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Sam Frankel

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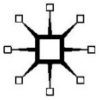

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For My Parents and Parents-in-Law

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Preface

The arguments presented in this book have been given particular resonance and urgency for, as I am finishing writing, London and other major cities around the UK have experienced consecutive nights of unprecedented behaviour. Described by some as 'riots', this behaviour, in which shops were looted, houses burgled and buildings set on fire, appeared to have no point of actual protest. The causes are now being debated from every side and opinions expressed as to the 'moral decline, absence of authority, the lack of God in people's lives, the breakdown of family values, the "collapse" of the school system, materialism and the "softness" of the police' (*The Times*, 13 August 2011: 7).

Significantly it was young people who were associated with this outbreak of lawlessness, with children as young as 11 being charged with offences (*The Guardian*, 10 August 2011).

The trouble on the streets saw a determined response from those in government as they fought to regain their power. In doing so the Prime Minister reinforced our approach in this country towards children through the criminal law, underlying its capacity to bring punishment, even to the younger members of our communities:

> And I have this very clear message to those people who are responsible for this wrongdoing and criminality: you will feel the full force of the law, and if you are old enough to commit these crimes you are old enough to face the punishment [quote taken from speech made by David Cameron] (*The Guardian*, 8 August 2011).

Is this yet another moral panic that will see children as a universal group become targets for society's fears? Or does this mark an opportunity for change based on real knowledge, as we seek to understand more deeply the relationship between children, morality and society?

Acknowledgements

Without the support of certain key people this book would not have been written. First it is only due to the inspiration, teaching and support of Allison James that the original research was able to open such an exciting window into the lives of a group of children. Their words have since motivated me to want to share them more widely. However, developing them within this book would not have happened without the friendship and support of Kate Bacon, whose encouragement and guidance has been invaluable.

I am grateful for the ongoing understanding of all those at Act 4 and to Terry and Louis particularly. My parents, parents-in-law and all the family have been fantastic in helping me create the space to write, although, as always, special thanks are due to my children and to my wonderful wife for letting me dedicate so much time to this project. Thank you!

Introduction

Just the title of Gitta Sereny's book *Cries Unheard* is evocative. It tells the tale of the troubled and horror-filled childhood of a girl in the North of England. An account that warrants the deepest compassion towards a young life abused and distorted. However, is this what we see? For this story is that of double child murderer Mary Bell, who at just ten years old took the lives of two toddlers. Such a terrible crime saw Mary labelled as 'a freak of nature', 'evil born', a 'bad seed' (Sereny 1998: 11). The power of this book is the contrasting views it paints, which challenge our opinions and attitudes towards children who have committed the gravest of acts. Is this child, now an adult, to be seen as victim or as offender? How is her behaviour to be judged? As a consequence of her social situation, as a result of an innate capacity to do wrong, or as a decision rationally taken and executed with knowing intention? This may have been the act of one child, but such cases impact on social consciousness, therefore the answers to these questions have wider ramifications. In fact they strike at the heart of society's relationship with children and morality.

Children and the question of moral behaviour are prominent social discourses. Adult attitudes towards children and their recognition of right and wrong impact society deeply with implications for the way in which we think about children's participation, their citizenship, their 'education' and governance and how they are punished if they step out of line. But on what basis are such practices and policies built and how do they reflect the reality of children's social lives? It is through exploring such questions that this book presents a foundation on which children can be engaged in moral discourses. In so doing it does not seek to present a case that removes or exempts children's moral responsibility, rather it seeks to place children within moral discourses such that they are engaged with and not imposed on. What this work suggests

is that much of society's thinking in relation to children and questions around social behaviour are linked to misplaced assumptions that are rooted in views from the past. These views influence constructions of childhood and directly impact on the everyday experiences of children. It is by hearing children, within the context of sociological investigations, that these constructs of morality can be challenged, so that the voice of the individual child at last is recognised within this complex and important social debate.

The fundamental nature of this challenge should not be underestimated. For within it questions are asked that directly examine our understandings of moral philosophy and notions of childhood development. These are views that in some cases stretch back thousands of years. This work does not presume that, as a result of the following chapters, such opinions will vanish, but it does seek to add to the growing body of writing that highlights the social aptitude of children, capable of creating meanings as a response to their interaction with the social world around them. This is only possible through reviewing such writings in the light of new empirical research that allows specific questions to be asked about the way in which children engage with morality as part of their everyday lives. Presenting this in the form of a case study allows the particular experiences of these children to be analysed, whilst recognising their unique nature. The focus of the case study, although limited to one group of children in a certain part of one country, does not disqualify it, but it does contextualise it. For the following chapters do seek to consider the way in which childhood and morality are constructed within an English setting. This demonstrates the extent to which cultural sensitivities play a part in shaping the way in which children's childhoods are experienced. It also provides an example that is open to comparison in other cultures. As a consequence, the claims within this work are clearly focused on a group of children, such that additional research is needed, to develop, extend and further the voice of children on a wider scale.

Key themes

It is unashamedly the zeal of a campaigner that drives this book, as it seeks to free the voice of the child within an adult-dominated debate. Time has passed since the original research was conducted; however the extent to which the themes it raises are still relevant is very apparent. Progress in the way in which children are engaged within moral discourses remains limited, slow to develop and in many cases

non-existent. It is a problem that is built on adult assumptions about children and morality.

It is in an attempt to bring increased knowledge to these issues that the following chapters are employed. The work is divided into four sections.

1. Laying a foundation for moral discourse – agency, identity and belonging

Thinking on morality has a very rich and complex past. A brief investigation shows the extent to which the opportunity for *all* to engage with discourses on morality has been limited. Whose voice, if any, is credible within the context of being able to shape and define moral meanings? As time has passed scholars have begun to acknowledge the voice of the individual, not just in responding to what is moral, but in actually shaping it. That capacity to inform morality provokes a further question about the nature of the relationship between the individual and the social world they find themselves in. As such, Chapter 1 considers what is meant by agency and structure and how this is linked to the capacity of the individual to be a meaning-creator. By extending this debate to children, it becomes clear that children too need to be seen as capable of responding to their social worlds as they shape and define meanings. This process of agency is developed by placing it in the context of the self and the role of the body as a principal form through which the child seeks to position themselves in the context of others. At the centre of this is a child's desire to belong, which is shaped and re-shaped through perceptions of similarity and difference.

However, it is one step to recognise children as social agents, and another to accept their capacity to demonstrate moral agency. Or is it? For as suggested in Chapter 1, morality must be seen as an expression of the social. Morality reflects a capacity for the individual to identify and act in a way that promotes interaction through doing what is acceptable. Having established children as social agents, it is therefore not such a significant jump to recognise their moral agency. Thus the gauntlet is thrown down, the foundation laid and the challenge begins, as this work seeks to demonstrate the extent to which these claims can be supported.

2. Representations of childhood and morality – a social construct of control

The extent of the challenge, if children's voices are to be heard within discourses on morality, is formidable. It is therefore important that it is

understood. Chapter 2 seeks to identify some of the key themes within this struggle, which Chapter 3 puts into a specific context as it looks at children within English law. As a result this section is able to highlight the way in which both childhood and morality are social constructs but also, significantly, the interrelationship between the two. Morality has been thought of in many different guises across the ages but in respect of representations of children it is those theories that allow for control that have been and remain most prominent. Significantly, tracing this relationship shows the extent to which such moral definitions have shaped and informed childhood itself. These representations of the child as a moral concern have histories of a number of millennia and promote a construction of the child which emphasises their lack of competence but also, notably, the need for children to be controlled. As a result children have become the easy focus of repression, as adults seek to protect society and maintain social order.

The notion of children as a threat may stretch back thousands of years, but it remains as prominent today as it ever was. Chapter 3 highlights the way in which contemporary constructions of children and morality continue to draw on the themes dealt with in Chapter 2. Through a process of panics and popularisation, these attitudes towards children gain political weight and form part of policy and practice. By taking a look at the legislative foundations and principles of the criminal law, it shows the extent to which more progressive approaches are limited, with the 'justice' system being defined by archaic assumptions that ensure the focus remains on controlling and constraining children. As such it also provides a context within which the case study must be seen, as the children respond to these attitudes within their developing understandings of morality.

Notably, this chapter also examines the contrast presented by the way in which other areas of the law view children and morality. Although an increased focus on children's rights has furthered the extent to which the voice of the individual child is important, in application any recognition of agency remains limited, leaving a continued sense of ambiguity in relation to children's age and competence, with implications for the way in which morality is understood and managed.

3. Moral agency in action – the self, others and experiences

It is to the children themselves that Section 3 turns. It introduces the empirical research and provides an overview of the methodological approach. However, it is in Chapter 4 that these voices begin to be heard.

This chapter shows the extent to which the child as a social agent is constantly engaged with the 'moral' as part of their day-to-day lives. What emerges is that notions of right and wrong are not fixed but the product of numerous social variables, which children need to actively consider in reaching a moral opinion. This process of meaning-creation and moral judgement is developed through looking at stereotypes, which the children used to help provide points of reference as they sought to establish understanding. Significantly, these stereotypes drew directly on those aspects of agency looked at in Chapter 1, as children considered others in relation to themselves, creating order through notions of belonging, as expressed through similarity and difference. Breaking down the use of stereotypes into categories relating to the self, morality clearly emerges as part of the day-to-day, as the children seek to navigate the complex social world around them.

It is by categorising these experiences of the self and others in the context of power relations that a broader picture emerges of how children engage with morality. At the centre of Chapter 5 is the fact that children desire mutual relationships in which they feel respected by those around them. Such relationships are particularly valuable and children are shown to make considerable effort to maintain them. This is so much so that this desire to establish elements of a mutual relationship can shape and define moral boundaries to such an extent that not only caring for others in the home, but also smashing a stranger's window, can be seen morally as the 'right' thing to do. By considering this in light of a child's desire to belong, one can see how moral acceptability can shift in accordance with the values and purpose of different groups. The implications of this are starkly illustrated by those who feel they lack power, where a bid for equality sees them define the morality of their behaviour in such a way that leaves them vulnerable, both to getting into trouble and suffering personal harm. Power, therefore, provides a central ingredient to children's moral experiences and the way in which they come to define and manage their social worlds.

Chapter 6 develops further the extent to which moral understanding is expressed in children's everyday lives through looking at social relationships and their significance on a child's moral journey. What this chapter suggests is that children's understanding of morality is the product of a personal process of learning. Within this, children recognise the need for moral knowledge, as it provides a guide to what is and is not acceptable, which, if they get it right, can help to further establish their sense of belonging. This has considerable implications for the way in which adults engage with children on matters of morality. Parents

emerge as the group who are perceived to be the most effective in providing moral education. This results from the fact that parents are seen within the context of mutual relationships, acting in a knowledgeable and concerned way for their children. The nature of this relationship is such that it not only inspires a sense of duty in children to do what is right, but it also allows acts of correction to be accepted as part of the child's ongoing moral leaning. Within school, however, teachers are not perceived to be so effective. The ingredient of power that is caught up in the children's perception of this group means that moral guidance is not accepted in the same way as it is at home. In fact, the children questioned the justice of it. This suggests, therefore, that moral understanding, to be effective, needs to respond to children within the context of their own personal experiences. The chapter ends by contrasting what happens in home and school with the neighbourhood, a space of intense popular and political focus. What emerges is an arena in which children get little or no moral guidance at all. They are expected to abide by laws, the application of which is questionable within the context of their own lives. That sense of vulnerability is further highlighted as children face the challenges of victimisation without the safety net offered in other spaces, as well as having to deal with competing social pressures as they seek to further their sense of belonging and status amongst their peers.

4. Concluding thoughts – time to be 'bothered'

The nature of the empirical research means that these findings are not presented as having universal application. Rather, these are the views of one group of children, from a particular area, set of backgrounds and individually collected experiences. In fact, a desire to present an authoritative set of recommendations applicable to all children following this work would go against the key themes raised in it. This said, issues emerge that do have implications for adults, particularly in relation to the need to recognise the individual more fully. Societies' desire, therefore, to deal with moral issues, must start and not merely finish with the individual. The acceptability of behaviour must be a process of engagement and not imposition; it must recognise and hear the individual child, so that societies' view of morality is just that, 'societies', including all who are active members within it.

Section I

Laying a Foundation for Moral Discourse

1
Agency, Identity and Belonging

The history of children's engagement with discourses on morality has at best been partial and at worst non-existent. Questions of children's competence and capability of age and reason have stripped children of a voice, leaving them powerless within the dominant world of adults. This has consequences. For children to be heard, a foundation needs to be laid that gives them 'moral' credibility. This asks immediate questions about the nature of morality and how it sits within the context of the relationship between the individual and society. This chapter will not provide all the answers, but it will look to begin the process of establishing a foundation that recognises the extent to which the individual is part of defining moral meanings. This implies the application of agency and the social essence of morality itself. Significantly, these arguments can be made in the context of children, challenging and defeating theories that limited the extent to which children were seen as decision-makers and meaning-creators within their everyday lives. It is by recognising children as agents, responding and reacting to the world around them, as they shape a sense of identity and belonging, that the case for children's moral agency and therefore their inclusion in such discourses can be made.

Morality and individual agency

The first step in freeing children's voices is to demonstrate the potential of the individual within moral discourses. As suggested above, establishing a foundation for children to be heard rests heavily around philosophical questions about the nature of the individual. To what extent is an individual free to construct and shape moral meanings, or are such meanings caused by and derived from the social 'structure' that

the individual finds himself or herself within? This conceptual wrestling match between the 'agency' of the individual and the potency of 'structure' must therefore be explored as we consider the extent to which the individual has the potential to inform moral debate, rather than simply being seen as a passive object within a pre-defined moral world. Indeed the relationship between the individual and morality has been a complex one. The following discussion shows the extent to which discourses on morality have a history of exclusivity. It is only with the growing recognition of the individual and increasingly this notion of agency that morality has come to have more general application. A more detailed definition and discussion of the social nature of morality follows in the next chapter; however, here the focus is on the positioning of the individual as we consider what potential there is for children's voices to be heard.

Early writings highlight how only limited sections of society were seen as fit for engaging with discourses on morality. They project the idea of a philosophical hierarchy within which there were only a small number who had the requisite 'capacity' and 'competency' needed for moral thought. For example, Aristotle's notion of virtue was restricted to a 'few', as Aristotle doubted that the desire to be noble or good could have universal application. Indeed he says of the 'many' that,

> . . . these do not by nature obey the sense of shame, but only fear, and do not abstain from bad acts because of their baseness but through fear of punishment; living by their passion they pursue the pleasures appropriate to their character and the means to them, and avoid the opposite pains, and have not even a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant, since they have never tasted it (Burnyeat 1980: 75).

Moral capacity here is directly linked to the extent to which the individual is seen as capable of constructing meanings, of demonstrating agency. However for Aristotle such capacity was limited to a small group who were seen to have the required wealth and education, as well as nationality, age and gender. Everyone else, *the many*, was seen as outside of the moral discourse with moral definitions and judgements simply being applied to them by the 'noble' in their capacity to define the 'common good'. This image is interesting as in many ways it still reflects a parody of the experience of the child in relation to morality today. For children, this sense of being the 'other' and of entering the moral world of us the adults has, and continues to be, the dominant way of thinking.

However, this restricted application of morality in which the 'many' were mere spectators was not to last. Christianity was significant in establishing a moral framework that had more general application, applying to increased members of society. However, it was not until the 17th century that, as MacIntyre remarks, 'the individual is now on the scene with a vengeance' (MacIntyre 1966: 151). In literature, with books such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and in politics, the rights of the common man became increasingly voiced, with moral discourses not only being the realm of the philosopher or politician, but also of the soldier.[1]

This more expansive sense of moral discourse revolved around the notion of 'free will'. However, the concept of 'free will' raised questions of its own. Did 'free will' apply to all? When did the individual develop their own ability to reason and therefore think and understand what was 'right' and 'wrong'? In exploring these issues it questioned directly the extent to which individuals were 'shaped by' or were 'shaping' the societies within which they lived. Were individuals the product of 'structure' created by the broader organisations and institutions of society or were they as individuals responsible for shaping and creating meanings? This line of thought challenged the nature of the relationship between the individual and society, as that sense of the social agent, an individual capable of constructing meanings as a response to the social world around them, began to emerge.[2] As a result, MacIntyre suggests that social order, defined by structure, was no longer considered a 'framework within which the individual has to live out his moral life but as the mere sum of individual wills and interests' (MacIntyre 1966: 267). This marked an important moment in relation to agency and morality. However, this sense of the individual as an 'active' social contributor had limited visibility, eclipsed by the popular credence given to theorists such as Immanuel Kant. For even though Kant did much to acknowledge the application of morals to 'all', his encompassing sense of universality left no room for individual moral expression. Morality, for Kant, applied equally no matter the background or border. It rejected any sense of the agent's capacity to draw moral meanings in response to the social world that they were part of.

