘reality’, this eliminates the methodologies based on quantities (including textual content analysis), as not

relevant.

Furthermore, looking at the qualitative research options, I have to eliminate the methods based on various forms of phenomenology also because the current study, as described in Chapter 1, is not interested so much in people's internal experiences and perspectives on the phenomenon of child maltreatment but rather on the ways in which child maltreatment is communicated about, the range of meanings that are attributed to it and the interplay of those with the public and the professional discourse.

The *theoretical framework* suited most for this kind of research premise—again, as claimed in Chapter 1—is that of social constructionism. The choice of the *method* is related to the specific questions that need answering in the study: how is child maltreatment constructed in Bulgaria; how is it linked to historical, social, cultural and ethnicity factors; what power relations do the constructions of child maltreatment exist in and how these relate to the public domain, the institutions and the families; how do some of these constructions block our awareness and what 'silenced' discourses exist out there?

To answer these questions, I need the theoretical framework of social constructionism, which provides an access to the complex relationships between language, meaning, power and history. Social constructionism though is not a straightforward concept to define.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman are the first to introduce the term 'social construction' in social science in 1966, in their book *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1969). They introduce the notion that people form concepts and representations of each other's actions through the process of social interaction, and that these mental representations become stable over time (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1969)

Kenneth Gergen, another of the pioneers of using the above term, says

... people often understand mistakenly social constructionism as an integrated movement targeted against essentialism and realism in science (Gergen, 1985, p. 271).

According to Gergen, social constructionism could be understood more correctly as a “. . . range of variegated and overlapping conversations and practices that draw from various resources . . .” (Gergen, 1985). In just the same lines, Vivien Burr argues that there can be no one single description that would encompass all authors sharing social constructionist ideas (Burr, 1995).

She defines social constructionist ideas as such that imply one or more of the following premises:

1. Critical stance to the given for granted knowledge and to the empirical idea that nature of the world could be discovered through objective and dispassionate observation.
2. Historical and cultural determination of the ways we understand the world and the categories and concepts that we use to describe it.
3. Knowledge is based on social processes; it is constantly negotiated in the everyday interaction between people.
4. Knowledge and social action are inter related; different descriptions and constructions of the world support particular patterns of social action (and power flows), and exclude others (Burr, 1995).

In *An Invitation to Social Construction* (1999) Gergen outlines his own four defining principles. These are very similar to Burr’s with the exception of his special attention to reflexivity, or “. . . the attempt to place one’s premises under question, to suspend ‘the obvious’, to listen to alternative framings of reality, and to grapple with the comparative outcomes of multiple standpoints.” (Gergen, 1999)

With full awareness that a comprehensive discussion of what social constructionism is goes far beyond the scope of this text, I concentrate here on how its main claims ‘translate’ to the domain under exploration, namely child maltreatment in Bulgaria.

Taking a purely deductive approach, one can claim that the social constructionist principles apply fully when the domain of *child maltreatment* is concerned. A possi-

ble application of this theoretical approach to child maltreatment can be expressed in the following statements:

1. Critically appraising the consistent ‘reality’ of child maltreatment as a fixed phenomenon. Being very reluctant to the assumption that when different people or professionals refer to ‘child maltreatment’ or ‘child abuse’, it is automatically clear what is exactly the ‘reality’ they refer to.
2. The notion of ‘child maltreatment’ is historically and culturally determined, just like the concepts of ‘childhood’ and ‘parenting’ are. Social constructionism implies that in different cultures, different historical periods or different parts of the world there does not necessarily exist a unified construct of ‘child maltreatment’. On the contrary, one can assume that significant differences exist. Furthermore, the very genesis or non-genesis of the concept of ‘child maltreatment’ is historically determined.
3. ‘Child maltreatment’ is not constructed as a result of a single act; its construction is rather a result of a continuous repeating everyday process of social interaction—implying use of language in all its forms—between various social participants. One could safely assume that these are the participants that talk about child maltreatment, namely professionals, policy makers, mass media, family members, etc.
4. The specific way in which ‘child maltreatment’ is constructed in contemporary Bulgaria supports particular forms of social action, namely institutional response, power relations between professionals and families/communities, maintaining or challenging forms of racism, etc. Therefore, the pragmatic consequences in the form of power and social action, stemming from the very way ‘child maltreatment’ is conceptualised, are vast.

I recognise that the above statements are purely deductive and very general but they outline the theoretical premises on which my research will unfold, seeking evidence for those. For their formulation, I owe to the way in which Burr defined the principles of social constructionism, as discussed above (Burr, 1995).

There is a range of authors that take a social constructionist approach to child maltreatment, child protection and childhood in general. Some of these were already mentioned. Parton et al. (*Child Protection. Risk and the Moral Order*, 1997) put child protection under a social constructionist scrutiny. They question the traditional, positivist premise, according to which

“[the] . . . role of the social scientist and practitioner, as we have shown, is to gauge the size, dimensions and characteristics of the problem, to explore its roots and causes and to investigate solutions. . .”

According to them, social constructionism is interested in a completely different range of questions:

“Constructionists are concerned with trying to account for the emergence, maintenance, history and conceptualisation of what is defined as child abuse and what is defined as child protection work” (Parton et al., 1997, p. 70)

The Canadian philosopher Ian Hacking in his book *The Social Construction of What?* (1999) dedicates a chapter to discuss the construction of child abuse. Though Hacking himself would oppose to be considered a ‘social constructionist’, I think in this chapter he provides a brilliant descriptive and historical account of how the notion of ‘child abuse’ had been ‘made and moulded’, to use the author’s words (Hacking, 1991). He gives an extensive account of the problematic emergence of notions ranging from the Victorian ‘cruelty to children’, through the ‘battered child syndrome’ to the still much controversial concept of ‘Satanic abuse’. Hacking raises a number of issues when one tries to apply these constructs, particularly cross-time and cross-cultures. Hacking also points to various power implications determining the way in which child abuse is constructed.

A number of authors use the social constructionist paradigm to carry out research in the area of child maltreatment and child welfare. In *Narrative Transformations in Child Abuse Reporting* (1997) Christopher Hall et al. explore how certain elements of the media story about a particular case of child abuse shift as various social

actors speak to defend their agendas (Hall et al., 1997). In another study Hall and Slembrouck explore parents' participation in child protection conferences (Hall & Slembrouck, 2001). As the authors say themselves, this latter study differed from previous research on parents' perspectives<sup>1</sup>, focusing instead on the verbal interaction during child protection meetings. The authors find that "a heavily-constrained discourse practice" emerge on child protection conferences and the parents' role in these meetings is ambiguous (Hall & Slembrouck, 2001).

The same authors publish a paper a few years later (*Professional Categorization, Risk Management and Inter-Agency Communication in Public Inquiries into Disastrous Outcomes*, 2007) that appraise the construction and communication of child abuse categories in the inter-professional dialogue (Hall & Slembrouck, 2007). In a related field, Heather D'cruz (*The Social Construction of Child Maltreatment: The Role of Medical Practitioners* 2004) carries out a discourse analysis studying how the medical, social work and legal discourses interplay to construct the notion of 'child maltreatment' and what the power implications of these discourses are (D'Cruz, 2004).

Another example of social constructionist perspective includes Nigel Parton's *Reconfiguring Child Welfare Practices: Risk, Advanced Liberalism and the Government of Freedom* (1999), where the author undertakes a Foucauldian approach in analysing contemporary UK child welfare policy and claims that the increasing preoccupation with the notion of risk transforms not only the agencies' attitudes towards families but also transforms the professional interactions between the social workers themselves and how the social workers construct their own profession and their professional identity (Parton, 1999).

In *Emphatic Childrearing and the Adult Construction of Childhood* (1998) David Kennedy critically appraises the historical emergence of the adult-child relation as 'one between two very different beings' and the subsequent 'appropriation' of the construction of childhood by the adults<sup>2</sup> (Kennedy, 1998).

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<sup>1</sup>For example, see *Parental Perspectives in Cases of Suspected Child Abuse*, (Cleaver & Freeman, 1995).

<sup>2</sup>Kennedy writes about 'adulthood', together with patriarchy and colonialism (Kennedy, 1998).

Helen Gavin makes an interesting contribution to the social constructionist approach to child sexual abuse. In *The Social Construction of the Child Sex Offender Explored by Narrative* (2005) she studies how the notion of the ‘child sex offender’ has been constructed and then she defines dominant and alternative narratives in that area, and their implications for practice (Gavin, 2005).

Of course, not all studies in that area are limited to USA/UK research. For example, Harkness et al. carry out research in the USA and the Netherlands studying parents’ ‘theories’ about their own children and claim that the results defy any notion that there is a consistent unified ‘Western’ perception of parenting and childhood (Harkness, Super, & Tijen, 2000). In a similar manner Seifert studies the ‘uniformity and diversity of everyday views of the Child’ (Seifert, 2000).

In *The Languages of Childhood: The Discursive Construction of Childhood and Colonial Policy in French West Africa* (2004) Lisa McNee explores the consequences of the French colonial policy on the forming discourses on childhood in Upper Volta, and the controversial effect that asserting French construction of childhood had on African children (McNee, 2004).

In a different part of the world, Jane Helleiner explores the public and policy discourses regarding the ‘Travellers’ children (*Contested Childhood: The Discourse and Politics of Traveller Child-hood in Ireland*, 1998). She argues ‘how [these] discourses of childhood articulate with, and often reinforce, inferiorizing discourses of racism, gender and class’<sup>3</sup> (Helleiner, 1998).

In Central Europe, Mojka Urek explores the oral and written account in the context of a case study, to reveal the rhetorical mechanisms through which the professionals ‘construct’ a mother and her child (*Making a Case in Social Work. The Construction of an Unsuitable Mother*, 2005).

This is only a sample—without any claim of representativeness—of some studies that address child abuse and child protection from a social constructionist perspective. I will refer to these and to some others further in the Chapter, when I consider particular research methods, and also in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, when I discuss

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<sup>3</sup>Particularly interesting study for me to compare in the following chapters with my own findings about the Roma Gypsy discourses.



my findings.

## 2.2 The Research Data Pools

After establishing the theoretical ground base of the current research, the next logical step is clarify what is the nature of evidence needed to answer the research questions and what is the kind of data that needs to be collected to provide that evidence.

Here I continue with a closer look at each of these questions and the feasible data that might utilise its exploration.

### 2.2.1 *What is the public/media discourse of child maltreatment and how is it constructed?*

This question refers to fairly straightforward evidence pool, which contains the media discourse; namely these are the mass-media products in the form of press articles, TV and radio programmes. Of course, this could be a list that can be expanded much further, to include web forums, public discussions, politicians' rhetoric, etc.

There are several factors that determine my decision to focus exclusively on *publications from the press* though:

- From a pragmatic point of view, it is much easier to collect a set of newspaper articles rather than any other type of mass-media product. This is true when sampling strategies are concerned and also includes the potential consideration of triangulating my Bulgarian data with possible UK counterparts. I have to note that with the advance of the Internet this case might very soon change, making the web media the preferred choice.
- There is a range of well-established discursive methods to analyse sets of texts/printed data, which will be discussed in the following sections. From my point of view, printed text introduces less potential confounding factors into the research and keeps the researcher's focus on the narrative. I am aware though that a trade-off in studying printed texts is the limited opportunity to explore discourse-in-action on 'interpretative repertoires' as defined by Potter

and Wetherel (Potter & Wetherel, 1987).

- The third factor behind my choice of printed data is culture-specific and is related to my understanding of the nature of the Bulgarian press. After the changes in 1989, when Bulgaria started its journey from Communism to capitalism, the free press was the ‘public institution’ among the first ones to adapt to the changing society. It was often cynical and rude, and predominantly ‘tabloid’ by its nature; however, it was much more at tune with the public attitudes and emotions than the Bulgarian politicians and the other public institutions. Reading through the headlines of the articles from the 90s or the 00s, one can get a fairly valid ‘feel’ of the times. This was not necessarily the case with the electronic media. The state sponsored ones were very slow to change and in my opinion they still carry a lot of the old totalitarian culture; the private electronic media have been heavily influenced by the agendas of their beneficiaries. Therefore, if I am looking for valid evidence of the emerging child maltreatment discourses, I think there is no better place to start than the Bulgarian press.

Therefore, the first data pool to be defined in the current research are the Bulgarian newspaper articles, dedicated to child maltreatment.

### ***2.2.2 How has the child maltreatment discourse emerged and what is its internal structure; what is its relation to other processes in Bulgarian culture and history?***

This second question does not refer to a definitive area of evidence in such a straightforward way as the first one. The most logical choice though seems to be the exploration of various documents throughout history and cultural artefacts that relate in some form to the construct of child maltreatment. One of the downsides defining the data pool in such broad terms is the impossibility to predict in any certain way the amount of relevant data that I would come across; it can vary from zero to more than manageable. However, a possible preliminary list of resources are the following:

- early Slavonic and Bulgarian folklore, including fairy tales and folk songs,

- Bulgarian literature from different historical periods,
- legislative texts and policy documents.

However, this is just a preliminary set of resources that potentially needs to be revised throughout the process of data collection. One particular difficulty is related in obtaining historical and cultural evidence from the Communist period (1945–1989). The reason for that is that from my anecdotal experience there was a great discrepancy between the official—therefore printed—discourses of the Communist state—and the ‘urban folklore’ that existed at that time, and that according to me is of a much greater importance in identifying potential roots of the child maltreatment discourse.

One possible solution of this limitation is to look at anecdotal and biographical accounts of myself and other people, specifically focused on the Communist period.

### ***2.2.3 What is its fragmentation and what are the unspoken—silenced—aspects of that discourse?***

Answering this question should not need the collection of any extra data on top of what has been already described above. Appraising the limitations of the child maltreatment discourses as well as identifying the dominant ones and the alternative ones is a matter of *method of analysis* rather than a matter of extra data.

### ***2.2.4 What is the link between the child maltreatment discourse as it emerges in Bulgaria and the historical evidence of this process in other countries—particularly the UK?***

I have already listed some resources that explore the social construction of the child maltreatment and child protection discourses in various settings and predominantly from the UK and USA. Doing any primary research in a context different from the Bulgarian one is beyond the scope of the current research project. However, throughout the analysis, I use the aforementioned resources as a means of *triangulation* of my findings<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>See Section 2.6 for more discussion on assuring the validity of the current study.

### 2.2.5 *How do the family narratives relate to the public/media discourse on child maltreatment?*

There is a vast amount of research on family narratives and discourses that use variety of different methods for data collection, ranging from clinical interview and observation (Dallos, 2003), to family artefacts like family photographs (Lassetter, Mandleco, & Roper, 2007) and biographies. For the purposes of my study, I choose to interview parents, for the following reasons:

- The interviews constitute an interactive process of discourse-in-action that compensate for the deficiencies of the printed discourse, as discussed above.
- Other alternatives, like ethnographic inquiry and observation demand extra time and effort that I cannot dedicate within the scope of the current PhD research and considering that variety of data that needs to be collected overall.
- The relatively under-researched area—at least in Bulgarian context—that I am interested in, and the tentative nature of my research design imply the need of flexibility; meeting and interviewing people can potentially provide the opportunity to add questions and explore new areas ad hoc.

I use here the interview material in a similar manner as the resources from other countries, namely in the process of *triangulation* of my findings from the media / public discourses of child maltreatment. Therefore, these interviews are not appraised on their own right—as primary data pool—but serve to support or otherwise my discussion of the media discourse. I use interview excerpts *as illustrations* wherever I feel they are relevant and mainly do so in Chapter 5.

To summarise this section, I see three separate pools of data that can provided the needed evidence for answering the research questions:

1. *Newspaper articles from the Bulgarian press* relevant to child maltreatment.
2. *Historical, folklore, literature and biography accounts* relevant to child maltreatment.

3. *Interview material* obtained from my conversation with parents/families.

An additional resource here is the range of studies on the social construction of child maltreatment in other countries, particularly in the UK.

From the three data pools, I consider the newspaper material *my primary research data*. The other two sets are used mainly for the purposes of exploring the social and cultural context, and for triangulation<sup>5</sup>. The rationale behind this decision are the following:

- Child maltreatment is a phenomenon that is only recently ‘discovered’ and spoken about by the Bulgarian public, professionals and policy makers. The voices of all these social ‘actors’ meet in the mass media discourse.
- The mass media press represent the public discourse, namely the way child maltreatment is constructed by the Bulgarian public is reflected in the way that child maltreatment is spoken about in the press. The mass media influence the public opinion and on the other hand the mass media discourse is influenced by what the public wants to read. It is a circular process.
- Familiarising myself with the the history of the emergence of the UK child protection discourses ((Parton, 1985); (Parton et al., 1997); (Preston-Shoot & Agass, 1990)) made me acutely aware of the importance of the mass media and public pressure as decisive actors in the social construction of child maltreatment and child protection. My premise is that studying the Bulgarian press stories will give me the opportunity to explore similar processes in Bulgarian context, in their very emergence.
- The analysis of ready available textual material, such as newspaper articles, means more reliable data in two ways:
  - opportunity for better control and more objective sampling process,
  - less intervention of me as a researcher and therefore more direct exploration of the phenomenon itself, avoiding eventual confounding factors that for example an interviewing process would introduce.

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<sup>5</sup>For further discussion on the need of a triangulation process, see Section 2.6

## 2.3 Data Sampling

After identifying the data pools or the types of data to be collected, the next step is to plan on the steps of *sampling* the data, which is meant firstly to assure a degree of representativeness, thus validity of the research findings and secondly, to narrow down the collected data to a manageable amount.

In a small-scale qualitative research as mine and taking into consideration the nature of the data to be collected, purposeful sampling process (Patton, 1990) is evidently more appropriate and obviously far more realistic than random sampling. I will approach each data pool as described above separately.

### 2.3.1 Newspaper articles

Based on Patton's classification of sampling strategies (Patton, 1990), my sampling process of child maltreatment newspaper articles can be characterised as a purposeful sample that uses mixed sampling strategies: maximum variations, criteria and stratification.

This translates into the following practical steps:

- (Criterion) *Nature of the stories*: I focus on stories that covered any form of maltreatment happening in *family environment*. This automatically eliminated all stories about child abuse in institutions, schools or assaults by strangers. The rationale for this choice was that this would give me the opportunity to explore the apparently most complex aspect of child maltreatment and also to focus on the most under-research area of child abuse in Bulgaria. Further arguments for that were provided in Chapter 1.
- (Criterion) *Time period*: I decide to screen for target articles the selected newspapers, issued within a time period of 16 months—between November 1999 and February 2001. The only factor determining the time period studied is a practical consideration, namely what is possible for me to collect during the field research periods.
- (Maximum variations and Stratification) *Selection of the newspapers*: I select

three newspapers to be screened for child maltreatment articles that I think represented the variation of the Bulgarian press in two aspects: tabloid vs. broadsheet and regional vs. national.

- *24 Часа (24 Hours)* is the most popular national daily newspaper;
- *Седмичен Труд (Weekly Labour)* is the most popular national weekly tabloid;
- *Бургас Днес и Утре (Burgas Today and Tomorrow)* is the most popular daily regional paper in my home city of Bourgas.

The intention was to include a mixture of daily and weekly, national and regional, ‘serious’ and tabloid press that meets both strategies of maximising the variation—particularly comparing tabloid vs. broadsheet papers—and stratification—mainly considered here regional vs. national.

### **2.3.2 Historical, folklore, literature and biography accounts**

This is the less straightforward data pool to apply sampling process too, due to the very general definition of the pool itself. My sampling strategies here include the following:

- *Convenience sampling*, ‘involving the selection of the most accessible subjects’ (Marshall, 1996). I explore all texts and accounts to Bulgarian history, folklore, literature, etc., which I have an easy access to.
- *Criterion sampling*. In the above accounts, I expand my my criteria to include texts relevant not only to specifically ‘child maltreatment’ but to include also accounts of ‘parenting’ and ‘childhood in general’. The reason behind that is the premise that in earlier texts it is unlikely to find much direct evidence to child maltreatment. Another premise here is that the exploration of the history of these more general categories in Bulgarian context will bring a light and help to explain the particular Bulgarian constructions of child maltreatment.

Chapter 3 gives further details on the particular texts and documents I use, and further methodological considerations I had to deal with while carrying along the

historical study.

### 2.3.3 Parental interviews

My sampling approach to the parental interviews is informed by the place I envisage of these interviews in the overall study design, namely for the triangulation of the public media discourse on ‘child maltreatment’. As a result, my interest in interviewing families is one of exploring societal discourses. In that respect, my decision is to approach a range of families through the general school system and through two independent domestic violence support projects<sup>6</sup>, where I have good connections—thus potentially *expanding the variance* of discourses on ‘child maltreatment’.

I asked my colleagues from two schools in Sofia and from domestic violence services from two other cities to approach service users and to inquire on their digression, whether they would be willing to participate in my study.

My target numbers was to interview ten families. I ended up with nine interviews—5 with parents referred from schools and 4 with parents referred through the domestic violence agencies. The only consideration behind *determining the interview numbers* is a pragmatic one, i.e. what was the realistic number of families to respond and what was manageable for me to do while I was on my research trip to Bulgaria.

In the course of the analysis, I use some excerpts from the interview transcripts, wherever I felt it was relevant, for the purpose of triangulation and illustration.

## 2.4 Description of the Data Samples collected

### 2.4.1 Newspaper articles covering *child maltreatment*

The periods covered and the numbers of articles that I identified based on the above criteria are systematised in Table 2.1.

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<sup>6</sup>Another reason for me choosing domestic violence services was informed by the fact that at the time of my field research there were still no dedicated child protection services in Bulgaria and that from my professional experience very often in domestic violence situation children are maltreated, and they come to the attention of these services.



Table 2.1: Sample of Newspaper Articles

Newspaper	Period covered	Number of articles
24 Hours	November 1999 - March 2000	19
24 Hours	November 2000 - March 2001	15
Weekly Labour	November 1999 - February 2001	5
Bourgas Today and Tomorrow	November 1999 - February 2001	11

It is obvious from the table that the national daily paper had significantly more articles, even for the shorter period that was covered. On the one hand, this could be normal, having in mind that it is issued daily and that covers the events from the whole country. However, alternative explanations are possible, too. I tend to think the fact that the daily Bourgas Today and Tomorrow wrote less on the topic of child maltreatment than the national *24 Hours* relates to the taboo that this still issue is outside of the national capital. This assumption finds confirmation in the fact that the specialised weekly supplement of *Bourgas Today and Tomorrow*, for the villages in the Bourgas region, featured no articles whatsoever about child maltreatment for the studied period.

The articles appear usually on the page with the criminal news. It is striking that these are cases almost always about drastic events that quite often lead to the death of a child. One could very hardly get a grasp of the author's moral position. The articles range from very long one-page stories to short five-liners of facts.

The articles present a strange mixture of modern and old-fashioned words and phrases, as if reflecting the complex nature of the transition that takes place in Bulgaria now.

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 represent a couple of scans from the sample newspaper articles. More examples are provided in Appendix B.

#### 2.4.2 Parental interviews

I managed to hold a total of nine parental interviews, which were transcribed in Bulgarian and two of them were fully translated in English—see Appendix D.



Figure 2.1: Title: “A father who had beaten his daughter black and blue was arrested” (*24 Hours, 5 October 2000*)

Table 2.2 provides more details of the interviewed sample. Both schools from Sofia were primary (basic), which in accordance with the Bulgarian educational system means that children are between the age of 6 and 12. Both domestic violence services are small independent organisations relying on charitable funding and operate in two cities that are Bulgarian regional centres.

Table 2.2: Interviews with parents

Referrer	Number of of interviews
Sofia School 1	2
Sofia School 2	3
Domestic violence service 1	3
Domestic violence service 2	1

9 out of 10 approached families agreed to participate and kept the appointment, which was much higher than I expected. My feeling was that people appeared interested and helpful, ready to discuss their points of view and I did not identify any concerns or suspicion on their side why particularly they had been ‘targeted’. These latter observations are of course purely subjective and I have got no way to evidence them.

(Продължение от стр.1)

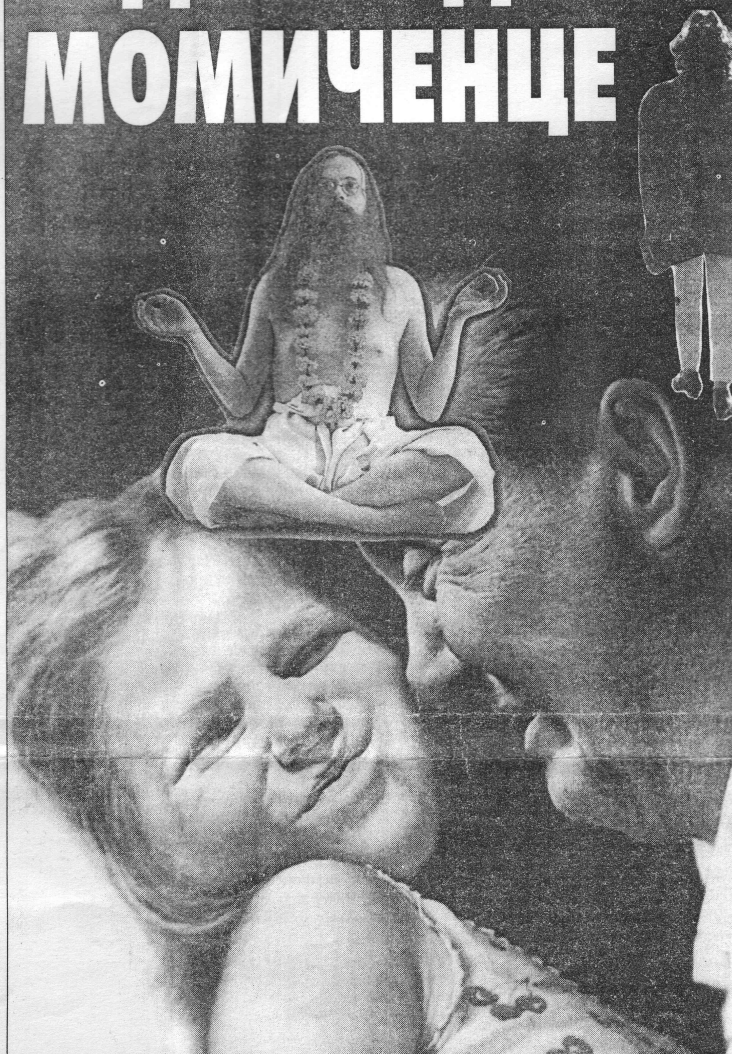
Боян е с безукорна външност - винаги стегнат, подчертано елегантен, гладко избръснат и ухаещ на скъп парфюм. Въпреки че приближава шейсетте, той е от хората, на които годините не им личат, сякаш изпаднали в безвремие. Без да е публична личност, е известен сред столичната бохема, научните и обществените среди - инженер, математик, компютърен специалист. С разностранни интереси - от широки познания в областта, в която работи, до тибетската медицина и китайския масаж. Хоноруван преподавател в СУ „Климент Охридски“, бил един от най-добрите специалисти в Министерството на благоустройството и териториалното развитие. Свири на цигулка, обича да е душа на компанията.

Малкото момиченце, което държи този мъж за ръката, е дъщеря на Нора. И все още не знае, че този вдъхващ респект и уважение мъж скоро ще пристъпи човешките закони, ще я „дари“ с преживявания, които един Господ знае как ще се отразят на понататъшния ѝ живот.

В живота на майката вуйчото заема особено място. „Когато станах на 16 години, спомня си Нора, той сподели, че е загрижен за моето бъдеще, тъй като майка ми почина, баща ми се проли и също си отиде от този свят. Имах Боян като баща. На седемнадесетия ми рожден ден той ми предложи интимна връзка, но без полов контакт - тогава все още бях девствена. По това време ми сподели, че е бил „близък“ и с майка ми. Винаги е коментирал с мен връзките ми с мъже, даваше ми съвети за брака. През последните седем-осем години сме се виждали рядко. За пръв път спях с него, преди да се омъжа. И след това - също.“

По време на следствието и извършеното сексологично изследване на Боян ще станат известни някои неафиширани факти от родовата биография на видния столичанин. Бил от известен княжески род, членовете на който в миналото се женели помежду си. Баба му и дядо му били втори братовчеди, неговите родители - трети. Спомня си, че бил само на пет-шест години

# ВУЙЧО ПОРУГА СЕДЕМГОДИШНО МОМИЧЕНЦЕ



за обучение по четене и писане, която с успех приложил и върху синовете си.

В жилището на вуйчото били двамата му синове и тъщата - съпругата му нас-

ностите на вуйчо си, майката веднага се съгласила. Така Боян и Алиса се озовали голи на терасата на ателието, после вътре. С тази разлика, че сега мъжът качил момиченце-

начало Нора и Боян се усамотили, после майката си тръгнала, като оставила дъщеричката на попечителството на възрастния мъж. За тази си ваканция момиченцето щял

кохм  
Тръ  
като  
тъпих  
изпре  
изми  
ме на

Figure 2.2: Title: “Uncle takes the virginity of a seven-year old girl” (*Weekly Labour*, 16 March 2000)

### 2.4.3 Historical and literary documents

Due to the specific nature of this sample, I do not provide a description here but refer in detail to all the historical and literary sources I have used, as I lay out my analysis in Chapter 3. As expected, I did not find much evidence related to ‘child maltreatment’ in these resources. However, I was surprised to find a vast number of common themes that I think help to explain and triangulate a lot of the media discourse findings discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

In summary, the historical and literary texts collected provided even much richer discursive material than I originally expected.

## 2.5 The Methods of Data Analysis

Since social constructionism has already been argued as most appropriate theoretical ground base for the current research project it is logical to seek methods for analysing the collected data that are consistent with it.

According to Gergen, one of the major consequences of the introduction of social constructionist ideas within social sciences is the shift in *the methods* that researchers use. They turn away from the methods of natural sciences and experimental psychology, and show preference to interpretative disciplines, which are interested in human meaning systems; thus borrowing methods from ethno-methodological work, dramaturgical analysis, anthropology, literary theory and deconstruction (Gergen, 1985).

One of the major forms of research method in that theoretical domain is the method of *discourse analysis*. No doubt discourse analysis has the potential to tackle the data and the questions as defined by me in the current study. Its advantage as a method is that it gives the possibility to explore:

- the elements of the child maltreatment narratives present in my research data,
- how these elements / discourses work to produce certain kind of stories,
- the child maltreatment discourses in their relation and interaction with various social agents,

- the mechanisms by which certain stories are dominant and silence other child maltreatment stories.

The specific approach to the discourse analysis that I use in the current research, is eclectic and stems from the work of several authors that have as common their interest, not so much in the linguistic aspects of the discourse but in how discourses ‘make certain thing happen’ (Potter & Wetherel, 1987).

Before arguing a specific form of analysis to be applied to my research data, I appraise several common approaches to discourse analysis widely used in contemporary social research.

Let me start with my understanding of the meaning of the concept of ‘discourse’ first. I think a pragmatically useful definition of discourse for the purposes of my study is provided by Hare-Mustin in her article *Discourses in the Mirrored Room: A Postmodern Analysis of Therapy*.

“ . . . “Discourse” comes from the Latin root *discurrere*, which means, “to run around” and different and competing discourses circulate in the culture . . . However, not all circulating discourses are of equal importance; some have a privileged and dominant influence on language, thought, and action.” (Hare-Mustin, 1994, pp. 19-35)

There is no a consistent unified method called ‘discourse analysis’ but rather a range of approaches calling themselves that and having some similar elements. One could hardly define the common features of these various forms of analysis, apart from the fact that they make a ‘turn to language’ and examine texts on their own right, independently from the intentions of the ‘authors’. As Wendy Hollway puts it, the primacy of language and text as a site to investigate social/psychological issues, is “. . . the only thing which the many variants of discourse analysis have in common, for the term has come to cover virtually any approach which analyses text, from cognitive linguistics to deconstruction” (Hollway, 1989, pp. 32-33).

Another strand of theoretical development closely linked to discourse analysis and social constructionism but coming not so much from social science and psychology but from history, philosophy and literature theory is post-structuralism. It

emerged on the basis of structuralism, both building on and rejecting some of its assumptions. Structuralism was searching for hidden structures that were lying behind (social) phenomena. The anthropologist Levi-Strauss, whose name is most closely linked with the structuralism, described ‘common structures’ in the myths of primitive societies. Jean Piaget did something similar in psychology, describing structures in the cognitive development of the child (Hoffman, 1990). The post-structuralists adopted the premise that certain structures stood behind the phenomena and these structures were more important for our understanding than the ‘intentions’ of the social actors; however, they argue that these structures are never fixed; they change over time, drawn by various factors and contexts; they are always fragmental and contradictory.

Defining any kind of demarcating lines between social constructionism, postmodernism, structuralism and post-structuralism is an exercise far beyond the scope of the current research. I doubt its pragmatic need either, especially having in mind that the majority of authors are in deep disagreements with each other where these demarcating lines lie. For example, Foucault himself would not have been happy to be called a ‘postmodernist’ (See Kendall & Wickham, 1999).

### **2.5.1 Structuralism. Vladimir Propp**

The reason I include this argument here comes from the fact that elements of structuralist theory are needed in my form of discourse analysis of choice.

When I studied the discourses about child maltreatment in Bulgaria, I became aware that certain (discursive) structures governed what could be said and what could not be said (or thought); these structures defined the ways in which the stories were told and evidently most of the stories fell into a limited range of ‘master-plots’. This shows the relevance of authors like Vladimir Propp to be included in the analysis (Lieberman, 1984; Propp, 1928/1968).

Vladimir Propp was a Russian structuralist who studied extensively the structure of the Russian magic tales. His contribution is into the claim that the Russian fairy tales can be ‘broken’ down to a number of elements or as he calls them—

narratemes. On that basis he formulates a typology of the structures of the tales. In the following Chapters I will refer to Propp's work on numerous occasions; I think that his approach is highly relevant in bringing light into the ways in which my press child maltreatment stories are constructed/structured.

Having said that, I think that a lot of the more general criticism to structuralism is valid to Propp's work, too. I think the structures I find in the newspaper articles are contradictory, inconsistent and fragmented; in that respect they are far away from the 'smoothened' by the centuries discourse of the fairy tales. Secondly, I am interested in the particular way in which the child maltreatment discourse emerge and develops dynamically in the Bulgarian public space; this is a question that could not be answered using purely structuralist approach as Propp's. Furthermore, Propp's approach does not help much into appraising how powerful relations and institutional practices interplay with the narrative structures, and how as a result of that these structures change over time, rather than being fixed—what Propp would claim. In a certain way, exactly these changes, dependencies and fragmentations are in the core of the current study.

The post-structuralist Michel Foucault addresses a similar set of questions when he criticises structuralism. I will discuss Foucault's relevance to the current study below.

## **2.5.2 Deconstruction theory and Jacques Derrida**

Another strand related to social constructionism and postmodern theory is *Deconstructionist theory*. It is related on the first place to the work of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who developed the post-structuralist notions in the field of literary criticism. The deconstructionists criticised an earlier structuralist school, which was called 'New Criticism'. The latter believed that

... a poem or a novel possessed a hidden structure of meanings—a kind of symbolic architecture ... The author's social and political beliefs, the genre he or she chose to write in, and his or her culture, history, and gender, were unimportant compared to the Grail to be found within the

text (Hoffman, 1990, pp. 1-12).

What the deconstruction does is to bringing literary criticism back into the larger context of politics, biography, and history (Hoffman, 1990). Deconstruction is not an easy notion to grasp but here are two definitions:

“Deconstruction refers to attempts to take apart texts and see how they are constructed in such a way as to present particular images of people and their actions” (Burr, 1995, p. 45).

Deconstruction “. . . refers to a close and critical analysis of texts in an attempt to lay bare their hidden allegiances and affiliations. . .” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 23).

The debate between Derrida and the New Criticism school is not dissimilar to what has been mentioned above about the debate between Foucault and structuralism in general (which I apply to the work of Propp). A very important aspect of my analysis of the newspaper stories is looking at the the narratives as implying social action; in that respect, the nature of the narrator and the receiving audience cannot be dismissed but on the contrary—they play an important part on how the child maltreatment narratives are shaped. Therefore, Derrida’s reclaiming of the ‘author’s attributes’ as determining the text characteristics is particularly relevant to my research material.

Another benefit of Derrida’s approach relevant to my study is that deconstruction “. . . approaches any work or story as inherently incomplete and fragmented” (Parry, 1991). I could add here that it approaches texts in a way that makes obvious where the otherwise hidden assumptions in the texts come from and what are the historical roots of the contradictions and the fragmentations in the texts. Deconstructionist tradition is obviously related to the kind of discourse analysis I am interested in the current study.

An example for the use of a deconstructionist approach relevant to my research is Erica Burman’s book *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* (1994).



### 2.5.3 Michael Foucault

I mentioned above Michel Foucault in relation to his critique of structuralism. Foucault formulates his famous definition of discourses, referred to by many authors in the field:

“...discourses systematically form the objects they refer to” (Foucault, 1969/1989, p.64).

For Foucault

“... the term [discourse] is integrated in an analysis of the production of knowledges ... within power relations” (Hollway, 1989, p. 33).

This is how Hollway summarises Foucault’s approach to discourses and I find this statement insightful because it highlights an important needed aspect of my analysis of child maltreatment discourses; namely that the ways in which child maltreatment is constructed in Bulgaria is a process that exist within certain power relations, between different social players having a vested interest in the talking.

In *Madness and Civilisation* (1961/2001) Foucault studied the history of mental illness: how the difference between ‘sane’ and ‘insane’ is produced; on the basis of what discourse/power practices this exclusion became possible and how the modern psychiatry evolved in this process as an institutional practice. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Foucault, 1975/1979), he traced the origins of the modern penal system and the mechanisms of discipline and social control. Foucault examines history in such a way that he makes it “groan and protest”; as he says we should not use the history to make ourselves comfortable, but rather to disturb the taken for granted (Foucault, 1980, as cited in Kendall & Wickham, 1999). His work

“... [genealogy] makes the older guests at the table of intellectual analysis feel decidedly uncomfortable by pointing out things about their origins and functions that they would rather remain hidden.” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 18).

Being a post-structuralist, Foucault looks on discourses not as fixed and static but as developing in the context of complex power relations—see above comparison with structuralists. In contrast to the traditional viewpoint to power as repressive and negative only<sup>7</sup> Foucault understands power as constitutive. By this he means, according to Michael White, that power shapes person's lives through 'normalising truths' (White & Epston, 1990). 'Normalising' because they construct norms around which people constitute and understand their lives and 'truths' not in the sense of objective facts but constructions as results of the operation of power. This links power and knowledge, which Foucault himself preferred to use inseparably as power/knowledge. Foucault maintains that modern power operates through isolation / marginalisation of certain knowledges through the development of dominant discourses of 'objective reality' (White & Epston, 1990).

The above argument is far from exhausting the discussion of Foucault's understanding of power. What is important here is that stepping on Foucault's work and learning from the examples of his critical appraisal of social institutions' discourses like psychiatry, medicine, the penal discourse, I am able to fulfil an important aspect of my own analysis of the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourse, namely that it operates within power relations. These power relations need exploring and should not be understood necessarily in negative terms.

Another relevant aspect of Foucault's work related to power is his understanding of the *dominant and the alternative discourses*. Hare-Mustin writes that:

“... because dominant discourses are so familiar, they are taken for granted and even recede from view. It is hard to question them. They are part of the identity of most members of any society, and they influence attitudes and behaviours...” (Hare-Mustin, 1994, pp. 19-35).

In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 I hope to demonstrate how this understanding could be applied to study the dominant child maltreatment discourses in Bulgaria and how

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<sup>7</sup>It is not uncommon in the recent literature Foucault's idea about power to be misrepresented as something that is exclusively 'bad' and oppressive, and something that needs to be fought and abolished.

it shapes their ‘reality’—sometimes in ‘invisible’ ways. I hope also to demonstrate the power implications of having dominant child maltreatment discourses in Bulgaria and the liberation and lessons for practice that potential ‘alternative’ discourses might hold.

One of the major problems though in applying Foucault’s ideas directly as a method in social research is that Foucault himself was fairly vague and inconsistent in describing his own method. Probably the best appraisal he makes of his own methodological approach can be found in his *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (1966/1970) and in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (Foucault, 1969/1989).

Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickham present in their book *Using Foucault’s Methods*, a comprehensive and handy interpretation of Foucault’s methodology (Kendall & Wickham, 1999). I will inevitably come back referring to Foucauldian method as I discuss other researches influenced by him, and when I outline my approach of studying the genealogy of the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourse.

#### **2.5.4 Ian Parker**

Ian Parker (Parker, 1991) has developed a method of discourse analysis that is closely inspired by Foucault’s work. In my opinion, this method stresses particularly well on the power dimensions and the institutional and ideological aspects of the discourses. As Parker says, without that dimension

“...an analysis of discourse could become just another method, just an academic exercise, and then just as pointless as other frameworks psychologists use to describe action and experience” (Parker, 1992).

This I believe is particularly true when studying a field such as child maltreatment in Bulgaria and one could raise the question whether a research at this field, which is not targeted at changing the things for the better, could be considered ethical. In his book *Discourse dynamics. Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology* (1992) Parker suggests a number of methodological steps that the researcher can take in order to carry out a discourse analysis. Both admired and

criticised, his approach provides no doubt one of the clearest methodological descriptions of how-to-do discourse analysis. The analysis in Chapter 4 is structured around Parker’s discourse analysis model though I borrow from other methods as well as I go along.

In *Discourse Dynamics* (1992) Parker outlines as many as twenty steps in order to identify the existing discourses within a text. Of course, he is not looking dogmatically at these criteria:

“I do not want to suggest that the criteria presented here constitute a method, that they should necessarily be employed sequentially, but that they will help to clear up some of the confusions . . .” (Parker, 1992).

Here I provide my fairly detailed version of these steps—as well as decisions behind adding new to them—because of the central role that Parker’s approach in discourse analysis plays in structuring my further study. What follows is my modification, based on Parker, 1992

1. Parker’s criteria start with one eliciting the ‘objects’ in the text and exploring how these objects are organised in particular ways of speaking; in practical terms this means looking for the nouns in the text and appraising how their meaning is constructed.
2. After that, one systematises the subjects in the text, which are the categories of people and institutions. Attention is paid to what the subjects say and have the right to say in the discourse.
3. The next step is the mapping of the different versions of the world in the text and refers to other texts to see how the identified discourses function in other contexts<sup>8</sup>.
4. After that, one identifies the institutions, which are reinforced by the different discourses, and what categories of people gain and lose from the employment of the such defined discourses.

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<sup>8</sup>This can also play the role for triangulation—a form of validation (see section 2.6). Note mine.

5. Finally, one explores how discourses allow the dominant groups to tell their narratives about the past in order to justify the present.
6. In addition to Parker's steps to discourse analysis, as presented above, I add an extra one that I think is omitted and that is particularly important in my study. This is the exploration of what marginalised discourses exist out there, which could install hope for change, how these discourses could attain their voice and what is their implication for practice.

I understand that such a listing of the above steps tends to be quite abstract; I hope they will become much clearer in Chapter 4, which I practically structure around them.

Parker's form of discourse analysis has been criticised for eliciting too 'abstract' discourses and for neglecting the specific interactions as the needed context of analysis.

From my point of view, another main limitation of Parker's approach to discourse analysis comes from what implies its advantage, too—it is a prescriptive form of analysis. As such, it provides a framework for the researcher where the routine is meant to guarantee reliability of the findings, diminishing the bias. However, on the negative side I envisage that it might be too prescriptive when one explores a new and an under-researched area such as the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourses. It is reasonable to expect the need to change and adapt the method of analysis as I go along.

Having made this clarification and highlighting the need for potentially more flexible application of the method—and eventually including elements of other methods with it—I still decide to base my discourse analysis on Parker's method for the following reasons:

- Firstly, the qualitative research in child maltreatment is still in its early days in Bulgaria and identifying the general discursive categories that determine its construction is an appropriate first step. In that respect, identifying discourses will contribute to the knowledge and in my opinion the risk of ending up with discourses that are too 'abstract' is minimal.

- Secondly, Parker’s method is based on a straightforward system of analytical steps, therefore it can be verified or replicated. This is related to the importance that I personally attribute to the consistent methodology as a researcher but also because of the fact of carrying out research dedicated to the Bulgarian context—while in the UK and in relative isolation of the immediate processes—brings the necessity of a methodology that guarantees potential replication and verification.
- Finally, and in spite of what Morss claims reviewing Parker’s work—that Parker has been ambivalent to Foucault’s approach all along (Morss, 2007)—I think that his form of discourse analysis is actually true to the Foucauldian interest and strive to put power and institutions under scrutiny. I believe this is a necessary step for a research project in area that needs urgent social changes and not necessarily only in Bulgaria.

### 2.5.5 Potter and Wetherel

Any review of discourse analysis models in social sciences will be incomplete, if a referral is not made to the work of Potter and Wetherel (Potter & Wetherel, 1987). Indeed, I think that their approach to discourse analysis is relevant to my research task.

Potter and Wetherel’s book *Discourse and Social Psychology* (1987) is an outstanding contribution to discourse analysis method. This book, although published nearly 20 years ago, remains as one of the contemporary ‘textbooks’ in the field of discourse analysis. The authors start with a historical account seeking the roots of the discourse analysis in the linguistic philosophy, speech act theory, ethnomethodology and semiotics. After that, they explore the application of the discourse analysis in various fields, like critical study of the social psychological notions of attitudes and racism, self, social representation, etc. Potter and Wetherel are often referenced for their introduction of the idea of the ‘interpretative repertoires’ as “... a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events” (Potter & Wetherel, 1987).

For example, one of the areas that the authors analyse is how the category of *community* is achieved by a cluster of metaphors, which are selectively put forward by the participants, in terms to provide an evaluative version about what has taken place during the ‘St Paul’s Riot’ in Bristol in 1980. The authors use the notion of the *interpretative repertoires* “...as a component in the systemic approach to the study of discourses”.

In contrast to Parker’s method, the *interpretative repertoires* are particularly useful when analysing discourses in spoken language. However, the Potter and Wetherel’s approach to the study of discourses and their notion of the interpretative repertoires is criticised by Ian Parker for affiliating too closely with microsociology and semiological tradition, stepping away from the Foucault’s ideas and the problems of ideology and institutions<sup>9</sup>.

I think that Potter and Wetherel’s method is especially powerful in studying the contradictory aspects of the participants’ accounts. In the context of my research, I refer back to these authors when discussing the interview material with the parents.

### **2.5.6 Feminist Discourse analysis**

Another influential writer in the area of discourse analysis is Wendy Hollway. She criticises Potter and Wetherel’s approach, for their focus on meaning, resulting in neglecting the problem of subjectivity. She writes:

“I would like to contribute an underlying theory for discourse analysis which is able to understand the relation between meaning and subjectivity” (Hollway, 1989, p. 33).

For the study of subjectivity, she turns to the ‘well-forgotten’ psychoanalysis. In her book *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology* (1989), she combines the discourses analysis with concepts from the Lacanian psychoanalysis, giving them a feminist twist.

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<sup>9</sup>That is, Parker’s understanding of Foucault’s ideas; Parker as we saw above, has been criticised for going to the other extreme and providing a form of analysis that is too generalised and ‘abstract’.

In the context of her research on heterosexual relationships, Wendy Hollway postulates three types of discourse: *the male sexual drive discourse*, *the have/hold discourse* and *the permissive discourse*. The *male sexual drive discourse* has as a central position the notion that men are driven by the biological necessity to seek out sex (Hollway, 1989). This is not dissimilar to what Rachel Hare-Mustin writes:

“The woman is seen as the object that arouses and precipitates men’s sexual urges. Men’s sexual urges are assumed to be natural and compelling; thus, the male is expected to be pushy and aggressive in seeking to satisfy them.” (Hare-Mustin, 1994, pp. 19-35).

The *male sexual drive discourse* is described as part of the masculine ‘nature’ and often is put forward as an explanation of sexual crime. But what is important in this case is that this is the explanation of the male not the female sexual behaviour; according to this discourse, women are driven by the biological need to reproduce, rather than to have sex. The *have/hold discourse* is related to the Christian family values: the husband and wife have a long-term loving and trustful relationship, live together and bring up children. Sex should happen only within the heterosexual, monogamous pair. However, Hollway argues that “... this discourse seems gender-blind... it is applied more stringently to women (with the effect of the well-known ‘double standard’)” (Hollway, 1989). The *permissive discourse* expressed itself in the context of the widespread challenge to the have/hold discourse during the 1960s. Hollway cites a book review that summarises the permissive society:

“On the whole, the young from both sexes believe that they have the right to express their sexuality in any way they choose so long as nobody is hurt” (Hollway, 1989, p. 56).

Here, again the discourse seems gender-blind; “... it permitted sex for women, too. What it did not do was defend the women against the differential effects of permissiveness on men and women...” (Campbell, 1980, as cited in (Hollway, 1989)).

Or, as Hare-Mustin states:



“...permissiveness has different effects for men and women because of their different positions in society. For men, permissiveness can mean open sexual access; for women, permissiveness can mean pressure to accede to men’s urging for sexual activity. In combination with the male sex drive discourse, the permissive discourse serves further to coerce women to meet men’s needs by labelling reluctant women as up-tight and teases, or as frigid” (Hare-Mustin, 1994, pp. 19-35).

Both Hollway’s and Hare-Mustin’s work on sexuality and gender discourses is widely recognised. They represent only two examples of discourse analysis being taken up by the postmodern feminists in the process of continuous awareness raising regarding gender inequalities.

Even a quick preview through my newspaper articles sample brings attention to the fact that most of the stories are heavily gender-specific; they are told in distinctively different ways regarding whether they involve adult male or female characters. This will be put under thorough analytic scrutiny in Chapter 4. I hope to demonstrate how the work of feminist authors like Hollway and Hare-Mustin on discourses helps to bring a light gender-specific themes in my own research data.

### **2.5.7 Norman Fairclough and the media discourse**

The last but not least name in this discourse analysis methods’ review is the one of Norman Fairclough, who is known for the development of a specific method of analysis that he calls ‘critical discourse analysis’.

Fairclough—following a Foucauldian principle—is interested in the relationship between discourses and social/institutional practices and how they mutually influence each other. He defines the *critical discourse analysis* as an exploration into the

“...often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by rela-

tions of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony . . .” (Fairclough, 1995).

My understanding of Fairclough’s use of the term ‘opacity’ is that discursive practices become more and more sophisticated and ‘invisible’ in the way they control social action and our everyday life—a claim that can be found also in Foucault’s appraisal of social institutions like psychiatry and the penal system (Foucault, 1961/2001, 1975/1979).

What makes Fairclough particularly relevant to my study of child maltreatment newspaper stories is the fact that following the above principle of critical discourse analysis, he puts under scrutiny the way in which mass-media discourse works—mainly in the area of advertising and marketing (Fairclough, 1989, 1998).

In *Language and Power* (1989) Fairclough identifies three stages of discourse analysis:

- **Description** is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text
- **Interpretation** is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction—with seeing the text as the product of a process of production. . .
- **Explanation** is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context. . . and their social effects.” (Fairclough, 1989)

In the same book Fairclough suggests a long list of specific steps and questions to analyse each one of the above three stages. Although I do not use these steps as an organising principle of my analysis in the following Chapters but rather opt for Parker’s approach to texts, I find Fairclough’s definition of three stages of discourse useful in addressing the mechanisms of *how social practices shape and influence discourse and exploring how these influences becomes historically more and more opaque*. Therefore, I return to Fairclough in Chapter 5, where I discuss these links in the Bulgarian context of child maltreatment and refer to some of Fairclough’s work.

In *Media Discourse* (Fairclough, 1998), Fairclough uses examples from TV, radio, and the press, to explore the dynamic changes in the media discourse and the tension between public and private, information and entertainment. A range of authors use the method of critical discourse analysis and Fairclough's study of media to explore similar discourses in Balkan cultures. For example, Adla Isanović studies the gender discourses dominant in the media in the former Yugoslav countries (Isanović, 2006), Maciej Czerwiński studies the discursive construction of European identity in the Croatian media (Czerwiński, 2003), and Fairclough himself contributes to the study of the construction of Romanian (anti-)feminist discourses. I found the latter particularly interesting because what Fairclough identifies as difficulties for the feminist discourse to find its voice in post-Communist Romania, are not dissimilar to the difficulties facing certain forms of *child maltreatment discourses* to find their voices in Bulgaria.

In *Mediated Discourse and Social Interaction. A Study of News Discourse* (Scollon, 1998), Ron Scollon takes Fairclough's critical discourse analysis as one of the main three around which he organises his study of the news and journalism.

### **2.5.8 Discourse analysis studies in the child maltreatment and child welfare area**

In section 2.1, I listed some examples of discursive studies in the area of child maltreatment and generally child welfare. Now I return to some of these to discuss author's choices of research methods.

Perhaps one of the most notable texts here—due to its similarity with my research task—is the article *Narrative Transformations in Child Abuse Reporting* by Hall et al. (1997).

The authors use a method of discourse analysis derived from Fairclough's approach stating based on the premise that

... To approach media reporting from the perspective of discourse analysis is to view critically the interaction between instances of talk and text and the sociopolitical context (Fairclough, 1992, as cited in Hall et al.,

1997).

After that they clarify that

... By interaction we mean that talk and writing are occasions which are both the product of sociocultural processes as well as local sites where social agendas are shaped and influenced (Hall et al., 1997, p. 273).

The authors use the defined in such a way method in discourse analysis to study the media coverage of a particular child abuse case and explore how the elements of these stories shift in accordance of the agendas of the different social actors involved in telling them.

This is an example of how Fairclough's approach to discourse—as outlined in Section 2.5.7—is applied to the area of child maltreatment. The authors demonstrate a key principle of discourse analysis at work, namely the complex interdependence between the social practices and the text itself.

I am not discussing here the nature of their findings though highly relevant to my work because the main focus here is on method. I will return to them later, in the process of analysing my own data. In other texts on child maltreatment and child welfare, there is a wide range of flavours of discourse analysis used.

In *Parent participation in social work Meetings—the case of child protection conferences* (2001), Hall et al. employ a mixture of discourse approaches, to include ethnography, which is justified with the nature of the study and is introduced to ensure a combination of "... 'distancing observation'—reserving critical space for discourse analysis—with one of 'sympathetic involvement'—oriented towards needs as felt and formulated by clients..." (Hall & Slembrouck, 2001, 147)

In *Not in Families Like Us: The Social Construction of Child Abuse in America*, (1994), Norman does not elaborate on her method but my understanding is that she follows what could be generally considered a Foucauldian approach, exploring the ways in which the constructions of 'child abuse' serves to maintain power relations. She claims that child abuse is 'normal' and

"...By normal I mean a set of practices embedded in daily life and

inseparable from cultural norms required for the maintenance of certain structures of power. . .” (Norman, 1994, n.p.)

This is no doubt in accordance with Foucault’s understanding of the normalisation process (White & Epston, 1990).

A much more explicit Foucauldian approach is taken by Heather D’cruz in her study *The Social Construction of Child Maltreatment: The Role of Medical Practitioners* (D’Cruz, 2004). She steps on Foucault’s dualism knowledge-power and uses the work of child protection critiques like Parton (Parton, 1991) and Thorpe (Thorpe, 1994) to analyse two case studies and to demonstrate how the medical professionals and the social workers use their knowledge and power to construct the meaning of child maltreatment.

In *Empathic childrearing and the adult construction of childhood* (1998), Kennedy uses quite a different approach—one that she borrows from the psychohistorian deMausse (deMausse, 1974/1980)—to the way in which the constructions of ‘child’ and ‘adult’ have evolved, and how they psychologically relate to each other (Kennedy, 1998).

These are only a few examples illustrating possible discourse analysis approaches in the area of child abuse and child maltreatment. At this point, I limited myself in briefly outlining their *methodological* side; I refer back to most of them in terms of findings in later Chapters.

### **2.5.9 Which Discourse Analysis?**

For that reason, the above overview claims to be neither exhaustive, nor representative of the wide range of discourse analysis approaches available. However, it includes some of the discursive methods that I find relevant for achieving the aims of the current study, and some examples of their application in my field of research.

The specific method to be used, both depends on and determines the nature of the data sample and the questions that are analysed. Therefore, the logical methodological issue is: What approach or combination of approaches to discourse analysis serves best to analyse my material and to answer the research questions?

Chapter 3 is dedicated to a historical and cultural examination of the origin of the child maltreatment discourse in Bulgaria. It is based on using Foucault's genealogical approach and due to the specifics of this exploration, I provide methodological discussion at the beginning of the Chapter.

In Chapter 4, I use a mixture of methods, structuring the analysis around Parker's approach (Parker, 1992, 1994) as the most suitable—from my point of view—for the study of printed textual material. The method was briefly described on Page 48 and more details are provided in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to expanding the analysis beyond the specific texts, and appraising the inter-connections between the newspaper texts themselves and the actors from the social environment, as well as referring to UK studies in this field. In that respect, I rely on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, which is suitable for this purpose. Wherever relevant, input from other discourse approaches are also used.

## **2.6 The Question of Validity and Reliability of the current study**

The main validity assessment tool employed in this project is the one of triangulation, which is defined as

“[a] ... procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study.” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, as cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 604)

As already pointed out in Section 2.2, there are two sets of research data that are used to analyse against my main sample of newspaper articles—these are the historical and literary resources/artefacts from the Bulgarian context and the second one is a sample of nine interviews, carried out with Bulgarian parents.

As Golafshani points out, “... [triangulation] may include multiple methods of data collection and data analysis, but does not suggest a fix method for all the researches. The methods chosen in triangulation to test the validity and reliability

of a study depend on the criterion of the research.” (Golafshani, 2003)

In my case, taking into account the high number of unknowns that surround a highly under-researched area what exploring the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourses is, and the limited resources available within the scope of a PhD thesis, I think that the best criterion for a triangulation process is the deductive one, namely whether the matching of the different data sets show patterns of theories already revealed. One example about such a validating theory can be Fairclough’s understanding about the inter-relatedness between the social condition and processes of production, and the text (Fairclough, 1989).

Another aspect of the validating process through triangulation is matching my findings and analysis with a range of other studies in the same field—predominantly from the UK and already referred to in Section 2.1 and Section 2.5.8.

A specific precaution as far as reliability is concerned, I take an approach that rigorously plans and reflects on the methodological base of the study.

## 2.7 The Research Ethics

There are a certain number of ethical considerations that I take into account while carrying out my research. These are the following:

1. Although my main pool of data consists of newspaper articles, which are public and normally issues of confidentiality would not apply, I decided to *change the names of the people and geographic places* that appear in them. The reason behind that was my opinion that Bulgarian mass medial still do not keep to the needed ethical standards of confidentiality themselves.
2. Confidentiality for the interviewees. All parents participating in the research are guaranteed confidentiality of the information that they disclose, unless there is a risk for significant harm for a child; the families were informed about the latter limitation of confidentiality in advance.
3. Informed consent. Parents participating in the research do it voluntary, after being informed with what the research is about. They were provided with a

printed outline of the research project and an explanation what the role they are request for is, about confidentiality and its limitations, etc. The Parents are be given time to think whether they would want to participate.

4. After transcribing the interviews from the tapes, the latter are destroyed.

More general issues concerning the research values and ethics, not limited to procedural steps but encompassing the ethical stance of the research as a whole, were provided in Chapter 1.



## Chapter 3

# History Of Childhood and Parenting — The Bulgarian Tales

My grandmother always used to tell me when we ate: “Come on, eat everything because the Gypsy child will come and beat you up.” And I asked, “Who do you mean, Pembe?” Pembe was always smiling, a small boy with a dark skin. I think his two front teeth were missing. Often one of the children would ask him: “Pembe, why your name is Pembe? You are not a Gypsy, are you?” And Pembe always answered, “No I am not. I am a Turk. But from the good ones. . .”

*An autobiographical account, (Petrov, Gospodinov, & Ivanova, n.d.)*

My first step in the journey of exploration of the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourses—as discussed earlier—is defined by the need to trace back their origins and the contexts that made them possible. Therefore, the current research starts with a historical endeavour looking for evidence of the evolving of these discourses in various written sources, ranging from mythology through literature to biographical accounts.

In the current Chapter, I study how the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourses unfold in the historical context of different layers of meaning of *childhood* and *parent-*

*ing*. The aim behind focusing on the notions of *childhood* and *parenting* comes from the need to understand the discursive context in which *child maltreatment* in family environment takes place. Furthermore, expanding the research subject in this manner enables exploration further back in time, before the notions of *child maltreatment* or *child abuse* were constructed, and enlightening discourse areas that presupposed certain versions of the contemporary constructions of *child maltreatment* or *child abuse*.

The rationale behind this Chapter's is my understanding that the contemporary Bulgarian child maltreatment discourses—the focus of the current study—are linked to and can only be understood in the context of the multiple and contradictory discursive influences from the past.

What follows, is an exploration of the references to *parenting*, *childcare* and *child maltreatment* in Slavic, Bulgarian and Roma Gypsy folklore, early written Bulgarian Christian documents, art and literature. The discursive traditions or more precisely the urban folklore during Communism is another area of exploration. Furthermore, I demonstrate the need to explore biographical accounts—including my own—for the need of completion of the current argument.

The historical account is mainly focused on the Bulgarian context but also seeks comparisons and links to other Slavic and European traditions; for example in the area of folklore, the German tradition revealed in fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1982, Bottigheimer, 1987 & Tatar, 1987) and Vladimir Propp's account of the Russian 'Wondertale' (Propp, 1928/1968 & Propp, 1984). An important aspect is also the trans-national exploration of the beliefs about *Gypsy parenting* and *Gypsy culture* in general and the persecution of the Roma Gypsies across Europe. <sup>1</sup> This latter exploration includes but is not necessarily primarily focused on own Roma Gypsy folklore.

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<sup>1</sup>My particular interest in the way Roma Gypsy *parenting* and *childcare* are constructed lies in the striking frequency and highly hostile and extraordinary way in which the Roma Gypsy theme is present in my research data, which mirrors the pandemic racism towards the Roma Gypsies in Bulgaria, as discussed in Chapter 1.

The current discussion—as well as the subsequent analysis of the research data in the following chapters—also refer to a number of UK studies that pursue similar objectives (Parton, 1985, Parton et al., 1997, Hall et al., 1997, among others), as well as referring to texts exploring the general history of childhood in Europe (Ariès, 1960/1962, Cunningham, 1995, Marvick, 1974/1980 and others).

As a secondary benefit of this chapter’s exploration, I hope to introduce the reader to my version of main aspects of Bulgarian history, culture and mentality in general, as well as highlight some specifics of the Bulgarian child welfare situation and draw parallels with its UK counterpart.

### 3.1 The Method used in this Chapter

My interest is in a certain kind of historical exploration, not so much chronologically identifying and outlining different ways of speaking about *childhood* and *parenting* but rather revealing contradictions, inconsistencies, common themes in this speaking.

Therefore, a methodological principle is needed, in order to avoid simplistic description of occurrences.

There are several factors that inform my methodological choice of how to approach the current historical analysis:

- My interest is to explore the *origins* of the social constructs of parenting and childhood, and to trace these notions back in history, trying to find ideas of how and why they have emerged and how they became possible. The question of the *origins* is important not only in the classical deterministic sense but based on the hypothesis that public discourses are ‘ruptured’ and ‘discontinuous’ rather than consistent (Foucault, 1969/1989), and I expect to find remains of these inconsistent origins present in the current Bulgarian public debate on *child maltreatment*.
- My particular focus is on childhood and parenting as social *constructs*, namely, as notions that are ‘historically and culturally specific (Burr, 1995) and that

re-emerge and re-shape throughout history, in a process of ‘ongoing negotiation’ in everyday human interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1969). The constructionist perspective on history is consistent with my research approach, as discussed in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 2.

- Historical exploration of childhood and parenting needs to examine an extensive number of sources with varying length and diverse nature and ranging from fairy tales to legislative acts, from prose to verse and from printed material to spoken language and biographical accounts.