Sociology can be argued to have developed as a response to such thinking, as psychology and other disciplines pursued the Kantian position. What sociology offered was a broader discourse on moral philosophy that was not restricted by the 'mind'. Rather it allowed exploration of the interconnection between the individual and social structures. In contrast to Kant, Durkheim, in the words of Lee and

Newby, suggests that 'moral science is not to establish universal standards of right and wrong. On the contrary, its rationale would be the recognition that moral standards vary according to causes originating within the collectivity as a whole' (Lee and Newby 1983: 214). For Durkheim, morality was reflected in the balancing of 'solidarity' and 'regulation'. Unless the collective conscience, which drew society together, was controlled and regulated it would result in anomie, a concept that defines the 'breakdown of norms governing social interaction' (Abercrombie et al. 1994: 17). What Durkheim was suggesting, therefore, was that morality was a product of the social as individuals weighed competing pressures as part of a desire to create a harmonious society. But Durkheim's work, similar to Merton's (1968) later, went no further on the extent to which the individual was recognised as having the capacity to shape moral meanings; rather, morality was a product of the collective, which applied equally in ordering the lives of all the individuals who lived within that society. The individual as agent had still not broken through.

This inclusion of the 'social' within understandings of morality and the role of the individual was important. The interconnection between these themes is usefully highlighted in criminological thought during the 20th century, within the specific context of exploring deviancy. The work of the Chicago School reflects this slow evolutionary process towards the acceptance of the individual as a moral meaning-creator. Initially, subcultural theories suggested that different sets of morals could be attached to small groups within society. Sutherland (1970), for example, argued that a person's exposure to particular influences within culture results in the creation of different moral standards; 'a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favourable to violation of law over definitions unfavourable to violations of law' (Sutherland and Cressy 1970: 75). This process, he argued, created a structure which was accepting of criminal behaviour. Short refers to this process of normalisation as, 'patterns of values, norms and behaviours which have become traditional among certain groups' (Short 1965: 58).

This idea that within a society groups or 'cultural units' can have their own values is important. It is given increased significance here as Sutherland's work looked at teenage boys[3] showing that this idea of group values was not restricted to adults, but could have application to younger members of society as well. Cohen (1955) provided an extra dimension to this debate, building on Sutherland's ideas by suggesting that acts within the group could be shown to carry specific meanings relevant to that group, as demonstrated, for example, in the attainment

of status. For instance, the act of assault would be seen as morally wrong by the majority of society; however, within the gang such actions could be given a positive meaning as individuals achieved status by demonstrating that they were 'tough'. Thus groups were seen as capable of creating their own moral order, with their own definitions on the acceptability of social action. Within these discussions the relevance of themes of identity and belonging begin to emerge, providing a context within which to understand this process of moral thought. However, the extent to which individual agency was acknowledged remained limited.

It was this focus on 'group morality' that came under attack from David Matza and Gresham Sykes (Tierney 1996) who, in challenging this position, provided a model through which to assert a sense of individual agency in the construction of moral meaning. Matza and Sykes's theories represented a radical departure from an undercurrent that had run through many of the previous debates, which had said, 'delinquents were fundamentally different to non-delinquents: that they each inhabited different moral universes' (Tierney 1996: 121). Rather, Matza and Sykes suggested that the delinquent recognised the moral structures of mainstream society, and that moral definitions must be seen in this wider context. Their progression into delinquency, therefore, was seen in the context of a number of stages, in which the individual wrestled with this wider moral understanding that had developed in their social life beyond the group or gang. The three key stages[4] Matza (1964) identifies reflect that sense of the individual having to respond to a different set of social circumstances in which they demonstrated agency by redefining their sense of identity and belonging as they formed moral meanings that governed their actions with the group.

Such theories suggest a significant shift in thinking on morality in which the individual must be included, being seen in terms of social agency in which notions of self-identity and belonging are central. Notably the individual's moral definitions and understandings are not seen as separate to the rest of society, rather the individual operates from within it, as he or she decides to conform, break, accept or create rules. The notion of deviancy had itself suggested a concentration on the 'other'; however, its suggested decline as a focus for scholarship (Sumner 1994) reflects that sense to which morality is all-pervasive and can not be seen outside of society as a whole. Discourse on morality, therefore, invites a growing recognition of morality as part of the 'everyday', linked to this sense of individuals' interactivity with the social world around them as they create and shape meanings. However, what does this mean for children? Are children capable of these processes of agency, which see individuals making moral decisions based on a

reflection of self-identity and belonging? It is to these questions that this chapter now turns.

The search for agency

Reason – barriers to engagement

The sense of agency and an ability to define meanings may have been accepted in adults, even young people, but in children? A significant barrier to children's engagement in moral discourses has always been the extent to which children have been seen as competent or 'ready' to engage with moral issues (Short 1999). Central to this has been the question of children's ability to reason, and the philosophical themes it raises about the nature of the individual, and his or her capacity to realise and practise the moral codes within society. Aristotle reflects on the personal duality reason raises through his division of form and material substance. The 'material' substance of the individual was flesh and bone, but the 'form' was an extra dimension, the soul, through which the individual could establish meaning and purpose. A uniquely human product of 'form' was reason. In reflecting on Aristotle's work Thompson notes that 'reason is needed in order to be fully human' (Thompson 2005: 54). Thus it was through this capacity to process information that it was accepted that the human formed moral opinions. However, significantly for children, reason, which becomes synonymous with the application of morality, is only present in those that are 'fully human' and children, according to Aristotle, were not. These views continued. Archard (2004), in commenting on John Locke (1632–1704), highlights a similar theme. For Locke the attainment of 'reason' was a journey that children were on, which, eventually, as they grew older and increased in experience, would result in them achieving this desired capacity. Locke's recognition of experience alongside ideas about constructive teaching practices were a step towards seeing children as a product of the social context they found themselves in. Although this was a progressive view, children were still not seen as capable of being part of moral discourses.

Reason suggested a move from inadequacy to adequacy as the individual child grew into their capacity to understand and interpret moral meanings. Its central place within this debate was fixed by the work of Immanuel Kant. It was Kant who, as presented earlier, argued that reason applied universally, irrespective of culture (Kant 1949). He suggested that morality was based around a supreme principle, which was rationality. This common capacity to reason meant that we are all

capable of answering for ourselves whether an act is right or wrong (Kant 1949). These thoughts have been reflected in earlier discussions; however, a pure interpretation of Kant was tempered by the fact that children, as Locke had suggested, were seen as needing to grow into this ability to reason, views that were significantly advanced in the 20th century by the work of Jean Piaget. Drawing from Kant (Winston 1998), Piaget sought to re-affirm this notion of reason, maintaining its links to morality, in the multi-stage account he presented of the child's development.

Piaget's theories came to dominate much of 20th-century thinking in relation to children. Piaget saw children as the products of structure, with agency being an aspect of development that took many years to be fully effective. At the centre of this was a universal construction of the child that impacted on the extent to which children were seen as capable of reason and, therefore, competent to engage with social issues, such as morality. It is important to understand Piaget's contribution as it continues to be influential, as will emerge, for example, in the discussion of the criminal law in Chapter 3.

Piaget states:

> The Psychological development that starts at birth and terminates in adulthood is comparable to organic growth. Like the latter, it consists essentially of activity directed toward equilibrium. Just as the body evolves toward a relatively stable level characterised by the completion of the growth process and by organ maturity, so mental life can be conceived as evolving toward a final form of equilibrium represented by the adult mind. In a sense, development is a progressive equilibration from a lesser to a higher state of equilibrium. From the point of view of intelligence, it is easy to contrast the relative instability and incoherence of childhood ideas with the systemisation of adult reason. With respect to the affective life, it has frequently been noted how extensively emotional equilibrium increases with age. Social relations also obey the same law of gradual stabilisation (Piaget 1967: 3).

Life is about achieving the balance of the adult mind, of working through the inconsistencies and ambiguities of being a child, a position that it is difficult to reflect on until one achieves adult reason. According to Piaget, psychological development parallels social development, with both moving towards achieving a sense of stability. However, this remains unattainable until the individual is equipped with the superior

reason of adults. The transition from the lesser state of 'equilibrium' to a higher state was clearly marked by Piaget through six stages of development. The first three take place within a child's first two years and are characterised through the recognition of reflex actions, developing into, first, motor habits and, later, sensorimotor activities. The fourth stage, between the ages of two and seven years, is linked to intuitive behaviour characterised by egocentricity, although it is only between the ages of seven and twelve that the child begins to use logic in shaping both social and moral interaction. But it is not until the child is twelve that the capacity to think in abstract terms marks the move into the adult world.[5]

These stages had moral application as well, which Piaget outlined in an early piece of work that looked at children playing a game of marbles (Piaget 1975[1935]). He suggested that initially rules were simply conceived as rituals by children. When a child reaches two years they begin to follow rules on their own, but this is simply as an imitation of what they have seen others doing. At seven years, rules start to be used in order to achieve control over each other and children begin to merge different notions of these rules, following them as a result of obeying instructions rather than an understanding of why it is 'wrong'. However, it is only when they are twelve years of age, and have the capacity to think in abstract ways, to reason, that they are capable of recognising rules as fixed and begin to follow them. It is therefore not until this point that children can be considered to have an ability to attach moral meaning to their actions, with reason being demonstrated when the child 'no longer merely obeys commands given by adults but obeys the rule itself' (Piaget 1975[1935]: 194).

The construction of the child that grew out of Piagetian theories was concerned with the child as self-centred and inwardly focused, which consequently meant their capacity to reflect on the opinions and attitudes of others was considered to be significantly limited. Within this debate Piaget does refer to the dual concept of the self, with both an inner and outer capacity. But the inner self, as suggested, is not considered capable of reflecting on or engaging with the subtleties of social interaction. Within Piaget's work, while there are a number of useful ideas, these are clouded by a desire to objectify the child in such a way that children become positioned as passive social objects, incapable of the kind of subjective reflection deemed necessary for social agency. As Greene suggests,

> No one would want to deny the importance of physical maturation to childhood. However, what is questionable is the commitment on the

> part of the child psychologist this century to the view that psychological change has the same characteristics and dynamic as physical change. Thus, just as the development of dentition occurs in a predictable, universal sequence in all healthy children, so, it has been assumed, does cognition, or attachment or the self-concept, or moral reasoning (Greene 1999: 253).

This rigid approach to the child that characterised them as a universal and passive group saw questions increasingly being asked about Piaget's reluctance to engage with any sense of agency and the social context in which children lived their lives (Greene 1999). What other researchers began to show was that similar tests to those run by Piaget, but with methods that appealed to the child's everyday life and experiences, could result in rather different findings. Donaldson and McGarrigle (1975) demonstrated just this when they introduced a puppet, the 'naughty teddy', into their investigations of Piaget's research methods. A little later further research adapted Piaget's 'Three Mountain Test' by including dolls and policeman puppets. Again it was found that engaging with children's everyday lives in a manner which they could understand did produce different results from those suggested by Piaget (Donaldson and Hughes 1979), all of which also called into question whether children had previously understood what they were being asked (Wood 1998a). In reviewing some of the challenges to Piaget, Light concludes that one cannot underestimate 'the part played by contextual sensitivity in the acquisition of understanding' (Light 1986: 183). Indeed, he goes on to say that one can only really seek to understand children by moving away from the 'abstract epistemic subject of Piaget's structuralist approach, towards the real child's experience within specific social contexts' (Light 1986: 185).

This suggestion of the child as processing and interpreting social interaction and as a consequence forming meanings was a critical challenge to Piaget and others.[6] In so doing it directly questioned the measure of reason that had stood to define the move from a child's moral incompetence to competence. Not only that but it brought into doubt the sense in which children could or should be observed as a universal group. At last the individual child was beginning to emerge.

A new balance – agency and structure

Challenges to Piaget marked a growing realisation of the need to move away from theories that restricted or ignored consideration of the 'active' nature of the individual as part of the social world. It reflected further thinking in other disciplines and marked an increased interest

in defining this process of agency and how it impacted on the way in which individuals defined meanings that directly informed action as a consequence of their social experiences.

Crick (1976), for example, writing about language, added to this growing focus on the individual as meaning-maker and by doing so provided a deeper understanding of the nature of agency itself, which carries significant resonance for this investigation of children and moral engagement. Crick rejected the notion of causality in which people were left to appear as 'things' (Crick 1976: 90), rather than being recognised for the insight that they can offer.

This desire to explain meaning and action saw him stress the contrast between physical science (in which developmental theorists such as Piaget would have been obvious targets) and its concentration on structure, and social science with its need to recognise agency. In marking the shift from the 'mechanistic man' (Crick 1976: 89) of the past, Crick, reflecting on other theoretical changes of the time, surmises that 'there has been a shift to the view of social life as the creation and negotiation of meaning . . . in the new paradigm, human beings are convention making, theory constructing, rule following creatures' (Crick 1976: 88). For Crick (1976) wanted to show that action was not the result of an automatic 'external response', but a process of agency, or as he put it, 'internal' reflection, resulting in actions that carried meaning; individuals are 'persons who use language, construct meanings, follow rules, give accounts of their actions – beings, in short, who have considerable insight into their own nature' (Crick 1976: 93). The recognition of a sense of self is important and in fact summed up the divide between different schools of thought. The physical sciences looked at actions in terms of seeking interpretations with a focus on 'causes of behaviour' (Crick 1976: 93) rather than in a social science context acknowledging the meaning that already existed within the language itself. In this regard it was for the social sciences to focus further on the internal and to explore more deeply the self, in an effort to understand that meaning and the way in which the agent interacted with the structure around them. This is a distinction that, as will be shown, is particularly relevant in the context of this discussion on morality.

Crick's thesis is of acute importance within the developing arguments in this book, as it encourages us not to be constrained by the past, but to recognise the extent to which an individual's actions carry insight and meaning: 'when watching a human being in the course of a social interaction, one is not witnessing a body behaving and failing to witness a

mind thinking, one is seeing a person in action' (Crick 1976: 97). Indeed these themes and his use of language such as the 'new paradigm' is significant, for it reflects that adopted by those a few years later who sought to apply these concepts to children (James and Prout 1997) as part of affirming their desire for children to be seen as active participants in the social world, acting on the basis of individually constructed meanings.

Crick's work was not a lone voice making a call for a new look at structure and agency. Within sociology Giddens (1979), amongst others (Thompson and Tunstall 1971), was part of efforts to recast the relationship between structure and agency in favour of a growing recognition of the individual as a social agent. At the centre of this there was this challenge to structure as the source of causality in which structure determined the character and nature of individual action. In a colourful attack on previous thinking, Giddens identifies the threat to the individual if they are not freed from simply being seen as the 'cultural dopes' (Giddens 1979: 52) of the past. With themes that will be shown to have particular relevance to children, he demanded the importance of temporality and the investigation of power within the context of social practices. Central to this developing argument was the meaningful way in which one comes to understand action, such that structure can not be seen as defining. Rather, 'structure' reflects 'rules and resources, organised as properties of social systems'. It is then within these 'social systems' that relationships are seen to be reproduced 'between actors or collectives, organised as regular social practices' (Giddens 1979: 66). These definitions reflect the centrality of the social in which action and meaning must be seen as a product of social interaction. The ongoing process, and the way in which it changes and transforms with time and space, altering structures and re-producing systems, he terms 'structuration'. The active social figure therefore undertakes the role of creating the principles on which society comes to be characterised, such that structure and agency can not be seen as separate but as mutually dependent, with structure being a response to social interaction; 'not a barrier, but as essentially involved in its [action] production' (ibid.). Despite challenges (Abercrombie 1994: 416), these developing theories mark a revolution in which the individual is recognised as being part of shaping and defining meanings. They give further context to those theories on deviancy explored earlier and herald the potential of approaching morality as a social process rather than a biological stage. However, how were these theories going to be contextualised in relation to children? Were children going to remain like the 'cultural dopes' of the past, blighted by the hurdle of reason? Or, were children to be recognised as

agents, drawing on the social world around them as they too shaped and defined meanings within their everyday lives?

Children as social agents

The new paradigm

Charlotte Hardman, an anthropologist, had, like Giddens and others, also recognised the incongruity of this awkward relationship between structure and agency. However, she took this one step further, and in a direct challenge to the restrictive notions of passivity and universality that had been central to Piaget and Parsons (see footnote 6), sought to apply such thinking to children. Hardman called for a marked change in the way in which children were thought of, by stressing the 'synchronic' (seeing the subject as it exists at one moment in time) rather than the 'diachronic' (the historical development of a subject) (Hardman 1973). This shift is significant. As well as drawing attention away from the developmental approach to children, it identifies the need to re-define the way in which children are seen as participants in the here and now. She attacked the way children were seen to be shaped by oppressive adult-centric social structures and demands that they should no longer be seen as

> [p]assive objects, as helpless spectators in a pressing environment, which affects and produces their every behaviour. They [anthropologists in the past] see the child as continually assimilating, learning and responding to the adult, having little autonomy, contributing nothing to social values or behaviour except the latent outpourings of earlier acquired experiences. The adult plays the role of either frustrating the child in its toilet training, feeding or other activities, or compelling the child to fit to a cultural pattern. My proposed approach regards children to be studied in their own right, and not just as receptacles of adult teaching (Hardman 1973: 87).