Facing these requirements, I chose Foucault’s genealogical method to structure the current historical study. Foucault used it in his classic appraisals of the origins of the notion of ‘madness’ (*Madness and Civilisation*, 1961/2001), the origins of the penitentiary system (*Discipline and Punish*, 1975/1979) and the medical perception (*The Birth of the Clinic*, 1963/1973).

Foucault defines genealogy as the pursuit of situating ideas in history; how and why they become possible and more importantly, how they become ‘truths’ as a result of their interplay with power.

At the same time, Foucault makes sure to oppose his idea of genealogy to the understanding of the history on the basis of linear development; for him the genealogical endeavour reveals the contradictory and ruptured nature of the discourses.

A genealogy of values, morality, asceticism, and knowledge will never confuse itself with a quest for their “origins”, will never neglect as inaccessible the vicissitudes of history. On the contrary, it will cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning; it will be scrupulously attentive to their petty malice... (Foucault, 1977)

And also ...

... The genealogist needs history to dispel the chimeras of the origin, somewhat in the manner of the pious philosopher who needs a doctor to exorcise the shadow of his soul (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault's understanding and application of the method of genealogy was strongly influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's work on exploration of the development of morals (Foucault, 1977). In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche postulates his 'hypotheses on the origins of morality' and explores what he calls their distinctive and fragmented nature, to include the distinctive and fragmented origins of the notion of 'good' (Nietzsche, 1887/1967). Friedrich Nietzsche's genealogy of morals some link to "the relationship of flight from economics to aesthetics, in the period between the class warfare of 1871 and the imperialist war of 1914-18" (Andrew, 1995)

Pamela Major-Poetzl gives the following summary of Foucault's genealogical method:

"[Genealogy is] . . . an interpretation of interpretations, constructed from a careful examination of the "archive" and sensitive to the "singularity of events" that emerge from such unlikely places as sentiments, instincts, and conscience." (Major-Poetzl, 1983, pp. 36-37)

Also,

"Genealogy does not, therefore, trace the ultimate origins of morality, asceticism, justice, punishment and knowledge; it examines a multitude of accidental, intersecting beginnings. It refuses to regard the past as a period of lost perfections, divine creations followed by falls, or hidden truths buried under the errors of the present. On the contrary, genealogy perceives only humble beginnings and a series of errors behind the "truths" of the present. Genealogy does not, in fact, treat the questions of origins at all; it studies the dispersions of the descent. Unlike origin, descent reveals differences, discontinuities, and division ." (Major-Poetzl, 1983, p. 37)

The genealogy method transcends beyond historical appraisal of 'gradual developments', meaning that Foucault

"...will ignore both the vertical hierarchy of propositions which are stacked on top of one another, and the horizontal relationship established

between phrases in which each seems to respond to another. Instead he will remain mobile, skimming along in a kind of diagonal line that allows him to read what could not be apprehended before, namely statements” (Deleuze, 1986/1988, pp. 1-2)

Foucault’s understanding of genealogy is relevant to the study of child maltreatment and parenting—areas in which I expect to find various contradictions, historical fragmentation and inconsistency. In the current Chapter, I hope to demonstrate that those expectations have been proven correct.

The problem with Foucault’s genealogical method of exploration though is that Foucault himself has not provided any clear and consistent account of his method—as already mentioned in Chapter 2. In his 1967 book *The Archaeology of Knowledge*<sup>2</sup> Foucault focuses predominantly on methodology; he discusses the ‘statements’ as the basic units of the discourse (Foucault, 1969/1989). However, I find Kendall and Wickham’s effort to explore Foucault’s methodology the best one to my knowledge, in terms of comprehensiveness and consideration to verifiable research practice (Kendall & Wickham, 1999); the latter authors’ work has influenced my current approach.

The following sections do not follow any strict chronological order but rather present a way to logically organise the wide range of discursive resources in manageable groups. There are some inevitable overlaps between them.

## **3.2 Early documents on childhood and parenting**

### **3.2.1 The foundational myth**

Searching for the earliest evidence of Bulgarian notions of parenting and parents-children relationships brings us back as far as one of the foundational myths of the Bulgarian people. A legend says that when Khan Kubrat (608-668 AD)<sup>2</sup> was dying, he gathered his sons and ordered them to fetch a bundle of sticks, and then told

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<sup>2</sup>A ruler who succeeded in uniting the proto-Bulgarian tribes in the lands north of the Caucasus during the first half of the 7th century.

them to break it in two. When none of the sons managed to break the bundle, the Khan took the sticks and broke them one by one with his weak hands (Lalkov, 1995; *Bulgarian Myths and Legends*, 2005)

I remember this story being told on numerous occasions when I was at school; the morale, which was stressed out was that when we are united, we are harder to ‘break’. The metaphor with the bundle of sticks or arrows is part of myths across the world—for example it is met with the proto-Mongol Hunnu people (*Kubrat*, 2007); in Latin the word ‘fasces’ means rods bundled around an axe and for the Romans it symbolised the strength through unity. The latter was taken up in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini as a core symbol of fascism.

The Byzantine chroniclers Theophanes and Nicephorus wrote that Khan Kubrat bespoke to his sons before he died that they needed to preserve the unity, “so that they would dominate everywhere and never become other peoples’ slaves” (Lalkov, 1995).

After Khan Krubrat’s death though, his sons divided the proto-Bulgarian people between themselves and separated in different directions. One of the sons—Khan Asparouch—moved to the Balkan peninsula and founded the Bulgarian state (681 AD).

Without over-interpreting this foundational myth, I find several of its aspects interesting and potentially relevant to the current study:

- It defines the the male blood line—the relationship of the father with his grown up sons—as the one passing wisdom to the next generation. The main message is one of wisdom and bequest, not one of care<sup>3</sup>.
- Khan Kubrat’s sons disobeyed their father’s bequest shortly *after* his death.

It is arguable to what extent one can draw conclusions about parenting based on foundational myths. These indeed are very general stories with overarching themes encountered across most cultures. It becomes evident though that those are presented as ever-lasting moral lessons passed from a generation to a generation and

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<sup>3</sup>The latter is evident in the foundational myth of Rome—where the sons Romulus and Remus are young and vulnerable; in this case it is the *female* wolf who steps in to protect and care.

that when encountered in foundational myths, parents-children relationships are represented in an idealised manner in a context of—or longing for the loss of—an idealised patriarchal family. In that line of thinking, the very words for ‘fatherland’ and ‘motherland’ found in many languages<sup>4</sup>, imply parental relationship. Although the Latin ‘patria’ and the Greek ‘patris’ can be traced back to Ancient Europe, the notion of ‘motherland’/‘fatherland’ as contemporary social constructs is usually associated as the rise of the modern nationalism, which according to the modernist theories of nationalism—including Marxism—was a result of 19<sup>th</sup> century industrialisation (Anderson, 1983/1991).

This nationalist reading of the foundational myths implies a quasi-parental relationship of the country, where disobedience with the quasi-parental authority equals treachery.

This makes even more interesting the storyline of the Bulgarian foundational myth that the sons of Khan Kubrat actually disobey their father, which leads to the disintegration of ‘Great Bulgaria’ and Khan Asparouh moving on the south of the River Danube with some of the tribes and founding contemporary Bulgaria; it is not uncommon for the Bulgarian Revival<sup>5</sup> writers to speculate how much stronger Bulgaria would have been, if only Khan Kubrat’s sons had followed their father’s testament, and that disobedience and historical mistake are at the heart of the very creation of the Bulgarian state.

According to some authors, like Roumen Daskalov (Daskalov, 1994, Daskalov, 2004) the Bulgarian foundational myth plays an important part in forming the national identity; therefore it is also relevant to my research in a *secondary* way, as far as national identity—as elusive term as it is—plays a part in the construction of the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourse, as I hope to demonstrate in Chapter 4.

To summarise, in spite of the fact that there is a clear reference to the parental relationship, childhood as such—and motherhood for that matter—are not a part

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<sup>4</sup>‘Taktovina’ in Bulgarian, ‘Patris’ in Greek, ‘das Vaterland’ in German, ‘Otechestvo’ in Russian, ‘Pha Yul’ in Tibetha, etc.

<sup>5</sup>Bulgarian liberation, intellectual and nationalist movement from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries—when Bulgaria was under the occupation of the Ottoman Empire.



of the ‘constitutional’ texture of the Bulgarian foundational tale.

### 3.2.2 Early Slavic folklore

The foundational myth of the Bulgarians is typically proto-Bulgarian, reflecting the historical fact that the proto-Bulgarians played a key role in founding the Bulgarian state and providing its military and administrative basis back in 681 AD. However, the vast majority of the population in these territories was Southern Slavic<sup>6</sup>. While in religious practice a dualism between proto-Bulgarian and Slavic paganism was kept, very soon—by the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD—the Slavic language and culture became the dominant ones in the country, with the proto-Bulgarian culture fading away or kept amongst the ruling proto-Bulgarian clans (Markovski, 1981; Stanilov, 2002).

The Slavic folklore and pagan traditions dominated the early Bulgarian society and were adapted to the Christianity when the Bulgarian King Boris I adopted it in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD.

One factor that makes the direct study of early Slavic mythology difficult is the fact that there are no direct first-hand written documents about it—for example unlike the Greek or Egyptian mythology—before the christianisation of the Slavs had started (*Slavic Mythology*, 2007). Therefore, historians rely on early evidence provided by non-Slavic Christian missionaries, mainly from the Byzantine Empire.

Studying early Bulgarian folklore, most references to parents and children are pan-Slavic; I have been able to identify only very few specific Bulgarian accounts in this area.

What strikes as a first impression, is the contrast of this folklore with the proto-Bulgarian mythological tradition. While the latter is predominantly militaristic and patriarchal, the early Slavic tradition is full of reference to female figures/godesses and deities of harvest and fertility. One possible explanation can be sought in the different means of living: the proto-Bulgarians occupation was mainly in war and hunting, while the Slavs were settled and predominantly occupied in farming. The

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<sup>6</sup>According to Dimiter Markovski, the differentiation among the Slavic tribes set in as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century (Markovski, 1981).

Bulgarian word for Fatherland—as discussed above—is ‘Rodina’, which is a female noun that means ‘one giving birth’; this female impersonation of the country is typically Slavic.

Early Slavic mythology refers to a range of natural, domestic and war divinities; although some relationships between these divinities are specified, this is far from the complex ‘family’ relationship in Ancient Greek mythology for example (*New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, 1968), thus providing little evidence of the Slav’s way of constructing childhood and parenting.

An interesting archetypal character in Slavic mythology is ‘Baba Yaga’

... a hag who flies through the air in a mortar, using the pestle as a rudder and sweeping away the tracks behind her with a broom made out of silver birch. She lives in a log cabin that moves around on a pair of dancing chicken legs. The keyhole to her front door is a mouth filled with sharp teeth; the fence outside is made with human bones with skulls on top—often with one pole lacking its skull, so there is space for the hero’s ... (*Slavic Mythology*, 2007, n.p.)

What is indeed notable about this maybe most famous Slavic mythic character is her *dual moral nature*.

Baba Yaga is sometimes shown as an antagonist, and sometimes as a source of guidance; there are stories where she helps people with their quests, and stories in which she kidnaps children and threatens to eat them. Seeking out her aid is usually portrayed as a dangerous act. An emphasis is placed on the need for proper preparation and purity of spirit, as well as *basic politeness*<sup>7</sup> (*Slavic Mythology*, 2007, n.p.).

Also,

... according to some versions of the myths, Baba Yaga ages a year every time someone asks her a question. This is why she is often portrayed as

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<sup>7</sup>Italics mine.

a cranky old hag: she is frustrated and angry about having been asked so many questions ... (*Slavic Mythology*, 2007, n.p.)

In the Slavic folklore Baba Yaga interacts with children and / or young heroes. The word 'baba' has the dual meaning of either 'grandmother' or 'old woman'. The dual moral character of Baba Yaga is apparent in the folklore and in the narrator's descriptions. In that respect, she is very different from god-parents in Ancient Greek mythology or other cultures' foundational myths, where the parent can throw away, kill and even eat their children but this is not accompanied by a moral judgement by the narrator.

Baba Yaga can be either a villain or a wise guide but which face she will show depends totally on the other protagonist—usually an youngster, especially on their *politeness and purity of spirit*. She does not need to give an explanation for her behaviour; it is the youngster's behaviour that is scrutinised by the narrator; Baba Yaga's behaviour is not a discussed subject in these stories.

This is consistent of my inability to find discourse structures scrutinising parents in Slavic folklore; the children and youngsters' compliance though is highlighted as desirable and in some of these stories as crucial of the survival of the heroes: from several youngsters it is the *pure and compliant* one that survives and reaps rewards. Baba Yaga as an archetypal parental figure is unpredictable and capricious and her actions are as much subject to moral considerations as the natural forces of storm or fire could be. And as with humans facing severe natural forces, it is the child's responsibility to adapt and comply in order to 'survive' the encounter.

Baba Yaga is not a unique Slavic character though. Here is what the Russian structuralist Vladimir Propp writes in his *Morphology of Folklore* regarding the Russian folklore character of 'Morózko' (Frost):

... In a series of wondertales about the persecuted stepdaughter I noted an interesting fact: in "Morózko" [Frost] ... the stepmother sends her stepdaughter into the woods to Morózko. He tries to freeze her to death, but she speaks to him so sweetly and so humbly that he spares her, gives her a reward, and lets her go. The old woman's daughter, however, fails

the test and perishes. In another tale the stepdaughter encounters not Morózko but a lešij [a wood goblin], in still another, a bear . . . (Propp, 1928/1968, p. 20).

Propp defines the above scenario as actually one of the main structures organising the narrative of the Russian magic tales (Propp, 1928/1968).

Not only the politeness and the purity of the soul is what saves the ‘good’ child as opposed to the ‘bad’ one; it is also her appearing sweet and innocent; it would be unnatural for Morózko to hurt somebody who ‘*appears sweet*’. Therefore, ‘sweetness’ is raised as both a moral category and a survival strategy of the child. If I allow myself a speculation, I can generalise that *it will be unnatural to hurt a child that is ‘sweet’ and ‘innocent’*.

One can see another interpretation in the story, too. The irony is that a *stranger* spares and sees the beauty of the child, which is not appreciated by her family. The stepmother gets punished, having her own daughter perishing. In this ‘dysfunctional family’, it is Baba Yaga or another outsider who brings salvation and justice for the mistreated child—and this salvation comes from a capricious, yet just source.

In summary, Baba Yaga is one of the earliest Bulgarian / Slavic folklore references to adult female- child relationship. It becomes evident that it is constructed as a relationship where the female is old, bad tempered but just, not liking to be asked too many questions, and powerful. The child or the young person—depending on the story—can be male or female and they get awarded or punished, depending on their compliance, which in these myths is equivalent to being a nice and pure person, or ‘sweet’.

The attribute of the Grandmother (‘baba’) is a characteristic of the Slavic and in particular the Bulgarian folklore. A frequently encountered character is ‘Baba Metza’, which translates into English as ‘Grandmother Bear’<sup>8</sup>. She is—again—usually old and wise and can be kind or menacing, which depends entirely of the behaviour or the the character of the hero.

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<sup>8</sup>Another interesting Slavic aspect of that word is in its etymology—it is related to the word ‘med’, i.e. ‘honey’.

Exclusive for the Bulgarian folklore is the figure of ‘Baba Marta’, who is the impersonation of the month of March. As the weather in March is unpredictable and ‘temperamental’, so is ‘Baba Marta’. Sometimes she is kind (then the weather is nice and warm) but sometimes she is furious and angry (then there is snow and blizzard). It is notable that the impersonation of the natural forces, typical for pagan religion and mythology, is combined here with the opposite process, namely the ‘*nature-lisation*’<sup>9</sup> of the hero’s personality—in their relationship with children and youngsters.

A general characteristic feature of Slavic folklore—as pointed out above—are all these female matriarchal figures. One—assumably a child—has to be careful with them, not to upset them; on the other hand, one can rely on their firm but just character (to factually intervene in the family). The tension between matriarchal and patriarchal elements in Slavic folklore is not uncommon for other cultures. The historical claim that matriarchal societies really existed failed to be proven and some claim that the notion of matriarchy was rather an ‘ideal or model’ in mythology and ‘a tool of thinking’, e.g. the Amazons myth (Tyrrell, 1984). Therefore, some anthropologists prefer to speak of ‘matrifocality’ rather than ‘matriarchy’,

“...to refer to societies with focus on women and especially mothers though not necessarily dominated by women or mothers.” (*Matriarchy*, 2007)

Although a claim that Slavic society was matrifocal is problematic and hard to prove, female divinities play an important mythological part in the family.

One thing that is absent from these early mythological discourses—as well as in the foundational myth, as discussed above—is any notion of childhood outside the illustrated continuum of whether a child is obedient and with good, pure soul or otherwise. How children and youngsters are treated and the consequences for these children depends entirely *on the character of the children themselves*. Namely, if you are a ‘good’ child, there is nothing to worry about; if you are a ‘bad’ child, you might perish.

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<sup>9</sup>Attributing characteristics typical of the ‘wild’ nature.

Another gap in the discourse—obvious here from my interchangeable use of the words ‘child’ and ‘youngster’—is the lack of certainty in the Slavic folklore of what exactly is referred as a ‘child’, which could mean a person under certain age, an offspring (parental relationship) or just somebody in communication with an elder.

Hugh Cunningham in *Children & Childhood in Western Societies Since 1500* (1995), finds the same problem looking at Ancient Greek and Roman cultures:

“...Neither Greek or Latin had any equivalent to the word ‘baby’, but each had a variety of words signifying child, but rarely restricted to that ... Just as in the age of modern imperialism and African adult might have been called a ‘boy’, so in the ancient world a slave or a servant, of whatever age, could be *pais*<sup>10</sup> or *puer*<sup>11</sup>. Does this imply that children were held in low esteem, or does it simply refer to the fact that in terms of power and juridical standing slaves and servants were in the same position as children?” (Cunningham, 1995, p. 23)

To push this questioning further, I might ask, is the historical origin of the ‘protective practice’ exclusively targeted to children or it goes beyond, to encompass all considered in ‘a position of low esteem’? An interesting question for me, which obviously is hard to find its answer here but to which I will return later in the text.

### **3.2.3 Adopting the Christian ethos—early Christian documents and parenting**

The dawn of Christianity in Bulgaria is heralded by another parent-son story. After King Boris I adopted Christianity in 865 AD (Draganova, 2005), he retired in a monastery passing the crown to his son Vladimir. Vladimir fell under the influence of the aristocracy, who disliked Christianity,

“... There was even an official attempt to reintroduce the old pagan rites and idolatries.

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<sup>10</sup>From Ancient Greek: child.

<sup>11</sup>From Latin: boy.

But Vladimir and his *boyars*<sup>12</sup> had reckoned without Boris. Immured though he was in his monastery, he knew what was going on outside. For four years he let them be; then, when he saw his life-work being too seriously endangered, he emerged. His prestige as a terrible saint was enormous; with the help of a few older statesmen he easily took possession of the Government. Once again in power, *he sacrificed his parental feelings for the good of his country* [italics mine]. Vladimir was summarily deposed and blinded, and so passes out of history. . .” (Runciman, 1930, pp. 133-134)

Son’s disobedience was severely punished for the ‘greater good’ and the historians throughout the ages—and my own history teachers—never saw a moral issue or drama about blinding your own son; the story was that it was all Vladimir’s fault, disobeying the testament of his father<sup>13</sup>.

While this story is different from the Ancient Greek and Slavic mythology, where an offspring is severely punished often due to the caprice of the divinity, it is really much closer to the Christian Old Testament’s punishment for the greater good or for one’s own good.

After the adoption of Christianity in Bulgaria during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century, there was a boom in the written literature, almost exclusively related to canonic texts (Moser, 1972) and church service (Markovski, 1981). As such, this literature was

“... a part of a generally homogeneous medieval culture deriving from the widespread and unquestioning acceptance of the Christian faith. . . so that there is often nothing either specifically Bulgarian or very original in the major literary monuments of medieval Bulgaria.” (Moser, 1972, p. 9)

There are numerous references to childhood and parenting in this literature; however, those are limited in the so called *žitija*<sup>14</sup>, in which the authors write about

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<sup>12</sup>High aristocrats.

<sup>13</sup>King Boris I was canonised as a saint by the Bulgarian and the Byzantine Orthodox Churches.

<sup>14</sup>Vitae, Saints’ lives.

moments of the childhood of saints and their relationships with their parents, in a quite New Testament style.

For example, in *From St Cyril's Life, (10th century/2007)*, Kliment Ohridsky writes:

“When he [St Cyril] was seven-years old, he had a dream and shared it with his father and mother: ‘The city strateg<sup>15</sup> gathered all the virgins in the city and told me ‘chose whomever you like for a companion and a servant’. When I was looking at each one of them, I saw one of them most beautiful: her face was bright and she was covered in beads of gold and pearls, her name was Sophia, ergo wisdom; her I chose.

When his parents heard these words, they told him, “Son, follow the orders of your father and do not dismiss the advice of your mother because the order is a torch and the advice is a light! Tell wisdom, ‘You are my sister’ and turn wisdom into your relative! The wisdom is brighter than the sun. And if you take her for a wife, she will save you from a lot of evil” ”(Ohridsky, 10th century/2007).

Further down in the same text Kliment Ohridsky writes that St Cyril as a child was the most achieving students and everybody admired his memory, he learnt grammar, geometry and Homer for three months, and so on.

This *žitije*—or *vita*—presents an account of St Cyril’s childhood that is not an isolated case but rather typical of the early canonical Bulgarian literature. Evtimij Tarnovski writes in his *Žitije of Ivan Rilsky* (late 14th century/2007a):

“St Ivan’s parents were god-fearing people and polite... [Ivan] was well-behaved and all-obedient to his parents, and showed them the necessary respect; he was in a constant fear of God and was inseparable from the church from that early age...” (Tarnovski, late 14th century/2007a)

Here is one more example from another text dedicated to the Russian Bishop Petar—who had Bulgarian origins:

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<sup>15</sup>Administrative head of the city.



When the child reached seven, his parents took him to study literacy. Although his teacher put a lot of effort, the boy was not advancing fast in his studies, but was slow and sloppy. This was a big disappointment for his parents, and the teacher was very concerned, too. But once it happened that the boy saw a man in his dream and the man was wearing priest's clothes, and he came and stood behind the boy, and told him, 'Open your mouth, son'. And when the boy opened his mouth, the priest touched his tongue and blessed him, and filled his throat with sweetness, and at that moment the boy woke up, and saw nobody. Since then, he was learning fast everything and soon he advanced more than his peers (Tzambulac, late 14th century/2007).

From all medieval canonical texts, I found only one, in which a child disobeys her parents; this is the *Žitije of St Philoteja Tarnovska* (late 14th century/2007b) who had an arranged marriage at age of 14 and pleaded to her new husband to leave her a virgin until the end of her days on Earth (Tarnovski, late 14th century/2007b).

I find several relevant elements in these medieval texts:

- As in earlier mythologies, parents' behaviour and decision are beyond any moral scrutiny. There is no assumption present that parents might be wrong in their judgement what is right for the child. This is in stark contrast with the contemporary discourses, particularly in the UK—a point on which I will come back later in my discussion.
- The highest possible value in children's character is obedience, politeness and fear of God. This would have been easily explained by the ethos of the Old Testament if this observation was not consistent with what I also found in Slavic mythology. This highlights a lack of a clarity so far, where other moral characteristics of 'childhood' come from, like the contemporary notions of adventure, play and joy. This is an area for further exploration.
- Related to the above, there is no evidence of a consistent construct of 'childhood' at all. 'Children' are defined solely on the basis of their relationship with

the parents—regardless of their age—and only as a life period that prepares the protagonists for their future lives; childhood has no value on its own right. In that respect, my findings are not dissimilar to what Phillipe Ariès claims about the place of childhood in middle ages (Ariès, 1960/1962).

- Last but not least—I was surprised to come across the very high value that the medieval authors attribute to learning and achievement at school; this was raised as something much beyond its pragmatic value for success in life but attributed considerable *moral* value, too. Furthermore, a sole referral to Christian religion would not be a sufficient explanation here either; the authors and particularly Kliment Ohridsky do not limit themselves to talking about learning scriptures only but also grammar, Ancient poetry, etc. These latter are reclaimed during the European Renaissance. Indeed, the Dutch Humanist Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus pointed the importance of education, and for him it was a much greater crime to neglect education than to commit infanticide. Erasmus compared a child to wax, to be moulded while it is soft (Cunningham, 1995). I will come back to the high value of the *learning achievement* later in my study.

The text characteristics described above are consistent with what Hugh Cunningham discusses in his book *Children & Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (1995). He writes that

“The Christian belief in the need of every human being for salvation immediately implied a higher status for young children. They needed to be brought, as early as possible, into the Christian family of God ...”  
(Cunningham, 1995, p. 27)

Therefore, the main concern is related to children’s spiritual salvation. Also, referring to the New Testament, he writes

“When his [Jesus’s] disciples tried to prevent children being brought to him, Jesus rebuked them, saying ‘Suffer the little children to come to me,

and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God', and warning that 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein' ” (Cunningham, 1995, p. 29).

Another aspect is related to a certain way in which 'youth' was constructed, as adopted from the Byzantine Christian tradition—'young' was meant also as somebody that had been recently baptised, regardless of their physical age. King Boris, who adopted Christianity in Bulgaria, was later canonised by the Orthodox Church as a saint and presented on ikons as an adolescent; he was also called by Byzantine historians a 'Holly youth', although he was around 50 when he adopted Christianity and died at the age of around 92 (Draganova, 2005).

### 3.2.4 Bulgarian fairy tales and spoken folklore

Two points are worth raising before I proceed with my study of Bulgarian fairy tale folklore.

- There is a reason for me to expect that the spoken folklore will be sufficiently different from the official canonical discourse described above. “It should be remembered that old Bulgarian literature did not reach the bulk of the population in written form. The written literature of the period was read by a thin layer of the educated classes, of whom most were churchmen” (Moser, 1972).
- While the early Bulgarian folklore is pan-Slavic in its nature, the later fairy tales and folk songs carry the combined influences of Christianity and the Ottoman tradition<sup>16</sup>.

The first efforts to systemically research and collect artefacts of the Bulgarian oral cultural tradition that was passed from generation to generation, took place in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the brothers Dimitar and Kostantin Miladinovi (Dinekov, 1961) and the most comprehensive folklore collection was published in 1889 in *Collection of people's art and creations*<sup>17</sup> by Ivan Shishmanov. This National

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<sup>16</sup>Bulgaria was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire during the 15-19th centuries

<sup>17</sup>It has been regularly updated and has so far 65 volumes.

Revival effort had similar motives as the Grimm Brothers' work in Germany during early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1982), who were inspired by Jonathan von Herder's notion of *romantic nationalism* that was on fashion at that times (*Folklore*, 2007).

Family relationships—husband-wife and parents-children—are a common theme running through a great proportion of the Bulgarian fairy tales and folk songs. Not dissimilar to the early Slavic folklore, the morale present in these tales is the importance of children obeying their parents and being good-hearted and respectful. Again, in these tales 'children' is a construct that is rarely derived from age category, having as a main attribute rather being somebody's offspring—regardless of the age.

Furthermore, there is a notable gap in the *timeline* of the stories' plot; children are spoken about in relation to their birth and then the story skips to the time when either they are grown up, they have to help out bringing house income, or when a daughter or a son becomes old enough for marriage.

Here is an example of one such a timeline:

“In a faraway forest there lived a woodcutter with his wife and three children: one boy and two girls. . . Since young, the children *helped out their father in his heavy work* [italics mine]. He cut treed and they loaded them on the donkey and carried them to the hut. . . Once, when the woodcutter was tying together a bunch of twigs, he was bitten by a snake. His hand swelled and he died. The mother and the children mourned him and after that—whether willing or not—*they had to start working not to starve to death* [italics mine].” (“*Samodiva Kingdom*”, *Bulgarian Tales*, 2007)

Here is another one

“Once upon a time there was a poor boy, an orphan. His parents left him behind only an iron ball. Sympathetic people took him home and raised him. However, they were poor too; hardly managed to make for living. When the boy was seven, *he started working as a servant in*

*people' houses—just for the bread [italics mine].”* (“*The Lad and the Three Samodivas*”, *Bulgarian Tales*, 2007)

The narrator ‘breezes through’ time of childhood straight to the inception of the story action, related to an event, which according to contemporary measures would mean *end of childhood*. In the narratives above, this is the need to help their parents make a living or to work after the father’s death. This is no doubt as far as it gets from the contemporary notion of ‘childhood’, as life period free of labour and dedicated to play and development. But what is really striking is the *vacuum* that exists in the narrative about anything between birth and this ‘initiating’ into adulthood event.

Of course, when I use words like ‘childhood’ and ‘adulthood’ in the paragraph above, I step on their contemporary meaning. According to Ariès, the modern conception of childhood began to develop during the 17th century and in the Middle Ages persons as young as 7 years ‘joined society as small adults’ (Ariès, 1960/1962).

This argument though, apart from the fact that it is strongly criticised by authors like deMause (deMause, 1974/1980), does little to explain the illustrated above narrative structure and the narrative ‘vacuum’ between birth and the exceptional event.

Another type of inception to the story action to which the fairy tales narrator jumps is the maturity for marriage. Here are some examples:

“Once upon a time there was an old man who had a girl: when she laughed, roses blossomed out of her mouth and when she cried, pearls dropped from her eyes. The old man *collected the pearls and sold them* [italics mine], to make for living. Time passed and the the girl became famous with her beauty and virtue, and the king heard of her. He wanted to marry her and sent people to take her and bring her to him.” (“*Say, Spinning Wheel*”, *Bulgarian Tales*, 2007)

“Once upon a time a man had a son. When his son *grew up to the age when he had to marry* [italics mine], his father started thinking how

to marry him to a good virgin, suitable for him.” ( *“Plums for Trash”*, *Bulgarian Tales*, 2007)

“Once upon a time there was a man and wife in a village. They had one daughter only; they loved her dearly and did everything for her. The neighbours called her ‘The Spoilt Daughter’. The mother and the father worked hard from dawn till dusk to make for living and the daughter did not do anything... Days passed by and the spoiled daughter grew up and was old enough to marry.” ( *“The Spoilt Daughter”*, *Bulgarian Tales*, 2007)

“Grew up Rada in her home, surrounded by her mother’s love and her father’s care. She grew to be a beautiful virgin” ( *“Rada and the Dragon”*, Yordanova, 2000)

“Once upon a time there was a merchant living in a faraway seaside town... Everybody knew his name. He had one son only. When the son grew up, his father sent him to study” ( *“The Most Educated in the World”*, Rainov, 2005)

Here I think is evident again, how the tales follow a narrative structure that skips everything ‘unimportant’ until the incepting event, which in the above examples is the maturity for marriage.

I would like to draw attention to another element implied in all these stories—an element that is not explicit in the story-line and which could not be identified by just studying the narrative structures (Propp, 1928/1968), as I did above.

This is the fact that most of these fairy tales have been meant to be told to children. The recipient of the narratives or the ‘*conception of the audience*’ (Hall et al., 1997) represents children.

“Facts or positions in the text cannot be separated from how they can be read” (Hall et al., 1997).

The importance of the conception of the audience—as important as it is when studying any kind of narratives—is even more relevant when the discourse of question both constructs ‘children’ themselves and has children as its main ‘audience’. *The pragmatic consequence if this double role of the discourse is that it constructs the very people it is told to*—according to me an important finding to which I will return later in Chapter 5.

In the Bulgarian fairy tales that I studied, there is not much referencing to parenting and child-rearing. Fathers are not often present in those and when they are, they are a resource of wisdom; mothers are much more often encountered and they love their children, especially their sons. Young children are rarely heroes in the folklore, as opposed to young people, especially young male heroes. These are often brothers and the youngest one is the ‘good’ character (*The Three Brothers and the Golden Apple*, 2007). The main dimension of parent-children relationship—in similarity to the Early Christian discourse—can be described as obedience/disobedience.

When younger children are present in Bulgarian folklore, they are not in the role of a protagonist but much more in the role of a subject, namely young heroes who have a child of their own or parents who struggle or have to find money to look after their children. In that respect, there is a contrast between the Bulgarian folklore tradition and that of other cultures, where a fairy tale can be narrated from the view/experience of a child<sup>18</sup>.

What I was not able to discover in the early Slavic folklore—probably as notable as what I have found—are strong patriarchal figures; in contrast to the ‘grandmother’ or the bad stepmother, parents are not referred to in much detail and whenever they exist, they are weak and presented with not much of a voice. This latter finding is in contrast with the early Christian literature and a tentative explanation at this stage I find in the fact that the ‘official’ literature of the Christian state and the verbal folklore were meant for different audiences—as discussed at the beginning of

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<sup>18</sup>For a starking example of that, see Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1982. There might be various speculations on what determines this differences; one possibility is the attribution of more value for children to obedience rather than on exploration.

this section.

### **3.3 The Roma Gypsies—the birth of the ‘Alien’**

A special interest in the current exploration is reserved to the way that Roma Gypsies are portrayed in the Bulgarian culture and particularly in relation to child-rearing and child maltreatment. One of the specific reasons for that is the predominantly racist way in which Roma Gypsies are portrayed in the Bulgarian public speaking in general, and the way in which mass media cover child welfare issues of Roma Gypsy children in particular. This anecdotal experience of mine, I expect to be reflected in my research data.

The mythologisation and indeed the demonisation of the Roma Gypsies is not a Bulgarian phenomenon. The Gypsies have been persecuted across Europe and the Middle East since the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972). A discussion of all mechanisms of this persecution and the ways in which it was justified is far beyond the scope of the current research. My main focus here is to identify the socially constructed mythology related to the Roma Gypsy parenting and the Roma Gypsy attitude towards children.

One of the most common prejudices about Roma Gypsies is related to the belief of their magic powers and fortune-telling. One particular variation of those that Gypsies are said to have ‘the power of the evil eye’.

“There are plenty of people who make a point of giving to Gypsies while they might not bother with ordinary beggars at their door, simply as a precaution against the unknown. This fear of the Gypsies’ curse has frequently caused a menacing backlash. Once it brought about the death of supposed Gypsy witches and in some parts of Europe is still a potent source of ill-will. . .” (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972, p. 32)

From my experience, one of the beliefs in Bulgaria has been that the Roma Gypsies can curse a child by looking him in the eyes; therefore it is very important to wash child’s eyes excessively with water, when you come back home.



“In Turkey and Albania it was thought that Gypsies commonly dug up graves and ate corpses. . .” (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972, p. 32)

In spite of the fact that there is little direct discourse on that, there is a clear implication that Roma Gypsies are not suitable parents. During the communist period in Bulgaria it was an official policy for Roma Gypsy families to be encouraged to leave their children for rearing in state institutions. This was not isolated Bulgarian or even not only a communist phenomenon.

“Within the sphere of containment policies, the forcible removal of children from Roma/Gypsy parents has been recommended in many states, and occasionally put into practice. One of the most important cases in recent years concerns Switzerland, where from 1926–1973 the charitable organization Pro Juventute in its ‘Children of the Road’ division removed Roma/Gypsy children from their families and placed them in institutions until they could be fostered or adopted, without judicial input. These actions were supported by the authorities.” (*Roma/Gypsies—A European Minority*, 1995, p. 26)

These policies however have been targeted mainly to the cultural assimilation of the European Roma Gypsies; there is indeed not much *written* Bulgarian tradition about Roma Gypsy parenting, which is in striking contrast with the themes emerging from my contemporary newspaper articles, as it will be demonstrated in Chapter 4.

In the ‘official’ Bulgarian folklore, as collected in the past couple of centuries and as described above, the Roma Gypsies are simply non-existent. This is most extraordinary having in mind that the Roma Gypsies co-existed on these territories for centuries with the Bulgarians and that the Ottomans/Turks are often encountered in the folklore.

The logical question that follows is: *how the stereotypes and prejudices towards the Roma Gypsies have been maintained through the centuries in Bulgaria if not through the official discourses, who seem totally silent to their existence?*

The only direction open for seeking answers to that question is looking back for anecdotes from my own past. As argued in Chapter 2, the (auto-)biographical

accounts are a needed element in the current study, in circumstances that no other sources are available.

As a typical Bulgarian I have been raised in an environment that has served to maintain and reinforce these stereotypes. Furthermore, having a biographical look at my generation can provide an insight, due to the fact that the statistical majority of the journalists from the period of my study belong to it.

When I look at my own upbringing and after having had several discussions with two of my coevals I am able to identify a number of myths that come from what I call non-written urban folklore from my childhood.

One character from this urban folklore is called 'Torbalan' (literally, 'the man with a bag') who is Roma Gypsy and who comes to put disobedient children in his bag and take them away. In my conversations with friends, I found out that this is a story that they have been told as children as well, sometimes with the variation of the character being female, i.e. 'Baba Torbalana' (old woman with a bag). Also, I have very early memories of a grandparent who would refer to this mythical character when we were on the street and encountered Roma Gypsies.

This image of the Roma Gypsies and children-snatchers is no way exclusively Bulgarian myth; it is similar to the British 'Bogeyman' among others. In *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* (1972) Kenrick et al. write:

Much more wide spread is the conviction that Gypsies steal children. In literature and on the opera stage it is a regular feature of Gypsy life and it is securely fixed in the popular mind everywhere (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972, p. 33).

The authors give examples from European literature, among which is like Cervantes and his *La Gitanilla* (1612). Also, they make a statement that verifies my observation about the way in which beliefs of this sort are maintained:

The fear of child kidnapping by Gypsies is kept alive more by scolding parents and child-minders than by actual instances of theft. An English nursery rhyme says:

“My mother said, I never should  
play with the Gypsies in the wood.”

and similar tales are current in our countries (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972,  
p. 34).

Another ‘urban myth’ from my childhood is that one has eat all his food; otherwise the Gypsy child will come and beat him up. This is again something that I found out in my conversations with friends as being widely used to make children eat their food. Yet another ‘disciplining’ story is related to personal hygiene. One has to be clean when he plays; otherwise he becomes ‘dirty as a Gypsy’. In Bulgarian language there is a word ‘цигания’, which is derived from from the Bulgarian word ‘циганин’ (‘Gypsy’) and means mess and dirtiness <sup>19</sup>.

According to Kenrick et al. (1972), there was belief in medieval Europe that

“Gypsies deliberately darkened themselves, using walnut and other vegetable substances. . . Archibishop Cajanus, convinced of this practice, issued an order saying Gypsies must not be permitted to blacken their children in future.” (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972, p. 19)

The above evidence demonstrate how the Roma Gypsies and their children have been constructed as:

- Dangerous/dirty<sup>20</sup> and needed to be avoided by the ‘Bulgarian’ children.
- Used as a scary image for disciplining purposes and obedience.

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<sup>19</sup>Interestingly, the Roma Gypsies use this word themselves with the same meaning but speculations on this are beyond my current focus.

<sup>20</sup>My anecdotal experience is that Bulgarians often used to express a belief that Roma Gypsies had darker skin because they were dirty. I was astonished to read in Kenrick et al. about

an Englishman who, while petitioning against a Gypsy family being given a vacant house in 1969, remarked, “Gypsies only look black because they don’t wash” (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972).

This, however, brings no insight at all on Roma Gypsy parenting and child-rearing. The latter is *non-existent not only in the official written discourse but in the parts of the urban verbal folklore that I have studied*. Roma Gypsies were point of referral as far as ‘Bulgarian’ children were concerned. This phenomenon is partly similar to what N. Parton describes in the past UK context as a complete disinterest by the authorities in the working class families and how they treat their children until economic reasons reversed this (Parton, 1985).

The above discursive gap I find of a significant importance to understand the contemporary construction of child abuse narratives; I demonstrate in Chapter 4 that the Roma Gypsy element is big part of the newspaper child maltreatment discourse, and seek explanations for this apparent contradiction/inconsistency between the historical evidence and the contemporary discourse in Chapter 5.

In summary, I think that Roma Gypsies have been constructed through the centuries in Bulgaria as the most notable image of the ‘Alien’—much more alien than the representatives of other cultures and religions, like for examples the Muslim Ottomans/Turks.

Another alien group encountered in the urban folklore are ‘the Jewish’—although anti-Semitism has never been strong in Bulgaria. I remember my ex-mother-in-law saying that her grandmother was telling her a story that Jewish people were drinking secretly blood from young children. In my conversations with friends, I have not been able to identify though other myths about ‘the Jewish’ and children.

### **3.4 Communism, childcare and parenting**

The communist period (1944-1989) had no doubt a crucial impact on the contemporary Bulgarian society, including impact on the child-rearing and childcare practices. In that respect, how parenting and child-rearing has been constructed by the official discourses through these decades might seem a relevant area of exploration.

However, one main feature of that totalitarian historical period was the fact of dissociation between the official ‘party’ discourse permeated throughout the official mass-media, socialist-realism literature and legislation, and the *underground urban*

*folklore*, which I referred to above. This unique dualism is interesting to study on its own right. However, this is far beyond the scope of the current research project; my focus here is in finding references—or lack of such—to the *contemporary* constructs of child maltreatment and child-rearing.

In that respect, the first difficulty I come across in my effort to explore the parenting discourses in the post-war Communist years is one of finding the relevant documents revealing their historical variations.

One way to approach this is through a biographical or autobiographical exploration, a case for which has already been made and which I used when discussing the discourses about Roma Gypsies. A further rationale behind my resorting to this method at this point is my hypothesis that during the Communist period *there were influential unwritten discourses at play, influencing contemporary Bulgaria much stronger than the official Communist discourse at that time*. I am aware that this is a claim too big to be proven in the current text.

For the purposes of the discussion, I look at biographical accounts of people sharing their experience of life during Communism, as collected by Petrov on their dedicated website *Спомениме Ни* (Our Memories)<sup>21</sup> (Petrov et al., n.d.). This is a website unique by its nature that invites people to share their anecdotal experience—either negative or positive—of Communism. The creators state their mission as follows:

“We believe that sharing past experience of the socialism<sup>22</sup>, embodied in stories, shared or heard from others, can help us recover the lost link between past, present and future.” (Petrov et al., n.d.)

The website comprises of more than 350 anecdotal stories submitted by readers and I will focus on those that are relevant to the issues of childhood and parenting (I was not able to identify any references to what we will call today child abuse and child maltreatment).

The majority of stories are recollections of either nostalgia or ridiculing Commu-

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<sup>21</sup><http://spomeniteni.org/index.php>

<sup>22</sup>The way Communism is known in Bulgaria.

nist symbols<sup>23</sup>, memories from school or from the Mayday Manifestations (Parades), the Komsomol organisation, days in the army and so on.

I was actually quite surprised by the fact that very few stories touched on the parent-children relationships—no more than 15 out of 350. This fading-into-the-background of the family is even more unexpected, having in mind the still existing strong patriarchal links of the Bulgarian family and the fact that in the majority of cases during Communism households included three generations—quite often though not exactly because of a choice but for economic reasons and deficient housing.

I will give here a few examples of stories before speculating on the reasons, why the autobiographic accounts of the urban folklore during Communism appears different from the expected.

At least several stories referred to religious faith in the family and how children and parents managed to communicate about religion in a society where it was a taboo:

“When I was 12, the spiritual emptiness in me became unbearable... I made myself a small cross out of cardboard and wrote on it, ‘God, protect me’; then I put it on a string and around my neck. My mother noticed it once and asked me what was it and I told her. My mother took out a silver cross and gave it to me, asking me to show it to nobody... My classmates always asked me what’s on the silver chain and I had to always answer, ‘Secret’ or ‘Astral sign’... I often remember that now and feel ashamed... that I had to hide and deny my faith...” (Petrov et al., n.d.)

Here is another, typical one:

“When I was 10, before Christmas, my parents arranged the Christmas tree and asked me to tell nobody about that. When I left on the other day for school, my grandmother reminded me again, “Don’t tell anybody about the Christmas tree!” Then I asked, “Shouldn’t I tell Radi?” (Radi

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<sup>23</sup>There is a big range of Communist symbols, like the East German Trabant Car, the ugly panel blocks of flats, the chewing gum ‘Ideal’, bananas in the shops two days before New Year’s Eve, among many others.

was my best friend) And my grandmother answered, “Especially not to her.”” (Petrov et al., n.d.)

There are a few more stories similar to these two. What I think is important in them though—more than showing the difficult relationship between Communism and religion—is *the level of disempowerment of the parents* that becomes apparent. This is something completely new and different compared to all other historical sources that I have studied so far in this Chapter.

These accounts of parenting could not go any further in the opposite direction from what I found in the folklore or the Christian material, where the parents’ authority was absolute, the obedience was considered the highest value. This big rupture in the parenting discourse<sup>24</sup> is not easy to explain; this level of parental disempowerment I can compare only to my anecdotal experience from my practice, while I listening to the accounts of UK parents undergoing parental assessment by the social services.

From my point of view, the marginalising of the parental role within the discourse can be explained by the fact of the Communist state appropriating a lot of the ‘caring’ and socialising functions. This no doubt is related also to the institutional nature of the state provided child-care—a process that was started way back in time in the Soviet Union after the Communist Revolution, that revealed its total failure in the Romanian and Bulgarian children’s institution and was raised as problematic only very recently in a BBC programme, as discussed on Page 12. Here I give a few examples of discursive practices demonstrating this appropriation of parenting roles by the Communist State/Party.

“My uncle who was born in 1943 told me once that when he was at school, one day his teacher came to the classroom, looking very worried, and said in a sad voice, “Children, your father died.” My uncle was so confused and scared that he tried to argue with her, telling her that he

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<sup>24</sup>I probably need to clarify once again here that my claim concerns discursive practices about parenting; it does not expand to claim validity in ‘real’ parental practices during this historical period.

had seen his father that morning and that he looked all right. Then his teacher clarified that she meant Stalin. . .” (Petrov et al., n.d.)

Here is another notable one:

“On 8th of March<sup>25</sup>, I was invited for a celebration at my son’s school, together with the other pupils’ mothers, and we were greeted by a recitation performed by the whole class, of the following poem:” (Petrov et al., n.d.)

“You have a mother that you love  
And she is kind to no end  
But she cares only  
For you and for your sister.  
We have a mother that we love  
She is full of compassion  
For us and for our country  
She cares day and night.  
There is no end to her love.  
She is ready to bear everything for us  
This is our everybody’s Mother  
Her name is BCP<sup>26</sup>”

(Petrov et al., n.d.)

Here I give one last illustration—similar to the above one—that demonstrates how this practice in action disempowers parents:

“I was a second grade at school and one day they gave us a poem that we had to learn for the following day to recite by heart. After going back home, I sat down to learn the poem, so that I can watch TV after that. . . Then I came across these verses

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<sup>25</sup>Still celebrated in Bulgaria as the Mother’s day.

<sup>26</sup>Bulgarian Communist Party



The Party is a good mother  
She is always kind and protects us  
In our studies, labour and play  
She fills us with happiness and power.  
She leads us to a wonderworld. . .

I was confused and anxious, I did not understand anything and started crying. When my parents came back home, they asked me what was the matter. Both of them sat down and tried to help me and when I saw how difficult they found it themselves to explain how the Party protects me, I calmed down a bit. . .

Then I asked my mother, “All right, but why [the Party] like a Mother?”  
Then my mother shrugged her shoulders and said, “I don’t know either, you will learn it as it is!”” (Petrov et al., n.d.)

It is not a coincidence that the discursive practice of appropriating parenting functions by the state actually wedges in the private space of the family—through homework tasks and parental gatherings, as in the illustrations. Confusing the children and parents guarantees perpetuating of the knowledge-power relations.

Some childhood accounts show even bigger confusion, when the family is from a minority ethnic group and when—as in the following story—has been an object of the official Communist state policy for changing the Turkish names<sup>27</sup>:

“I couldn’t remember my name

I think it was in 1985, I was a pre-schooler—about 6–7—a happy and innocent child. When they changed our names, I felt confused and embarrassed—everyone around me looked worried and grumpy; I remember hearing the voice of a crying woman. I really could not understand

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<sup>27</sup>During 1995–1997 The Bulgarian state changed the names of the Turkish population, forcing them to replace their Muslim names with Christian ones. Any resistance was suppressed ruthlessly by force. Some say that these events were the predecessor of the fall of Communism in Bulgaria in 1989.

then what was the big deal that they were changing our names; what really troubled me was that I could not remember my ‘new’ name, which was long and incomprehensible. . . I was repeating it to myself all the time to remember it. . .” (Petrov et al., n.d.)

### 3.5 Summary

In this Chapter I have examined a variety of textual resources, in a pursuit of the origins of the Bulgarian discourses of parenting, childhood and child maltreatment. Due to the limitations of the scope of this thesis, I needed to be selective in identifying the historical periods and the nature of the resources to be used in this endeavour. Undoubtedly, there are other areas, where a genealogical appraisal might have reaped fruit—for example a further exploration of the Bulgarian literature or of the post-Ottoman legislation.

However, the main purpose of the current historical exploration is to lay down the grounds of the discourse analysis of my newspaper articles data and I think that in that respect, it achieved its goal.

Below I provide a tentative summary of the findings, which are at the same time points for further inquiry, to be pursued in the following two Chapters, on the basis of the newly emerging evidence throughout the analysis.

- In early Bulgarian texts—including folklore and Christian ones—there appears to be a narrative structure that has an element of assigning a high *moral value* on obedience and submission of the children and young ones to their parents. This might be not unusual for any patriarchal setting but what I find discursively interesting is how obedience is assigned a moral value and how narratively it goes together with ‘pure soul’, with a spiritual—and also physical—beauty. On the other hand, parent-adult authority is never questioned and is far from any attempt of a rational scrutiny. The parent-adult caprice and anger are beyond moral appraisal, apart of the claim that parents are *just*—not dissimilar to the caprices of the Old Testament God. It is interesting that in my research interviews, I found the obedience discourse almost

invariantly; here is one example from one of the interview transcripts: “They [the children] always have been quiet and gentle. . . touch wood. . . when I have to do something I put them in front of the TV to watch the kids programme and do my chores.” Another theme prominent in the Christian literature—*about learning and achievement*—came very consistently as a theme during the interviews and confirmed something that I already have assumed anecdotally, namely the very high value within the Bulgarian culture of learning and achievement at school<sup>28</sup>.

- The way ‘childhood’ is constructed throughout the centuries, shows notable inconsistencies and discursive fractures. ‘Childhood’, as understood today, is almost entirely missing from the Bulgarian folklore narrative and children are most often presented as silent objects until some event gives them a voice; that event can be—amongst others—the need to become economically productive or time for marriage.
- There seems to be a hardly explainable contradiction between the lack of discursive concern about Roma Gypsy children in the past, and the prevailing themes in the contemporary newspaper reporting that will be demonstrated in the next Chapter. A lot of folklore narrative was evidenced, maintaining racism and prejudice against Roma Gypsies and describing them as a threat for children; however they are described as a threat, as far as Bulgarian children are concerned; no consideration is given to Roma Gypsy parent-child relations, which is not the case at present when they are put under scrutiny, as we will see in the next Chapter. One of the main questions that I will be pursuing in this enquiry is what made the prevailing discourse of Roma Gypsy child abuse possible in the Bulgarian public space?
- The autobiographical accounts of urban Communist folklore demonstrate a social process that has as an outcome, marginalised parenting and a state

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<sup>28</sup>Though this falls slightly outside the scope of the current research, I would not underestimate the severity of emotional abuse and pressure that goes on in many Bulgarian families regarding school achievement. This claim though needs studying on its own right.

taking over parenting tasks—some of the verses from above show how the Party actually took this role discursively, quite literally. The tension between the high ethical value of childhood submission and obedience demonstrated in earlier periods, and sustained by the patriarchy, and the new Communist variations of the discourse is another discursive inconsistency to be studied further in the current text.

Finally, the above exercises provided a mixture of discursive practices that are far from being consistent and are defying any attempt to prove a gradual historical process of accumulations. These inconsistencies and fragmentations is exactly what Foucault's genealogical method puts at the centre of its scrutiny (Deleuze, 1986/1988). Many of them cannot be explained within the context of the current Chapter and some possible answers will be pursued later in the text.

## Chapter 4

# Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this Chapter is to lay out my analysis to the main pool of sample data using a modified Parker's version of discourse analysis as outlined previously. The Chapter is structured according to the main steps of the discourse analysis of choice, followed by some general discussion of the emergent discourses. The latter will be explored further in Chapter 5 and triangulated with the additional data sources (interview transcripts and case files), as well as linked and compared to similar discourses from the UK context.

Before delving into the analysis, I think it is important to describe the nature of the data in more detail, namely to provide an appraisal of the newspaper articles' descriptive characteristics.

### 4.1 Description of the sample data

In Chapter 3, I outlined some summary characteristics of the sample newspaper articles data. In this section I will go a step further in providing a more detailed description of the sample, so that the reader can have a clearer idea on the nature of narrative on which the analysis is based. For further reference, Appendix C consists of 11 translated in English newspaper articles, representative of the sample used.

This section serves descriptive purposes only, looking at the research data from 'outside' and it is not part of the discourse analysis per se. However, even on this descriptive level, some interesting insights about the data could be made, which I

hope to demonstrate below.

#### 4.1.1 The nature of the child maltreatment covered in the stories

Even at first sight, one could be astonished by the extreme nature of child maltreatment narrated in these newspaper stories. Table 4.1 represents a breakdown according to the nature of maltreatment<sup>1</sup>:

Table 4.1: Distribution of newspaper article data according to the nature of maltreatment

Nature of maltreatment	Number of articles
Death of a child	18 (of which 10 cases of newborn babies)
Sexual maltreatment	12
Severe physical maltreatment	5
Child abandonment	4
Baby trade	4
Forcing a child to beg	2

It is hard to make a judgement as to what extent the extreme nature of maltreatment encountered in the articles is due to high rate of occurrence in reality and to what extent it is representative of the way mass media function, providing space for coverage of the most dramatic stories of child maltreatment. According to the statistics, the actual rate of violent death of infants has actually dropped significantly after the fall of Communism (Gantcheva & Kolev, 2001).

The distribution of articles according to the kind of the newspaper (national vs. regional media and daily vs. weekly media) also provides an interesting insight. All stories about child deaths are covered by the national daily media. With almost no exceptions, the stories about child death appear in the national and to a lesser extent in the regional daily papers (*24 Hours & Bourgas Today and Tomorrow*) and the articles about sexual maltreatment are mostly covered by the weekly media

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<sup>1</sup>Please keep in mind that some of these articles narrate multiple forms of maltreatment and it was my judgement which category to assign them into.

examined (*Weekly Labour*).

One can speculate about the reasons for that phenomenon, for example whether it is not a derivative of the possible role of the daily papers covering the most urgent and dramatic incidents of maltreatment (although I feel uneasy assigning relative weights to forms of child maltreatment, such as infant's death and sexual abuse).

Another interesting finding becomes evident, when I compared the length of the articles according to the nature of maltreatment they covered. Again, with almost no exceptions, the ones concerning infant deaths are much shorter (usually squares of 5 to 10 lines) compared to the ones about child sexual abuse, 9 out of the total 12 are covered on a whole page. Even when one controls for the variable how the news is represented in different papers (for example taking the articles only from *Bourgas Today and Tomorrow*), the same pattern occurs. Again, various speculations might be made here trying to explain the phenomenon of why child sexual abuse stories takes more space to tell, than child death stories; however, I think that a discussion on that matter will be more relevant after I have progressed with the proper discourse analysis of the narratives.

Below, I outline some *fractions* as examples, without a claim of representativeness but in order to provide a flavour of how the narratives read.

### **A man from Radomir rapes his stepdaughter**

(Weekly Labour, 2-8 December 2000, page 5)

When she stayed on her own with her stepfather, the 10 years old A.B.C.<sup>2</sup> hardly imagined that she would be overtaken by a nightmare that would cripple her for the rest of her life. The shock from the rape, and what is more a rape done by the husband of her mother, still torments the little girl and makes her suspicious to the entire world.

The dreadful destiny overtook the child at the end of September. The mother went on a nightshift in Steel-Radomir<sup>3</sup>, and left her husband B.N.

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<sup>2</sup>As discussed in Chapter 3, I decided to replace the names of people with abbreviations and to change the names of the geographic places, for ethical reasons.

<sup>3</sup>A steel factory.

to look after the little girl. Before she left, Maria S. cooked the dinner, kissed her daughter as usual and gave instructions to her husband for the dinner. Her relationship with B.N. until that moment had been normal and she, even in her gloomiest thoughts, had not assumed that her husband could commit such a monstrous crime.

Hardly waiting for his wife to step outside the door, B.N. fell upon the unsuspecting girl. He raped her most brutally and after that went to sleep. The child could not even shout, paralysed by terror. The next morning, when Maria came back from work, she found her daughter lying naked and limp on the bed. The mother thought at first that her child was dead. She quickly woke up her husband who was lying next to the child but he pleaded that he could not remember anything. The furious woman called the police immediately and they arrested the oppressor. B.N. said to the criminologists that he had been drunk and had no memories of the evening's events...

Here is a *fraction* from another one, related to a child's death.

### **A drunken stepfather killed a child**

*The 3 years old K. has a broken jaw, ribs and a thigh*

(24 hours, 27. 02. 2001, page 5)

The 3-year old K.S. passed away after a brutal beating in the Dobrich village of Apple, announced the local police yesterday.

The 26 years old A.K. is accused of murder and was arrested for investigation. He had been living with the mother of the child without marriage, clarified the police.

The child had been beaten to death during the first half of February and died on the 15th the same month.

The pathologists discovered exceptionally severe traumas during the autopsy. The ribs, the thighbone and the jaw are broken. His liver was



orn. There are many bruises on the little corpse. A haemorrhage under the soft brain tissue and a brain contusion are the cause for the boy's death, the medical conclusion states.

The murder took place on the evening of Trifon Zarezan<sup>4</sup> in front of the eyes of the 8-year old sister of K., the people from the village of Apple said.

The stepfather A.K. came back home very drunk and got angry because the boy was drinking water with sugar. The man grabbed the poker and started to mall K. The mother J.K. rushed to defend her son. But A.K. started to hit her as well.

In the meantime the boy passed away. The scared parents wrapped the dead child in a quilt, they said to his sister that her brother was sleeping and said they would go to get firewood. They were hiding in the region for 4-5 days. The girl understood that her brother had died and called her grandfather. And he called the police.

A.K. had served a prison sentence for theft. The real father of K. was also in prison at the time of the murder. . .

And here is the third one, considerably shorter, covering a newborn baby's death.

**A body of a newborn was found by local villagers** (*24 Hours, 21 March 2000, page 4*)

A body of a newborn was found by local villagers from Drianovo, Bourgas region. The body of the boy has been thrown away close to the road, wrapped in a towel and shoved in a plastic bag. There were no marks of violence found on the corpse. Most likely the baby had died of cold, after his mother had thrown him away.

For further reference, Appendix C consists of 11 fully translated in English articles from the sample.

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<sup>4</sup>Bulgarian holiday related to the vines and the wine; in contemporary folklore it is considered also as a day of the drunks.

#### 4.1.2 The unusual archaic and fictional style of the stories

There was a certain aspect of how child maltreatment stories were told by the newspapers that I was not prepared for—namely the extraordinary language in which these stories were told. What was the most striking thing was that these narratives were in stark contrast to the rest of the materials in the newspapers.

Communist society managed to keep a tight control on language for nearly fifty years, preserving it in a hardly changed form through the means of total control on media and written language in general. This was not too different from George Orwell's premise that whoever controls the language controls the mind (Orwell, 1949).

The major factor that led to a change of how language is used after the fall of Communism in 1989, was the free mass media. They were the first to convey the language in its natural form—sometimes messy and contradictory, and even some might say rude, but always alive and dynamic. Since 1989 the Press has been at the forefront of the dynamically changing Bulgarian language.

This makes it even more difficult to understand the fact that, with no exception, the stories of child maltreatment were told in very archaic language; one can encounter in them many words that are not used any longer in common speech. Some examples of such words are:

‘**пастрок**’, which is an old word for step-father, neither used in spoken nor in written language any longer;

‘**обезчестена**’, which literally means ‘dishonored’ and was used in the past to refer to a woman whose virginity has been taken;

‘**поругана**’, which is another word with the same meaning as the one above;

‘**щерка**’, which is an old Bulgarian word for daughter.

These are only a few examples out of many. Furthermore, it is not only the high occurrences of archaic words that is striking but often the style and the sentence composition themselves; unfortunately there is not a straightforward way to convey the latter in English. Having said that, I believe that some impression is given in

the English translations provided in Appendix C<sup>5</sup>.

Another aspect of the newspaper article's style was their fictional character. By this I mean that most of them and particularly the ones concerning sexual maltreatment read as fiction, rather than as factual news reporting. A particular characteristic of this fictional style is the imagined 'presence' of the story teller when the event took place and his/her knowledge what was happening inside the minds of the main protagonists. Here are just a couple of examples:

... In June last year Z. went to her mother in Sliven. Y.—the eldest daughter—stayed at the house to look after the other three children. The lass put her brothers and sister to sleep and went to bed with them. At about 3:00 am the girl woke up to her father's 'caresses'. X. moved the sleeping kids to the other bed, laid upon his daughter and started to feel her. The girl was pleading with him to stop. "What are you doing, you are my father" the lass was screaming. The man warned her that if she starts crying, he would kill both her and her mother. During the entire act the father was holding a knife aimed at his daughter. Y. had been a virgin. She was experiencing a strong pain. The sheet on which both of them were lying was soiled with blood. Later on X. and the girl went to the dunghill where they burned the material evidence. "Don't tell anyone," the rapist warned the sobbing girl... (*Bourgaz today and tomorrow, 11.01. 2000, page 3*)

And another example:

... In the Roma hamlet of the Bulgarian village of Mokren, the lass A. (13) goes to the bath with her mother K. (30). They two do not go to the bath often: neither together nor separately. That is why the mother

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<sup>5</sup>Here is the place to point out that I encountered a particular difficulty while translating the texts in English. As in any translation, the final result was supposed to read in proper English; however, one of my main intentions was to convey the archaic and sometimes confusing style in which the articles were written themselves; therefore the texts in Appendix C, as well as the ones laid out earlier in this Chapter, might read to an extent, strange.

only then noticed that her daughter was pregnant.

Up to here nothing is unusual; every week in each Roma hamlet of the Republic at least one Roma underage lass gets pregnant. But in the village of Mokren, in the Roma hamlet, the things are a bit different. Unpleasantly different—A. has slept with her father. With her father M.<sup>6</sup> (33).

### **My Granddad is my father**

In principle the nature allows such kind of events—the rest is a moral human imperative. The incest both among animals and among people often bears fruit. If people allow it to themselves, such embryos usually have nearly the same chance to be normal and to develop. But if the chance for such a baby to be born normal and healthy is carried out and he grows up, he would have lots, disgustingly lots of life problems. The simplest of them would be that he should name his father, ‘Granddad’... (*24 hours, 27. 02. 2001, page 13*)

It is evident that the latter quote, apart from demonstrating the specific fictional style of the texts, bears also no doubt a racist flavour. The all encompassing racist aspect of the child maltreatment stories will be an integral element in the discourse analysis to follow later in this Chapter.

The combination of archaic and fictional styles of the texts makes them similar to the fairy-tale narrative, particularly the horror and gloomy stories of writers like the Grimm Brothers and Hans Christian Andersen. There is a lot written about why fairy-tales that are meant to be told to little children are sometimes so scary and why the characters are so violent. In the Grimm Brothers’ stories we encounter murderous stepmothers, cannibal fathers, etc. (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1982) Although this fascinating discussion is beyond the scope of the current research, I have to keep in mind, during the analysis, that part of the discourse I encounter in the sample data might be related to much older archetypal stories. A widely spread fairy-tale image in Bulgarian folklore from the recent past is of a man

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<sup>6</sup>the original names in this text are Turkish.

with a bag called *Топбалаан* (in most versions he is a Roma Gypsy). Parents tell children that if they are not compliant *Топбалаан* will come at night and will take them away in his bag<sup>7</sup> (as discussed in the previous Chapter).

The fictional style however is not characteristic of all of the sample articles. The exception to the rule is the five-line reports of child deaths from the daily newspapers. These are on the other extreme, presenting in a condensed form and factually ‘who-found-who-where-and-when’ (see the last case illustration on Page 102).