In establishing this position Hardman refers to children creating their own traditions and through this an ability to culturally interact (Opie and Opie 1959), thus promoting a sense of agency and an ability to engage with and shape meanings. Children's meanings, for Hardman, were not something that were immature or primitive, as Piaget, Freud[7] and others might suggest. Rather, she argued, children operated within the same social world as adults. Drawing on the work of Susan Isaacs, she pointed out that the only difference 'between children's thought

and adult thought is merely a matter of experience, degree not kind' (Isaacs, cited by Hardman 1973: 94). Thus Hardman's work recognises the importance of the social for children's development, freeing children from universal and passive constructs that had been attached to them in the past, a move that was beginning to be reflected in Piaget's own discipline (Greene 1999) as well as within anthropology and sociology.[8]

This sense of liberation for children's agency within social structure was very clearly visible in the work of Bluebond-Langer (1978). In this case she was looking at children in hospital, a place where children came for things to be done to them. However, her work identified the way in which each individual child was drawing off interactions around them, thus shaping their own meanings and understandings of the situation that they were in. Others, such as Corsaro (1979), provided additional ammunition to propositions that children were far from passive, that in fact they were engaging with and in the social world around them. It was in this context that James and Prout's work was seminal in that it went further than the previously isolated forays towards establishing a coherent means through which to consider 'the child'. By drawing on contributors from different disciplines they were able to make a joint statement about the agency of the child within a socially structured world. In so doing they directly challenged the notions of universality and passivity that had been prominent in the past. They suggested that:

- Childhood is understood as a social construction. As such it provides an interpretive frame for contextualising the early years of human life. Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies.
- Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes (James and Prout 1997: 8).

It is this fundamental basis which continues to shape the development of thinking in this area and which provides the grounding for a greater understanding of children (Jenks 1996; Mayall 2002; Wyness 2007). What later work has gone on to reinforce is that children's childhoods are not lived out in a vacuum but within arenas where social attitudes and the approaches of others impact on their understanding (moral and

otherwise). In 'Childhood Identities', James (1993) provides a powerful illustration of this process in action, illustrating the need to engage with concepts of self and identity, belonging and space, as she considers children's active social participation. In the introduction to this work James reflects on her experience of being a mother. She writes:

> I began to see how my children's childhood was being culturally defined. They were learning to be children through confronting and negotiating the definitions of childhood given to them by me, as their mother, by their father, their teachers, their grandparents and their friends; through the books they learnt to read, the television programmes they watched and the advertisements they enjoyed (James 1993: 19).

It is that recognition of children as active participants that is so significant, drawing on the social world as they seek to make sense of what is happening around them and to negotiate a way through it.

Research in this area has gone on to look at children in a huge variety of arenas, from children at Disneyland to children in slums, from children at play to children at work. They recognise the social context within which children live out their lives and mark the way in which these are influenced by experience. It is by accepting and considering the individual's experiences of childhood, the way they interact and negotiate the social environments they are in, that will provide the theoretical foundation to challenge many of the assumptions of childhood that are so prevalent in the debates around children's moral behaviour. However, in order to extend this discussion further, it is important to look in more detail at what agency means for children, recognising the context within which they live their lives and particularly the extent to which processes of identity formation have an impact.

A meaning framework

Structure

Despite the case made above it is important to remember that structure and agency are not seen as mutually exclusive (see, earlier, the discussion of Giddens 1979). For, even though an argument has been put forward in relation to children's agency and ability to shape meanings, this can not be fully understood without reference to the structure within which their everyday lives are lived (Jenks 1996). It was that symbiotic relationship that was significant to the 'new paradigm' as it worked to explore

this interconnection in greater depth looking for a theoretical perspective that would 'address both structure and agency at the same time' (James and Prout 1995: 81). James and Prout (1995), engaged with this directly through considering Mary Douglas's grid-group theory (1973b). What Douglas had done through developing a model termed a grid-group was consider the extent to which individuals are free to create meanings. She recognised that this process of meaning-creation was firmly controlled by the social structure that individuals found themselves in. However, what this model allowed was the recognition that different spaces reflect different structures and that within these the extent to which social control is applied impacts on that process of meaning-creation.

However, grid-group theory was not seen as being particularly child-friendly and focused on the social group, rather than seeing the individual as the constant measure for analysis. James and Prout therefore redefined this model using the terms 'hierarchy' and 'boundary'. Hierarchy was a continuum, which provided for cultures that are highly structured on the one hand (reflecting a lack of negotiation and lots of rules) and those environments that are loosely structured on the other (demonstrated by high negotiation). This could then be contrasted to 'boundary' which referred to the degree to which a group was open or closed. Within closed groups, membership is highly regulated and it is difficult to leave, in contrast to open groups, which are more freely constituted. By doing this they recognised the need to look at children within the different settings of their everyday lives, considering the strategic flexibility they employed as they moved between different environments. They go on to give an example, saying how a child could be followed at home, at school and in the playground and 'it would be possible to see how the different modes of action might be employed in these different settings' (1995: 86). Not only that, but one could take into account the transition of the child from one social structure to another, thus reflecting the flexibility which social agents need to employ when navigating their way through social life. It starts to provide evidence of the complex processes that are involved within the agent's everyday journeys, to the extent that one begins to observe the changing constructions or forms of self used as a response to varying social settings and strategic decision-making.

Such a discussion is not complete without the mention of habitus and the body of experiences which Bourdieu (1971) and others recognise as feeding into actions and meanings. The role of habitus, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, provides another framework

within which agency is able to be expressed as children draw from their own social past. It is the uniqueness of this social experience that is important, as for each child a separate set of experiences will shape the unconscious body of data they draw from in defining meaning and action. Within this, relationships are key as children respond to the changing social environments in which they live their everyday lives, with all these different interactions having some impact on the pre-disposed way that the individual child comes to think and behave. What these discussions suggest therefore is that it is only within social structures that agency is meaningful, an illustration clearly made as we consider the expression of agency seen in the formation of self-identity.

Self-identity – an expression of agency

Before putting this realisation of the child as agent back into the broader context of morality, it is important to consider more deeply one of the major tenets of meaning-formation, the self. This not only demonstrates the intrinsic place of the social as we think about the individual, but also helps to provide a framework to understand the child as meaning-creator both generally but also, as will be considered later, in the specific context of the moral.

The significance of this process of self-identity is summed up by Jenkins, who says:

> All human identities are by definition social identities. Identifying ourselves or others is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation (2004: 4).

Meaning, therefore, needs to be considered in the context of a process of interaction, a process of social engagement that applies both to adults and children. The essence of identity comes in the way in which we all seek to position ourselves vis-à-vis others, as we look for the 'same'. Such is our desire to classify and order things (people included) into these categories that Simmel (cited in Jenkins 2004) says that the 'cultural history of mankind can be conceived as the history of the struggles and conciliatory attempts between the two [similarity and difference]'. It is within this ongoing process of categorising sameness and difference that one can observe the agent in action, with clear implications for meaning-creation. This model stresses the dynamic aspect of interaction, as individuals assess similarity and difference and form meaning as they reflect on perceptions of themselves in light of others.

Dynamism is stressed by the extent to which this process is constant, as the individual continually seeks to position and re-position themselves amongst the many 'others' with whom they come into contact in their day-to-day lives. Take a child's first day at school after the summer holidays. The child has to re-formulate their notion of self as they assess their place within the institution, their place within the class, and their position amongst their peers. They leave all these behind when they get home, re-formulating who they are as they re-assert themselves back into the family. All this begins again the following day, as the child continually seeks to position themselves as a response to their self-assessment of who they are and thus how they should fit in.

The body

Jenkins (2004) seeks to make sense of the human world and the role of the self within this process of interaction by identifying three defined orders. At each level, the orders present a way of acknowledging the process of agency and meaning-creation, and provide a focus for the empirical investigation that follows. The three areas Jenkins considers are, first, the individual order and its focus on 'embodied individuals, and what goes on in their heads'. The next, the interaction order, offers a step away and considers the individual but as part of relationships. Finally, there is the institutional order, which looks at the individual within the context of broader structures that shape the way in which things are done (Jenkins 2004: 17). However, the latter two make little sense unless one first understands the embodied individual, and the concept of the self, with the notion of the body at the centre.

The body is integral to the way in which individuals come to view and understand the world around them. Jenkins reflects that the body can be described as 'an index of collective similarity and differentiation, and a canvas upon which identification can play' (2004: 19). As James suggests, the relevance of the body for children is no different, as she argues that the body is 'one of the most important signifiers and conceptual filters through which any particular child's childhood and social identity is understood' (James 1993: 103).

To understand the role the body plays in impacting on self-identity one must first recognise the separation between the individual's inner view of themselves (the view of themselves that is projected out) and the external view (their view of themselves looking in), as shown in Figure 1.1.

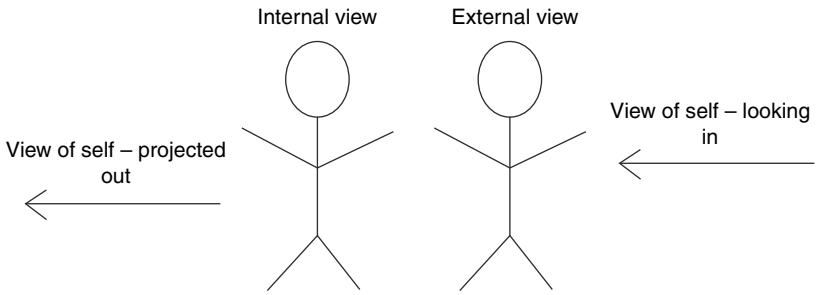


Figure 1.1 Internal and external view, or I and me

The interrelationship between and inner and outer self is not new and was touched on in earlier discussions. Back in the 13th century, Tomas à Kempis in his work 'Inner Life' drew attention to the division between self and public image. About three centuries later John Locke, in his seminal work, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, includes a specific chapter on 'Identity and Diversity'. Within this chapter Locke reflects other thinking of the time by highlighting the need for discernment within society, through which one could distinguish one object (whether persons or material things) from another. Without the ability to separate 'there would be no principle of individuation' (Locke 1998: 209). This clearly shows the essence of individuality is uniqueness, which is reflected in the similarities but also differences that one holds in relation to others. However, it was George Herbert Mead who provided the first detailed assessment of the separation of the self, through the notion of the 'I' and the 'me'. What these positions presented was an almost existential ability for the individual to look at themselves from the outside. This ability to objectify ourselves, viewing the 'I' from the point of view of the 'me', recognises the capacity for the individual to be concerned with the way others view them and to shape meanings accordingly.

However, this process must be seen as something more than simply the acknowledgement of one's image whilst, for example, passing a shop window. Rather it needs to be viewed in a more analytical way, one that recognises the potential for definition and re-definition. Cooley (1964) frames this within the notion of the 'looking glass self' in which not only is there recognition of the way one looks to others, but judgement and emotion as a result of this realisation. In respect of children the recognition of this interactive dualism has been that bit more intense

as it demands an acceptance of the reflexive processes of the mind, an attribute children have not always been considered to have. For example, part of Jean Piaget's difficulty with the idea that young children develop a personal concept of morality was his belief in their inability to be influenced by internal feelings (Piaget 1975[1935]). This reflects a theme that emerges in Chapter 2, where the child's body is a focus for control and constraint. It was hoped that through consistent physical punishment that the aversion to pain in itself would result in the child not making the 'wrong' choices again. Indeed this reflects an interesting contemporary dilemma between the child who has done wrong and the child to whom wrong has been done. Still in relation to the former there is an acceptance, even a determination, to see that the physical body remains the focus for moral correction. This can be seen for example in relation to smacking (Lee 2000) where throughout the UK it is still legal, in contradiction of UN demands and the growing position of other countries.[9] For victims, the outer body is something to be nurtured and maintained, protecting the vulnerable and innocent inner body (Kirtzinger 1997). In both these cases the extent to which the individual is recognised as having ownership of their own body is limited, which has implications for the way in which the child relates to his or her body.[10]

The interrelationship between the body and the individual's view of themselves has been characterised as a contest between two opposing factions.[11] However, Prout (2000) points to the potential that a synthesised view of these two approaches could have for childhood studies. In reviewing the different positions, he argues in favour of the division of the body into an internal-external dialectic, defined as a mind-body relationship. The intercourse between the mind and body therefore provides recognition of the biological – 'I', and the social – 'me', similar to Mead. What this dynamic connection also accepts is that the internalisation of this interaction results in an embodied self. A leading example of this, mentioned earlier, was the work of Bluebond-Langour (1978) with terminally ill children:

> A form of behaviour common among terminally ill children, 'exhibition of wounds', underlines how children try to affect not only the way others see them but also how they see themselves. By showing where and how they have been poked and prodded, children present an image of themselves to others as sick and find their self-image confirmed. This is further evidenced by the fact that once

> children internalise this view of self, they no longer use this strategy, except when meeting someone for the first time and wanting, for any number of reasons, to affect the stranger's view of them (Bluebond-Langner, 1978: 9–10).

This demonstrates the active relationship between the inner and outer views of the body with one impacting on the formation and construction of the other. James's (1993) work also emphasises the everyday way in which children are forced to negotiate their way through this internal-external dialectic. James defined the internal aspect of the body as the physical or biological body over which the individual had little or no control, as opposed to the social body, which was open to the vast array of influences that fill the social world in which children operate. What James makes clear is that these social influences quickly take a hold on children and the way in which they represent their bodies and view those of others. The reason why children learn the importance of the body so quickly is because if they do not, then negotiating the complex everyday world would be more difficult. The body thus provides a context that allows the individual to order and shape meanings as he or she seeks to make sense of social interaction.

The following extract, made in relation to the body and consumer society, presents a number of useful images and themes that can be used in furthering this discussion about the dominant role the body plays in shaping the self (James 1993):

> Self preservation depends upon the preservation of the body within a culture in which the body is the passport to all that is good in life . . . With appearance being taken as a reflex of the self, the penalties of bodily neglect are a lowering of one's self acceptability as a person, as well as an indication of laziness, low self esteem and even moral failure (Featherstone et al. 1991: 186).

It is the idea of the body as a passport that is particularly apt and compelling. It suggests that if an individual does not tend to their physical body, their ability to access social groups and spaces can be denied. On top of this, if one does not maintain a 'likeness' that is acceptable to others then this will have implications for the way in which the inner self is viewed, to the point where the wrong body can indicate moral failure. Not only does this start to point towards the connection between the body and morals, this section reflects a deeper position that

shows that children reach such meanings as a process of social agency, by reflecting on their sense of self in light of others.

Belonging

Belonging has been mentioned a number of times previously in this chapter and the metaphor of a passport provides a useful means to explore it further within the context of agency and meaning-formation. A passport symbolises citizenship and belonging to a particular group. One's nationality can be easily distinguished from another both in terms of similarities and differences. For example, within most of the European Union there are no restrictions on travel and a UK passport will provide an element of similarity with a Finnish passport. Therefore access and acceptance within each country are open. However, if one were to travel to Saudi Arabia using a UK passport, the individual's nationality would immediately raise questions of acceptance; only with the additional steps of securing a visa might entry be allowed. At the centre of the idea of belonging, therefore, is the process of who we are in comparison to others. Social groups work in the same way as the passport. If someone can present themselves as similar then they are likely to be accepted; if they are considered different then they may be kept at a distance permanently or until additional information can be ascertained to grant them access. Goffman's (1969) work on the 'presentation of the self' provides further theoretical reassurance about the interaction between the body, society and belonging.[12] The way in which the individual agent engages with their perception of others as a reflection of themselves has also been noted in relation to the way in which young children interact with one another whilst looking to establish a sense of belonging (Kantor et al. 1998[13]). Indeed, such research has shown that children will formulate friendships with those whom they identify some form of similarity. Thus, children will work hard to formulate and maintain a sense of belonging, even if this means demonstrating behaviour that would be morally questionable (Pollard 1985). Connolly (1998) demonstrated this in relation to boys and fighting. To remain high on the plinth of masculinity boys assert themselves through actions against others, achieving social capital with displays of fighting and the use of misogynistic and insulting language. The implications of this in the context of moral agency will be developed in later chapters.

Integral to the whole notion of belonging, therefore, is the concept of the 'collective' or group. Establishing a sense of sameness with others, whether at school or at home, results in the creation of a particular

cultural unit (Cohen 1994). These units can then be used to reinforce one's sense of belonging and identity through reinforcing similarities to the group in opposition to other groups. Cohen says:

> It is the experience of belonging . . . whether to a culture or smaller unit, such as a household, which allows people to mark out their sense of similarity to and difference from other people (Cohen 1986: 1).