## 4.2 Preparing the sample texts for the analysis

The above descriptive account is meant to give the background to the nature of textual data on which the following discourse analysis is based. Some of the findings laid out, have a merit in their own right. However, some of the findings can also provide valuable insights in the process of discourse analysis that follows. Therefore, I shall often refer to the previous section later in the text.

One important area of consideration for a researcher contemplating textual discourse analysis, is related to decisions that have to be made in relation to the quantity of data produced during the sampling process. As described above, after applying my selection criteria for extracting the relevant texts for my sample, I ended up with a sample of 50 newspaper articles on the topic. The next step was taking a decision of how these articles were to be fed into the process of analysis.

### 4.2.1 Analysis of the whole narratives vs. analysis of the articles’ titles

The first dilemma is related to how the texts are fed into the analysis concerned, whether I would use the whole texts of the articles or the articles’ titles only. This methodological issue was already discussed in Chapter 3; however, the final decision had to be taken after I had already collected the data and had done the initial descriptive appraisal of it.

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<sup>7</sup>A scary story, similar to the English one about ‘Bogey Man’.

On the one hand, the benefits of carrying out discourse analysis on the articles' titles only, was that I could concentrate on a lesser amount of text and explore the discourse objects in much more detail; in that respect the analysis would be much more complete. Furthermore, the focus in this case would be on the most representative and symbolic parts of the stories, which are the titles. The validity of the analysis would not have suffered, if I had chosen to focus on the titles only.

On the other hand however, the above descriptive appraisal of the texts revealed potential areas of exploration that would have been lost, if I had limited the analysis to the titles only. Some of the aspects of the narratives related to the specific use of language or other factors like the style and the length of the articles would have been lost if not exploring the texts discursively in their entity.

Based on that, my decision was to feed the whole texts into the analysis rather than just the titles, accepting the inevitable consequence that the analysis would be incomplete and an element of choice would be introduced, when eliciting the discourse objects, which could lead to a possible bias.

The steps that I took to minimise the effect of this potential bias was to take extra precautions when eliciting the discourse objects, describing them as objectively as possible at the initial stage of the analysis and avoiding any judgements.

#### **4.2.2 Multiple narratives vs. Master narrative**

As outlined above, the first step in Parker's method entails "...eliciting of the 'objects' in the text and a discussion how these objects are organized" (Parker, 1992). Therefore the decision that I had to take at this stage was whether I would treat every single article as a separate narrative, thus analysing 50 different texts and putting the discourses together. Alternatively, I would treat the sample articles as one large master text that would be scrutinised analytically in its entity. After weighing the pros and cons of these two options, I decided on the latter approach, based on the following arguments:

- My research interest is in exploring the emergent Bulgarian child maltreatment discourses in their entity and the inter-play between the various subjects and

objects that I would discover, featured in these narratives. In that respect, my interest was to discover what are the dominant themes in the discourse and what are the the gaps, namely the silent aspects of the discourse.

- I wanted to explore the possible impact of the public child maltreatment discourses as an entity on the Bulgarian Child Protection policy, rather than to compare or distinguish between the different kinds of narratives that one may encounter in the national and local press or the weekly and daily press. The latter would have steered the analysis in a completely different direction.
- Treating each article in its own right as a narrative, would have made the analysis much more subjective during an eventual next step of putting the emergent themes together. It would have also made the task much more laborious, forcing me to be selective of which aspects of each article to choose for the analysis, thus contributing to eventual bias.

Based on the above considerations, my judgement was to treat the 50 articles as one large narrative and to apply discourse analysis, eliciting objects from the whole entity of this master text. On a practical level, this meant stitching the newspaper cut-outs on big pieces of cardboard, in random order to avoid possible bias, based on the different newspaper sources.

#### **4.2.3 Use of the original Bulgarian texts vs. English translations**

One of the major challenges that I encountered in the current study was the fact that I was conducting discourse analysis of Bulgarian textual material but writing a thesis in English for a British University. Even leaving aside all the consideration that needs to be paid to the cultural discrepancies between the UK and the Bulgarian contexts (some of which were outlined in Chapter 2) this still leaves the issue of how one can carry out a discourse / language analysis of Bulgarian textual sources while narrating the analysis in English.

The requirement to submit the current thesis in the English language was evidently something that could not be altered but I still had the choice of whether to

approach the research data in its native language or whether to translate the texts into English first.

Weighing the pros and cons of these two options lead me undoubtedly into the direction of using the original materials, instead of translating them in English. The advantages of using English translations would be that this would make the whole research process much more transparent to an English speaking supervisor and examiners. However, the disadvantages for going for that option would be significantly more:

- As discussed earlier, the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourse is still emerging and even the common use of some of the key words is still quite unclear and contradictory. Any English translation would ‘kill’ this dynamic of the discourse and would introduce inevitable changes of meanings.
- The process of translation is a subjective one and heavily depends on the translator’s views on the subject matter as well as on his/her style. Here I can add that, as discussed earlier, quite a few of the sample articles were written in very characteristic, often ‘archaic’ style. Furthermore, any attempt to deal with these biases (namely the use of independent translators and/or the use of a ‘blind translation’ process) would be only partially successful in a subject area so new to the public speak as child maltreatment is, and was definitely beyond the scope of my practical resources, to organise.
- On a conceptual level, the discourse analysis is based on the premise of a complex interplay between language and ‘reality’. Thus the very fact of translation of the source narratives into English risks substituting one ‘reality’ of a constructed phenomenon with another; in this case the Bulgarian construction of child maltreatment with the British.

Based on the above reasoning, I was left with no doubt that I had to base the analysis on the original Bulgarian versions of the articles. This choice however, still did not give answers to the problem, namely at what level or during which step of analysis the translation into English should occur. I chose to do this at



the very first step of itemising the discourse objects—namely to lay out here the English translations of the discourse objects—because this stage would give me the opportunity to comment on specifics of the objects’ words and their corresponding English translations.

Below are the main objects identified by me in the master narrative, which constitute the first step in the analysis.

### **4.3 The Discourse Objects**

This stage of the discourse analysis aims to identify and single out the main objects found in the text. The way I approached this was by reading through the ‘master text’ as described above eliciting the nouns that are most frequently encountered and looking at how they are defined in the context of the narrative.

The objects are presented on descriptive level. I try to stay as true to the meaning in which objects occur in the narrative as possible; all the objects’ definitions are based directly on the way the objects are described in the texts. As mentioned earlier, an extra precaution was needed at this stage due to the mere quantity of the objects encountered in the texts and the inevitable process of choice that this process entailed.

This initial analysis could be described using the ‘Alien metaphor’, namely if an alien lands in Bulgaria and reads the sample set of articles trying to make sense of them—without knowing anything about the context—what would be his or her understanding of the objects encountered, on the basis only of how they are characterised within the narrative.

The objects’ description that the reader will encounter below might sound strange and/or extreme. I want to point out that the somewhat vague and messy definitions of the discourse objects is a derivative of how they actually appear in the master text. Far from being a disadvantage, the contradictory nature of the objects’ description (or the way they are constructed in the text) is actually a major opportunity for any discourse oriented analysis.

The exploration of the relationships between the different objects and going

beyond this descriptive level will take place at a later stage. Before I proceed, I want to stress a word of caution—what follows is not a representation of ‘The reality of the Bulgarian child maltreatment situation’; it is rather an analysis of how child maltreatment is *constructed* in the Bulgarian public discourse.

#### 4.3.1 The Protagonists

The first group of discourse objects that will be laid out, are the main ‘characters’ from the stories, namely the family members.

##### ‘mother(s)’

Not surprisingly, ‘mother’ or ‘mothers’ was the most common objects encountered in the stories. ‘Mother’ was described as somebody who got pregnant in ‘unusual circumstances’ and/or already pregnant before eloping with her husband.

She lives with the father of the child ‘on a family basis’<sup>8</sup> and suffers, together with her children, from day-to day physical and psychological harassment by the father. She is someone who sleeps while the father rapes their daughter and somebody that does not believe her 7-year old daughter who tells her that her uncle had had sex with her. However, she is the one that informs the police that her daughter was sexually assaulted. After that, she flees to Greece, away from people’s eyes and rumours.

She is 35 or 40-years old, unemployed, feeds her children frugally and is considered by her mother-in-law as a prostitute. If she is 17 and from an elite grammar school, she has hidden from her parents that she is pregnant and when the truth is found out, kills her foetus in the eighth month either helped or coerced by her own mother.

If she is Roma, she has six children and looks younger than them, either carrying them with her or if they are older, encouraging them to beg on the streets. If she is Roma also, she is seeking a buyer for her 2-year old daughter.

‘Mother’, as encountered in the narrative is somebody who systematically beats up her child together with her partner and kills her child, hitting her on the head.

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<sup>8</sup>I.e. without being married.

‘Mother’ is one who abandons her 8-months old baby or kills him with pliers and an axe. Immediately after the birth, she does not feel any emotions, only the desperate wish that ‘this twisting and struggling for its life creature’ did not exist; she aborts her baby in the bathroom because her husband did not know she was pregnant.

‘Mother’ is mad and before trying to kill her second child, she has killed her first one throwing him from a train, thus called by ‘The Narrator’ ‘Mother-Murderer’.

‘Mother’ is released from detention in spite of the evidence of murder because there was nobody else to look after her younger baby.

### **‘unfaithful wife’**

Often ‘mother’ is also ‘unfaithful wife’, somebody who has relationship with another man before the murder of the baby; somebody that has affairs whilst her husband works, and she has a baby not from him. This leads to either ‘mother’ performing an abortion or ‘father strangling’ the newborn baby.

After the death of the baby, the husband of ‘unfaithful wife’ has to pay her 2,000 Bulgarian Leva<sup>9</sup> reparation although the baby that he has killed, was not fathered by him.

### **‘female beggar’**

‘Mother’ can also be ‘female beggar’ if she is Roma. A ‘female beggar’ is armed with a child, her profession is referred as “Gimme, Misteer, for health and good harvest”. The profession of the ‘female beggar’ is very well organised.

### **‘father’**

‘Father’ is a person that has killed his child, hitting her on the head; he has a history of criminal offences and sometimes is not the natural father of the victim. He has started drinking, executes day-to day physical and psychical harassment and finally rapes his daughter.

‘Father’ lives on a family basis with the mother and becomes easily furious; he had been very strange and his own mother had mental ‘deviations’. He burns his

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<sup>9</sup>About £800 or five average monthly Bulgarian salaries, as of 2007.

child throwing her on the woodheater while in a fit of fury. He is 27 and beats 'black and blue' his daughter or he is 50-year old and sexually assaults his 13-year old daughter in the evening of 25 November in their house, after getting drunk. He rapes his daughter 61 times over duration of ten months with unbelievable lust, using threats and beatings; he has strong hands and kisses disgustingly.

'Father' works as a tractor driver or is unemployed ex-military. He kidnaps his son carrying a gun and he has had other offences in the past. He shoots his two sons and then commits suicide.

'Father' strangles the newborn baby when he finds out it is not his and after that goes back home to have a dinner with his wife.

### **'father's brother'**

He is a close relative of the father and is in prison for murder.

### **'stepfather'**

As mentioned earlier, the Bulgarian word used in all articles is 'настъпък', which is a quite old-fashioned word for stepfather.

'Stepfather' is a 37-year old man who who is unemployed and rapes his step-daughter, he has a record of an attempted murder and had been to prison.

'Stepfather' beats his 4-years old stepson to death and had been sentenced for another offence in the past.

### **'parents'**

'Parents' as indiscriminate object appears very rarely in the texts; only on one occasion they are narrated as people who torture their children by depriving them of food. The rarity of this object in the texts is quite surprising considering the prevailing occurrence of the objects of 'mother' and 'father', and is worth exploring later in the analysis.

### **‘grandfather’**

I was particularly interested in how the objects of the grandparents would be constructed in my sample narratives. ‘Grandfather’ is 65-year old man that raped his granddaughter; he is very strong, he drinks and is violent.

‘Grandfather’ is someone who throws his granddaughter (a baby) on the rubbish.

### **‘grandmother’**

‘Grandmother’ would not believe her granddaughter that she has been raped. She considers her granddaughter guilty of being a prostitute like her mother.

‘Grandmother’ is somebody that abandons the house that she rents with her daughter, leaving her newborn grandchild behind.

‘Grandmother’ helps her daughter to burn the corpse of her baby; she is a nurse and helps her with the abortion in the eighth month with the aid of tablets.

### **‘uncle’**

‘Uncle’ is somebody who sexually assaults his 7-year old niece. He is 60 and very presentable, always shaved and smelling of an expensive perfume; it is hard to tell his age; he likes to play violin; he is from aristocratic descent; his ancestors have often married amongst the siblings.

### **‘stepbrother’**

‘Stepbrother’ is 18 and is Russian; he sexually assaults his 4-years old stepsister, after tying her on a bed.

### **‘daughter’**

From all the objects of the victims of child maltreatment ‘daughter’ is the most commonly encountered one.

‘Daughter’ is a 15 or 16-year old girl who was a virgin before she was raped by her father. She is telling with disgust about her father having sex with her 11 times and raping her 50 times; as a result she becomes emotionally withdrawn and has no

intimate relationship. She is tied to the bed by her father with a chain for donkeys and being raped in all possible ways in which a man can have a woman, and her honour<sup>10</sup> is taken away.

She is the eldest daughter and when the mother is missing she takes care of the other children in the family. If she is 9-year old she is beaten 'black and blue' by her father and tied to a tree.

### **'younger son'**

He prevents the second rape of his sister and throws a brick at his father.

### **'victim'**

'Victim' as an object appears on one occasion only and is described as a 2-year old girl who was killed by her parents. They hit her on the head with an axe.

### **'baby'**

'Baby' can be anywhere between 0 and 9 months old; in many occasions the gender is not apparent; often especially if older he/she demands a lot of attention from the mother. 'Baby' often dies as a result of a family row.

If a 'baby' is killed as a newborn, his/her body is usually found in a rubbish container or thrown down a (village) toilet, or burnt in the bathroom by his mother and grandmother. The corpse is wrapped in a towel and shoved in a bag.

If 'baby' survives, he/she is found in front of the door of a nurse's house. In this case 'baby' is dressed in jumper, blouse, coat, knitted hat and wrapped in a blanket.

Newborn 'baby' is a 'struggling for its life creature; twisting like a fish, kicking with his legs, as if to run somewhere far away'. A 4-months old and dies of hunger, weighs 4 kg and was systemically undernourished.

### **'child'**

Surprisingly, the discursive object 'child' is rarely encountered in the texts. 'Child' is a 3-year old girl burnt by her father or a 4-year old girl that dies quietly from

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<sup>10</sup>virginity

hunger and cold.

A Roma ‘child’ is wrapped in rags and carried by the female beggars; sleeps like she is bewitched and is used as a bait for credulous people.

#### **‘stepdaughter’**

‘Stepdaughter’ is a 10-year old girl that was raped by her stepfather and this is a dreadful destiny for her; she suffers the shock and psychological traumas.

#### **‘granddaughter’**

‘Granddaughter’ is 13-year old girl, raped by her grandfather; after the rape, she starts to change from a merry and lively girl to a withdrawn and downcast one; she is crying all the time but puts herself up to tell her story.

With the risk of preempting the a later discussion, this is the only occasion in my narratives, in which the victim of maltreatment was given a voice.

#### **‘children of the politicians’**

‘Children of the politicians’ are not really protagonists but they are referred in the text as studying abroad in some kind of colleges and their future is secured while the children in Bulgaria beg, prostitute, use drugs and train to go to prison.

It is evident that the list of the protagonist objects if fairly long; for the purpose of discourse analysis they will be combined into a smaller number of discursive ‘subjects’, the relationships between which will be explored in Section 4.4.

### **4.3.2 The Family Home**

There are not many references to the family home or parts of it in the sample narratives. The few discursive objects related to the family home that are encountered, are very symbolic though.

### **‘(family’s) house’**

‘Family’s house’ is a wooden shed that looks like a ‘Red Indian hovel’; there is no door, bathroom or toilet; there are two dilapidated beds, table and a TV. In another occasion it is frozen, a hovel with no glass on the windows.

‘House’ is described as ‘miserable flat’; it is the place where family lived and where the drama took place. It is a place where the father sexually assaults his 13-year old daughter, a place which walls and floor are used by the father to hit a 3-year old child onto.

### **‘larder’**

A traditionally important part in the Bulgarian homes used usually for storing canned food; also the place where the granddaughter’s rape took place.

### **‘bathroom’**

‘Bathroom’ is a place in the house where a newborn baby is burnt.

## **4.3.3 The Neighbourhood**

The group of objects referring to the immediate surrounding of the family play a significant role in the text. They appear in the narratives as people that have witnessed and/or know the reasons of why the maltreatment has happened, and give their moral judgement of the events and the character of the protagonists.

### **‘neighbour(s)’/‘neighbourhood’**

‘Neighbours’ are a category of people that claim how the mother and the father were hitting the child on the head with an axe. They confirm that there are frequent problems in the child’s family and say that the child was often maltreated.

‘Neighbours’ are people who hear the father shooting his two sons dead and who call the police. They are the people to whom the daughter goes to seek shelter after being raped by her father.



### **‘witnesses’**

People that say the stepfather has killed his stepson in the family bathroom disconfirming his claims that the stepson has been run over by a carriage.

### **‘people from the village’**

This is a relatively frequent object. ‘People from the village’ are old men basking in the sun. They say that the child’s death was horrible; they threaten to lynch the mother and say that the court should carry out a capital punishment.

In other occasions they are shocked by child’s death also. ‘People from the village’ are the ones that find a body of a girl thrown out near the road.

They are restless after the news that three children from their village died of hunger and cold because, as they say, there was only one honest Roma Gypsy family that has come to the village and this drama happened unfortunately to them.

‘People from the village’ are divided like Montagues and Capulets<sup>11</sup> in two camps after the story comes out of the stepdaughter being beaten and raped. They rumour that behind her husband’s back the wife is having affairs.

### **‘village square’**

This is a place at the centre of the village where people gather to bask in the sun and talk about the murder.

### **‘streets’**

‘Streets’ are a place where one could meet the Roma beggars and where the newspaper reader is not advised to go and beg because he will be kicked out by the dodgers.

### **‘credulous people’**

This is a category of people that treat beggars with snacks and pity their children.

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<sup>11</sup>The two feuding families from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*(Shakespeare, 1980).

#### **4.3.4 Psychological Aspects**

This is a loosely defined by me group of discourse objects, referring to either the psychological experiences of the protagonists or to psychosocial qualifications given to the events by the narrator.

##### **‘(child’s) bad character’**

‘Bad character’ is a justification that parents give for killing their child; child’s bad character is disturbing the mother and she could not look after her younger baby.

##### **‘family problems’**

When ‘family problems’ are frequent they could lead to the parents killing their child.

##### **‘family row’**

This is a scandal between the parents that precedes the tragedy. It is the cause of the baby’s death. It happens frequently and is about money.

##### **‘total harmony’**

This is a state of mutual agreement in which the family had lived in spite of the primitive conditions of life, before the father started drinking.

##### **‘(family) drama’**

The event of the baby’s death; it took place at about 5 p.m. in Tuesday. This is also the act of a father shooting his two sons dead and then committing suicide.

‘Family drama’ is when the father strangles the newborn baby on finding out he is not his offspring.

##### **‘shock’/‘psychological traumas’**

These are the psychological consequences of the rape for the little girl; she becomes suspicious of the entire world, hardly sociable and scarcely letting people close to her.

### 4.3.5 The Professionals

This group of discursive objects represents a long list of various people who get involved in their professional capacity *after* the maltreatment has been discovered.

#### **‘policemen’/‘police’**

‘Policemen’ and ‘police’ are the most frequently met objects of professionals in the narratives. They are people that arrest the parents after the murder of the baby and release the mother a day after. They take the victim and bring him to the hospital.

‘Policemen’ interrogate the grandfather and search for the mother; together with the investigation officer, they will prove the grandfather’s guilt.

‘Police’ announces that the baby’s body is found in a rubbish container and that they will undertake mass checks for child trade.<sup>12</sup>

What is interesting especially about the short articles from the daily press is that they are often in the style of retold brief police announcements.

#### **‘doctor’**

‘Doctor’ is a medical professional who is suspicious of the parents’ explanation of how the child has fallen from the window and therefore he orders an autopsy.

‘Doctor’ is someone who finds out a girl has made an abortion at the eighth month of pregnancy and calls the police. If he works in a hospital, apart from his professional duties he shows affection to the girl victim, cutting her hair.

#### **‘ward staff’**

‘Ward staff’ are people working at the hospital. They cannot believe how a father could beat his daughter black and blue, and they treat her with rolls, wafers and sweets. They say that the mother has come to see her only twice.

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<sup>12</sup>Baby trade.

**‘teachers’**

‘Teachers’ are people who announce that some parents deprive their children of food on a public forum about maltreatment and who say that the maltreatment at home makes children aggressive. They insist that police should check the schools more often.

**‘social workers’**

‘Social workers’ are professionals that prepare the victim’s accommodation in an orphanage. There was only one occurrence of this object in the sample articles.

**‘local authorities’**

‘Local authorities’ are described as a public institution, which provides the family with welfare packs and tins.

**‘mayor’**

‘Mayor’ is a public official giving information to ‘The Narrator’ how the mother did feed her children and who was providing for her.

In another occasion ‘mayor’ says there are three pregnant women in the village only but they haven’t given birth yet, therefore the baby’s corpse found in the field must be from another village.

**‘lawyers’**

They are professionals that comment how many years in prison the mother could be sentenced to.

**‘psychologist(s)’**

‘Psychologist’ is the person to whom the victim has disclosed about the rape and who accompanies her to the police. ‘Psychologists’ are professionals that comment on why the girl was raped anally.

### **‘psychiatrists’**

Professionals who say that the victim could not have made up the story about her uncle sexually assaulting her.

### **‘director of ‘Mother and Baby’ Home’**

This is a manager of the institution<sup>13</sup> who advises a mother that has abandoned her child and planning to sell her, to read Guy de Maupassant’s *Mother of Creeps*<sup>14</sup>.

### **‘director of a children’s home’**

‘Director of a children’s home’ is somebody who has filed 23 contests in court for taking away mothers’ parental rights.

### **‘prosecutor’**

‘Prosecutor’ is somebody who feels embarrassed that he has had to plead for only ten years sentence, for a man who has raped his daughter 61 times.

## **4.3.6 The Institutions**

The Institutions is a defined by me group of discursive objects that intervene before or after child maltreatment has been established. They are described as public structures that interface with families’ and children’s ‘reality’ through complex and diverse relationships.

### **‘hospital’**

‘Hospital’ is a medical institution where the victim was brought for treatment and where, ironically, she feels best. It is a medical service where girl was taken after the rape.

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<sup>13</sup>In the Bulgarian child welfare system this is a residential institution under the authority of Ministry of Health where children 0 to 3 are accommodated when their parents are not available or not engaged in taking care of them.

<sup>14</sup>I was not able to identify such a text in Maupassant’s bibliography.

A 9-year old daughter is accommodated in ‘hospital’ after being severely beaten, with a suspicion of kidney trauma. ‘Hospital’ is a place where they take a newborn baby whose placenta is cut 30 cm long and is bleeding.

#### **‘Mother and Baby’ Home**

‘Mother and Baby Home’ is an institution where a 2-year old girl is abandoned since her birth and on her only visit, her mother states that she wants to take her and sell her.

‘Mother and Baby Home’ is also a place where a 8-month old baby is accommodated after being abandoned by her mother (See also note on Page 122).

#### **‘children’s home’**

This is an institution where a 3-year old child is accommodated after systemic beating by his mother and the mother’s boyfriend.

#### **‘prosecution’**

This is a part of the judicial system that has the right to take away the parental rights.

#### **‘court’**

The ‘court’ is a part of the judicial system that sentences the perpetrator.

#### **‘Child Protection Act’**

The ‘Child Protection Act’ is a creep who is stillborn by the death souls in the parliament; it is unclear and is difficult to interpret. It allows all kind of torturers and allows psychos to control children’s fates.

### **4.3.7 The Proceedings**

One interesting aspect of the sample newspaper articles was also the fact that they were full of legislative jargon. Whole fractions of the texts read like copied from

announcements made by the police or the prosecution. This aspect of the articles was also commented on Page 120.

**‘investigation’**

‘Investigation’ is an enquiry by experts that will reveal the level of guilt of each one—who is the perpetrator and who is the accessory to the crime.

**‘autopsy’**

‘Autopsy’ is act done by experts that proves without doubt that the child is murdered and will determine the exact causes of his/her death. It proves that a child has been smashed by heavy objects.

**‘ID’**

A document on which it is written which child is whose.

**‘capital punishment’**

A form of sentence where the convict is killed; according to people from the village the proper sentence for the parents who have murdered their child.

**‘preliminary investigation’**

An initial proceeding done by the police during which the father denied the accusations.

**‘justification thesis’**

A means by which the father tries to minimise his guilt; he claims his daughter was having sexual contacts with a neighbour.

**‘criminal code’**

‘Criminal code’ is a a law according to which the father could be sentenced from 3 to 10 years in prison for a murder of a baby or up to three years for throwing a newborn baby away.

**‘sex perversion’**

This is the act of a father raping his daughter 61 times.

**‘complaint’**

This is a legal act that someone has to lodge against the perpetrator; in some cases there is no complain lodged.

**‘underage sex and incest’**

It happens when the father rapes his daughter.

**‘illicit birth’**

This is giving birth to a baby outside of a marriage; possible reason for why a baby is thrown away in the field.

**‘investigation’**

It will confirm or otherwise whether the mother is guilty.

**‘mitigating circumstance’**

The fact that the mother has not recently had sex with the father before he strangles the baby.

**4.3.8 Other**

Below is a list of discursive objects that play an important part in the narratives but do not fit in any one of the above categories. The majority of these represent material objects used for a murder or assault; one can hardly avoid the association with ‘murder weapons’ and their significant role in the detective stories.

**‘axe’**

This is the means of the murder on two occasions; according to the neighbour it is similar to a hammer that a Serbian officer would use to murder Bosnians. In another occasion ‘axe’ is used by a mother to kill a 2-year old child.



**‘pliers’**

Used by the same mother from the above paragraph to kill a 2-year old child.

**‘knife’**

‘Knife’ is an object that the father kept on aiming at his daughter throughout the rape. It is used to make wounds on the neck of a 3-year old child or used by the mother to cut through the throat of the newborn one, two, five times . . . after that she washes her hands.

**‘cigarette’**

‘Cigarette’ is something that is extinguished in the face of a 3-year old child.

**‘bed sheet’**

Upon which the rape takes place; it is soiled with blood and burnt after that, not to become a piece of forensic evidence.

**‘dress’**

It is torn apart during the rape.

**‘rubbish container’**

I was surprised by the frequency in which the object of ‘rubbish container’ was present in the narratives. It was encountered in at least half of the stories about murdered or abandoned babies. It is usually a container in which a baby’s body is found or a place where a Roma Gypsy kid digging for food finds an alive baby with feet blue from cold.

**‘wild February storm’**

During which a Roma Gypsy boy finds an alive baby in the rubbish bin.

**‘plastic bag’**

It is used to put in the body of a strangled baby, firstly wrapped in newspapers.

### **‘big towel’**

‘Big towel’ is something used to wrap a baby when found abandoned in front of a door and freezing of cold.

### **‘animals’**

‘Animals’ are creatures that have gnawed parts of the head and the right arm of a baby’s body found in the field.

#### **4.3.9 Initial comments on the discursive objects**

It will be not an overestimation if I say that I was totally unprepared for a range of aspects of my findings so far. It was as if I was reading about the ‘reality’ in another country; not the one I lived in for 33 years.

Firstly, it was the intensity of drama and child suffering described in the texts, which had been invisible for me; after all I was analysing all occurrences of newspaper representation of child maltreatment for a range of two years, in a condensed form.

Secondly, the style that was used in the majority of articles, was not the one I normally have encountered in either written or spoken language. My anecdotal association was with reading old fashioned horror stories. One could hardly avoid the allusion with Charles Dickens’ novels, although I think this is not the most relevant comparison; the texts sounded more like patriarchal folklore.

Thirdly, I was not prepared for the extreme nature of maltreatment that was narrated in most of the texts. This could be due to how mass media operate, meeting the public demand for scandals and ‘bad news’<sup>15</sup> but nevertheless, I found the the fact that the majority of articles covered infant’s death and extreme sexual / physical maltreatment overwhelming.

Finally, the list of objects as defined above, revealed the initial outlines of the child maltreatment discourses, as they appear in the Bulgarian press. However,

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<sup>15</sup>One of the running themes in the UK mass media recently has been the baby trade from Romania and Bulgaria. My questions are: Why exactly right now? Why not a couple of years ago when the situation was worse? I believe the answer is related to the fact that Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU on 1 January 2007.

before appraising these, there was one more necessary step, namely identifying and analysing the discourse subjects found in the texts.

## 4.4 The Discourse Subjects

The discourse subjects are defined by Parker as ‘sentient beings’ that have...

... a sense of self... a location constructed within the expressive sphere, which finds its voice through the cluster of attributes and responsibilities assigned to it... (Parker, 1992)

My interpretation of this definition is that the discourse subjects:

- Have a voice, namely they have a say to comment on and to define objects from the ‘reality’.
- Have attributes, namely they are described in the narrative as discursive entities in certain ways.
- Have responsibilities, namely they enter into relationships with other discourse subjects.

Another aspect of the discourse subjects implied in Parker’s definition is that they have limits to what they can ‘speak about’ and ‘comment on’. The exploration of the discourse fragmentations or the silent aspects of the discourse is an important part of any Foucauldian analysis, including Parker’s method.

Discourse subject can be some of the already identified discursive objects. For example in my sample the discursive object of ‘police’ is also a discursive subject—‘police’ is positioned in the discourse as an agency, namely it has a voice and also has a specific say on how (some) discursive objects are characterised; ‘police’ has a say on how certain aspects of reality are defined.

However, not all subjects are necessarily identified discourse objects. For example, one of the discourse subjects in my sample is the ‘reading audience’, namely the subject category to whom the newspaper articles are addressed. Although this category is not defined as an object in the texts, there is a range of assumptions

in the narratives about the attributes / characteristics of the reading audience, as I hope to demonstrate further in this section.

The step of analysis aiming to identify and describe the discourse subjects is "...Specifying what types of persons are talked about..." and "...Speculating about what they can say in the discourse..." (Parker, 1992).

What follows is a list of the discourse subjects found in my sample data, identified and categorised in groups. In order to have a manageable list of subjects, I had to make a certain choice how to combine them into categories. My decision was based on looking at the different ways the subjects describe 'reality'. For example, I grouped 'psychologists', 'doctors' and 'psychiatrists' together because of the similar way in which they interpret the events from the stories.

Here are the discourse subjects:

1. 'The Public'

This category consists of people that are exclusively from the close geographic area in which the events take place. These are the 'people from the village' who are described as male and gathering together on the village square to bask in the sun while discussing the events; they have a strong moral response to what has happened and threaten to lynch the parent who has killed her child.

2. 'The Neighbours'

This category is very close and sometimes overlapping with the category of 'The Public'. However, in contrast to the latter, 'The Neighbours' do not make such a strong moral judgements; they are often the category of people that have been aware of the problems in the family where the maltreatment occurs and people who are ready and willing to share lots of details with 'The Narrator'.

3. 'The Mother'

I took the decision to present 'The Mother' and 'The Father' as separate categories of discursive subjects against using the generic category 'Parents' because of the significant gender differences in which these two roles appear in

the texts. ‘The Mother’ is either the direct perpetrator of the maltreatment (baby murder, physical maltreatment) or somebody who suffers maltreatment herself together with her children, or both. If not directly involved in the maltreatment but the child discloses to her about it, ‘The Mother’ at least initially does not believe her child.

#### 4. ‘The Father’

This category of people are exclusively described as the perpetrators of the maltreatment with the exception of when they are referred as ones that are away (in prison or more rarely at work). Often ‘The Father’ maltreats both the mother and the children; sometimes he involves ‘The Mother’ as an accomplice.

What is interesting about the discursive subjects of the parents is that very rarely have their own voice in the stories apart from when they claim ‘mitigating circumstances’. ‘The Father’ can be a stepfather, too but ‘The Mother’ is never a stepmother<sup>16</sup>.