This idea of cultural units is very powerful with respect to children's social worlds. When applied to, for example, homes and peer groups, it suggests that these micro groups are units, capable of creating their own sense of social order and indeed morality.

Children and moral agency

This review of self identity creates a framework for exploring agency through notions of the body, similarity, difference and belonging, but how does this case for the individual translate into a moral context? How comfortably does the idea of a social agent sit alongside the notion of moral agency? The reality is that those ideas generated in psychology, of children going through stages of relative inadequacy to relative adequacy (Mathews in Mayall 2002), have driven our approach to positioning children within discourses on morality. This has had implications for parenting, schooling and more general policy towards children (see Chapter 3). Some within psychology have sought a diplomatic route out of the restricted representation of the child offered by the developmentalists. However, what is significant about these approaches is the extent to which they are only recognised as having application when seen to acknowledge the relevance of the social in influencing the processes that impact on moral attainment (Haste 1999). Here the work of Vygotsky provides a much-needed bridge, as part of establishing the social within such discourses. His work focused on showing the interrelationship between the individual, interaction and culture (Vygotsky 1978; also see Haste 1999). These ideas subsequently allowed the consideration of the extent to which interaction informs and shapes the individual and their social and moral development.

That recognition of the social in the process of moral development can not be underestimated. For as one explores further it becomes clear that the distinction between what is seen to be a social rule and what is seen to be a moral rule is not as distinct as some may have suggested

(Schaffer 1996). Notably, research has consistently shown the extent to which very young children are engaged in moral learning.[14] However, it is the nature of the research that is significant. All this research reflects everyday social interaction, in which certain acts carry the additional label of being moral, in that they bring order by shaping what is and is not acceptable (a more detailed definition of morality is looked at in the next chapter). These expressions of 'morality' can, for example, be seen in acts that demonstrate sharing and emotionally caring (Dunn 1988; Kagan 1986; Damon 1990). This demonstration of moral awareness is, suggests Kagan, because children are 'programmed' to be able to make moral judgements in the same way that they are able to speak (Kagan 1986). Through a process of emotional awareness and the need to socially persevere children are drawn into moral engagement at this early age. Mayall sums this up:

> Children confront issues of justice, equal distribution and sharing. They respond to others' actions and feelings, and meet approval or disapproval of their own actions: 'morality is a fundamental, natural and important part of children's lives from the time of their first relationships' (Damon 1990, in Mayall 2002: 88).

Morality is part of the everyday; it is central to social interaction. The specific importance of relationships themselves will be returned to in a later chapter; however, here it is important to note the ways in which morality is seen to be expressed as we recognise the process of agency as children act and form moral meanings as a response to the social world around them. Work in other everyday settings such as nurseries and schools also shows the day-to-day positioning of moral thought and action. Short (1999), with work that again engages very young children, shows the way in which children actively evaluate the acceptability of their own behaviour with reference to the social situation that they are in, drawing on notions of their identity and belonging as they demonstrate their agency. Looking at discrimination and race in a nursery school, Short observed how children managed their thinking as a response to others, hiding discriminatory views in the presence of adults. Pollard (1985), similarly in primary schools, observed the way in which moral action was managed as a consequence of varying social factors, with different social groups behaving in a morally considered way as part of extracting a desired outcome.[15]

This points to the complex and subtle ways in which children express morality as an aspect of their everyday lives. Other work on the micro

elements of social interaction shows how 'mundane' morality forms part of establishing social order and shaping identities (Sterponi 2009). It reinforces themes in theories already shared, as to the extent to which morality must be seen in the context of perceptions of self and identity, as well as through past experiences. This connection between selfhood and moral codes can be further expressed through the relevance of culture. In another attack on the developmental approach Haste suggests that what can be seen to be developing is not the mind but 'the individual's skill in managing the moral expectation of one's culture' (Haste 1999: 186). It is within this context, which relates back to moral theories looked at in the beginning of this chapter, that boundaries develop. Cohen defines these as zones for reflection on who one is and who others are (1994: 128). However, these boundaries are no longer of the mind, as had been the problem for children with previous theories, but of culture itself (1994: 123). These boundaries, which are different and changing, apply moral filters that shape and define meaning-creation.[16] It brings us to the central argument that the social and the moral are inextricably interlinked, with one needing to demonstrate moral agency if one is going to be successful as a social agent. Morality therefore becomes a filter through which social interaction can be considered.

As a result moral behaviour is part of social behaviour and therefore in understanding the individual as a social agent we are also in a position to recognise the individual's moral agency. Mayall and others have argued in favour of the 'moral agent'. Such a definition can be helpful, but it is also important that moral agency is not seen as something separate from the social. The expression of morality displayed by the individual is not through the deployment of a second self, a moral self. Rather it is one and the same, moral agency being a facet of the social agent, through which the agent seeks to make sense and position themselves in the context of the world around them. The everyday nature of moral agency must therefore be viewed within those spaces where children live out their lives. Home, school, the neighbourhood all therefore become sites in which moral agency is expressed (Mayall 2002). Significantly, in keeping with that sense of hierarchy and boundary developed earlier, even in those spaces where the ability to demonstrate moral agency is limited, this does not restrict the extent to which the individual child is still processing moral meaning as they seek to negotiate the social context they find themselves in by trying to make sense of what is and is not acceptable.[17]

Conclusion

In respect of children, the contest between structure and agency has increasingly seen agency assert itself more than ever before. That is not to say that structure has become unimportant; on the contrary, finding a new equilibrium between the two has allowed for children to be seen in a different light. The sociology of childhood has validated children's voices in a way that previously would have been impossible (James 1993). Most importantly, within the context of this work, it has presented children not only as social observers, but as social contributors. As a consequence this has established a foundation for directly challenging adult assumptions about children through the presentation of meanings constructed by children themselves. It represents an entirely different way in which children can be engaged. At the centre of this is the need to recognise that processes of agency are seen through the self, without which we would not know who we are and be unable to act (Jenkins 2004). The challenge of this book is clear, to free the self so that children, once muted individuals, can refute the indoctrination of the past on their way to creating a society in which their voice is also included (Cohen 1994) as that sense of agency is recognised within a moral context.

Section II

Representations of Childhood and Morality – A Social Construct of Control

2
The 'Ominous' Child – Childhood and Morality as Social Constructs

The last chapter sought to establish a foundation on which the individual child could have a voice within moral discourses. As a result the case was made for children as social agents, capable of displaying moral agency. The foundation, therefore, is set! Well not entirely. Despite acknowledging children's capacity as meaning-creators, actively drawing on the social interactions around them as they manage a sense of self and belonging, the problem of adults is still pervasive. For it is adult constructions of both childhood and morality that impact directly on the extent to which children are positioned in relation to such discourses. Themes in the following two chapters not only provide context in relation to the case study but also present a challenge against which children's voices seek to be heard.

Through deconstructing notions of childhood and morality the social makeup of both becomes clear. Indeed, one can begin to see the extent to which representations of childhood are shaped by morality and significantly, the way understandings of morality come to shape perceptions of childhood. An historical investigation illustrates key themes that have pervaded discourses on these subjects for millennia. Notably these themes recur today, impacting on both policy and practice (see Chapter 3). It is as a consequence of these archaic conceptions of children and morality that moral guidance and definitions today can be argued to be exclusive in application and limited in effectiveness. Notions of the child as a threat, as innately programmed to wrongdoing, as in need of control and constraint, pervade the coming discussions, with a result that morality is seen as fixed and determined and as a tool for maintaining order. It is only by understanding this attitude to children in the context of wrongdoing, actual and potential, that it is then possible to move further in

establishing a foundation in which children's voices can effectively be heard.

The problem of children

In 1993 a toddler was murdered in the city of Liverpool. It was a tragic case, the ramifications of which were to extend far further then the families who were directly affected:

> James Bulger was a month short of his third birthday when two killers lured him away from his mother in a busy shopping mall, dragged him to a lonely railway embankment and murdered him. It was an unspeakably cruel death. The thought of anyone being cruel enough to inflict such a fate on an innocent little child defies comprehension. Astonishingly, the killers in this case were both just ten years old (Thomas, cited in Jenks, 1996: 118).

The national reaction was immediate and determined. News coverage was total. Only two newspapers, the *Financial Times* and the *Daily Star*, did not have the story as front page news. The *Daily Mail* carried twenty-four separate articles and the *Daily Express* had an eight-page supplement. The arrest of one 12-year-old boy in connection with the murder highlighted the raw passions that this case excited and the disproportionate and misplaced perceptions of children that were allowed to surface. A reflective account of the arrest described the events as follows:

> They are sorry about Snowdrop Street, about the family whose 12-year-old son was lifted in a Liverpool CID Starsky and Hutch raid – police cars on the pavement while 200 neighbours bayed for the 12-year-old's blood (*The Guardian*, 20 February 1993).

Such were the numbers of press and local residents that followed the speeding police cars and vans to Snowdrop Street that children were even reported to have been watching events whilst hanging out of trees. This tribal mentality to what was in effect the lynching of a child is symptomatic of a popular desire to root out evil and to banish it from the streets. Such themes, this chapter suggests, can be found as a regular undercurrent pursuing children and questions about their moral behaviour throughout history. It is notable how in this incident it was the guardians of acceptable social behaviour, the police, that took the

lead, as they too, reflected the dangerous notion of the offending child, and the need for this to be dealt with hard and fast. There seems to have been little credence paid to that central tenet of the criminal law, which says a person is innocent until proven guilty, as this report goes on to account, 'He [the 12-year-old boy] was released the next day without charge. Sorry for your trouble son' (ibid.).

This sensational public response acted as a catalyst to the forming of a social consensus in which the threat children posed was not only agreed to but acted upon. This perceived fear was not restricted in its application, but seen to apply in relation to all children. The result was that those who might be regarded as 'innocent' were seen as justifiable collateral damage as politicians and others sought to capitalise on this popular wave of feeling, developing policies that focused on the potential threat that children posed, as seen, for example, in the lowering of the age at which the criminal law could deal with children and increased measures to provide surveillance and control (Muncie 2004). However, were children around the country 'collateral damage', bystanders, caught in the middle of a tidal wave of emotion? Or was this reaction a more calculated step in which children were an intended target, with adults waiting for an excuse to shoot, and in this case resoundingly hit? For, as will emerge, the idea that children are a threat to the harmony of adult society was not new. Indeed such constructions of the child can be shown to reoccur through history, albeit in different guises. As a result this reaction can be seen as a re-awakening of a latent representation of the child, which, carefully managed by those with power, was used to 'protect' the perceived order of society.

Childhood as a social construct

This conspiring attitude towards children highlighted by the explosion of emotions that surrounded the case of James Bulger must be seen within the particular context of 'childhood'. Childhood is not constructed by children, but as Hendrick (1997a) argues, childhood is an adult definition, which, without rejecting the biological realities of age, one must recognise as socially constructed. As James and James suggest, 'Childhood cannot be regarded as an unproblematic descriptor of a natural biological phase. Rather the idea of childhood must be seen as a particular cultural phrasing of the early part of the life course, historically and politically contingent and subject to change (James and James, 2004: 13). The idea of childhood being culturally sensitive is important, offering the social context within which views of the child must be

considered; 'there is always a relationship between conceptual thought, social action and the process of category construction and, therefore, definitions of childhood must to some extent be dependent upon the society from which they emerge' (Hendrick 1997a: 35). However, as well as providing a social tapestry on which representations of the child can be given meaning, perceptions of childhood are also significant for the active influence they have in shaping 'children's experiences of being a child' (James and James 2004: 13), consequently effecting how they respond to and engage with the adult world around them.

Therefore, through seeking to understand childhood as a social construct it is increasingly possible to make sense of different representations of the child which, as will be shown, is useful in the context of morality. The work of Philippe Ariès (1962) has been pivotal in providing theorists with a foundation on which to investigate childhood. What Ariès did, through reflecting on painting and iconography, was to question the way in which European culture (particularly in France) reflected a view of the child, thereby demonstrating the extent to which notions of childhood and adult attitudes towards it changed with time and space. Ariès questioned where the 'child' was during the Medieval period, suggesting that notions of the child as particular and different were simply not visible. However, he does point to cultural variations demonstrating the extent to which our perceptions and attitudes towards the child are restrained by 'social' borders. Ariès highlights the trip of an Italian merchant to England that shows these different opinions in respect of issues impacting directly on children's everyday lives. He refers for example to relationships, participation and acceptable levels of responsibility. For this Italian merchant, English approaches to their children stood out for their 'cruelty' and could be 'better' if they were to follow the customs from his country:

> The want of affection in the English is strongly manifested towards their children; for after having kept them at home till they arrive at the age of seven or nine years at the utmost, they put them out, both males and females, to hard service in the house of other people, binding them generally for another seven or nine years. And these are called apprentices, and during that time they perform all the most menial offices; and few are born who are exempted from this fate, for everyone, however rich he may be, sends away his children into the houses of others, whilst he, in return, receives those of strangers into his own (Ariès 1962: 365).

This paradoxical arrangement in which one man would send his child away for another to fill with knowledge, and in return would instil knowledge in other people's children, demonstrates the different importance that was attached at that time to the role of the parent and to the needs of the child. The expectation was that a person at the age of seven in England was no longer a child, but a person who was capable of being sent from home and undertaking a position within adult life. Children were constantly depicted in adult spaces, 'even in taverns of ill repute, children were mingled with adults' (Ariès, 1962: 368).

This snapshot highlights the extent to which conceptions of childhood reside in time and space. Significantly, the notion of children as 'little adults' as depicted above was to be completely overturned by the religious revolution that swept though Europe in the 16th century. Not only did this have implications for the family, but it also had implications for morality more generally, themes that will be developed later in this chapter. For parents, in a marked contrast to the views represented above, there was a growing recognition of the importance of their role in the upbringing of their child, with a greater sense of responsibility at its centre. Defined by concerns over children's moral weakness, these changes ushered in an era in which children needed to be protected from the adult world, characterised by going to school. Initially it would not have been unremarkable for children to have had to travel some distance to school. However, in the context of this re-presentation of the child as a more sentimentalised member of the household, more schools were built, so that children did not have to travel so far and could remain close to their parents, or perhaps more pertinently, their parents could remain close to them. Ariès reflects on these changes as a 'phenomenon which bears witness to the major transformation of the family, the latter fell back upon the child, and its life became identified with increasingly sentimental relationships between parents and children' (Ariès 1962: 370). These different constructions of childhood were also reflected in gender differentiations. For example, in upper and middle-class families, boys were seen as worthy of education, and girls of marriage. Indeed the ages associated with these two very different activities were also significant; boys were to be educated up until their late teens, thus allowing this group to be monitored and controlled, whereas girls at the age of 12 or 13 years were seen as capable of taking on the responsibility of running a household. It must also be noted that Ariès' presentation here does not reflect all of European society and particularly not all classes, for the way in which childhood was experienced across such divides was very different. However, what this does show

is the extent to which notions of childhood change at different times, with these constructions impacting on the way in which children are able to live out their everyday lives.

The changing nature of childhood has been the subject of many academic reviews, with this link to time and space demanding the need for the historical contextualisation of childhood (Hendrick 1997a, 1997b; Cunningham 1991, 1995). Such analyses, following in the footsteps of Ariès, pursue childhood as a modern concept, although this temporal setting has been challenged as limiting (Jenks 1996); they do, however, continue to demonstrate the extent to which perceptions of childhood are linked to the political, social and economic realities of the day. Indeed, the way in which representations have been accounted for draws on these cultural particularities, as the child is seen to move from 'natural' to 'romantic', to 'evangelical' to 'wage earning' to 'delinquent' and further (Hendrick 1997a, 1997b).

Others, in presenting this chronological review of childhood, have attached labels that more directly reflect the perceived competencies of the child. This can be seen in the five categories of childhood that James et al. (1998) identify as they consider pre-sociological notions of the child. Each of these perspectives can be summed up by the fact that they assume an interpretation of the child that is based on adult-centred hypotheses that rule out or ignore the capacity of children themselves to establish meanings. These are identified as the 'evil child', the 'innocent child', the 'immanent child', the 'naturally developing child' and the 'unconscious child'. As well as providing another interesting way to characterise childhood, these categories also reflect further opinions of children's ability to engage socially. Significantly, themes depicted within these categories continue to be seen in approaches to children today. For example the 'evil' and the 'innocent' child both deal with themes important to this investigation of morality. The 'evil child' presents children as containing an innate capacity for doing wrong. In response to this adults undertake the role of enforcer, policing children who are seen as a threat. The 'innocent child' is the antithesis to this, presenting children as free from corruption and as examples of true, natural goodness. These latter views, which centre on the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, demand a very different undertaking for adults, underlining their responsibility to protect innocence through considering basic notions of children's rights and the recognition of certain publicly recognised standards. Both will be returned to in more detail later.