If the parents are Roma, they appear in two ways: mothers who use their children to beg or are willing to sell them off, and fathers who sexually maltreat their children.

#### 5. ‘The Victim’

This is the most important category of people in the narratives but again, they rarely have a voice of their own. ‘The Victim’ of child maltreatment is exclusively a female and aged 7-16 when sexual maltreatment is involved, when s/he is a newborn baby s/he dies, and when ‘The Victim’ is a toddler or a child aged 2-9, s/he suffers most likely severe physical maltreatment.

#### 6. ‘The Relatives’

This is probably the most controversial category of people constructed in the narratives, consisting of grandparents and uncles. When grandfathers and uncles are present, they are the main perpetrators of sexual maltreatment;

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<sup>16</sup>This is an interesting contrast with a common theme in many fairy tales, for example see Brothers Grimm (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1982).

the grandmothers are described as persons who call their daughter-in-law a prostitute or who force their daughter to perform an abortion in the eighth month of pregnancy.

7. 'The Judicial System'

These are the people whose role is to find and catch the perpetrators of maltreatment; to collect evidence, trial and execute the punishment. Namely, these include policemen<sup>17</sup>, prosecutors, lawyers<sup>18</sup>, investigators.

8. 'The Experts'

This is a category of people who give opinions on the psychological factors laying behind the events; they are the ones to determine when and why a child murder had happened, whether the girl was virgin before the rape, etc. These include medical professionals like doctors and psychiatrists, and also psychologists and teachers.

9. 'The Child Welfare Professionals'

These professionals are grouped in this category rather than in 'The Experts' because they have no professional opinion, namely expertise voice in the narratives. These are directors of children's residential institutions and social workers. The only occurrence social workers have is as people who prepare the victim's accommodation in an orphanage.

10. 'The Local Authorities'

'The Local Authorities' are represented in the sample articles through the figure of the mayor. I decided that it is important to include this as a separate category of discourse subject because of the importance the mayor's voice has in defining 'the reality', when it is present.

11. 'The Politicians'

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<sup>17</sup>I decided for including the policemen in this category; they are strictly speaking in law enforcement rather than constitutionally part of the judicial system but my decision was based on the identical voice and role that they had in the narratives.

<sup>18</sup>The only occurrence of lawyers is when they support the prosecution.

These are people that are responsible for the new Child Protection Act passed by the Parliament (present in the sample text as described on Page 123) and whose children study at colleges abroad.

#### 12. ‘The Reading Audience’

This last category of people, as said earlier, do not appear directly in the stories but are an important discursive subject. For example, if a text is an instruction manual, the reading audience is expected to follow the instructions in the texts, otherwise the warranty might be voided, etc.

The underlying assumptions about ‘The Reading Audience’ implied in the sample data are that the readers want to know lots of very specific details of how the events of maltreatment occurred, especially in the case of sexual maltreatment or severe physical maltreatment—not so much in the case of a murder and even less if the victim is an infant. Also, the readers are considered as ones who want to know what the punishment for the maltreatment was and ones that appreciate fiction-styled texts.

#### 13. ‘The Narrator’

‘The Narrator’ is the one who is telling the story; in the case of my sample articles this is the journalist. ‘The Narrator’ rarely takes a direct moral position—the moral judgements are usually presented through the speech of other participants—with the exception of the cases when the protagonists are specified as Romas; in these cases ‘The Narrator’ is generous in voicing judgements.

Each subject on this list is described as it appears in the narratives. The next step is to examine what parts of ‘reality’ the subjects can speak about. The discursive subjects are explored below also in their mutual relationships, namely how they are positioned towards each other.

The last aspect of the current section is referring the discourse objects found here to the work of other authors—from both Bulgarian and UK context—thus providing a first level of triangulation of the findings.

#### 4.4.1 ‘The Public’

Initially, I examine ‘The Public’ in its relation to the other discursive subjects. The main message in ‘The Public’s’ voice is a moral one and it is targeted as blame and punishment seeking from the perpetrators of maltreatment. The existence of ‘The Victim’ is absent from this voice. ‘The Public’ readily discuss with ‘The Narrator’ details about the family in question and they easily assign moral categories to the family members.

In relation to ‘Legislative System’, ‘The Public’ claims that the legislative measures envisaged for the perpetrators of the maltreatment are not strict enough and they want capital punishment for child murder. Apart from that, they do not raise any other criticism towards the ‘Legislative System’, including the police, and they stay silent also about the involvement of other discursive subjects, like ‘The Experts’, ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’ and ‘The Local Authorities’<sup>19</sup>.

‘The Public’s’ voice is influential in how *the moral* aspects of the child protection stories are constructed. In a nutshell, it is the ‘bad character’ or ‘the madness’ of the abusive parents to blame; if the judicial system is to be accused of something, this is the not severe enough punishments envisaged.

‘The Public’ representatives communicate directly with each other, e.g. on the ‘village square’. They appear only when the events take place in a village or in a small town. I want to point out though that this is not necessarily the case in newspaper articles beyond the scope of my target sample, namely when child maltreatment happens outside of the family. There were some major paedophile scandals covered by the Bulgarian press, where the perpetrators of maltreatment were strangers. Notably enough, in these stories ‘The Public’ was represented by a much larger audience, including politicians, famous journalists and publishers, and talk-show hosts.

It is interesting that, according to ‘The Narrator’ in another of the texts, ‘The Public’ might also consist of ‘credulous people’—those who treat the female beggars with snacks and pity their children. It is important that the representatives of the

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<sup>19</sup>This is in striking contrast to the role of ‘The Public’ in similar stories found in the UK press.



public are ‘credulous’ when they pity Roma Gypsy mothers—an overarching theme found in several articles. The role of these people in the text is such that one should not be proud to be one of them—he or she is not smart enough.

This adds another *moral*—straightforwardly racist—dimension to the construction of the child maltreatment discourse: another explanation for the child maltreatment happening, apart from the parents being ‘mad or bad’ is that they might be Romas.

#### 4.4.2 ‘The Neighbours’

‘The Neighbours’ is another category that has an important voice in constructing the family circumstances, where child maltreatment has occurred. These are the people that tell us ‘how the things have happened’ and as the members of ‘The Public’ do, willingly share the details with ‘The Narrator’. In contrast to ‘The Public’ though, their moral judgement is either missing or not so strong.

‘The Neighbours’ are present in most of the long sample articles. Sometimes ‘The Neighbours’ speak to ‘The Narrator’ as witnesses. In these cases though witnesses is a term quite broadly defined; for example one neighbour shares how the parents have hit the baby on the head with an axe, comparing this act to the use of ‘a hammer that a Serbian officer had used to murder Bosnians; the neighbour was evidently not present when the murder took place. On another occasion they describe a girl’s rape by her father with details, as if they were present, too.

The ‘The Neighbours’ play a decisive role on how the ‘reality’ of the family where maltreatment has occurred is constructed. In that respect, the discursive role of the subjects of ‘The Neighbours’ is similar to the one of ‘The Experts’. Their voice differs from the general moral attitude of ‘The Public’ but they attribute the maltreatment to ‘constant family rows’, ‘frequent family problems’, ‘the father is in prison’, etc., as some representatives of ‘The Experts’ do. ‘The Neighbours’ are the ones that contact ‘The Legislation System’, in particular the police, after ‘learning about the rape’ or after ‘hearing gunshots’. They provide a shelter for ‘The Victim’, when she is a girl that has been raped by her father.

The role of ‘The Neighbours’ in constructing the community in the sample narratives is not straightforward. On the one hand, it makes us see the texts as telling a story about a related, vigilant and conscientious community. On the other hand though one might ask, if they were so well informed and knew about the maltreatment, why was it not possible to prevent the tragic events?

This relates to what can be called an institutions-centred society—it is not the individual or community’s responsibility to act; it is the responsibility of the institutions, respectively the State.

We are presented with a picture of a community that that is *reactive in its response to child maltreatment rather than proactive*.

#### 4.4.3 ‘The Mother’

‘The Mother’ as a discursive subject in my sample texts is not surprisingly, stripped of any ‘motherly’ attributes from the dominant discourse about Motherhood, like affection, care, bonding, etc.

The representatives of ‘The Mother’ subject category hardly have a voice of their own in the narrative; only on couple of occasions they are a given a voice to claim ‘mitigating circumstances’, like the demanding behaviour of the younger baby who has driven her out of control and as a consequence she kills his elder brother.

Not having a voice of her own, ‘The Mother’ as a subject is constructed by:

- her own actions, which constitute her as the perpetrator of maltreatment;
- the direct actions of other participants in the discourse, like the father, her own mother or the older uncle who are violent towards her, control her or sexually maltreat her;
- the voices of other discursive subjects, such as ‘The Neighbours’, ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’ or ‘The Experts’.

‘The Mother’ is constructed as someone who is psychologically fragile and is either ‘mad’ or weak enough to turned into an accomplice to the maltreatment. If neither of these, the fact that she is Roma Gypsy is enough reason for her to be

abusing her children. The latter aspect is particularly strong in ‘The Narrator’s’ voice.

In relation to the other discursive objects, ‘The Mother’ is positioned as being constructed by ‘The Neighbours’, ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’ or ‘The Experts’; maltreated by or made into an accomplice by ‘The Father’ and put into custody by ‘The Legislative System’.

However, this positioning is not evident on the surface of the text. The first impression that the reader gets<sup>20</sup> is a shock of the completely different from the traditional way, in which ‘The Mother’ is presented.

#### 4.4.4 ‘The Father’

The discursive category of ‘The Father’ is of a ‘macho’ man with a primordial and a naturally violent character—a kind of a masculine archetype. At least this is how he is constructed by ‘The Neighbours’ and ‘The Experts’. He might have ‘lived in a total harmony with the rest of the family’ but this is until ‘he started drinking’. Or, he has a criminal record, which is pushed ahead as the explanation for his behaviour.

It is worth mentioning here the analogy with the defined by Wendy Hollway ‘male sexual drive discourse’, which according to the author is used to excuse the male sexual violence as being innate in the ‘masculine character’ (Hollway, 1989).

Similar to ‘The Mother’, ‘The Father’ is constructed through his actions and the voices of the other participants; he hardly has a voice of his own; again, mainly in order to excuse himself for his actions, like using the fact that ‘the mother has not recently had sex’ with him, before he strangled the baby.

I have included in this category of subjects also the stepfather, who is often present in the narratives. The fact that he is not the real father of the child deserves a special attention. It is, again, quite often-met story in the texts. Step-parenthood implies ‘a broken home’, which together with cohabiting—referred to as ‘living on a family basis’—are constructed by the participants and by ‘The Narrator’ as abnormality and consistently pointed out when present, together with the ‘madness or

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<sup>20</sup>I have given some of the sample articles for a trial read to my friends who are laymen in this area.

badness', or the ethnic origin of the protagonist if s/he is a Roma Gypsy.

Maybe not surprisingly, 'The Father' is not positioned towards the subject category of 'The Child Welfare Professionals'; the latter are silent about him in contrast to their preoccupation in constructing 'The Mother'.

#### 4.4.5 'The Victim'

I have chosen this label for the subjective category of children who suffer maltreatment in the sample texts for the following reasons:

- the extreme nature of maltreatment encountered in the stories;
- the word 'victim' appears in some of the articles, referring to the maltreated children;
- the passive and objectified way in which children are constructed in the narratives.

As described earlier, 'The Victim' is exclusively a female and aged 7-16 when sexual maltreatment is involved, when s/he is a newborn baby s/he dies, and when 'The Victim' is a toddler or a child aged 2-9, s/he suffers most likely severe physical maltreatment.

Compared to the perpetrators of maltreatment—'The Mother' and 'The Father'—'The Victim' has even less voice of her/his own. In contrast to the perpetrators though, 'The Narrator' plays a significant direct role in constructing his/her image. 'The Victim's' bodies are 'found in a rubbish container' or 'thrown down a toilet', 'wrapped in a towel'; they have 'blue from cold feet' and are 'twisting like a fish, kicking with his legs, as if to run somewhere far away', and if they are Roma babies, 'they sleep wrapped in rugs like collectively bewitched', representing a 'bait for credulous people'. On a couple of occasions we are told by 'The Narrator' that 'The Victim' had her virginity/honour taken away or that 'she was a virgin before the rape', thus putting the latter in the context of even deeper cultural constructions of being irreversibly damaged and of lowered human quality.

On one occasion ‘The Mother’ describes the two-year old that she murdered as ‘having a bad character’ and ‘The Experts’ have a say on what would be the long-term psychological consequence for ‘The Victim’, medical examination reveals whether they are pregnant and/or raped; autopsy performed on their corpses prove beyond doubt the exact time and reasons for the death. ‘The Childcare Professionals’ accommodate ‘The Victim’ in an institution *after* the maltreatment has happened. Sympathetic hospital ward staff cuts their hair and treats them with fruit. *Compared to the perpetrators of the maltreatment, whose actions define themselves, ‘The Victim’ is defined/constructed by the actions of the others.*

Thus, ‘The Victim’ is positioned as the most passive discursive subject with occasional signs of free will, like twisting and kicking for their life or telling to ‘The Narrator’ ‘with disgust about her father having sex with her 11 times and 50 more times raping her’.

Comparing the above to the archetypal scenario of the *Victim, the Persecutor and the Savior*, it becomes evident that the role of the Saviour in my sample narratives is the most contradictory one. It is even hard to speak of a Saviour at all because ‘The Victim’ is either killed or is sexually assaulted, or Roma, which are constructed as irreversible damages; the only chance for ‘having been saved’ have those who suffer physical maltreatment and are then treated by sympathetic ward/institution staff. ‘The Experts’, ‘The Neighbours’, ‘The Public’, even the ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’ and ‘The Legislative System’ take much more often the Persecutor’s role, rather than Saviours.

#### **4.4.6 ‘The Relatives’**

The subjective role of ‘The Relatives’ in the sample data is either to sexually assault ‘The Victim’ or not to believe her about the maltreatment. On two occasions also, when ‘The Relative’ is the grandmother and her daughter is a pregnant teenager, she coerces her to perform an illicit abortion at later stage of her pregnancy.

In the rare occasions when ‘The Relatives’ have a voice they qualify the daughter-in-law as a prostitute or deny the sexual maltreatment, claiming ‘they only wanted

to help the family’.

What I was not prepared for was to find out that the subject category of ‘The Relatives’ played a much less supportive role than one would expect from the dominant discourse of an extended patriarchal family, which was in contradiction to the old-fashioned style in which the majority of texts were written. ‘The Neighbours’ appeared much more supportive to ‘The Victim’ than ‘The Relatives’. My tentative interpretation of this contradiction is based on the hypothesis that on a deeper level the narratives tell a story about disintegration of the ‘traditional’ family.

#### **4.4.7 ‘The Judicial System’**

The representatives of ‘The Judicial System’ find and catch the perpetrators of maltreatment—‘The Mother’ and ‘The Father’, sometimes ‘The Relatives’—collect evidence, trial and execute the punishment. According to the sample texts, they are authorised to *make decisions* about these actions.

Together with ‘The Neighbours’ and ‘The Public’, they are the main resource of ‘The Narrator’'s stories, thus the latter is often overwhelmed by judiciary jargon. Their discursive power is in constructing the ‘guilt’ and the ‘measures of punishment’, and together with ‘The Experts’, in finding out ‘the truth’. There is no evidence in the texts of interaction between the ‘Judicial System’ and ‘The Victims’ or ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’.

On the other hand, ‘The Judicial System’ is defined by ‘The Public’ as too *soft* to the perpetrators, namely the right to speak about the ‘measures of punishment’ is not exclusively to ‘Judicial System’ but to ‘The Public’, too.

‘The Judicial System’ is one of the categories of discursive subjects that has strongest voice in the narratives.

#### **4.4.8 ‘The Experts’**

Although not overtly narrated, it is implied that ‘The Experts’ work together with ‘The Judicial System’ to find out ‘the truth’. This truth-finding is the main role of ‘The Experts’ in the sample texts. An autopsy will reveal the facts around a child murder and the murder itself is explained in various ways: it could be the ‘criminal

violent father’ or the ‘mental mother’, or the fact that this is a stepfamily, or the frequent family problems, or any combination of the above, etc.

‘The Experts’ most often communicate with ‘The Narrator’ through ‘The Judicial System’, to present their version of the reality. Their voice is never questioned by any of the other participants in the stories<sup>21</sup>.

‘The Expert’s’ role is to find the truth but not to ‘save’ ‘The Victim’; the latter is the role of ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’ who follow the instructions of the ‘The Experts’ and of ‘The Judicial System’.

#### **4.4.9 ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’**

As said earlier, these are either child institution’s directors/staff or social workers; the role of the latter is to accommodate ‘The Victim’ in a children’s home.

In terms of discursive power, ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’ are subordinated to ‘The Judicial System’ and ‘The Experts’ but on the other hand, they have discursive power over ‘The Victim’ and the parents, namely to speak about / to define attributes of ‘The Mother’s’ character or to take action *through looking after* the children that have suffered child maltreatment.

The actions of the ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’ as they appear in the sample articles are very limited and never questioned by ‘The Narrator’ or by any other discursive participant—yet another contrast with the stories found in the UK newspapers. The discursive voice of the ‘Child Welfare Professionals’ is almost entirely within the limits of qualifying the parents.

#### **4.4.10 ‘The Local Authorities’**

When the events take place in a village, ‘The Local Authorities’ are represented by the mayor who knows how many women in the village are pregnant or how the mother in question was feeding her child. ‘Local Authorities’ also provide the family in need with welfare packs and tins.

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<sup>21</sup>This is another contrast to the attitudes towards ‘The Experts’ that can be found in similar articles from the UK press.

‘The Local Authorities’ appear positioned separately from the other institutional discursive subjects; in the case of the mayor they voice their knowledge of details from families’ private lives.

#### **4.4.11 ‘The Politicians’**

As pointed out earlier, these are people defined as responsible for passing through the Parliament of the new Child Protection Act—a piece of legislation described by ‘The Narrator’ as “. . . a creep who is stillborn by the death souls in the parliament. . .”. ‘The Politicians’ children study at colleges abroad, while children in the country are maltreated.

‘The Politicians’ right to speak within the discourse is presented indirectly only— through their creation of the Child Protection Act. Apart from passing a single legislative act, the subject category of ‘The Politicians’ is positioned only to the subject of ‘The Narrator’. The latter evidently constructs ‘The Politicians’ using emotionally charged demonising attributes. No other discourse participants speak about ‘The Politicians’<sup>22</sup>.

#### **4.4.12 ‘The Reading Audience’**

The subjective category of ‘The Reader’ is implied throughout all sample texts. These are the people towards whom the articles are targeted to. As suggested on Page 132, there are a number of underlying assumptions about ‘The Reading Audience’ in my sample:

- The readers want to know lots of very specific details of how the events of maltreatment occurred, especially in the case of sexual maltreatment or severe physical maltreatment; the readers are not so interested in so many details when an infant is concerned.

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<sup>22</sup>This observation is in contradiction from my anecdotal experience about the Bulgarian culture, where people are constantly engaged in the practice of blaming the politicians for everything. One possible explanation is that in this demonise-all-politicians-for-everything discourse, we are in the role of a different discursive subject, namely in the role of ‘The Narrator’, rather than in any other public role, regardless of whether this is a parent, a family member, expert or other.



- The reader wants to know what are the reasons for the tragedy to happen and whom is to blame for it; the reader wants to know how the guilty ones are punished.
- The reader understands better when the text is written like a fiction, including many metaphors.

The assumed age or gender of ‘The Reading Audience’ is not clear but in terms of their ethnicity one thing is sure—they are not Roma. All sample articles about Roma Gypsy families target non-Roma readers: not only in terms of the overt racism evident in them but also because of the pretended ‘introduction in the Roma culture’ that they imply to present.

It is not clear also how ‘The Reading Audience’ is positioned towards the other participants in the narrative; however, it is implied that the readers have a sense of ‘moral justice’.

#### **4.4.13 ‘The Narrator’**

‘The Narrator’ is a key discursive category. His/her gender is undefined and again, ‘The Narrator’ is not Roma. S/he rarely takes a direct moral position; the moral judgements are presented through the voices of ‘The Public’, ‘The Neighbours’, ‘The Child Welfare Professionals’, etc.

At places, just as the voice of ‘The Neighbours’, ‘The Narrator’ leaves the impression of telling what has happened in fine details, as if s/he has been a witness of the events.

‘The Narrator’ takes a direct strong moral position in two occasions:

- when s/he refers to ‘The Politicians’;
- when s/he refers to Roma families.

‘The Narrator’ is positioned as someone who has close communication with ‘The Neighbours’ and ‘The Legislative System’. Also, his/her not-taking-direct-moral-position is illusory because ‘The Narrator’ has the key say how main aspects of the narratives are constructed, as it was demonstrated on numerous occasions above.

I started the previous section with a word of caution; I want to finish this section with another one. My position is not that ‘The Narrator’ is a real figure that consciously engineers reality behind the scenes; I am personally not a fan of this, according to me, simplistic version of postmodernism / discourse theory. So, there is no sinister conspiracy; ‘The Narrator’ can be and in certain circumstances is, everyone of us. As pointed out on Page 34, mass media influence public opinion and public opinion on the other hand influences what the mass media cover; the process in its complexity is a circular one.

#### 4.5 The Dominant Discourses as main versions of the world of child maltreatment

This section is dedicated to singling out the main versions of child maltreatment reality, namely the dominant discourses that construct child maltreatment in certain ways, in the Bulgarian public domain.

Parker defines discursive entities as “coherent systems of meanings” (Parker, 1992). Therefore, at this stage one has to look inside the discursive subjects’ voices for consistently occurring patterns of meaning or, as Parker puts it, “. . . for different versions of the social world, which co-exist in the text” (Parker, 1994).

On the basis of the analysis so far, the following three discrete discourse can be identified, functioning within the child maltreatment stories from my sample:

- **Familial**, which describes the event of child maltreatment as occurring in certain type of families with certain type of composition and relationships, assigning it to ‘broken or dysfunctional homes’.
- **Racist**, which describes child maltreatment as inherent in certain ethnic groups, assigning it to ‘Roma-ness’.
- **Medical**, which describes child maltreatment as caused by and leading to mental and psychological problems, assigning it to ‘madness’.

This list of discourses is a result and consequence of my judgement. It can be expanded further or the discourses can be formulated in other ways. However, I

think that this list sets the necessary ground for achieving my goal and providing answers to the research questions.

With the formulation of these three key discourses, I draw a close to this Chapter. They are the main factors, which through a complex interplay, construct the ‘reality’ of child maltreatment in the Bulgarian public domain, and determine certain social practices. All three of them are rooted deeply into the culture and language, and are maintained by institutions. Therefore, the way in which the Bulgarian child maltreatment stories started to emerge in the last fifteen years or so, is not a result of chances but a logical consequence of the way these discourse operate in the public space through their institutions.

A closer look at the Bulgarian Child Protection Act (2000), the regulations and the practitioners’ language demonstrates that the child protection policy and the professional narratives are governed by the same three discourses. I refer to evidence about that in the following Chapter.

## Chapter 5

# Discussion

This Chapter is dedicated to bringing together and organising my findings, and providing a further analysis of the emergent Bulgarian child maltreatment stories. I explore the way in which the three—formulated by me on Page 143—discourses originate and maintain social practices, using the evidence from the historical study of the Bulgarian context, as well as texts of other authors, predominantly from the UK.

Due to the wide range of primary findings, discussed in Chapter 4, I inevitably pick and choose these elements that I find particularly useful to further my analysis in the present chapter. I am fully aware that the initial discourse analysis revealed in Chapter 4 leaves many alternative venues of enquiry open and not pursued in the remainder of the thesis, focusing instead on those threads that I believe are most useful to further my argument and to seek messages for practice.

In this Chapter I also introduce further evidence from my final set of research data, namely the *interviews with parents*. I use these to further support my argument and on the other hand, to find potential discrepancies and contradictions in the formulated discourses.

Next, I explore potential marginal discourses that have not got their voice in my newspaper stories, though they find alternative ways to express themselves. The identification of these marginal discourses is an essential step in generating alternative ideas and liberating thinking about reform in the child protection practice, which will be considered as the last part of the current Chapter.

## 5.1 The three child maltreatment discourses—origins and operation

Formulating the major discourses that operate in my sample of newspaper stories is not the end of the analysis. On the contrary, it only provides a framework in which I can explore how these discourses actually come to life and what social practices they determine. In other words, what is the link between their textual existence and the process of production (Fairclough, 1998)

### 5.1.1 The Familial Discourse

As it was demonstrated in Chapter 4, the families in which child maltreatment occurs are narrated through a process of alienation and dissociation from the Narrators part. An obvious narrative structure (Propp, 1928/1968) existing throughout the stories is one of a family with certain characteristics, defining it as ‘alien’ to the Narrator and to the reading audience.

The discursive subjects of ‘The Mother’ and ‘The Father’, as discussed on Pages 135-137 (Chapter 4) differ in many ways: the gender difference in their construction is apparent; ‘The Mother’ is often a victim of violence herself or forced to become an accomplice; ‘The Father’ is violent, absent or a stepfather<sup>1</sup>. ‘The Victim’ is a contradictory discursive subject category with no voice, as demonstrated on Page 138.

It is interesting how these discrete discursive subjects are organised together in a family system. In other words, what are the story elements that combine them together in the story. The analysis in Chapter 4 demonstrated that these combining elements are more than anything else:

- The ‘Psychological aspects’ of the story, voiced by ‘The Neighbours’ and ‘The Experts’. These define the family environment where child maltreatment occurs as being fundamentally flawed in some respect, described in psychological categories.

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<sup>1</sup>‘The Mother’ is never a stepmother

- The moral aspects of the story, voiced by ‘The Neighbours’ and ‘The Narrator’. This is the process of attributing ‘badness’ to the perpetrators of child maltreatment, where the neighbours and the Narrator have the moral authority to do so. This attribution of ‘badness’ is gender-specific—as demonstrated in Chapter 4—and is in a complex interplay with the psychological aspects of ‘madness’, defining the family reality.

Here I do not include the voice of ‘The Judicial System’, which though powerful, does not construct the family system as a whole but rather defines the different discursive subjects separately.

There are a few other combining elements but they do not play such a significant role in constructing the family system. Some of these are ‘The Family Home’ and other situational discursive objects, related to the act of maltreatment.

Overall, there are three elements of how the child maltreatment family is constructed that I find important and somewhat unexpected:

1. Contrary to other articles on the subject that I discussed in Chapter 2, *the psychological elements of the discourse are not owned by ‘The Experts’ only but also by ‘The Neighbours’*; the latter are free to voice their psychological versions of the family.
2. ‘The Narrator’ has a strong moral stance on the happening, together with ‘The Neighbours’.
3. The above two demonstrate the complex interplay between psychological and moral, setting the grounds for the complex interplay in the public child maltreatment discourse, between the public (mass media), the child protection services and the family.
4. A pragmatic consequence of the way the child maltreatment family is constructed is that all other actors morally and psychologically dissociate from it.

This dissociative process as discursive practice results into the construction of the *child maltreatment family* as a ‘real’ distinguishable type that can be identified

and measured. I think it is worth reminding here that the main agents having the authority of knowledge—ergo authority to comment on and define—of the family circumstances are the (medical) professionals, the neighbours and last but not least, the Narrator.

The relations in the ‘child maltreatment family’ are by necessity constructed as problematic and broken; the perpetrator of the abuse or both parents are described as either ‘mad’ (mainly but not exclusively the female) or ‘bad’ (mainly the male). In contrast to the folklore and Christian discourses, where parents-adults’s caprice or volatility are not questioned, in the newspaper articles there is a *strong moral attribution* the personality of the parents. My explanation of this is that this moral attribution becomes possible through the process of ‘alienation’, namely making these people ‘others’ from us.

Here is an excerpt from one of my interviews with parents from Sofia:

...One thing I can’t understand and this is...I watch the news, what are these people that do these things to their children.....to beat a small child black and blue, what person is he...

It is apparent that this kind of action constructed is incomprehensible and far from what anyone of us—researcher, interviewees, reading audience—will ever contemplate doing. If I refer back to the stories, this is *especially unnatural*, if the child is portrayed as ‘innocent’ and ‘obedient’—and it would be even for the Slavic folklore ‘Bana Yaga’.

Constructing ‘versions of the family relations’ is not unique for the Bulgarian stories. Hall et al. in their research of the Stephanie Cox case point out that

“... a wide range of agents use the subject of child abuse to claim that they talk with authority about family relations...” (Hall et al., 1997, p. 273)

The authors also add

“... we see all reporting and writing about child abuse as concerned with the persuasion of readerships, versions of family relations and the allo-

cation of blame and responsibility.” (Hall, Sarangi, & Slembrouck, 1995, as cited in Hall et al., 1997, p. 274).

In contrast to the UK study of Hall et al. though, in my media sample stories the question of ‘allocation of blame and responsibility’ is much more open; if blame is allocated to any of the subjects at all, these are the ‘dysfunctional parents’ and their family or the race of the family (Roma Gypsy); more than anything else though, blame is allocated to *the mystery and the unknown*. I discuss this aspects of the stories’ structure in more detail in Section 5.2

From my point of view, there are several social groups that benefit from the process of the construction of the *child abuse family* as a distinctive type, prone to a potential scientific/professional scrutiny:

- The ‘wide society’<sup>2</sup>, represented by the ‘reading audience’. By isolating child maltreatment and allocating it to families of *certain type*, we not only feel better about ourselves in the purely psychodynamic understanding of this process<sup>3</sup> but also maintains certain power relations in the society, namely to the possession of power-knowledge.
- The medical establishment (to include psychologists). These are the people who have the right to define the family; in contrast to the neighbours, they have *professional knowledge* and ultimate authority to comment on the family circumstances, personalities and relationships.
- To a lesser extent, the child protection institutions. I say here to a lesser extent, due to their scarce appearance in the stories, which can be explained by the fact that they themselves are in an emergent process of construction.

In terms of child protection practice, the construction of the ‘child maltreatment family’ undoubtedly opens the door for the emergence of an-ever expanding process

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<sup>2</sup>I will not even try to define ‘wide society’ here; for the purpose of this statement I tentatively accept that these are ‘the rest of us’, i.e. ‘people that do not abuse their children’.

<sup>3</sup>Probably the best psychodynamic concept to introduce in this wider social context is Bion’s notion of the *fight or flight group* (Bion, 1961).



of procedures for evaluation, classification, and risk assessment. This professional—but by its deep essence also social—practice reaches in my opinion its extreme in the *probability risk* assessment.

Parton et al. provide an outstanding critique to the contemporary notion of risk in child protection practice.

“The science and technology of risk assessment are crucially based on the assumption that future harm can be prevented and predicted and thereby modified and controlled. However, as we will argue, such an approach is fundamentally misconceived. For while the various associated risk factors may help in informing more general preventative strategies and overall policies concerning priorities and resources allocation, because child abuse is such a complex issue we have not developed the skills, techniques and understanding for successful prediction.” (Parton et al., 1997, p. 66)

To that argument I will add that I feel ethically uneasy with the notion of probability assessment of risk. I think that a pragmatic consequence of this practice is often ‘victimising the victim’; a lot of these probability factors are actually related to social disadvantage. To translate this ethical dilemma to the area of child sexual abuse, it is to claim that the survivors of child sexual abuse are at high risk of becoming adult sexual abuse perpetrators. My social constructionist objection to this statement does not concern its positive validity but its *consequence as a social practice*.

Having said that, this is a real and I think gravely serious dilemma facing the child protection practice in the UK. In contrast, the Bulgarian practice is still far from that, due to the still under-regulated services.

One oddly missing element in the constructing the family circumstances of the ‘child maltreatment family’ is the issue of economic well-being. Indeed, on occasions the stories’ structure includes descriptive elements, like the family house being presented as a ‘hovel’ or details are given to family’s poverty but in the story line *poverty is never given any particular importance in understanding child maltreatment*. This

is hard to explain, since the economic consequences of the transition had especially drastic impact on children. The proportion of children living in poverty in 1990 was 2% and by 1994 it had rapidly increased up to 42.5% (Carter, 2000). There is an all-encompassing poverty discourse in the Bulgarian media and among the members of the public; it is most interesting that these have not merged with the child maltreatment discourse.

### 5.1.2 The Racist Discourse

The ethnic minority group most seriously affected by the economic transition in Bulgaria, have been the Roma Gypsies <sup>4</sup>.

“The collapse of the large state owned enterprises as employment providers was not the only reason for the deterioration of Roma socio-economic status during the transition. Roma were also affected by the land restitution and the collapse of cooperative farming in rural areas... As a result, Roma migration from rural to urban and suburban areas intensified, leading to the expansion of ghettos, with all their attendant social consequences.” (*Avoiding the Dependency Trap. Roma in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2002, p. 15)

In 2000, the monthly household expenditure of an average Roma family was 33% of that of a Bulgarian one (*Avoiding the Dependency Trap. Roma in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2002). In 1995, the poverty rate among families with children was 15% for the ethnic Bulgarians, compared to 42% for the Turkish and 76% for the Roma families (Andrews, 1996 as cited in Gantcheva & Kolev, 2001)

In 2000, in certain regions of the country, the unemployment among the Roma population reached 80-90%. On the other hand, the Romas receive the lowest wages, no matter what is the nature of their job; 85% work non-qualified jobs (*Social Integration of the Romas in Bulgaria* , 2000)

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<sup>4</sup>However, studies show that the Roma population had been in disadvantaged economic position all through the communist period and also before that (e.g. see *Avoiding the Dependency Trap, 2002*).

When asked the question: “If you have been fired from your job, what was the reason for that?”, 58.4% of the respondents reply that the reason was that they were Roma (Social Integration of the Romas in Bulgaria, 2000).

Not surprisingly, the Roma children are the ones to suffer most from the process of ethnic segregation and discrimination:

“The survey data provide additional information on the vulnerability of Roma children. Substantial numbers of Roma children suffer from undernourishment, even in the most developed economies in the region. This has profound negative effect on their health and educational capacities and further damages prospects for escaping from poverty and dependency cultures. Moreover, poverty and its consequences are among the major systemic causes of exclusion and segregation.” (*Avoiding the Dependency Trap. Roma in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2002, p. 3)

An estimated 49% of Bulgarian Roma Gypsy children study in minority segregated classes, comprised exclusively of Roma Gypsy, which is the highest percentage in Eastern Europe (UNDP, 2002). The standards in these schools have progressively deteriorated. The percentage of Roma Gypsy children in schools for ‘mentally retarded’ children is also disproportionately high and the authors claim that there are no ‘health-related grounds for this’ (UNDP, 2002). A research study conducted by the Bulgarian Institute for Minority Studies suggests that out of 100 Roma children entering school, only five have had the chance to pursue secondary education (UNDP, 2002).

Health is another area that suggests evidence of the consequences of poverty among the Roma Gypsy children. The life expectancy among the Roma population is 5-6 years less than the average one for the country. The Roma infant mortality rate in 1989 was 24% compared to 4% among the general population<sup>5</sup> (*Avoiding the Dependency Trap. Roma in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2002).

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<sup>5</sup>Please note that this is 1989—before the transition started. It is fair to assume that since then the situation has worsened.

I decided to review this factual information concerning the welfare of the Roma Gypsy children, before continuing with the discourse analysis because I am convinced that the social welfare situation of these children is dire and that they really are the most disadvantaged group in the contemporary society, that had the most negative impact as a result of the economic and social disruptions after the fall of the Communism.

The Racist Discourse plays a significant part in shaping the child maltreatment narratives in Bulgaria—as demonstrated in Chapter 4. One of the constructed discursive explanations for child maltreatment was clearly assigned to *belonging to the ethnic group of Roma Gypsy*.

If we look back at Chapter 4, Pages 111-112, there is enough evidence for the above statement. The ‘mothers’, when they are Roma Gypsy, are constructed in a very specific way, different from the other occurrences of the ‘mothers’. Neither psychological nor economic explanations are needed when the parents are Roma Gypsy; the very fact of their ethnicity is enough explanation and the ‘Narrator’ is not in an urge to go any further than that to seek explanations.

‘The Narrator’ though takes a ‘high moral stance’ to warn ‘The Reading Audience’—presented as ‘credulous people’—to be aware of the dangers that Roma Gypsy parents and children present on ‘the streets’.

One question flagged up in Section 3.5, was about the problematic contradiction between the lack of any kind of discursive concern about the Roma Gypsy children in past historical periods and the overwhelming saturation of of talking about Roma Gypsy children in my contemporary newspaper stories.

I find that the answer to this question is disturbingly racist in both its aspects; namely, *both the lack of discourse in the past and the current ‘preoccupation’ with the Roma Gypsy family are racist in their nature*.

The reasoning behind this judgement is as follows:

- As demonstrated in Chapter 3, Roma Gypsies were presented as ‘a danger’, which is reflected in the analysis of the newspaper articles in Chapter 4, namely a danger for ‘The Reading Audience’. In both sets of data the overarching

theme is one of ‘danger’; being cursed or mugged, pickpocketed by street children or ‘having your own children snatched’. Therefore, the ‘danger’ element is common throughout history is an overt element of racism and there is no discrepancy there.

- However, how does this fit with the apparent ‘preoccupation’ in the newspaper texts of how Roma Gypsies parent their children? Is this an evidence of a genuine concern? My answer is no; on the contrary, I think this is evidence of *furthering and evolving of the Racist Discourse*. There are two elements to that: firstly, the Roma Gypsy families—parents and children alike—are still perceived as ‘a danger’ to the society that needs to be dealt with and secondly, the concern for the Roma Gypsy children is constructed in a way that dissociates both ‘The Narrator’ and ‘The Reading Audience’ from them, as being ‘others’.

My explanation of this complex discursive phenomenon is to suggest that this is a result of social practices, similar to the shift of the attention of concern of the British government to the working class children during the 19th century in the UK. I find this parallel with the UK history of child protection policy highly insightful when seeking for an explanation of the defined by me Racist Discourse.

Parton claims that the reason behind this shift was twofold:

1. The economic reason related to industrialisation and the need of increased social control
2. The protection of the *society* from violent or potentially violent children.  
(Parton, 1985)

In other words, the protection of the working class children was not a concern before economic reasons emerged bringing the necessity for it, combined with the emerging social fear of the ‘violent child’.

The similarities between these social practices in the UK—as described by Parton—and my evidence related to the Roma Gypsy children could not be closer. After the initial shock from the fall of the Communism in 1989, the Bulgarian society started

to recover and with it the need for social control increased. In addition to that, in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 I brought forward evidence about the antisocial and potentially violent construction of the Roma Gypsy children. This explanation is further validated by anecdotal evidence about the public reaction towards the street children—formal discussion of which is beyond the scope of the current research—and which instead victims of severe forms of violence and exploitation are perceived as a threat to the society.

Therefore, the most feasible explanation of the current public ‘preoccupation’ with how Roma Gypsies parent their children is in the public fear of what are the social control practices that can ‘protect us from the dangerous Roma Gypsy child’. In that respect, this apparent discursive rupture is actually evidence of *a logical process of furthering* the Racist Discourse through levers of social control. Indeed, this is a whole new level of social control building upon the institutionalised practices during the Communist period, when the governmental policy actively encouraged Roma Gypsy children to be institutionalised and thus ‘Bulgarianised’.

This is notably consistent with Helleiner’s argument about the governmental discourse on Traveller children in Ireland:

“Anti-Traveller discourse of this time differentiated between Traveller children and adults, and called for control based upon the ‘needs’ of the former. The inclusion of Traveller children into the category of modern ‘childhood’ was, however, accompanied by their stigmatization due to their divergence from a newly ascendant ‘norm’ of modern childhood.”  
(Helleiner, 1998, p. 305)

Reading this, I think it could not be closer to the way that the Racist child maltreatment discourse operates in Bulgaria towards the Roma Gypsy children; they are maltreated because their parents are Roma and what is more, they are different from the other children because—as in Helleiner’s argument about the Travellers—they do not comply to a modern ‘norm’ of childhood. On Page 17, I provided an example of my conversation with a social services manager who stated that Roma Gypsy children were a hopeless case and that it was in the ‘blood’ of the Roma

Gypsies to neglect and abuse their children.

In *Social Violence and Social Institutions*, (1995) Toma Tomov discusses the dynamics of functioning of the Bulgarian social welfare institutions, after the fall of the Communism. According to Tomov, violence permeated in particularly all accounts by both clients (mostly Roma Gypsy) and social services employees (exclusively Bulgarians).

“... The clients of the social services, unemployed, poverty stricken and lost in the political scramble around them, reported endless stories of corruption, malevolence and ethnic hatred verging on genocide. The social service employees, unrelenting, suspicious and overwhelmed, produced figures and documents to ward off any personal responsibility for the claims of the other party and to prove that the complainers were not the ‘honest’ or ‘deserving’ poor.” (Tomov, 1995, n.p.)

Haralan Alexandrov who often works in collaboration with Tomov (Alexandrov, 1997), explains the institutional practices of racism and discrimination as determined by the inherited ‘inertia of totalitarian social control’. They...

“... still perceive their task in terms of sustaining and reproducing uniformity in the ‘correct’ patterns of social life (those, approved by the authorities). Therefore they are inherently hostile towards all forms of divergent or unpredictable behavior of individuals and groups, who refuse or fail to answer the narrow expectations of mainstream society. This is the conceptual fundament of the discriminative attitudes and practices towards various minorities—ethnic and religious groups, disabled people, drug addicts, the mentally ill, the constantly poor... Usually ignorant about the self-perception of these groups and neglectful towards their specific problems, institutions tend to classify and label them under generalized, biased and stigmatizing categories, such as ‘socially weak’ or ‘asocial’ and treat them accordingly—as violators of the established norms and potential disturbers of the social order.” (Alexandrov, 1997, n.p.)

I am not able to provide any evidence from my interview material supporting the argument for the Racist child maltreatment discourse. As much as the racist discourse towards the Roma Gypsies in Bulgaria is prevailing, the interviews did not engage in one while talking with me and I am not in a position to provide definitive explanation for that.

### **5.1.3 The Medical Discourse**

The Medical Discourse might seem at first sight very similar to the Familial Discourse but I would suggest that there are some significant differences. While the Familial Discourse constructs the ‘child maltreatment family’ as a distinctive type (entity) and a point of intervention and control, the Medical Discourse plays the double role of both constructing the child maltreatment family but also ‘disassembling’ the family and the family members into discrete medical or psychological explanations/constructs.

In Chapter 4, I justified my decision to group the psychological and medical aspects of the stories together and undoubtedly the main owners of this discourse are the ‘Experts’. It was notably to demonstrate that ‘The Experts’ role was not to ‘save’ the victims but to explain the reasons why maltreatment happens and to support ‘The Judicial system’. The saving role was attributed to ‘Child Welfare Professionals’, whose appearance is seldom in the texts.

Thus, the Medical Discourse, as voiced by ‘The Experts’, adds an additional layer of dissociation with the ‘child maltreatment family’, telling a story of a division between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It is informative to look at the emergence of this discourse in the Western cultures and practice.

In the USA and the UK, the Medical Discourse was the first modern child abuse discourse to emerge in the 1940s and 1950s (Parton, 1985; D’Cruz, 2004) Chapter 4 provides evidence of the way the Medical Discourse functions to construct ‘realities’. Apart from the specific medical jargon encountered in the narratives, the medical discourse is called to give explanations—both medical and psychological—of the occurrences of child maltreatment. From my point of view, the level on which it



functions is not very different from what Parton describes as the way the American medical professionals explained the ‘battered child syndrome’ in the 1950s, resorting to explanations like “...‘parental indifference’, ‘alcoholism’, ‘irresponsibility’ and ‘immaturity manifested by uncontrollable aggressions’...” (Parton, 1985)

In that respect, I think that the most notable characteristic of the Bulgarian child maltreatment Medical Discourse at present is that it seems like a replica of the similar discourse in the USA from the 1950s.

Here is an illustration from an interview I had with a mother of a 10-year old girl that had been sexually abused by her father:

“...we went to a forensic doctor but without my ID he could do nothing ... we went to a psychiatrist who listened to the child ... listened to me .... and she told me ... please madam you have either to take yourself in hand or I am taking you upstairs<sup>6</sup> ... so, I was in such a state ... she told me she was astonished by my resilience ... how I managed to bear ... and after that she told me.. what do you want, to go upstairs and so that he would continue to play with your child ... is that what you want .... I went to Dr. Petrov (chief psychiatrist) as well ...”

Here is another illustration, this time the medical discourse working conjointly with the legal one:

“I had three refusals by the Karnobat<sup>7</sup> prosecutor, I made an appeal after that and ... it was really by chance I read in a newspaper the name of a prosecutor that had experience in such cases ... and I decided to write a letter to her.. during the summer of 1999 ... and I used a small twenty-pages notebook in which I wrote down my story ... and she decided to move the lawsuit in Bourgas<sup>8</sup> but ... in Bourgas they ordered a new investigation, they interrogated my daughter once again ... this affects my daughter’s psyche, the convulsions became more frequent ... then

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<sup>6</sup>Presumably to the ward; being hospitalised.

<sup>7</sup>A small Bulgarian town; please note that the name is changed.

<sup>8</sup>a large harbour city on the Black Sea coast

I send a complaint to Karnobat and I asked the prosecutor that this man should not have access to the child ...not to meet her, not to speak to her, not to ...because as I try to get he better, she actually is getting worse ...and in his third refusal to prosecute he writes that it was not normal for the child to soil ...so the child had psychological deviations and he even asked the psychiatrist whether either I, or her father, are not mentally ill. Here in Bourgas the prosecution ordered full psychiatric expertise for my daughter and me and it was found that we are fully normal people ...so they write that the child is fully normal and had suffered sexual maltreatment ...I cannot remember ...it was one Monday or Tuesday the psychologists and psychiatrists gathered ... we, the mothers, were told to stay outside and the children entered one by one ... one commission of fifteen-twenty people ... so they write the child is absolutely normal, she could visit public school ...”

Leaving aside the obvious lack of preparedness of the medical professional in question to respond adequately to the situation, I think what is notable is that she sees the situation through exclusively medical ‘lens’. The story of this interviewee might sound like grotesque and exceptional but regrettably my anecdotal knowledge of the Bulgarian professional system makes me think that it is more likely to be the rule than an exception.

In her article *The Social Construction of Child Maltreatment: The Role of Medical Practitioners* (D’Cruz, 2004), D’cruz critically explores the operation of medical knowledge in the process of constructing the notion of ‘maltreatment’. She questions the notion of the ‘co-ordinated knowledge networks’ in child protection:

“There are fundamental assumptions underpinning the reliance on co-ordinated knowledge networks as instrumental in predicting and preventing the childhood tragedies (injuries and death) that unfortunately come to professional and public attention retrospectively. A basic assumption is that shared knowledge across professional domains can produce a ‘full picture’ about a child and family’s circumstances. . . This view recognizes

that each of the dominant professions—medical, social and legal—has access to partial knowledge gained from allowed and demarcated professional practices. Therefore, logically, if each of these partial knowledges is shared, then, like a jigsaw puzzle, the full picture that constitutes ‘fact’ can be produced and sound conclusions drawn as to whether or not allegations of maltreatment can be substantiated. . .

The purpose of this paper is to show how apparently co-ordinated knowledge networks in which medical practitioners participate, operate as social processes that legitimate particular versions of knowledge as dominant discourses, whilst simultaneously excluding conflicting versions.”

(D’Cruz, 2004, p. 101)

My anecdotal UK experience working in the child welfare practice confirms D’cruz’s concerns about the co-ordinated knowledge networks and my conversations with parents revealed how they sometimes can experience these as oppressive and as a conspiracy against them.

However, this is not exactly my concern about the professional child protection practice in Bulgaria, where the experts are only just now learning how to make any sense of the phenomenon of child maltreatment, not unlike their American colleagues from the 1940s and 1950s.

## **5.2 The newspaper narratives as horror stories: the style of the Bulgarian child maltreatment stories**

One particularly striking characteristic of the newspaper child maltreatment stories—as discussed in Chapter 4—is their style. The majority of them read as fictional ‘horror stories’ rather than as journalistic reporting. As I have already argued, this style is most notable and it is in a significant contrast with the other material in these newspapers.

I am not convinced that the subject matter of the stories—child maltreatment in sometimes a most severe form—is enough explanation for the gloomy horror mood

of the narratives. Experience demonstrates that sometimes journalism, even when reporting terrors of war, can do so in quite a detached manner. Furthermore, evidence shows that the issue of child abuse can be approached in a similarly detached, ‘professional’ way as I have seen in some UK press publications, and/or turning the full attention to the procedures/services. Also, *some* of my articles simply resorted to a ‘police bulletin’ style of storytelling.

At first sight, one might say that a number of newspaper sample of stories read like fairy tales. If I compare to my study of Slavic and Bulgarian folklore though, there is one *major* difference—in the traditional folklore, if the child is obedient, good hearted and ‘sweet’, he or she is spared and rewarded. This seems to be *exactly the opposite* in my media narratives, if I read them as fairy tales. In that respect, I think that they are even more ‘horrible’ than the Grimm Brothers’ tales (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1982).

The key source of horror in the stories I believe lies in the fact that they indicate a certain type of pessimism; a pessimism that says, “there is no safe way out for the protagonist”. No obedience, good behaviour, innocence or ‘sweetness’, pure heart or cleverness are tactics that can guarantee that the child will be spared. And that makes the allusion with folklore forms that I explored, problematic. I can hardly avoid the association here with the title of this thesis, namely thinking about opening Pandora’s box.

This observation about the newspaper narratives’ style—as significant as it is—plays a marginal role in my main research aim and in answering the research questions. Furthermore, I believe that social constructionism and discourse analysis are not in the best position to provide an explanation for it.

In my opinion, a relevant theoretical framework to explore this ‘horror’ style of the stories is psychoanalysis, particularly in its Kleinian form. However, this is a task for another, different research project.

### 5.3 The marginal child maltreatment discourses

There are certain aspects of the child maltreatment discourse that are ‘silenced’ or marginal. Though not present in a significant way in the newspaper sample, there is evidence for the existence of these discourses. Based on this research and on my anecdotal experiences from practice, I think that at least two such alternative discourses can be formulated<sup>9</sup>:

#### 5.3.1 The voice of the child

I think it is justified to claim that this voice was almost entirely missing from all kinds of texts I have explored. Probably most prominently this voice was in the autobiographical accounts from the Communist period but even there, it operated more like an internal voice that reached to the outside much later, in adulthood.

I think it was an interesting contrast to hear one mother’s account during an interview, where the victim’s voice was much more powerful than everything I have encountered so far in all kinds of the texts:

“... she had frequent convulsions ... and was talking in her sleep ... telling ... Dad squeezes me.. Dad holds it in his hand ... at night at about ten or in the morning at four-to-five ... when she was delirious ... I went and hugged her like that ... with one hand across her breast and she was telling ... get away, do not squeeze me, that is how Dad squeezed me.. that is how my Dad squeezed me ... and a convulsion followed ... I was standing ... I sat on the chair ... next to the bed, next to her and ... so she was going through it, dreaming, delirious ...”

This demonstrates that there is more to the child maltreatment discourses than what is dominant in the public/media ones. There are reasons though why this voice is marginal in the public domain and does not find its space in it. The question is, will child protection as a social practice incorporate this voice or solely follow the dominant one from the public space.

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<sup>9</sup>I decided to describe these in small letters because they are defined as marginal discourses

### 5.3.2 The voice of the parents

This is another marginalised discourse. The lack of voice of the parents was I think well-illustrated in Chapter 4. I am not convinced either that it was very strong in the historical and folklore documents I studied. I demonstrated that parents were constructed as particularly disempowered in the autobiographical accounts from Communism, when the State and the Party appropriated parenting tasks. In the UK context, it was not before studies like Cleaver & Freeman (1995) that parents started to find their voice in the public discourse. Hall & Slembrouck (2001) is another example of research in that area.

My interview transcripts provide sides of the stories about parenting and childhood, not available in any other set of collected data, which demonstrates that the interviews as a method in exploring these particular marginalised discourses has no alternative.

For example, in two of the interviews the parents disclosed the existence of a tension between them and the grandparents, over the best ways of disciplining children. The parents generally complained that the grandparents were ‘too soft and spoiling the children’.

“... ah the grandparents... we have these rules and when they go to their grandparents... they turn everything upside down... they have their own values... that is why they see their grandparents regularly now but only for a limited time...”

A liberation of Bulgarian child protection policy is possible when the above ‘invisible’ alternative discourses are given a voice. Otherwise, we are bound to go round in circles from public scandals to ‘reactive policy’ and around again. Some authors, like Preston-Shoot et al. claim that the UK child protection work is caught in a similar kind of double-bind or a vicious circle, namely between the unrealistic expectation of the public and the demands and real life practice with the families (Preston-Shoot & Agass, 1990).

## Chapter 6

# Conclusions

In this final Chapter, I bring together the key findings and claims regarding the Bulgarian child maltreatment discourses that I have made, and I share also my perspective on learned lessons for practice; not necessarily Bulgarian practice only.

6.1 The ‘child maltreatment family’ as a distinctive type has already been constructed in the public discourse. This is a ‘family’ with certain characteristics within the discourse, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. The construction of such an entity as the ‘child maltreatment family’ means that the social practice of society’s intervention and child protection has already started. The further steps are for this ‘family’ to be studied in depth and scrutinised, using scientific and diagnostic methods, and assessment and intervention tools to be put in place. The challenge facing this evolving social practice is to keep in mind that this ‘child maltreatment family’ is a social construct, in order to avoid the pitfalls of questionable practices, as discussed by Parton et al., 1997, amongst others.

6.2 The most disadvantaged social group in contemporary Bulgaria currently is this of the Roma Gypsy children—disadvantaged both in terms of welfare and as a place in the overall public child maltreatment discourse. This is an acute social problem and unless pandemic racism within society is addressed from the very bottom to the very top levels of bureaucracy, it cannot be resolved. Social practices have started to emerge—as produced in the discourses—focusing on

Roma Gypsy children but only very recently. However, these practices are mainly determined by the agenda of social control and the fear of the ‘antisocial Roma Gypsy Child’. I claim that *both the absence of discourse on Roma Gypsy parenting in the past and the current public ‘preoccupation’ with that matter are racist practices, the latter being actually a logical development of the former*. This is a social process not dissimilar to the historical development in the UK concerning working class children during the 19th century, and the perceived need for the ‘public’ to protect itself against these ‘dangerous children’. (Parton, 1985).

- 6.3 The medical discourse operates in the public/media child protection narratives at the level of its American counterparts from the 1940s and 1950s. I believe that this discourse will develop but it needs time to catch up. In contrast to other authors, commenting on the context in other countries, I do not see the medical discourse as the most powerful and holding knowledge one. I consider that the legal discourse hold no less power in affirming dominant ‘truths’ about child maltreatment and risk assessment.
- 6.4 There is significant evidence that the children’s and parents’ voices—the alternative discourses—are marginalised and suppressed by the dominant ones in the public/media domain. This is particularly true about the children, who I think are objectified throughout all texts I have studied. On the other hand though, my interviews demonstrated that these alternative discourses find their voice when people are talked to and listened to. I referred to UK research dedicated to exploring these voices (Hall & Slembrouck, 2001; Cleaver & Freeman, 1995). I indicated that empowering these marginalised discourses is the only way to escape the trap of reactive practice.
- 6.5 The interviews, as a research method have no alternative in studying marginalised discourses, as described in [6.4]. However, exactly because of that reason they did not fit too well with my main line of discourse analysis. I used some excerpts from the interviews wherever I thought it is relevant but my initial expectation about the extent in which I could use them was much higher.



6.6 The Bulgarian public child maltreatment discourses have some very specific characteristics when compared to their UK counterparts—for example their narrative style. Other aspects of them though—like the medical or ‘professional’ discourse—are undoubtedly simply behind the times, in terms of their development, this however is not necessarily a bad thing. The available critique discussed throughout—to mention Parton among many others—can provide the Bulgarian child protection practice with lessons to learn, so that it can avoid the pitfalls and practices that are now being questioned in the UK child protection system.

6.7 The narrative style of the newspaper stories analysed in Chapter 4 is nothing short of astonishing. They read in a way like fairy tales with the exception that there is no guaranteed way—neither obedience nor wit—for the main hero (the child) to be spared. This discursive phenomenon was not given an answer in the current thesis and I claimed that a different theoretical approach is needed to study it. Finally, this horrific nature and the ‘demons’ present in many of the newspaper stories leaves the impression of opening Pandora’s box.

## Appendix A

# Maps of Bulgaria and Europe



Figure A.1: Map of Bulgaria. (Credit to the University of Texas Libraries, retrieved from the World Wide Web, <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/bulgaria.jpg> on 4 October 2006)



Figure A.2: Map of Europe. (Credit to the University of Texas Libraries, retrieved from the World Wide Web, [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/europe\\_ref\\_2006.pdf](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/europe_ref_2006.pdf) on 4 October 2006)

## Appendix B

# Scans of some articles from the data sample



Figure B.1: Title: “Father burns a child, they send her to an orphanage” (24 Hours, 5 February 2001). See the article translated in English on Page 176.



Figure B.2: Title: “Stepdaughter beaten and raped” (*Weekly Labour*, 5 October 2000)



Figure B.3: Title: “A man from Radomir rapes his stepdaughter” *Weekly Labour*, 2-8 December 2000, page 5. See the article translated in English on Page 178.



Figure B.4: A collage of some other article scans. Titles read from top to bottom: “A baby found torn to pieces by wild animals”, “Twin babies thrown away in a rubbish bin”, “A father armed with a gun kidnaps his son”, “A corpse of a baby found in a public toilet”, “A corpse of a newborn baby found in the fields” and “A cigarette extinguished on the face of a three-year old”.

# Appendix C

## Sample newspaper articles, translated in English

### C.1 Case One

#### **A village is threatening to lynch a mother that has killed her child**

*The victim stood in the parents' way to take care for their 9 months old baby*

(24 hours, 8.02. 2000, page 4)

Why did the policemen release her, do they want us to lynch her, ask the people from the village of Bobovo. A day after she had killed her 2-year old child, Sneja R. was set free.

The mother and the father have been hitting the little Nina on her head with the reverse side of the axe, just like that Serbian officer who used a heavy hammer to murder Bosnians, a neighbour of Sneja and Milen was telling.

..... At about 10.00 pm both parents were arrested. An autopsy was made. 'It is proven out of doubt that the child is murdered,' stated the speaker of the Regional Directorate of Inner Affairs, senior lieutenant Nadia Simeonova.

After he was arrested for 24 hours, Milen was moved to the judicial inquiry but Sneja was set free to take care of her little baby. There is an indictment raised against the two for murder done in an exceptionally cruel way. The investigation will reveal the level of guilt of each one—who is the perpetrator and who is the



accessory to the crime.

Both of them state that the reason for the outrage has been the Nina's bad character. She allegedly was so much disturbing that the mother was not able to take care after the 9 months old baby. The neighbours confirm the frequent family problems. According to them Nina was often maltreated. The real father of Nina was another man. Sneja was pregnant already when she eloped with Milen. In Milen's ID by the way Nina was registered as his child too.

Two days before the murder there had been a revelry in the house. They were celebrating the father's birthday. Milen used to do criminal acts before that too, they said from the police. And his brother was in prison for a serious murder. 'Nina's death is horrible, the court should adjudge death sentence for the killers' the old men were definite while basking in the sun on the Bobovo's square yesterday.

## **C.2 Case Two**

### **A father who has raped his virgin daughter was put on trial**

(Bourgas today and tomorrow, 11.01. 2000, page 3)

A man that has raped his 15-years old daughter stands tomorrow in front of the Varna's Regional Court. Ivan Radev Ivanov is accused of underage sex and incest. Ivan has been living with Katya Atanasova on family basis for several years. Their house in the Varna's quarter 'Meden Rudnik' looks like a Red Indian hovel. There is no door. Bathroom, toilet and such extras are missing too. There are two dilapidated beds, a table and a TV in the wooden shed. In spite of the primitive conditions of life Katya and Ivan were living in total harmony together with their four children—Svetla - /15 years/, Mihail, Ivailo and Mima. But the father started drinking. The mother and the four kids were subject to day-to-day physical and psychical harassment.

In June last year Katya went to her mother in Sliven. Svetla—the eldest daughter—stayed at the house to take care after the other three children. The lass put her brothers and sister to sleep and went to bed with them. At about 3.00 a.m. the girl woke up to her father's 'caresses'. Ivanov moved the sleeping kids to the other

bed, lied upon his daughter and started to feel her. The girl was pleading him to stop. “What are you doing, you are my father” was the lass shouting. The man warned her that if she starts crying, he would kill both her and her mother. During the entire act the father was holding a knife aimed at his daughter. Svetla had been virgin. She was experiencing a strong pain. The sheet on which both of them were lying was soiled with blood. Later on Ivanov and the girl went to the dunghill where they burned the material evidence. “Don’t tell anyone,” warned the rapist the sobbing girl. However, in the neighbourhood it got about. The man praised himself, the investigators established. Two months later, after a row with his wife, Ivanov tried to rape the under age Svetla again. While Katya and the three children were outside the house, the oppressor coerced the lass to get undressed. He started to feel her breast. At this moment the younger son Mihail entered the house. ‘Mom, come, Dad wants to rape sis, ‘the boy was shouting like crazy. The kid grabbed a brick and threw it upon his father. The furious parent tore the girl’s blouse. The mother burst into the room. The husband attacked her. As by miracle the woman and the two children got off without serious injuries. After the incident they reported to the local police office.

During the interrogation at the preliminary investigation, Ivan Ivanov denies the accusations. He states to the investigators that his 15 years old daughter has had sexual contacts with one of their neighbours. However, the experts’ report and the collected evidence unconditionally refute his justification thesis. According to the currently functioning criminal code Ivan Radev Ivanov could be sentenced 3 to 10 years in prison.

### **C.3 Case Three**

#### **A day of the child Roma begging**

(Bourgas Today and Tomorrow, 18. 01. 2001, page 1)

It could sound curious but during the last frosty workday each female beggar was armed with a child wrapped in rags. We have certain observations of the Bourgas streets and of the people from the profession ‘Gimme, Misteer, for health and good

harvest'. But why all of them have come out with children, why all children were sleeping like collectively bewitched and why some of them were looking older than their mothers, we could not specify because of the never ending droning of always the same blessings, without anyone of the earning women to hear at all what we were asking. It seems that in that profession, too, each day, before taking their places, there is a change of the Roma guards somewhere in the Komluka . It is clarified who will work where, which kid would be used as bait for credulous people and which will jabber for whimpering for pennies. And the credulous people never end - some made a dash to treat the beggars with snacks, others pitied the children. But does someone pity you? And if you dare to start begging on the high street, do you know that you would be kicked out instantly. By the same dodgers that you pity? Because with them this kind of organization begging is accompanied by spit and polish discipline as well. And they beg mainly on the high street. At least I have seen beggars neither somewhere in the outer suburbs nor on the field. The pickpockets and the bandits, you see, are another case . . . .

## C.4 Case Four

**Father burned a child; they send her to an orphanage** (24 hours, 5. 02. 2001, page 6)

'What do you like to become when you grow up?' 'Mom!' the 3 years old Veneta Angelova answers. She nearly became crippled for whole life after her father had burnt her on the woodheater. Two weeks after the drama the Roma girl from Vetren is the biggest attraction in the second child ward at the Bourgas Regional Hospital. She is constantly singing and jabbering something. Only the plastered hand reminds for the terrible event. The ward staff still cannot believe how a father could put on the stove such a child. Veneta was brought by a police patrol car to the hospital with severe traumas from burning, after a family row. It is said that in a fit of fury her father has thrown her on the woodheater. As a result of the contact with the hot metal, both feet of the girl were burnt. The child was crying of pain and fainted. Probably neighbours have heard and called the police. It was found not necessary to

graft new tissue to the child. The little Veneta pulled through pneumonia too, while they treated her from the severe traumas. By an irony of fate, the child feels best at the hospital. Everyone is giving something to her—a roll, a wafer, a sweet. The treating doctor from the plastic surgery ward, Deian Minchev, took the scissors and cut her hair himself. Veneta is the fifth child in the family. Her mother gave birth to the sixth quite recently. After the tragedy she covered herself. ‘She came once or twice’ they say from the ward. Social workers from Bourgas prepare Veneta’s accommodation in an orphanage. Until now, there is no complaint lodged against the father perpetrator.