Such analysis is helpful in deconstructing representations of the child as we seek to understand attitudes towards children better and provide

a context in which to consider children's lived experiences. It is only through such a theoretical viewpoint that it is possible to make sense of the reactions to events such as the murder of James Bulger. It is notable as we glance back in history how these different representations continue to provide us with intelligence on social attitudes to children today. It has been made clear above that theorists position these views of children within a particular time and space. However, within this there is a danger that such representations of the child are simply left in these historical moments and the themes they reflect are not free to traverse different periods and different societies. This is not to suggest childhood moves but, rather, themes of childhood. By drawing on these themes, our understanding of the child is furthered, and particularly in the case of morality one can see the extent to which similar themes are shown to act as an undercurrent of attitudes that influence childhood and inform the way different societies have come to represent the child.

Morality as a social construct

As the previous discussions in this book have suggested, the relationship between children and morality must be considered in a social context. In the previous chapter it was suggested that morality forms part of the everyday, that it is a filter through which to categorise social action and meaning. It is therefore important to consider in more detail morality as a product of the 'social', as we seek to understand its relationship with childhood.

Morality, like childhood, has faced similar questions about its universality and constancy through time and space. However, the relationship between the two is deeper than that, for as an exploration of morality begins, so one can see the way in which the social is innately linked to the moral. Indeed the way in which morality is concerned with human relationships and interaction can be seen through an investigation of the word itself. Morality, derived from the Latin *moralis*, came from the Greek word *ethikos*, which means 'pertaining to character' (MacIntyre 2007: 38). It is that focus on the individual and the way in which individuals seek to engage with those around them that forms the basis for an analysis. The extent to which moral philosophy recognised the individual is not so definitive (as seen in Chapter 1), but there seems to be no doubt amongst moral philosophers themselves that 'morality', in its truest sense, is about establishing meanings through which to reflect on actions and behaviours. Morality is 'a guide to behaviour that rational persons put forward to govern the behaviour of others' (Gert 2004: 9) or

it is 'often an attempt to achieve a deepened understanding of the meaning of our actions' (Gaita 2005: 264). Both these positions reflect the focus on actions, but from different perspectives. The former highlights the restrictions to moral thinking, that it can only be done by those who are rational, and that it is about a set of criteria applied to others. Gaita's view, however, is broader, not only about the act but the meaning, with recognition that such meaning needs to be seen in individual terms as a product of one's experience or 'past'. The conflict between such positions will be returned to, but the common ground, the desire to give meaning to human actions, actions which by definition are social, provides our starting place. It also invites a further question. If morality is concerned with understanding social interaction as part of human behaviour, then to what extent is morality itself a product of the social?

Moral thinking is not only about establishing a set of criteria through which one can assess the acceptability, the right and wrong, that should be attached to the behaviour of the self and others; it is also about creating a climate of positive social interaction. Pojman (2004) highlights this through the identification of five purposes of morality:

1. To keep society from falling apart
2. To ameliorate human suffering
3. To promote human flourishing
4. To resolve conflicts of interest in just and orderly ways
5. To assign praise and blame, reward the good and punish the guilty

(Pojman 2004: 39).

This focus on social harmony is important. It denies a climate within which right and wrong can simply be looked at in terms of the act in isolation, but rather they must be seen within the context of the way in which that act is considered by society as part of its common goals towards establishing and maintaining community. The recognition of this adds a powerful ingredient to an argument that suggests that it is untenable to present moral theories in isolation from the time and space within which they were created. The goals of societies have been constructed and reconstructed as those societies have changed, an argument strongly presented by MacIntyre as he places moral theory within the realms of social discourse and change:

> Moral philosophy is often written as though the history of the subject were only of secondary and incidental importance. This attitude

> seems to be the outcome of a belief that moral concepts can be examined and understood apart from history. Some philosophers have even written as if moral concepts were a timeless, limited, unchanging, determinate species of concept, necessarily having the same features throughout their history . . . in fact, of course, moral concepts change as social life changes (MacIntyre 1998[1966]: 1).

Macintyre goes on to make clear that he has not written 'because social life changes', for morality and society must not and can not be seen apart; 'moral concepts are embodied in and are partially constitutive of forms of social life' (MacIntyre 1998[1966]: 2). He suggests that there are concepts that are unchanging and are not affected by social life, reflected by their specialised or stable nature; however, he suggests, 'moral concepts do not fall into either of these categories' (ibid.).

Through MacIntyre's (1998[1966]) compilation of western moral thought, it becomes clear how notions of morality change with time and space and how thinking is influenced by social factors. This process whereby moral definitions were shaped by the social developments of the time can be seen in the example MacIntyre provides of ancient Greece. As has already been pointed out, the Greek word for morality, *ethikos*, ties it to character, and one's character was assessed from the point of view of Homeric role models. That is to say, morality was concerned with whether a 'man [sic] discharges his allotted function' (MacIntyre 1998: 5). If a man was successful in fulfilling his roles then he would demand a higher position in the social hierarchy and a lack of success would result in the opposite. Through this review of character and the channelling of behaviour towards particular ends that were seen to promote the community as a whole, it provided a means through which social order could be monitored and maintained. As times changed and trade with other cultures became a more frequent aspect of life, questions started to be asked about the extent to which any such moral definitions carried weight outside one's own community. This has particular relevance when placed alongside concerns over maintaining social order as it coincided with a change in moral application with growing emphasis being placed on individuals, rather than on their ability to fulfil a role. For Plato, this meant asking questions about justice, whereas Aristotle's focus on virtues showed a concern for 'the practical science of human happiness' (MacIntyre 1998: 57). A focus on God, or His absence, again had significant implications for societies, a theme that increasingly emerges in this developing discussion in relation to children. To condense these theories does not do them justice,

but the common point taken from these illustrations is clear; moral definitions change.

The Homeric example above helps to highlight two factors that are of particular importance to the discussion. First, to whom did morality apply? In ancient Greece, morals were an issue for men. The idea that aspects of morality are restricted in their application is significant particularly when considered in the context of children. Second is the extent to which morality conferred a means through which to maintain social order. This is perhaps not surprising, as the original definition put forward places social harmony at its centre; however, as will become clear, the way in which morality could be shaped to confront the social threat of the time highlights a more sinister application, where moral definitions were not just there to guide interaction but were a tool through which certain groups in society could be oppressed, monitored and ultimately kept under control. Morality shapes society and society shapes morality; as a result individuals' life experiences can not be fully understood outside of this context. The next section therefore seeks to glance back at history and look in more detail at the relationship between childhood and morality.

Constructions of childhood morality

The birth of the 'Ominous Child'

James et al. (1998) used the term 'evil child' to think about children, Jenks (1996) uses the term 'Dionysian child', both relate to a notion of the child that really became apparent in the 16th century. These conceptions of childhood reflected a sense within society that children posed a threat and that it was only through the stringent control of childhood itself that such concerns could be managed. They also highlight the extent to which constructions of childhood are directly associated with morality, with implications for children's lived experiences. However, the themes detailed in these constructions were not all unique to that period, and simply by tapping the surface of history it becomes clear that there has always been an awkward relationship between childhood and morality. This will be characterised through the notion of the 'Ominous Child', where the child is the symbol of a threat posed to the harmony of adult life. The Ominous Child does change in time and space but elements can be seen to re-emerge within different cultures at different times. Recurring characteristics include concerns over children's future potential, the idea that children are a threat, the sense that

children are driven by natural-law compulsions to give into desires, and a need for them to be managed and kept under the control of key adults.

Greek writings, for example, reflect moral concerns over children, albeit from the point of view of the parent. Plays by Euripides such as *Medea* or *Herakles* reflect a concern parents have over their children and what they might become. As the chorus reflect in *Medea*,

> childless people have no way of knowing whether children are a blessing or a burden . . . [those who have children] always burdened and worn with incessant worry, first how to rear them in health and safety . . . and then this further anxiety: they can never know whether all this toil is spent for worthy or worthless children (Euripides 1963: 51).

It is this recognition of the potential of children that to some extent seals their fate in these early writings, for there is a fear of what the child might do in order to avenge the wrongs committed. This element of unpredictability, which for some can be linked to that developing sense of reason, had to be managed as a means of calming (Pattison 1978) the child's natural tendencies and channelling them towards this sense of worth. Moral education was recognised as means to do this. This was reflected in the accounts of Herodotus's travels (Herodotus 2003). Here an example from his time with the Persians reflected how moral attributes sat alongside those of the soldier, 'the period of a boy's education is between the ages of 5 and 20 and they are taught to ride, to use the bow and to speak the truth' (Herodotus 2003: 47). Moral education or guidance was important, as there was this recognition that the young were prone to rashness, which Herodotus notes in overhearing an adviser speaking with a young king, 'do not always act on the passionate impulse of youth. Check and control yourself' (Herodotus 2003: 92). In Athens, for those parents who could afford it, children were provided with a moral guardian to ensure this control. As a result children were constantly accompanied by a *paidagogos*, a slave who was given the duty to watch over his charges at school and home, sitting in on lessons and escorting them when they were out, with responsibility 'for teaching the boy good manners' (Amos and Lang 1979: 161). Plato was in no doubt of the importance of a moral education; in fact he argued that education was 'training from childhood in goodness, which makes a man eagerly desirous of becoming a perfect citizen' (Smale 1998: 59). Plato's views must be seen in the particular context of the natural-law position of Sophocles and the sophists that the natural behaviour of man was

aggression and lust (MacIntyre 1998). It is therefore not surprising that a means was needed through which behaviour could be channelled and to some extent changed, and thus, for Plato, moral education provided a means for ensuring social order.

These themes are echoed in Roman writing. Juvenal, writing some 400 years later than Euripides and Herodotus, continues to reflect on the worry that a child might bring their parents: 'a handsome son keeps his wreathed parents in perfect anxiety: good looks and decent behaviour too seldom are found in the same person. However, strict the morality on which he has been brought up . . . cash always wins in the end' (Juvenal 1974: 215). This example reflects those worries in relation to future potential parental fears and a concern for those passions that drive the young, in this case, towards embarking on an adulterous relationship.

Another common theme within this notion of the Ominous Child is the role of key adults in helping to control the threat. The Roman period provides a good example of this through the notion of patriarchy in which moral conduct was the concern of the male head of the household, taking responsibility for all those who lived within his walls. As a moral construct patriarchy was highly efficient for society in general. What it meant was that the patriarch, the head of each household, was individually responsible for those under his care; it was his responsibility to ensure moral order was kept. By providing this power 'in-house' it lessened the extent to which the state needed to be involved. Indeed, the patriarch's effectiveness in running a well-managed house added to his prestige and status (Saller 1994). The patriarch had absolute power over his household, and although this meant the power of life and death over one's children, many rejected even the use of corporal punishment, which was seen as best left for the slaves rather than the family. Indeed in relation to one's own children these are examples of thinking that will be returned to later, with the idea of encouraging and listening being seen as a more effective form of moral guidance that than 'blows or ill treatment' (Saller 1994: 143). As a tool for managing moral risk, encouraging the role of the patriarch can be seen as a useful social tool; as such these themes continue to be apparent in other societies and were explicitly re-encouraged as part of the Reformation over a thousand years later.

The Ominous Child in need of control

There was still over a thousand years between the Roman period and reaching the point in history in which academics have placed the 'evil

child'. However, even though writing during the intervening period is perhaps more limited in relation to children, it does still give some idea of the themes, particularly in a moral context, that were impacting on children's everyday lives. Cunningham suggests that between the 7th and 16th centuries the biggest influence on childhood was the Catholic Church; 'its beliefs and rituals shaped the lives of children from the moment they were baptized on the day of their birth' (Cunningham 2006: 20). The purpose of this baptism was to wash away the sin that was thought to stain the individual unless baptised. This simple act had huge moral ramifications. The Catholic position recognised the need for individuals to live moral lives; however, they saw this process as being one in which individuals were free to make moral decisions within the context of a rational and created world (Thompson 2005). In the context of children, the default position, after baptism (deviations from the recognition that *all* were tainted by sin, were heretical[1]) seemed to reflect a sense of innocence. This can be seen in relation to boy bishops who were appointed at particular times during the year to take on some of those tasks normally performed by adult clerics, including delivering sermons. What is reflected in fragments of sermons that were written for them by adults (Cunningham 2006) was this notion of children as innocent, free from the desires of adults. Looking back, some have therefore argued that this reflected a time of protection for children (Cunningham 2006).

This sense of innocence suggested above is slightly misleading, for in situations where children had done or might be doing wrong, the themes of the Ominous Child were still very much apparent. This is reflected during the Anglo-Saxon period in debates over ages of criminal responsibility (developed further in the next chapter), but it can also be seen in relation to what might be termed everyday morality. The Catholic position recognised that prior to baptism, as touched on above, children were seen to be tainted with evil whilst still in their mother's wombs; unborn babies had 'evyll lustes and appetites' (Cunningham 2006: 66). Although baptism might wash away that innate capacity to sin, Catholic teaching still demanded that children learn to live moral lives. Lloyd de Mause makes reference to church writings that reflected a determination to ensure this through physical control and constraint, which again shows their fears over the potential of what children might become. This determination was obviously carried through into households, where parents continued that mission to ensure that children's moral education was executed with force. This extract is from one mother's account of her efforts to deal with her four-month-old child: 'I whipped him till he was actually black and blue, and until I could not

whip him any more and he never gave a single inch' (de Mause 1974: 42). De Mause's review provides further examples, including advice to parents who were instructed to keep the 'golden mean'. This meant not to 'strike and buffet their children about the face and head, and to lace upon them like malt sacks with cudgels, staves, fork or fire shovels, for they might die of the blows'. One then hopes that the advice will go on to provide a more understanding approach to correction, but it does not; rather it provides advice on the correct way to hit the child – 'hit them upon the sides . . . with the rod, he shall not die thereof' (ibid.).

The Ominous Child was also visible during the early middle ages through a sense of concern over the potential of older children. In fictional form, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* reflects this particularly in the context of sex, where sex is to be seen as the defining act in this challenge to social harmony.[2] Mirroring to some extent Juvenal's satires referred to earlier, The Cook's Tale, for example, refers to a 'goodlooking' 'prentice boy' who was 'full of love and lechery' (Chaucer 1985: 111). The aptly named Peter Playboy steals and gambles and in the end loses his apprenticeship. This is one of a number of examples that associates the threat posed by the younger generation with the potential to grow into a force that challenges the principles adults sought to secure.

These concerns over behaviour can be seen as deeply lodged within society as it grew into the 1500s. Stone suggests that violence within this period was never far from the surface; 'the most trivial disagreements tended to lead rapidly to blows' (Stone 1979: 93). Such behaviour was linked to young people, with gangs of 'idle youths' in London, for example, being openly recognised as perpetrators. It was not just in the towns but also in the countryside that there was a potential for violent trouble. Indeed, Stone goes on to suggest that this led to a deep sense of mistrust in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart eras; 'the violence of everyday life seems to have been accompanied by much mutual suspicion and a low level of emotional interaction and commitment. Alienation and distrust of one's fellow man are predominant features' (Stone 1979: 95). Indeed, even in schools, which were supposed to be providing moral guidance and education to young people at the time, adults were given occasion to worry. Examples of school pupils revolting against their teachers, even using violence, were documented. In some parts of the country this conflict between teacher and pupil formed an annual ritual, which must have done little to quell adult fears more generally about the threat children posed to social harmony.[3]

However, the threat posed to society in the 16th century by children was not just violent; rather, children within the poorer classes (those who would have been outside of education) were becoming more

visible. Cunningham (2006) suggests that a third of the population were under fifteen and the general burden on adult society was becoming an increasingly recognised issue. Orphaned children or children simply left at churches became a financial concern for the parish, which was obliged to bring them up. In 1547, in line with a general population rise, which began in the 1520s, a law was passed as a response to these worries over children. It said that any child between the ages of five and fourteen years left wandering on their own could be taken away and put in the charge of anyone who 'promised to keep them occupied' (Cunningham 2006: 94), girls until they were twenty, boys until they were twenty-four. Indeed any apprentice who escaped could be put in chains with the master given authority to 'use him as his slave' (Cunningham 2006: 94). This might have been removed from the statute books two years later, but it reflected a concern over children and the threat they posed to society more generally as they became more visible, not just through violence but also through the financial strain they exerted and concerns over their future worth. Cunningham suggests that 'in these laws and policies rank social fear seems to be the dominant motif. Children are dangerous. They need to be put to work' (Cunningham 2006: 95). In this drive to bring about order and to some extent care, further Acts were passed, focusing or channelling children into useful tasks. For some, where there was not work at home, a law passed in 1617 provided for children to be transported to the colonies.[4] To start with this was seen as a charitable act but it did not take long to recognise how this could be a means for getting children out of the way, with the Privy Council being given powers to 'imprison, punish and dispose any of those children, upon any disorder by them committed . . . and so ship them out for Virginia (Cunningham 2006: 98). It is within this context that the moral revolution, which begun to take hold in the 16th century, must be seen.

From 'Ominous' to 'Evil'

Ominous implies a concern yet to take hold. In order to contain this future threat one seeks to manage, make preparations and do what is necessary to prevent the fear turning into reality. This is reflected in the measures and attitudes taken towards children, shaping the construction of the Ominous Child. However, as already discussed above, increasingly society was not just warning of problems but directly reacting to them. This explicit focus on the need to deal with the child, through conceptions of morality, due to the threat they posed *now*, created the 'Evil Child'.

So far, our discussion of the Ominous Child has highlighted characteristics that relate to fear of the child's potential as they grow, the threat they pose, the need for suitable adults to guide them and the use of punitive measures to keep them under control. Indeed, aspects of the Ominous Child, albeit with different expressions and emphasis, have been traced through different times and spaces, never far from the surface in discussions around children's social behaviour and potential for wrongdoing. However, a further characteristic really transformed this notion of the Ominous Child into the Evil Child, and that was 'panic'. In words used to reflect the events in England following the murder of James Bulger in 1993, Brown describes the sensational response and subsequent panic growing out of 'a specific narrative of fear based on urban unrest' (Brown 1998: 47). The same words could have described the elements that were igniting social fears in the 1500s. As touched on above, violence and poverty are a particularly potent combination when they become visible. This added to already underlying constructions of children in the form of the Ominous Child, providing a foundation for what could be termed a 'moral panic' that subsumed society and its relationship with children during the 16th and 17th centuries, with major implications for children's everyday lives.

Cohen's (2002) notion of moral panic identifies three key aspects: the suitable enemy; the suitable victim; and the coming together of ideas. Certainly this period saw the convergence of thought in relation to children and morality, with the realisation that morality could be used explicitly and comprehensively as a tool through which to control and constrain children. The argument has already been presented of the reasons why children were a 'suitable enemy'. However, the threat they were seen to pose in turn made adults 'suitable victims' as they saw themselves increasingly as targets as they stood up to defend the harmony of social life. The coming together of these views, which were also reflected in the moral philosophies of the time, accepted that unbridled passions were the default human position, causing panic and the search for answers. It was in many ways a re-awakening or maybe a re-energising (as these ideas had never disappeared) of the fears that shaped Martin Luther's approach to children through the church.[5] What Luther promoted was the notion of original sin.

Original sin

As the foundation created by this sense of moral panic, the notion of original sin provided a daily means of correction and regulation through

which children could be controlled. 'Parents should regard their children as like a young colt, wanton and foolish till he be broken by education and correction' (Fletcher 2008: 3). These were not the only animals children were associated with – there were, variously, wild asses, wild heifers, hawks and hunting dogs (Stone 1979). The analogy was the recognition that, like animals, children needed their will to be channelled to the bidding of their master, by force. What emerged was an absolute determination to see that children's will was broken; 'surely there is in all children . . . a stubbornness of mind arising from natural pride, which must be in the first place be broken and beaten down' (Stone 1979: 116). This effort started within the home, with the re-emphasis of the role of the father as head of the household and moral arbiter. There are examples of children kneeling in the presence of their parents and addressing them formally with 'sir' or 'madam'. This desire to ensure obedience, as encouraged by the concept of original sin, saw households going to extreme efforts to take control of every aspect of a child's life, from toilet training (Stone 1979; de Mause 1974), through to the rigid bodices that shaped a young girl's body (Stone 1979). Indeed the extent to which Protestants believed in the importance of the parent in this role is highlighted by John Calvin's desire to see disobedience to parents made into a capital offence, which it was in Massachusetts (Stone 1979). However, such was the interest in these views that even in the 1520s Luther was already boasting of 'bringing order, discipline and obedience to the family, as well as to society as a whole' (Stone 1979).

A previous section has already made comment on the changing nature of family relations around this time. However, the role of the family here must not be underestimated, as it provided a means through which this moral regeneration could be effectively delivered. In so doing it raises interesting questions about the extent to which parental relationships with children can be influenced and shaped. Earlier the discussion noted that previously in English society parental relationships with children were limited; however, now parents were being required to adopt a new attitude to their children in which they were to take on an intimate and involved interest in their children's moral development. In fact what this changing attitude towards children allowed was a real pulling together of society as a whole, combining thinking behind a common goal or purpose, and offering a framework for moral observation by empowering families, particularly fathers, as moral enforcers. In comments that mirror those touched on above in relation to Roman society, Stone lays out

the centrality of this idea within life at the end of the Medieval period:

> Kinship was an institution whose purpose was the mutual, economic, social and psychological advancement of the group, and in which the principle of patriarchy, the leadership of the head of the clan, was very strong . . . These lineage and kin relationships provided society with a political framework and formed the principle bonding patronage and good lordship on the one hand and loyalty and deference on the other (Stone 1979: 86).

It was this system that Stone suggests was beginning to fragment at the end of the 16th century. However, what the Reformation provided was the coming together of state and church to provide support to legitimise patriarchal power. As a means of control it remained highly effective. If conducted correctly it allowed the state to implement its power at a domestic level. The result was a new form of patriarchy, which was 'reinforced by the state, however in a much modified form of authoritarian dominance by the husband and father over the women and children within the nuclear family. What had previously been a real threat to the political order was thus neatly transformed into a formidable buttress to it' (Stone 1979: 153–4). At the centre of this new order, the means through which the patriarch exerted his power and dominion over his family, particularly his children, was the notion of original sin.

It is important to note the extent to which thinking about children came to drive society as it sought to combat this fear of evil and disobedience. Stone suggests that it created a clear drive towards moral regeneration, brought together by this common desire to suppress the sinfulness of children. He argues that such was the level of fear that children would be overcome by their desires of pride and disobedience 'that the only hope of preserving order was to concentrate on the right disciplining and education of children' (Stone 1979). In this regard the need for training could not just be left to parents and so schools began to grow and with them a further tool through which children could be controlled and constrained. Schools reinforced this need for obedience, with the use of physical punishment being a central feature of any child's school experience. One German schoolmaster calculated the number of beatings that he had given within his career; 911,527 strokes with a stick, 124,000 lashes with a whip, 136,715 slaps on the hand, 1,115,800 boxes of the ear (de Mause 1974). The extraordinary nature of these figures serves to highlight the extent to which children were

regularly the focus of corporal punishment as teachers sought to instil in them the discipline and order that it was demanded they should maintain.

The pervading presence of the Evil Child

What is significant about this construction of the Evil Child is that once it is established the sense of panic does not go away, and indeed, as the next chapter will argue, it can still be seen impacting on policy and practice today. The threat of and concern over potential wrongdoing combines with a moral panic to create a means through which children can continue to be controlled and constrained, within the specific context of behaviour that is or might be 'wrong'.

It is notable that these views continued despite the assertions of other thinkers who presented children in a very different way. Rousseau's *Emile* (1911, first published 1762) for example is associated with the notion of the 'innocent child' or 'original innocence' (Coveney 1957), a theme that was reflected in literature of the time, as writers seemed to reject this notion of children as a threat and rather focus on 'a world of fantasy and nostalgia for childhood' (Coveney 1957: xi). However, despite the more progressive thinking in relation to children and childhood, ideas that reinforced children's predisposition to do wrong remained. This is reflected in attitudes towards the threat children might pose both out on the streets (Pearson 1983) but also in the home. Indeed this determination to pursue moral education at home and school with vigour sits alongside the same level of determination of philanthropists to 'rescue' children from the desperate social conditions they were living in.

This can be seen in relation to sanctions. As suggested above, this 'combat' with original sin (Jenks 2000) saw children's bodies become the very clear focus of moral 'correction', as morality for children placed itself firmly in the day-to-day. Foucault (1977) notes how this desire for control was not only concerned with supervision but with punishment, punishment that was focused on the redemption of the individual's soul. Indeed, parenting manuals in the Victorian era reinforced and supported this need for a child's body to be controlled in order to prevent the realisation of evil. Mary Sherwood's 'Child's Manual', *The Fairchild Family*, highlights this precisely. In one of the stories Henry, the male child of the Fairchild family on whom the stories are based, takes an apple from a tree, despite commands not to (this story provides parallels to Adam and Eve in Genesis). He initially resists the temptation of the

apples but then gives in. 'Now Henry did not mean to steal the apples, it is true; but when people give way to sinful desires their own passions get so much power over them that they cannot turn it down' (Sherwood 1869: 64). In order to 'scourge' Henry of such desires, in the course of this book he finds himself flogged, caned, locked in rooms and not fed. His sister Emily is locked in a dark room, and fed on bread and water for three days just for climbing a tree. These themes were represented in many texts for children where children were consistently reminded of their own mortality, their inclination for doing wrong, the need for punishment and finally the need for redemption.

This desire to control the Evil Child had major implications for the way in which moral issues were dealt with in the context of education (both at school and at home). It ensured that children themselves were not seen to be active participants in the process, but rather that they were objects to be morally sculpted by adults, through the use of fear, punishment and positive rewards to instil appropriate habits (Ariès 1962). Mumford (1910), writing on the development of moral character at the beginning of the last century, reinforces the desire to establish positive habits within the child, with punishment playing a very real part in 'freeing' the child from evil desires:

> Frank when he was 6, had for a while been away from home and on his return suffered severely from 'swollen head'. There was no managing him in the nursery. For a fortnight life with him was endured by the nurse and the other children; it is difficult to find a word strong enough to describe the pitch of the lawlessness and even rudeness. Various plans tried to reduce this small sinner to order. At last his mother threatened him with a whipping. For two days she was full of anxiety, dreading the punishment for him and with the lad things were better. Then the old behaviour began again. Frank was properly whipped. The whole atmosphere of the house was different afterwards; it was as if the child had before been possessed by a devil, now angels came and dwelt in him! At home, it was the last whipping he needed for more than a year (Mumford 1910: 114).

Within this assessment of the child's behaviour and subsequent action, assumptions are made that point to bad behaviour stemming from an inner cause. No consideration was therefore given to other factors such as the child's behaviour resulting from the time he had spent away from home. The inner threat of the Evil Child was such that it was only

through violent punishment that order could be restored. It is noticeable that this was not the last whipping that Frank suffered!

Conclusion

These themes from the past continue to pervade thinking today. The reaction to James Bulger's murder, considered at the beginning of this chapter, shows the extent to which children are still considered a threat that needs to be controlled and constrained. As considered in the next chapter, it is significant how even though thinking on children has to some extent progressed, there still remains a particular way of looking at, thinking about and engaging with children who are seen as doing, or potentially doing, wrong. Indeed, even language that reflects a perception of children as innate wrongdoers has not disappeared. In response to the murder of James Bulger, Jenks makes the following observation:

> Childcare experts say the idea that children can be inherently evil has gained currency since the Bulger trial. Roger Smith, social policy officer for the Children's Society, said 'the trial was held at a time when there was serious concern about joy riding and other juvenile crime. There was a feeling that it was all getting out of control. It was easier to put it down to children's evil nature rather than confront the complexity of the problem (Jenks 1996: 119).

It is perhaps here that, in part, the answer to this problem lies. It is certainly easy and convenient for children to be seen as a universal group and for morality to be seen to apply equally to all. It allows for simple application, strong and defined measures, and ultimately a means to contain the potential threat that children pose. Within this the voice of children themselves is at best limited and at worst rejected. Children's engagement is therefore what adults choose it to be. Morality is set and defined by adults, to be imposed on children, rather than developed with them. This chapter has introduced themes that have impacted on attitudes towards children, directly affecting their experiences. The following chapter extends this by putting these themes into the specific context of the law, as the extent to which such views drive the very principles of our approaches to children becomes clear. This is a complex problem, but one that can only be addressed by understanding the nature of the assumptions that children face and the extent to which representations such as the Ominous and Evil Child continue to play in the way in which we think about children.

3

The Ambiguous Child – Contemporary Constructions of Children and the Law

It is clear from the previous chapter that notions of childhood and morality must be viewed as a social construct linked to time and space. However, it has also been shown that themes of childhood do move, passing through generations and cultures with differing impact and relevance. A feature of this is the extent to which contrasting views of the child can co-exist. This chapter therefore seeks to explore constructions of childhood and morality as presented through the law. The law in this case is English law,[1] which allows further context to be given to the discussions already started (in relation to responses to the murder of James Bulger) and those that follow, as part of the empirical investigation. However, this focused analysis of English law also provides the opportunity to see the extent to which different attitudes towards children and morality exist alongside one another. This shows the extent to which notions of the 'Ominous' and 'Evil' child, as well as the extreme opposite, the 'Innocent' child, all have a perceived place as the law draws on different constructions of the child to fit different circumstances. Such competing views of childhood, brought together in one system, goes some way towards highlighting the uncomfortable ambiguity of the way in which we approach the child, strengthening the case in this book for a more defined foundation for engaging with children. The ongoing search to identify opportunities for agency are not successful here, but this chapter does demonstrate the way in which attitudes and opinions can come to influence policy, reinforcing the significance of societies' constructions of childhood and morality and the way in which the subsequent representations can impact on children's lives.

Criminal law: a construct for control

The previous chapter offered a view of the child as a threat. It explored this in the context of shaping attitudes and how this came to influence practice towards children. Maybe, one might suggest, that it is one thing for attitudes to be expressed within the home, but another for them to be accepted by government. However, that separation of state and home is not that distinct and, as this discussion progresses, so the same themes begin to emerge as adults seek to enforce control, to assert their power, to maintain control. However, this time these views are legitimised within the law itself.

The criminal law is a useful lens through which to look at social attitudes towards children and morality as the law presents a means through which society formalises its moral opinions. This need for humans to define and order the social world within which they live has always been present; 'the whole universe is harnessed to man's attempts to force one another into good citizenship' (Douglas 1966: 3). The criminal law, which has developed out of this, like other areas of the law discussed later, is therefore a social construct (James and James 2004), reflecting the way in which 'morals, norms, expectations and behaviours are both framed and moderated' (James and James 2004: 49). However, it is significant that the views reflected in the law are not those of all in society, but of those in power. Social order needs to be maintained (Douglas 1966) and the law has always provided a means for reinforcing certain hierarchies: 'laws are often laid down to preserve the privileges of the ruling elite' (Tamanaha 2001: 11). Even Aristotle comments that the sole aim of the law is to give 'men despotic power over their neighbour' (Tamanaha 2001: 67). In a historical example, which carries similarities in the approach to children in the 1990s, E. P. Thompson reflects on the prominence of the law in maintaining power over minority groups. He considers the social changes in the 18th century that occurred with the move from the countryside into the towns, which saw the poor moving closer to the rich and creating, among the rich, a sense of fear. The reaction to this fear was symbolised within the Black Act 1723. This Act exemplifies the way in which those in power protect their position using legislation. It used propaganda and the paying-off of members of parliament in order to ensure an extreme punitive position in relation to the 'blacks' (a name given to foresters) who were seen to be 'a threat to authority, property and order', a 'real danger to peaceable man' (Thompson 1975: 195). The Act, therefore, which was also known as the Act of Terror, was used to scare citizens into compliance. Thompson

highlights that this legislation came about because of a moral threat and due to a growing sense that something needed to be done in order to control it.

This example shows the connection between a moral fear or threat and the legislative changes that it induces, managed by those in power. More recently McRobbie has argued that moral panics have become 'one of the most effective strategies of the right for securing policies' (McRobbie 1994: 198). Indeed the positioning of the right in the UK is not as clear as it once was, such that now the use of 'panics' can be clearly argued to be a more general tool for establishing policy direction. This expression of power in defining society's position is not just about politicians but can be seen to spread across the adult 'establishment'. For example, Hall et al. (1978), in considering Cohen's (2002[(1972]) theories about moral panics, note the central role the press plays in defining and communicating these panics, which are then argued to influence judicial decisions.

This review presents a powerful combination of popularism, politics, press and policy, shaping and impacting the way in which moral attitudes are presented and acted on. Significantly, within all these fields children are vastly unrepresented or not represented at all, with a result that policy becomes a statement of control rather than engagement. The murder of James Bulger, introduced in the preceding chapter, provides an obvious example. This case had ramifications that went to the heart of government. It resulted in questions being asked about society's approach to children with much apportioning of blame. However, it also saw a social consensus developing behind particular urban fears as society drew on those themes of the 'ominous' potential of the child as a threat to social harmony, resulting in panic. It is not perhaps surprising that amongst talk of control and power reflected in the criminal law notions of the child as 'ominous' and 'evil' should be found; however the extent to which they are implicit and pursued, even today, is. Indeed in the aftermath to the Bulger case, these representations of the child were managed to further the panic in order to build political capital, as parties recognised that by adding to the sensational press coverage,[2] votes could be won. It was in the context of this fear that the moral panic that had emerged around 'childhood' was argued to have become a 'total' panic (Brown 1998).