## **C.5 Case Five**

### **A child dies of hunger and cold**

*The Zagora village Radnevo is shocked; the mother is investigated*

(24 hours, 29. 11. 1999, page 6)

The 4 years old Bonka Boeva died from starving and cold in front of her mother in the Zagora region. The death of the child shocked the whole village of Radnevo. The girl quietly extinguished in the frozen house without glass on the windows. The 35 years old single mother Mima Boeva is unemployed. She has four children. One of them is accommodated in a specialized institution for moderate mental retardation in Kermen. ‘She was feeding her children frugally with welfare packs and tins provided by the local authorities, and a local businessman was paying for her bread,’ the mayor Kalina Kaloianova told. During the last days the exhausted Bonka felled ill with bronchitis but her mother did not give her to the hospital. On the 26 of November the child departed this life. The autopsy must give an answer what exactly has the child from the hovel died from. For now, an investigation for manslaughter started. If this is confirmed, the mother could be sentenced to 3 years in prison, lawyers comment. If it is proven that Mima is guilty for the death of her daughter, the prosecution has the right to take away her parental rights upon the other three children.

## C.6 Case Six

**A man from Radomir rapes his stepdaughter** (Weekly Labour, 2-8 December 2000, page 5)

When she stayed on her own with her stepfather, the 10 years old A.B.C. scarcely assumed that she would be overtaken by a nightmare that would cripple her for the rest of her life. The shock from the rape, and what is more a rape done by the husband of her mother, still torments the little girl and makes her suspicious to the entire world.

The dreadful destiny overtook the child at the end of September. The mother went on a nightshift in Steel-Radomir, and left her husband Boris Nikolov to look after the little girl. Before she left, Maria S. cooked the dinner, kissed her daughter as usual and gave instructions to her husband for the dinner. Her relationship with Boris until that moment had been normal and she even in her gloomiest thoughts had not assumed that her husband could commit such a monstrous crime.

Hardly waiting for his wife to step outside the door, Boris Nikolov fell upon the never suspecting girl. He raped her most brutally and after that went asleep. The child could not even shout by terror. On the next morning, when Maria came back from work, she found her daughter lying naked and limp on the bed. The mother thought at first that her child was dead. She quickly woke up her husband who was lying next to the child but he pleaded that he could not remember anything. The furious woman called the police immediately and they arrested the oppressor. Boris Nikolov said to the criminologists that he had been drunk and had no memories from the evening.

The child who was in a state of a strong shock was taken to the Radomir hospital. But the relatives say that her psychic traumas could not be eliminated even until today. After the fatal 27 September A.B.C. became hardly sociable and was scarcely letting people close to her. The Radomir Regional Court sentenced Boris Nikolov to 8 years in prison. At the time of the trial it became clear that before the rape of his stepdaughter, the 37 years old man was discharged from prison where he had served his sentence for an attempt of murder.

## C.7 Case Seven

*Drama*

### **A baby dies in a family raw**

(24 hours, 18. 11. 1999, page 6)

The 7 months old Velin Simeonov found his death during a scandal for money between his mother and his eldest brother. The drama took place at about 5 p.m. in Tuesday in the house of the 40 years old Nina A. from the Medovo village, Stara Zagora region. The divorced woman had frequent quarrels with her 17 years old son about money. The unemployed family inhabited a miserable flat and made both ends meet by social support and by BGL 8,55 child allowance. During the serial thrashing Atanas attacked his mother who was holding Boyan. While she was guarding herself from the cuffs, she dropped the little boy on the floor. This is the version that the arrested mother and son tell during the investigation in Stara Zagora. The autopsy must determine the exact causes of the baby's death.

## C.8 Case Eight

### **A grandfather rapes his granddaughter in the larder**

*The 13 years old girl keeps silence of fear that her grandmother will turn her out of the house*

(24 hours, 2. 02. 2001, page 2)

..... ‘ ...He started to squeeze me and to groan. I ran away. I could not believe. I did not know what to do, where to go. I thought that he did that with me because he was a bit muzzy.’ Yana starts crying. She cannot go on. After a while she gathers herself up. ‘After a couple of months, it was the end of the school year, Granddad wedged me up in the larder. I was there to get a jar. He gagged my mouth and hit me several times. He is very strong; a real husky. I tried to fight. I drew aside and twisted. He raped me anally; it was awful. I have never slept with a man. I was all over wet. My dress was torn apart. I stayed in my room for the rest of the day. I did not know what to do. I did not dare to tell my Granny because

she would not believe me. She would tell me that I was guilty because I was like my mother and a prostitute like her. I thought that my Granddad would stop but he kept on raping me and always from behind. He was hitting me. I was afraid that he would beat me black and blue if I shout. He was always drunk,' Yana finishes her story. Yana starts to change. From a merry and vital girl she becomes close and downcast. She gathers herself at the end and just before Christmas she tells to the school psychologist. They go to the pedagogic office at the police. The police call the grandfather for interrogation and he of course denies. They trace the mother to come back to the village since the girl could not stay in this home any longer. The police even give her details for a national search. But she is not found. Police and investigation will prove yet the guilt of the 65 years old rapist. Psychologists comment that Yana is raped anally most probably because the grandfather had been afraid that she was a virgin and she could get pregnant. It is possible that he had always wanted such kind of sex but his wife would never allow it to him. Through his granddaughter though, he managed to accomplish his wish.

## C.9 Case Nine

### **A drunken stepfather killed a child**

*The 3 years old Kalin is with broken jaw, ribs and a thigh*

(24 hours, 27. 02. 2001, page 5)

The 3 years old Kalin Sali passed away after a brutal beating in the Dobrich village of Apple, announced the local police yesterday.

The 26 years old Kenan Adin is accused for murder and arrested for investigation. He had been living with the mother of the child without marriage, clarified from the police.

The child has been beaten to death in the first half of February and has died on the 15th the same month.

The patho-anatomists discovered exceptionally severe traumas during the autopsy. The ribs, the thighbone and the jaw are broken. His liver is torn. There are many bruises on the little corpse. A haemorrhage under the soft brain tissue and

a brain contusion are the cause for the boy's death, the medical conclusion states.

The murder took place in the evening of Trifon Zarezan<sup>1</sup> in front of the eyes of the 8 years old sister of Kalin, the people of Apple were telling.

The stepfather Kenan Sali came back home very drunk and got angry because the boy was drinking water with sugar. The man grabbed the poker and started to mall Kalin. The mother Jenia Kolarova, rushed to defend her son. But Kenan started to hit her as well.

In the meantime the boy passed away. The scared parents wrapped the dead child in a quilt, they said to his sister that her brother was sleeping and said they would go to get firewood. They were hiding in the region for 4-5 days. The girl understood that her brother had died and called her grandfather. And he called the police.

Aden had served his sentence in prison for theft. And the real father of Kalin was in prison at the time of the murder.

## C.10 Case Ten

### **Seven babies killed by their own mothers**

(Bourgas today and tomorrow, 4. 06. 2000, page 7)

The dark statistics of the Bourgas police indicates that during the last two years seven corpses of newborns were found. They were thrown away in dustbins, toilets and shafts. The perpetrators of this deed are the young mothers and quite rarely the fathers, criminologists state. The motivation for this villainous deed the specialists seek in the social poverty of the Bulgarian mothers and of the mothers and the fathers from the minorities as well. The research of the forensic doctors during the autopsy characterise the perpetrators as prudent and nimble killers. The investigation in some of the cases indicates that the "mothers" were mentally healthy which suggests that the motives were of a social nature—impossibility to take care after the newborn or that the newborn is the third or fourth child in the family. Such is the case of the young mother from the village of Iracli who threw away her

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<sup>1</sup>Bulgarian holiday related to the grapes and the wine.



fifth child on the dunghill. And there are no judicial consequences because Article 15 from the Criminal Code says “A mother who has killed her newly born child by manslaughter shall not be sentenced”. The court uses other articles from the Code very rarely. For example Article 120 ‘If a mother kills her baby during the birth or immediately after, the sentence is no more than three years in prison’. Article 121 reads ‘If a parent kills a newly born with a monstrous outlook immediately after the birth the sentence is no more than one year in prison or correctional work’. The lawyers say that the law texts in relation to the wilful murder of newborns should be re-edited and the sanctions should be much more serious. The only reason for killing newborns sociologists and psychologists see in the lack of money of the families. This is how one could explain the case when newborn twins were found in a plastic bag, thrown in a . . . . .

## **C.11 Case Eleven**

### **Oedipus drama in the village of Mokren**

*No one believes that the father who made a child to his own daughter would be convicted*

(24 hours, 27. 02. 2001, page 13)

In the Roma hamlet of the Bulgarian village of Mokren, the lass Aishe (13) goes to the bath with her mother Kaima (30). They two do not go to the bath often: neither together nor separately. That is why the mother only then noticed that her daughter was pregnant. Up to here nothing is unusual; every week in each Roma helmet of the Republic at least one Roma underage lass gets pregnant. But in the village of Mokren, in the Roma helmet, the things are a bit different. Unpleasantly different—Aishe has slept with her father. With her father Mumun (33).

My Granddad is my father In principle the nature allows such kind of events—the rest is a moral human imperative. The incest both with animals and with people often bears fruit. If people allow it to themselves, such embryos usually have nearly the same chance to be normal and to develop. But if the chance for such a baby to be born normal and healthy is carried out and he grows up, he would have lots,

disgustingly lots of life problems. The simplest of them would be that he should name his father 'Granddad'.

A normal village The village of Mokren could not be distinguished from any other normal Bulgarian village in which there surely is at least one Roma hamlet. If you go there the mayor's wife will welcome you and treat you with a home made stewed strawberries.

# Appendix D

## Sample interview schedules translated in English

### D.1 Case One

#### Interview with C.

26. 03. 2001 Bourgas

T. Well, aa so, where to start from; maybe you could tell me first a couple of words how . . . quite briefly . . . what was the reason to get in contact. . . to seek help from Demetra . . .

C. Well.. psycho-trauma . . . psycho-trauma that I suffered from . . .with the statement of my husband who had . . . had . . . I do not know in which moment exactly, in fact aaa . . . but he . . . exercise of violence, insulting words aaand . . . once stated that he raped our child . . . he showed his genitals . . . and I literally started shouting . . . why is he telling such things . . . if you need a doctor you should see a doctor . . . and he fell upon me with his fists, literally . . . I will break your head against the wall if you don't shut up . . . eer.. I went out after that . . . I went to search for the police . . . that was my first thought . . . that I should inform the policemen.. the mayor of the village told me the policeman was not there . . . where we used to live . . . that he was not coming after a row there . . . that he comes from a neighbour village and only on call, you know.. he asked what the problem was and I told him family matters.. but since the conversation started like that I did not dare to

tell him more ...I was one week like ...especially the child.. frightened ...I did not dare to tell to anyone at work.. and two days after that my child had her first convulsion.. that's what I could tell you ...we made medical examination and on our way she started telling me about the outrage of her own father ...when I was at work second shift he squeezed her in the bed, waved his hand there in front ...he spread something on her face ...aand.. what can I tell you ....

T. For how long has this taken place?

C. One year ...she hadn't talked about that ...when we were at the hospital ...I was in shock and I told to the door-keepers about my case ...I said I could not keep silent because I will be torn apart ...thanks god blood started leaking from my nose ...because otherwise I could have had heart attack.. and I remember at the hospital the policeman asking my child eer ...where do you live so that we could come and take him away ...here is my gun and so on ...and my child says ... (incomprehensible).. and he told her do not be afraid ...tell me ...I do not dare to say.. I am afraid of my Dad ...I am afraid of my Dad .... I didn't have money because he didn't let me have ...he had hidden my ID ..... we went to a forensic doctor but without my ID he could do nothing ...we went to a psychiatrist who listened to the child ...listened to me .... and she told me ...please madam you have either to take yourself in your hands or I am taking you upstairs ...so, I was in such a state ...she told me she was astonished by my resilience ...how I managed to bear ...and after that she told me.. what do you want, to go upstairs and so that he would continue to play with your child ...is that what you want .... I went to Dr. Petrov (chief psychiatrist) as well ...

... she had frequent convulsions ...and was talking in her sleep ...telling ...Dad squeezes me.. Dad holds it in his hand .... at night at about ten or in the morning at four-five .... when she was delirious ...I went and hugged her like that ...with one hand across her breast and she was telling ...get away, do not squeeze me, that is how Dad squeezed me.. that is how my Dad squeezed me ...and a convulsion followed ...I was standing ...I sat on the chair ...next to the bed, next to her and .... so she was going through it, dreaming, delirious ..... before that, in nineteen

ninety eight my husband ... we had a car crash in the town of Shoumen ... he told me after while he was kicking me that his aim was to kill me ... he wanted to kill me in the accident but he did not succeed ... eer sometimes I argue with the doctors whether her convulsions are from her father or from the car crash.. she was in coma for ten minutes after the accident ... my child stopped eating for a month ... there were statements like.. I want to die ... I want to run away ... and I hadn't got any idea what it all was about ... he used to hit her with his fists ...

... she is fifth grade now ... December last year it was again a ... a sleepless night with my daughter when my child told me ... excuse me for expression ... he cannot get in ... what I experienced then ... I don't know ... I was upset to such an extend that ...

T. ... this was a delirium again?

C. yes, and she had a convulsion, too ... I did not know if these words were something that he had told her ... while he was sexually satisfying himself ... aaahhh.. I haven't got the right words ... and how could I bear it if she was raped by him ... I do not know ... I am trying to console her ... to relate her to other children ... as it is said ... to go out with more children ... we go on holidays but ...

T. I understood that you had a son as well ...

C. My son came to me ... after the army service he came to our house but my mother kicked him out ... they couldn't get along together ... he was listening to the radio and she ... turn the radio off, you are disturbing me and so on ... and he came down on her and I stood in the middle.. and I said we are here she could kick us out ... and she even told us go out and find a flat by the end of spring ... and we have three rooms so we could live together but ...

T. Who are you living now with ...

C. I live with my daughter now ... because my mother kicked us out and my son went to live with his father ...

T. And since when are you separated with your husband?

C. I came here February ninety nine and the divorce officially is November ninety nine.

T. Did your son know about these things ...

C. Well I told him ... I told him you must know the reason why I am leaving your father ... you must know the reason and believe me or not ... but in his testimony this January he had written down ... mother talks nonsense.. it is obvious that because he lives with his father he becomes his advocate ... and what I told him was something that I know from my daughter ... I have been a teacher for twenty one years and I do not believe that children could lie for such a thing ... if it was for something else ... this is not possible ... he used to show his genitals before that, too.. then was in front of my son ... the solicitor said I have no words madam, he is a freak, idiot.. he is actually a normal man but for me he is a freak ... leave him do not seek anything from him ... and I became convinced during these two years that there could be laws but ... if you do not have money.. everything else is .... I went to Karnobat after the third refusal to start a lawsuit .... but the prosecutor showed me the door ... no, I said, I am not leaving ... my child is with me and she wants you to interrogate her to tell you what her father had did with her ... he said OK but you must leave ... I said why should I leave ... what would happen if she feels sick.. would you be the one that would provide first aid ... because in Bourgas when she was talking about him her head started shaking ..... in his testimonial he was saying that he didn't do any thing wrong, he loved his daughter a lot, that it was from parental love ... she was lying with him and hugged him ... he hugged her ... that I had made this up ... that I had read about these things in a kind of newspaper ... that he was not violent towards me either ... and there were cases when he had beaten me black and blue, when I was bleeding .... he had beaten our son as well, in nineteen ninety seven ... and he swallowed these pills in front of me.. the boy ... and told me ... I want to die ... he told me you have to divorce, why do you bear him, don't you see that he is ... because your mother wants that her two children have a father ... that is why I bear him .... I made two efforts to divorce that spring but I forgave him ... you know.. and my son told me get a divorce and let's get out of here ... and he laid on the bed and I went to his father and told him why did you beat him .... but that was my mistake that I did not tell to anyone

and I was hiding how things were.. his hypocrisy and baseness were endless.. since we are married ...he could kick me and fist me at home but said please hold m? arm in arm and smile, so that people could see that we live well ...

T. How long have you lived with your husband?

C. Nineteen years ....

T. Is hi drinking often?

C. ...I haven't noticed ...well, he had got drunken a couple of times, I was still pregnant with my daughter, when he hit me and he wanted the keys for the car ...he went out and started hitting the car.. give me the keys ...give me the keys ...then I went into the bedroom and barricaded myself with what I was able to find ...he was pretending to be a model husband ...now from my daughter's testimonials I understand that he brought her to an auntie ...allegedly to cut her hair and after the haircut she gave her paper and pencils and locked herself with her Dad in the other room ... he had more than a couple of affairs but I closed my eyes ...because I wanted to have a family .... but his sexual mania was not satisfyable.. it is related to his laziness .... his mother was always between us, like a vicious triangle ... which I tried to break but I saw that I can't ... when we were newlyweds she used to enter the bedroom to see whether it is warm enough in the room, to put a warmer so that her son could warm his legs and so on ...

T. You were living with them?

C. yes, everyone was entering the bedroom without knocking, without anything ...I asked him to put a bolt on the door but no it was upsetting his parents ...

...there were cases that he tore my clothes, broke furniture if I refused sex to him, he was jumping, kicking, offending me, swearing ... when he had an erection I had to be with him ...I got used to the humiliation ...in front of my children ...he was masturbating all the time under the sheets, watching porno videos ...I don't know ...I understood that he had locked a woman in the shop and ...it is difficult for me to prove that ...she met me one day and told me madam your husband locked me in the shop and offered me one hundred levs to do the thing ... and I told her please I am a mother of two children and I want to keep my family do whatever

you want do not engage me with these things .... I got used to everything but the sexual violence to my daughter ...I couldn't stand ...this will be something I will struggle to understand until the end of my life ...I will think about that every day ... why did it happen and where was my mistake ...I have read in a Russian psychology dictionary ...about the pedophilia ...that it is still not understood .... there were people sexually satisfying themselves with children, animals and birds but this was still not understood and there was still no treatment for that ...so he will stay like that until the end of his life ...

T. And what are the developments in terms of the court?

C. I had three refusals by the Karnobat prosecutor, I made an appeal after that and ...it was really by chance I read in a newspaper the name of a prosecutor that had experience in such cases ...and I decided to write a letter to her.. during the summer of nineteen ninety nine ...and I used a small twenty-pages notebook in which I wrote down my story .... and she decided to move the lawsuit in Bourgas but .... in Bourgas they ordered a new investigation, they interrogated my daughter once again ...this affects my daughter's psyche, the convulsions became more frequent ...last year her father tried secretly from me .... we went for a walk with her and my sister .... he must have followed us because when she told me she would drink water from the fountain and when I told her OK and she went he father had reached her, fondled her on her hair and told her don't be afraid I am your Dad ...and she nearly had a convulsion ...went white, my sister and me look at her, she cannot speak ...and five minutes after that she says Dad was here ...I ask how ...and she started she even soiled involuntary ... this is because she is frightened when she sees him ...then I send a complaint to Karnobat and I asked the prosecutor that this man should not have access to the child ...not to meet her, not to speak to her, not to ...because as I try to get he better, she actually is getting worse ...and in his third refusal to prosecute he writes that it was not normal for the child to soil ...so the child had psychological deviations and he even asked the psychiatrist whether either I or her father are not mentally ill. Here in Bourgas the prosecution ordered full psychiatric expertise for my daughter and me



and it was found that we are fully normal people ...so they write that the child is fully normal and had suffered sexual maltreatment ...I cannot remember ...it was one Monday or Tuesday the psychologists and psychiatrists gathered ... we the mothers were told to stay outside and the children entered one by one ...one commission of fifteen-twenty people ...so they write the child is absolutely normal, she could visit public school ...she used to be a good achiever but now her marks went worse ...after these interrogations, convulsions, the medicine had an impact as well .....

... then I saw my husband, lying on the bed, his head in his hands, hanging from the edge of the bed ...and I started to talk again—not to talk but to cry out—I couldn't stay calm ...what have you done to the child I have to know ...I'd like to know what was the reason ...and he said take the axe and slaughter me ...I did it involuntary .... what have you done, I want to know exactly ...take the axe and kill me ...and I say why should I kill you, there are doctors, these doctors have studied for six-seven years, they will help us ...no, he says, they will bind me ...why should they bind you, may be they take medicine—I am trying to comfort him .... — ... we entered the hospital with diagnose of symptomatic epilepsy ... the doctor said she shouldn't meet with the father in any case; if necessary we should inform the guards at the hospital ...he asked me how he looked like and so on ...and he sent us to the scanner. We went to the scanner on the second day ...he had sneaked through the back entrance ...and he arrives at the scanner and starts asking me ...how is the child, is she better now ...but I started crying, I refused to talk with him ...they did the scanning and he grabbed her hand ...but the child refused she came and sat next to me again ...at that moment I cannot talk, I cannot shout for help because there is no one that I could ask ...and he grabs her hand ...come here Daddy to see you, show me where you sleep, where you play ...and the chief doctor looked at me and told him good bye ...and he gave some money to buy something to the child ...and no sound comes from me and I told him goodbye only and I didn't look at his eyes. Dr Stoev asked me why was I defending him ...and I said I was not able to protect her, I was not able to ask anyone for help ...

...in August during the interrogation, which was something terrible ...there was a psychologist from school there ...I even have to find her because she told me if needed she would witness to the court ...and on this interrogation the child said that he spread over her this ...I felt sick again ...and the inspector said ...I dunno this is ...the whole story ...

T. ...eer his parents, your ex-husband parents ...did they ...

C. my father in law died in nineteen eighty two ...

T. ...aaaa his mother did she know about these things, I mean did she believe, what was her attitude ...

C. on the divorce suit she came as a witness ...because he was not able to find a single witness against me ...and he took his mother ...and she said that since I had married him ...'since she came to our house she tried to command him ...she tried to subdue him ...he told me that she was chasing him with a knife' ...so this is written in the minutes of the court ...that I was chasing him with a knife ...I am sixty five kilos, he is ninety five, so how do you think ...for me chasing him with a knife and he living with me for nineteen years ...and after that she said that I made up the whole story to defame her son, it is not possible for my son to do such a thing ...my witness was my sister ...she came after the battering to take me with a car ...and she said about the blood and the bruises.. and after that battering he gave me flowers and was repent ...that he wouldn't do it again ...

T. and probably what he was doing with your daughter broke the camel's back  
....

C. Well, I decided that it was not possible to live with him anymore ...he said you promised me to go together to the psychiatrist ...and I say no, it is over ...eer don't call me anymore, I don't want to talk with you anymore, this is the end. And he followed me and told me ...I want to talk and I said there is nothing to talk about, this is the end ...let's not make a row here because there are people around ...and then he became insulted and went away. And as far as I know he is living normal life now, he has invited another girl, a lady with two sons .... eer ...I did not have the money for a lawsuit for division of the property ...I left the flat to

him, the flat was actually ... to the children ... I cannot go back where there was violence against my child ... because it could be worse for him as well ... our case started to get about, it wouldn't be good for me, it wouldn't be good for the child ... and I went with two policemen to take my luggage ... and again, he was throwing my clothes on the stairs, in front of the two policemen ... I don't think it is possible to communicate with such a person ... there were times when ... after taking the medicine she was not able to see for moments ... and I felt frightened and I do not know why but I dialed his number—I reproach myself for that—and I started again ... tell me what have you done to the child, tell me, she is losing her sight now ... what have you done to her and he said I've done nothing ... I want to see her, I miss her a lot, I love her a lot and so on ... and I said if you loved her would you do these things with her ... and I shut the telephone ... I did not want anything from him, neither financially, nor ... nothing ...

T. And how is she now?

C. Well, you could see the consequences of these two years ... something that I try to wrench from her ... this feeling ... eeer .... she feels different from the other children, in the sense that she is going through what had happened ... she thinks about it and when she thinks about it she has headaches. She could have a convulsion during the day as well ... she just falls upon the desk ... her teacher told me once ... I've sent her home with the assistant ... and I say why home, there is no one at home to look after her, and he said well, she fall upon the desk and paled ... and he started to pour water on her, and I say mister, I think I have explained to all the teachers, to absolutely all the teachers that ... when epilepsy you should leave her on her own and not to ... and I had given them a booklet as well, a very interesting booklet about the epilepsy ... I wanted the children at school to become familiar with her illness ... and I explained to all the class ... children, this is not a mental illness ... this is a neurological illness and I ask you very much to be tolerant, in the sense that ... if she falls here, you could get frightened and not able to help her ...

... well ... that is all, we buy books ... fairy tales books ... we started reading

Janny Rodary who we like ... 'The Hope Seller' story ...

.....

## D.2 Case Two

### Interview with S.

March 2001 11.00 p.m. Sofia

..... T. ... to ask you, how old are you, roughly ...

S. I'm fifty two ...

T. And who is living in the household?

S. We live only with my son at the moment; he is fifteen ... seventh grade at school ... he started one year later, after that there was one year suspension, and he had to repeat yet another year ...

T. ... mhmm ...

S. ... but he is mildly retarded ...

T. ... and who else used to live in the household?

S. My parents died seven-eight years ago, I had two marriages, my daughter is from my first marriage and my son—from the second ... she graduated the New Bulgarian University, MBA ... last year ... and our problems are first of all with my son and the care is primarily about him ... I've been a pensioner for the last two years ... I'd worked in Kremikovtzi for ten years before ... we live on one pension now, both of us ... and with the father's benevolence he managed recently to have extra math's lessons, the condition was that he pays because I can't ...

T. And since when you do not live with ...

S. Officially for the last three years, non-officially for five ... the suits were dragged out ... since nineteen ninety six ...

T. And does your son have contact with him?

S. ... eer, yes, he has contacts as long as his father calls him ... he is scared, he told his sister that he felt something inside ... that he doesn't want to go ... but something is telling him ... go ... as he is hearing his father's voice ... when his father looks at him, he doesn't dare to refuse. That's why he goes with him and

comes back ... almost never comes back cheerful ... he is always in tears ... in the last years he event came back ... soiled his pants ...

T. ... mhm ...

S. ... he used to wet his pants from fear as well ... and since his father in not living with us, he stopped ... aaah ... what else ... this fear that he acquired gradually during our cohabitance with my ex-husband ... because his father never took into consideration ... when we had troubles, not in front of the child ... he even made rows in front of the child, taking advantage of the fact that then I kept silent, not to irritate him ...

T. ... yes ...

S. ... and I kept silent to avoid big rows and he used that fact and always in front of the child ... he always tried something to feel guilt in front of him ...

T. Was it the same in respect of your daughter? She was actually his step-daughter, wasn't she?

S. Yes, he is actually from Varna, my second husband ... he came to us ... I say that because he tried before to make up, to inculcate on us that we had went to him, that we forced him ...

T. You got to know each other in Sofa, didn't you?

S. ... aaa, no, in Sandansky ... I have asthma, he as well ... we were at the same sanatorium ... you know, people get to know each other ... after he called from Varna, he paid us a visit ... then he started to come more often ... and a friendship started, he was very persistent; he knew that I was recently divorced, that I have a daughter that just had started school ...

T. where were his parents from?

S. from Varna; his mother is living in Sofia now; he took her with him when his father died fifteen years ago ...

T. did they meddle in your relationship?

S. they meddled a lot especially his mother ... she was silent at the beginning while his father was alive they were against because he was a bachelor ... eer not-married and I was married, divorced and with a child ... they were really against

...and while his mother was silent his father expressed overtly everything ...I had savings in a building company from my first marriage ... which was divided between me and my first husband ... and we kept on waiting for a flat as everyone else ... and I rented a state owned flat, my second husband used to visit us for three years and after that he decided to stay ...

T. ...so three years passed until ...

S. yes, he visited us often, he was trying to seek for a job ...and after that decided that he had to get back ...

...his father died six months after Martin was born ...after we got together, especially after Martin was born he said you haven't heard nothing from me.. that I do not want you ...since you want to live together with each other I accept that ...he didn't accept that while we were not together, married ...after that he was extremely considerate ...both to the baby and to my daughter because due to some coincidence she had the same name as him ... and his mother kept silent ... he had a sister that was divorced and never married after that and I think that this fact was the source of the spite ...I was trying to keep silent, to avoid the row ...

.... and she kicked us out at the end ...when we were in Varna my son was always having temperature ...

T .... and after your son was born did the relationships between you and your husband change?

S ...yes, he was very helpful at the beginning and then ...I was pregnant in my sixth month when he decided to marry me ...I did not insist then but he said that his son should have his name ...and after the marriage our relationship changed radically, as if this signature was important ...about the way he would behave ...and when I think back now ...because I believed him strongly—he accepted me and my daughter after all ...he started to be severe with my daughter ...and I accepted it ...he was jealous towards my daughter ...that my mother paid more attention to my daughter than to me ...he still says that the only person he valued from my kin was my mother ....

....

T. and how it happened that you separated with your husband?

S ...he started ...our relationship ...his mother ...my son had thirty nine degrees temperature and she kicked out ...I called my brother, we booked plane tickets, I took my son and went back to Sofia ...because I couldn't stand anymore in Varna ...my daughter stayed with him ...he had a car and they would get back by car ...and such kind of troubles started to accumulate gradually ...I said I didn't want to go to Varna anymore since she didn't want us ...I could stand it but because of my child ...I leave him with her for example and she immediately leaves the room ...let's say when I go to do the laundry ...we even brought our basins from Sofia, not to use anything that is hers in the house, not to annoy her ...she was hiding her basin ...and such kind of things ...

T. ...does it mean that you separated because of his mother?

S. ...aaah.. that is where the things started from ...then he started to neglect his children especially the one that's his own ...with disregard ...and my son was ill a lot ...each month he was at the hospital ...I noticed that he was not seeing well, not distinguishing the objects ...they made a lot of examines and tests ...we stayed for a week and he didn't come ...he told us he was tired of going to hospitals ...he was always seeking for someone to be guilty about something ...so that you could feel guilty ...

...after that ...his sister did not want to live with his mother any more and his mother always wanted to live with him ...she didn't want us ...

T. ...is there anything in common with the separation from your first husband?

S. ...no there ...you know ...he found another woman ...I lost my first child and my second, and my daughter is the third ...he started drinking and to ...to neglect me and not to care ...he didn't know what he was doing while drunk ...he harassed me and my daughter ...even sometimes he grabbed her and threw her on the bed ...three years old child ...she wasn't even three ...so she was three when we separated ...he came to see her in two-three months and after that stopped ...she repelled him because he was drunk and rode her on a bicycle ...I let her once to go with him on holidays ...with him and his girlfriend ...and he locked her

up and they went out ...so she didn't want anymore ...she told him herself she didn't want and he never came back ...twenty two years ...

... [the children] have ten years age difference ...when he was a baby she loved him a lot and rejoiced at him ...she accepted her stepfather well, too ...he paid attention to her, he wanted to show her that he cared more for her than I did ...he tried to win her over .... and he tried to suggest to my son that he cares for him a lot, he loves him and that I am irresponsible since I was working, I had night shifts ...a mother cannot work on nightshifts ...and he tried in such a way to alienate the children from me ...

...and to make children respect him he tried while he was playing with them to cause them pain, to show that he was the strongest ...if he holds his hands to press until he experiences pain ...and when they were playfully wrestling he they shouldn't hit him ...his attitude towards me was the same ...he shouldn't be the one that is brought down ...as if he was experiencing a kind of ...

... while I was at work.. he bent them over the balcony upside down and wanted them to tell him that they loved him most ...he had done it with both of them ...from the eight floor ... and I wondered how to make him leave them alone because my son was screaming ...Daddy please I won't do it again ...

T. and he was not drunken?

S. no, he doesn't drink because he has asthma ...and he bent them from the balcony and they were screaming ...and when I brought my son to psychologists ...I even brought him to the head-teacher of the special school and she told me he is for normal school, here he will learn their ... which is not good ...

T. so it affected him ...

S. yes, affected ....

T. ...and did it affect your daughter?

S. yes ...



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