In what marked the start of this punitive approach to children that defined future policy, the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard, in addressing the Conservative Party conference in 1993, argued:

> We're all sick and tired of reading about young hooligans who've endlessly stolen cars, burgled houses and terrorised communities. We'll set up separate secure centres for 12–14 year olds . . . we must get on, pass the legislation, build these centres, get these thugs off the street, that's what we've got to do (Carlen and Morgan 1999: 146)

The ages of those to be targeted are notable, twelve to fourteen-year-olds. These were children that in the context of the criminal law were not fully recognised as criminally responsible. However, the intention was clear, as demonstrated in the first raft of legislation imposed in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which established a determined punitive stance towards children, overturning the more liberal policies of previous years.

At the centre of these changes was this question over age, which remained prominent and became a particular feature of New Labour's electoral campaign in 1997. Summed up by the title of a paper written on their proposed approach to children, New Labour made it clear that they were going to allow children 'No More Excuses' (Home Office 1997). Their aim was to reduce the age of criminal responsibility to ten years old, removing any of the previous protection that had surrounded children up till their fourteenth birthday (Cavidino 1997). This presented a significant statement about children, which reaffirmed that sense in which moral competence was a stage of development which one reaches at a particular moment in life. At this time the individual moves from a state of inadequacy to adequacy, a transition that all children go through at the same 'moment', resulting in acquisition of the same moral knowledge and competence. The desire to see this apply to children at an even younger age reflected that sense of threat that could only be dealt with through effective, therefore punitive, action. Agency as a response to these demands for greater responsibility was not acknowledged; rather those longstanding themes of the Ominous and Evil child were reinforced and given contemporary credibility.

Age and criminal responsibility

The acceptance of age as the defining factor in the application of the criminal law in England is not new, with the law being based on the principle that at a given moment in their lives children reach an age of reason, when they know what is right and wrong (reflecting themes discussed in relation to developmental psychology in Chapter 1). Once this age is reached, measures to control the child's innate capacity for

evil through punishment are unleashed, opening them up to the full force of the criminal law. The age that is set by society therefore becomes a significant statement in defining the relationship between the child, morality and society.

The setting of such an age brings the discussion back to notions of reason discussed in Chapter 1. Cesare Beccaria (1963[1767]), a founding voice in the development of classical criminology (and writing slightly before Kant), argued in support of a universal notion of reason, suggesting that because of implied free will, all people, including children and the mentally ill, should be capable of taking responsibility for their actions. Becarria was clear that this should be replicated within the law. He demanded fixed laws,

> [w]hich must be observed to the letter, [therefore] leaves no further care to the judge than to examine the acts and to decide whether they conform to the law as written (Beccaria, cited in Muncie 1996: 7).

This defined link between an act as written and the punishment which follows reflects a notion of legal rather than moral guilt, which will be discussed further later. However, it also presumes an understanding of morality that is universal both in meaning and application, such that the five-year-old is equally guilty as the 65-year-old. However, even though this sense of legal guilt is important in English law, children have for hundreds of years stood outside of it, being recognised as 'different' to adults. This can be seen by the fact that the common law identified the age of seven years as that of criminal responsibility (Leng et al. 1998), an age that, at the time, reflected the moment of transition from the world of the child to that of the adult (Ariès 1962 – as discussed in the previous chapter). However, the extent to which children were open to the full force of the law was mitigated by *doli incapax,* meaning 'incapable of evil', which said that children must be proved to have known the act was seriously wrong and not just wrong, before being convicted. *Doli incapax* was established at the time of Edward III (Cavidino 1997), with the result that in the 14th century 'children under twelve years of age could expect charges against them to be dropped because they had not reached the age of reason' (Hanawalt 1979: 43). However, even though such measures were in place they often sat uncomfortably with adult desires to demonstrate control and to deal with the perceived threat. As the Newgate Calendar reported in relation to two fourteen-year-old boys in 1791:

> So often have they been arraigned at the bar . . . that the judge declared . . . it was necessary for the public safety to cut them off, in order that boys might learn that, inured to wickedness, their tender age would not save them from an ignominious fate (Rayner et al. 1926: 187).

The language used here has many parallels to attitudes to children today as punitive measures are employed as a deterrent to those whose actions are antisocial in the extreme, such that those in power must 'cut them off'; thankfully no longer by hanging. However this cavalier use of the concept of reason to ensure maximum control continues unabated.

The ways in which concepts of reason are constructed within the criminal law are markedly different to other areas of the law. In fact, some have suggested that the criminal law seeks to justify its jurisdiction to deal with children by removing them from notions of childhood and equating them with adults, resulting in what Jenks terms the 'adult child' (Jenks 1996: 128). This construction of the 'adult child' reflects a view of a child who has stepped outside the bounds of what is seen to be 'childhood'. Such a view of the child is significant, as it not only demands an increased level of responsibility on a par with that applying to adults, but it also provides a stronger foundation for blame and punishment:

> The latter [the delinquent] is a little stunted man already – he knows much and a great deal too much of what is called life – he can take care of his own immediate interests. He is self-reliant, he has so long directed or misdirected his own actions and has no control and asks for no protection. He has consequently much to learn – he has to be turned again into a child (May 1973: 7).

This court record provides a picture of how the 'adult' child was constructed, and even though it was written 100 years ago, similar themes can be noted in our views of children today (Jenks 1996). It is interesting that the 'adult child' has been discussed in terms of the disappearance of childhood (Jenks, 1996).[3] However, here it appears that even though the 'adult child' reflects a different notion of childhood from that which applies to civil law (see below) it is still a particular construction of childhood, notably one through which dominance over children can cleverly be maintained.

The construction of the 'adult child' draws on elements of the debate about the 'Ominous' and 'Evil' child, as well as reflecting some academic

views on children and moral development as a staged process based on age. In rejecting *doli incapax* in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the New Labour government can be seen as returning to a more universal conception of reason, by removing the opportunity for the courts to consider moral guilt, as opposed to simply legal guilt, as it asked whether the child defendant was just being naughty or if they knew what they were doing was seriously wrong (Bandalli 1998). In a case before the House of Lords in 1995 Lord Lowry referred to an Australian case, which had also considered criminal responsibility. The judge in this case had said:

> 'No civilised society,' says Professor Colin Howard in his book entitled Criminal Law, 4th ed. (1982), p. 343, 'regards children as accountable for their actions to the same extent as adults' . . . The wisdom of protecting children against the full rigour of the criminal law is beyond argument. The difficulty lies in determining when and under what circumstances that protection should be removed (cited in Barber 1998).

However, by abandoning *doli incpax* and lowering the age of criminal responsibility to ten years, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 seemed to give limited credence to such arguments. The government in Westminster suggested that *doli incapax* was out of date; that the measure was illogical as children today know right from wrong due to compulsory education and that such a policy simply acts as a barrier to those children whose presence in the court demonstrates their need for 'help' (Leng et al. 1998). The then Home Secretary, in supporting its abolition, suggested that it was a 'doctrine that defies common sense, most young people between the ages of ten and thirteen are clearly capable of knowing the difference between right and wrong' (cited in Cavidino 1997: 165). In reality, its removal simply provided for the perceived threat that children pose to be more 'effectively' managed, by accepting a universal understanding of both children and morality and thus increasing the reach of the criminal law.

Legal or moral guilt?

This attitude to age must be seen in the further context of the English criminal law's focus on legal guilt. Legal guilt asks: has the act been committed? This in opposition to moral guilt, which enquires why the act was committed. Indeed, reflecting Beccaria's position, it means that under English law, for those who are criminally responsible, 'ignorance or a mistake of law is irrelevant as the citizen is presumed to know the

law of the land' (Allen 1987: 87). Such a position does not provide for guilt to reflect the 'moral' circumstances of the case, and offers little or no investigation into *why* certain behaviour was carried out. As such it adds to the hostile nature of the criminal law for children, but in doing so it acts as a further example of the extent to which the law reflects constructions of childhood, and subsequently morality, through which control can be maintained.

It is, for example, only recently that the criminal law has moved away from a position in respect of 'recklessness' that summed up the uncompromising attitude and universal approach to children the law had, and in other areas continues to have (Ball 2004). For certain offences the court has the ability to consider recklessness as well as intention. In this circumstance, if evidence does not support the case that the defendant intentionally committed an act, the court can consider whether he/she was reckless in committing that act, resulting in the same potential finding of guilt. The problem with recklessness, however, is that for over the past twenty years it has been judged according to the standards of a reasonable bystander (R v Caldwell, 1982). A reasonable bystander is a magistrate or member of the jury, who are of a minimum age of eighteen years. This standard has resulted in findings of legal guilt where questions of moral guilt remain. One example of this was the case of Stephen Malcolm. In this case the verdict centred on whether Stephen Malcolm, who at the time was aged fifteen, was reckless in endangering life as the result of throwing three Molotov Cocktails at the wall of a house. In denying the appeal Lord Justice Ackner stated:

> We would have preferred that the judge [in the original trial] should at least have been entitled in law to have left to the jury the question, would a boy of the defendant's age have appreciated that to have thrown petrol bombs very close to the windows in a dwelling house was a danger to the life of the occupants (Stephen Malcolm R (1984) 79 Cr App R 341).

The nature of the act is irrelevant. The significance of this case is that the law prevented the judge and the jury from considering the issues from the point of view of the child involved, a finding that in Lord Justice Ackner's words did raise questions about the validity of the judgement. It was only in 2004 that the position set in Caldwell was overturned and the House of Lords acknowledged that this measure 'was offensive in principle and was apt to cause injustice and offend against a jury's sense of fairness' (Metcalfe and Ashworth 2004: 369).[4] One judge in reaching his decision drew on the United Nations Convention on

the Rights of the Child (Metcalfe and Ashworth, 2004); however it is notable that this document had been ratified for twelve years prior to the courts re-defining its position in relation to children and recklessness, re-affirming this reluctance to engage with children.

Smith, a vehement campaigner in relation to changes to the law on recklessness, contrasts the English law with that in Sweden, reflecting that the latter has 'much to commend it when compared to the uncompromising attitude of English Law. They seem to regulate guilt to moral responsibility in a way that our rules do not' (Smith and Hogan 1999: 82). Not only does the law in England and Wales not recognise moral guilt, but the age of criminal responsibility, following the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, is lower than in any other European country, apart from Scotland and Switzerland. The English position in relation to criminal responsibility continues to be criticised by, or in, reports that form part of the UK's commitment to being a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (James and James 2004). As part of the third review, the Children's Commissioners in the UK produced a joint document; at the top of a list titled 'bad things about being a child in England' was:

> There is a very punitive approach to misbehavior by children and young people and the criminal justice system is used too readily. Compared to other European countries, England has a very low age of criminal responsibility and high numbers of children are locked up (UK Children's Commissioners 2008: 5).

Successive governments have continued to refuse to change the age of criminal responsibility. Despite recommendations from groups such as a UK parliamentiary enquiry in which a joint House of Commons and House of Lords Committee found that the age of criminal responsibility should be raised to twelve years (James and James 2004: 90). A recent report echoed this change, arguing that significant savings would be made if children's behaviour was dealt with through interventions focused on the family, rather than efforts to criminalise within the system (Children's Society, 2010). This determined stance is symptomatic of this uncompromising attitude in English law towards children.

The Antisocial Child

It is notable how these fundamental principles of English law simply reflect representations of the child and morality that have previously

been argued to be social constructions driven by adult concerns, based on an unreliable theoretical foundation. However, this has not stopped the extent to which such attitudes have driven recent approaches to children. As a result, the wave of legislation that was introduced in the 1990s and into the following decade highlights a contemporary example that demonstrates the way in which constructions of childhood and morality, through legislation, impact on children's lives. It also further reflects the depth of thinking through which children's voices need to be heard.

The coming together of fears and panics in the late 1990s saw the Evil Child morph into its contemporary cousin – the Antisocial Child. In order to address this new perceived threat, legislation was and continues to be used as a means to control and monitor children's movements and to respond quickly to inappropriate behaviour. Child curfews, child safety orders,[5] antisocial behaviour orders, some of which had the capacity to draw children as young as eight years into the criminal justice net (James and James 2004), have been added to with increased police powers to use fixed penalty notices, powers of confiscation and dispersement.[6] The search for appropriate legislation matched the rhetoric of politicians who continued to call for 'strengthening the punishments' (*The Independent*, 19 May 2002) as they battled forth against youth crime. As a result the borders of what was of interest to criminal justice seemed to be ever moving, drawing more and more children within it. Databases to record children's DNA and list potential future offenders (*The Guardian*, 8 June 2009) further highlighted the extent to which the police were being used as a frontline tool to monitor children and ultimately control them.

However it was not just the police, but parents and teachers, who had a role to play in this dramatic response to children and antisocial behaviour. In schools, the focus was on truancy and a desire to be able to account for children at all times. This was supported by an increase in police being based actually in schools. Arguably, the policy of 'extended schools', which saw premises opened throughout the day, was another move to monitor children, as school was increasingly perceived as a more appropriate moral space than home. Schools reflected this, with teachers challenging parents for failing to teach children 'basic social standards' (*The Week*, 7 May 2005b). This popular view, which significantly does not take into account children's own thoughts, was highlighted by *The Mirror*'s opinion of young people who are seen to be behaving antisocially; 'typically children who are out of control come from a dysfunctional family background, in which discipline is

either lacking or inconsistent. They know no limits or boundaries' (*The Mirror*, 20 March 2002). However, despite the reality of this perception that schools were increasingly the place in which moral education took place, it was parents who were seen as culpable, being drawn into the legislative net as government sought to enforce parental responsibility through the implementation of Parenting Orders, which notably included provisions about sending children to school[7] (Squires 2008; Bainham 2005).

The approach to antisocial behaviour following the 2010 general election is now at a cross-roads. Political capital is being placed on the need to move away from the notion of 'antisocial behaviour' as a policy focus for dealing with young people. This is based on a desire to re-establish personal responsibility, which seems to suggest a growing awareness of the individual at a time when the 'cult of the individual' is seen by some to be flourishing (Layard and Dunn 2009; Winlow and Hall 2006). ASBOs, which have become synonymous with children, morality and communities, may die out but will the disappearance of the Antisocial Child simply allow the emergence of a new representation of childhood on which society can hang its fears over the potential threat posed by children? Squire (2008), in summing up a collective work on ASBOs, suggests that it is not the ASBO itself that is necessarily the point of interest but the extent to which it spearheaded a political approach that saw the imposition of extreme measures, in unorthodox and extraordinary ways, on young people. It is only by addressing the fundamental principles that underpin the criminal law that this historical merry-go-round, that sees children becoming the focus of society's moral concerns, will stop and that room can be made to allow children to become participants in a process of moral order, defined by the criminal law.

The civil law – in search of the individual

The criminal law presents a particular representation of childhood and morality. This is highlighted when compared to other areas of the law where alternative constructions are employed in order to deal with other 'social' agendas. In fact even within the criminal process itself current techniques are increasingly contradicting the absolute position identified above. For example, restorative justice is being seen as a means of actually engaging children in the process of responding to their wrongdoing (Smith 2009).[8] Restorative justice by definition demands particular focus on the individual, with acknowledgment of the learning

possibilities that this measure can result in, as one is called to recognise at least some demonstration of agency. The idea of individual engagement that is an integral part of the restorative justice process seems at odds with the notion of childhood as defined by the criminal law, although this more progressive position it is not unique within the law more broadly. Presenting these different understandings alongside each other, the true depth of the ambiguity surrounding the way in which the child is represented becomes apparent:

> On the one hand, then there is the denial of children as rational responsible persons able to receive information, participate in frank and open discussions and come to well reasoned and appropriately informed decisions about their interpersonal relationships (family, friends, sexual), about school and developing sexuality. On the other hand there is the imposition, using the full force of law, of the highest level of rationality and responsibility on children and young people that seriously offend. The paradox is that the same sources appear to propose that childhood represent a period of diminished adult responsibility governing certain actions while being a period of equal responsibility governing others (Scraton 1997: 182).

When put in this context it is again easy to see the way in which rationality is used as a tool through which adults seek to control children, with contradictions that simply dissolve when up against adult desires to maintain power. It is in contrast to this that the civil law presents another version of the child, one in which there is room for the individual. However, this must be seen in the context of the civil law's own particular construction of childhood, which rather than emphasising children as a threat, draws on perceptions of children as innocent and in need of protection.

Freeman (1997) argues that the civil law's conception of childhood can be summed up by the following:

1. The child is set apart temporally as different, through the calculation of age;
2. The child is deemed to have a special nature;
3. The child is innocent;
4. The child is vulnerable and dependent (James and Hockey 1993).

What this view does is to assert many of the expected assumptions in relation to what an ideal child should be, which stand in contrast to the

threatening and deviant behaviour dealt with in the criminal law. This view has resulted in a focus on protecting children's welfare (Ennew 1986), which has been kept separate from recognising their individuality. Examples of this can be seen throughout the law, both in terms of case outcomes but also in the way procedure is interpreted. First, according to the civil procedure ruling a child is someone of 'unsound mind'. And a person of unsound mind under s 27 Limitations Act 1980 is anyone under the age of eighteen (Sime 2000). Thus a child, when in need of protection, is seen as unable to be responsible until they are eighteen years old – unlike the criminal law, which as shown above, makes ten years the age of 'reason'.

Indeed the distinctions developed in law also have implications in the context of moral reasoning. Previously the case of R v Stephen Malcolm was discussed in the context of the rigid and unbending nature of the criminal law. However, the civil courts have shown more willingness to recognise the different ages and the subsequent levels of experience that may be expected. For example, the case of Mullin v Richards, in which two fifteen-year-old girls were having a play fight with a ruler. One ruler broke and one of the girls was injured. Rather than this case being considered according to adult standards of reason, the more protection-orientated focus of the civil court allowed for the defendant to be considered on the basis of a reasonable child of the same age. However, even though the case of Mullins v Richards (1998 1 WLR 1304) showed some room for flexibility, it stopped short of considering the circumstances of the case from the specific point of view of the individual children involved. Rather, it was for the judge to place themselves in the shoes of a 'reasonable child' of that age in deciding what was and was not reasonable behaviour.

This reluctance to engage with children as individuals shaped by their experiences was challenged by a number of high-profile cases on child abuse in the 1980s. The Report for the Inquiry into Child Abuse in Cleveland stated 'that a child is a person and not an object of concern' (cited in Burrows 1994: 579), a definition which moves away from the protectionist idea outlined above and within which previously held positions regarding age and understanding, were challenged. Lord Bingham said, 'Children have different levels of understanding at the same age. And understanding is not absolute, it has to be assessed relative to the issues of that case' (Bingham in Re S (A Minor), 1993: 448). Such a pronouncement is important for it marks a shift from those under eighteen years being seen as *all* being of 'unsound mind', to a recognition that individual circumstances may have relevance in

considering issues affecting children. The most categorical pronouncement in relation to competency came from Lord Scarman in the case of Gillick. This case was concerned with whether a child under the age of sixteen years could consent to medical examination and treatment. The essence of the case was concerned with the child's mental capacity; were they of sufficient intelligence to understand and thus give consent? Lord Scarman stated:

> If the law should impose upon the process of growing up fixed limits where nature knows only a continuous process, the price would be artificiality and a lack of realism in an area where the law must be sensitive to human development and social change . . . a minor's capacity to make his or her own decision depends upon the minor having sufficient understanding and intelligence to make the decision and is not to be determined by reference to any fixed age limit (Gillick v West Norfolk HA, 1986 1 FLR 250).

This view begins to acknowledge the individual, and seems to show an awareness that each child will be different, due to both biological and social factors; it is a major shift from the constructions of childhood considered at the beginning of this chapter.

This increasingly progressive attitude towards children was reflected to some extent within legislation. However, reflections on such changes highlight the extent to which a development can be argued to be more conservative than the rhetoric that surrounds it. For example, Bainham (1998) considers the Children's Act 1989 to be an act which 'generally supports the notion of participatory decision making, which gives young people a degree of self determination' (Bainham 1998: 49). The Act included for the first time a statutory checklist which the courts need to consider when dealing with children. At the top of this it is stated that the court must have regard for the wishes and feelings of the child (Bainham 1998). This is important in the search for the recognition of children as individuals, but it is here that Bainham (1998) raises a note of caution. He suggests that throughout the Act there is a principle of non-intervention on behalf of the child, the result of which, despite the feelings of the child, is that the court adopts a presumption against making orders that would disrupt the 'family unit'. This, as a result, limits the weight attached to decisions made by individual children. Also, as Freeman (1997) identifies, any power children have to speak out within the system is restricted to specific situations, such as care, rather than being concerned with giving them a more general voice at school or at

home. In addition, fundamental concepts such as a child's welfare being the 'first consideration', as outlined in the UNCRC (United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child), are diluted in the Act by it stating that one should 'safeguard and promote' welfare (Freeman 1997: 29), a dilution that leaves Freeman (1997) arguing that even the latter phrase is mere tokenism. The Act, therefore, for all its focus on welfare, actually appears to follow more protectionist ideals (considered above) than any more progressive view. For certain, the Act is clearly not aiming to give children the use of the law themselves, by empowering them. Instead, adults remain in control of the law and thus have the power to determine how it is used on behalf of children. It is a means by which the notion of childhood as identified by Freeman (1997) earlier in this section is maintained. However, it is significant to note that this attitude of not fully engaging the child does not always ensure protection. Rather, as it has done in the area of child abuse, it can make children more vulnerable as victims, through not providing them with the necessary knowledge to empower them, through fear of damaging their innocence (Kirtzinger 1997). What is clear is that the move towards recognising children as individuals, and perhaps more radically as competent social agents within the law, does not outweigh adult desires to control children, which here are camouflaged as acting in their best interests.

Children's rights

Constructions of childhood that influence the law must also be seen in the context of the more formal recognition of children's rights. This came to fruition with the acceptance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989,[9] the result of over 60 years of work to get governments around the world to recognise and respond to children as active members of society.[10] In theory the Convention proposes another model though which to engage the child, not as an ambiguous universal object but as an individual, free to choose and make decisions. Implied within this is the recognition of the individual child as a meaning-maker, not as a passive receptacle of adult demands. However the extent to which the UNCRC has managed to deliver on, for example, its call for children to be taken seriously (article 12), has been restricted, as the convention has become clouded by adult debates that reflect a reluctance to give up a notion of childhood through which adults are able to maintain control over children.

This had led to discussions about whether it is helpful to have a notion of children's rights at all. Freeman suggests that such arguments are

based around two 'myths' (Freeman 1997: 84). The first is that children can rely on adults to always act in their best interests. Such an ideology, he suggests, sees a reversion to the non-interventionist stance discussed above, in which the court is reluctant to get involved, particularly in relation to the child and the family. Such a position, however, may leave some children, who are outside of the ideological notion of the 'family', vulnerable. Such a position seems not to stand for the individual rights of the child, but more for the institution of the family, within which parents are accepted as always acting in their children's interests. The second myth is enshrined in the notion of childhood innocence. It suggests that children, due to their age, should not have to be concerned with the need to fight for their rights; rather children should have fun and play. This view of childhood is problematic as it starts out from the position that all children already have these opportunities and is oblivious to the idea that it is precisely because many children do not have these things that the notion of rights is so important.

However, the case against children's rights per se has clearly been weakened by the support given to the UNCRC, which encourages the prevention, protection, provision and participation of children within society (Bainham 1998). The response, which has resulted in the convention being the most signed international document,[11] shows an international consensus as to what rights children should have and what the role of parents and the state should be (Bainham 1998: 66). The convention clearly provides a mechanism through which adults could build and develop their recognition of the child as an individual in all aspects of their lives.[12] At its best, it has been argued that a rights-based model for children actually has the potential to pull together the 'incoherent hotchpotch of legal principles and government policies' (Fortin 2009: 3) that are in place to deal with children in other areas of the law, as seen above. However, as can be seen from the earlier discussions about the direction that the criminal law has taken since 1993, it is clear that the British government's sense of obligation to realising children's rights has been very limited. 'In general terms, the UK government shows little sign of taking seriously the advice to all states to "see their role fulfilling clear legal obligations to each and every child"' (Committee on Rights for the Child, cited in Fortin 2009: 49–50), with the result that representations of childhood within the law remain ambiguous.

One possible explanation for this lies in the way in which those in power see rights. Fortin (2009) (also Bainham 2005) argues that the government's view can be linked to the work of MacKormick (1982). In this work it was argued that, in relation to children, it was sufficient

to merely acknowledge they had rights, rather than do anything about them. Since the state acts paternally, the freedom of subjects could be limited through well-meaning regulation, with the result that provision need not be made for rights to be actively pursued. This position reflects directly the argument above in relation to the civil law, that is, that there should be some recognition of children as individuals so long as this does not interfere with the notion of childhood as a time of innocence and dependence. The result of this has been that there has been very little effort to ensure that children are empowered to use their rights. This was reflected in the findings of a UN report, which noted that 75 per cent of children do not even know that they have these rights (James and James, 2004). Thus control over children is maintained, as their exercise of their rights remains dependent on adults. This current position provides a clear answer to Oakley's (1994) question 'who owns children?'. As she points out, it is not until children own themselves, as women are now in a position to do, that they will be able to break away from the perceptions that are used to control them (Oakley 1994). Recent policy has done very little to reject those myths about why children should not have rights, let alone progress the notion of the child beyond the controlling theories that are obvious in both the criminal and civil law.

The need for agency

For there to be any move towards empowering children, there needs to be a recognition of their capacity as agents (Archard 2004). This does not mean, as Plant (1992) suggests, that protectionism and empowerment have to be mutually exclusive. However, the protection of children must take place within the context of children having recognised rights that they can access. Such a call demands a move away from the position of MacKormick (1982) mentioned above. Rather, it demands that children are considered to be in some sense autonomous and to have an element of agency.

Freeman suggests that children should be treated more like adults, 'as they are different but not all that different' (Freeman 1997: 34). In developing such a position, he explores the notion of children's autonomy. He defined autonomy in terms of whether a 'person has a set of capacities that enable them to make independent decisions regarding appropriate life choices' (ibid.). Satisfying this criteria means, as discussed above, an acceptance of that person's capacity to reason.

He goes on to say that reaching this 'critical capacity' can happen far earlier than is allowed for in the courts. However, Anderson et al. (1994) assert that the term 'autonomy' is in itself restrictive. Freeman's definition of autonomy suggests a level of awareness that does not acknowledge the social processes of the self and therefore does not recognise the child fully as a social agent. Anderson et al. (1994), in moving away from the notion of autonomy, provide a more concrete and measurable concept, through defining the 'self' as the ability of the individual to reflect on contact with others in shaping a perception of themselves, which has implications for the way in which they develop meanings in relation to the social world. They suggest that autonomy theories do not fully consider the uniqueness of a child's personal situation. They suggest, therefore, that one should be concerned with concepts of physical, mental and personal integrity, and ask why children need to be seen as perfect, to be competent, when there are many parents who are fallible. If adults can accept a child's ability to construct meanings then this would be a huge step forward in freeing children from the constraints of the past (Anderson et al. 1994: 62) and in creating a legal process that effectively responds to children as social agents.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the reality of the challenge to children's engagement in moral discourses within the context of English law. Even though elements of the more progressive civil law reflect children's agency they are still surrounded by layers of assumptions within which adults draw on long-held views about what childhood should be and how it should be managed. This is clearly illustrated by the criminal law through its focus on age. Drawing on fixed and absolute perceptions of morality, a universal transition in age is seen as sufficient to move the individual from unknowing to knowing, and from irresponsible to responsible. It is notable that is only when dealing with children who have done 'wrong' that this sense of responsibility is seen to apply so early, reinforcing that sense in which the criminal law is used to control the ongoing threat children pose to adult harmony. This is in stark contrast to children and their behaviour in other areas of the law, where alternative representations of the child and their understanding of morality have very different implications. It is amongst these arbitrary understandings and differing constructions that children's voices must be heard, as the case is made for children as social agents with

the capacity to demonstrate moral agency. As Mayall (2002) says, it is only by tackling the 'mis-fit' between adult conceptions of childhood, such as those assumed within the 'law', and children's actual experience that the debate on morality can be explained and moved forward.

Section III
Moral Agency in Action

As has been illustrated, approaches to children have and continue to be full of assumptions as to what children know and do not know, what they think and why. 'Adults never understand anything by themselves,' concludes the narrator in Saint-Exupéry's story *The Little Prince*. The opening of this tale sees the narrator seeking to share with the adults around him, but they never hear. It is a perceptive illustration of the extent to which child and adult communication is restricted by adult preconceptions towards childhood, which in this story means the narrator simply 'gave up' (Saint-Exupéry 1945: 6). This example, however, presents a position that goes beyond a failure to listen. It suggests a world in which the right to think and define meaning belongs to adults; where children's views are seen as immature, ignorant and in need of adult direction. It reflects the conflict between the themes in the opening chapters in this book in which we see children as agents contrasted with the child as a passive object waiting to achieve a state of competency. However, as the arguments have been presented, so too has the need to hear the voice of children themselves and to test the extent to which agency is an appropriate theoretical foundation for considering children in the context of morality.

The case study

This section, therefore, focuses in on the voices of a small group of children who provide a case study through which to begin this exploration of the way in which children express moral agency. These findings, therefore, are to be seen as their findings, recognising the particularities of the individuals within this group. Elements of the research may have more universal application, although the extent to which these

findings seek to prove that is little more than tentative. The focus here is to demonstrate children as agents, who in engaging with the social world around them find themselves wrestling with morality. Morality, therefore, becomes an aspect of the social, part of the day-to-day, to which children bring meanings that accompany their actions.

The children were clearly the focus of this study and the research techniques were designed to maximise their participation (the research methods are discussed in detail in the Appendix). Within this a range of methods were used, allowing both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected, as I sought to capture a rich glimpse into the lives of these children. These methods will be referred to in the following chapters.

Part 1 – Involving all the children

- Personal Fact File: An initial self-completion questionnaire
- Questionnaire: Using a recorded script the children listened and then responded to questions, writing their answers on a specially designed answers sheet.
- Drama/Discussion Groups: These were focus group discussions that used the preparation of a drama as a tool to direct and explore the themes discussed.

Part 2 – This involved a smaller number of children

- Interviews: Children were interviewed in pairs, exploring in detail issues around morality in their everyday lives. Adults were also interviewed.
- Diary: A personal reflection on morality that a small number of the children chose to take part in (these were either written or recorded).

The nature of the research was such that I wanted these children to have the opportunity to contribute over a number of sessions, looking at their moral engagement from different angles and building on the data collected in separate meetings. Access on a regular basis to the same children was only ever going to be really possible at school; therefore it was one school that was chosen as the site for this work and it is from those children that the findings come. The school was called St Stephens and was in a commuter town to the northeast of London. Eighty-four children took part, contributing to the different elements of the research to varying degrees. Over three classes, it gave me five children aged nine

years and then 43 and 36 respectively aged 10 and 11 years, of which there were more boys than girls (49 to 35).

The age of these children is significant. Very young children have been part of research into moral issues, but what about those who are slightly older, children, who within the law (as described in Chapter 3) are required to have absolute and positive knowledge of right and wrong? That is why the focus of views for the forthcoming discussion is based on the voices of children who are at or around the age that English law sets for criminal responsibility.

It was also interesting, within the context of the previous chapters, that the children at St Stephens lived in a town at the heart of what some might term 'middle Britain'. The area was affluent, with very little deprivation (Neighbourhood Statistics 2006a) and the children mainly lived in two-parent families. Of the population 97 per cent describe themselves as white and 74 per cent state their religion as Christian (Neighbourhood Statistics 2006a, 2006b). The school, in a reflection of the town itself, had very little cultural diversity and, as a Church of England school, had a strong Christian ethos. These children therefore live in a community that sits outside the media focus on children and morality. Also, by virtue of their middle-class position, the children arguably have greater access to knowledge and more preparedness to interpret it, as opposed to their working-class contemporaries (Wyness 2006). As a result these children offer the perfect case study through which to consider morality; if any group is to fit adult perceptions of the 'knowing' moral child, as discussed in Chapter 3, who understand right and wrong as a result of their upbringing and education, then it is children such as these. It is therefore, recognising the middle-class nature of the area, its lack of diversity and strong principles that makes this group of such particular interest in considering the extent to which these children demonstrate agency and consequently, through their interactions, use, shape and define morality.

4
Stereotypes – Positioning the Self

Previous chapters have to some extent explored the way in which children are positioned within moral discourses. Here children start to have their say as they express themselves as social agents, interacting with the world around them. Notably, it is through drawing on moral understandings that children give order to this world, which consequently gives them guidance on shaping their path within it. This demonstration of moral agency does not draw on fixed understandings of morality but on a more complex interrelationship between the self and others. Among the central tools helping the children make quick judgements and decisions are stereotypes. A more detailed consideration of their use shows how children draw on their perception of themselves as they seek to give moral meaning to others by measuring similarity and difference. This process sees the child as agent shaping and creating moral meanings as part of everyday interactions.

An expression of self-identity

The importance of the self, as a filter for understanding social agency, was discussed in some detail in Chapter 1. There it was suggested that by considering the process of self-identity in relation to belonging, a framework emerges that offers a means through which to consider the way in which children engage with moral meanings. Indeed, belonging itself carries with it a strong 'moral' element. Douglas (1966) makes this link clear in her discussion of otherness, where morality, in the form of moral limits, is used as a measure through which to recognise those who are similar and those who are not. Indeed, contemporary discourses continue to reflect the extent to which morality and belonging are indelibly interlinked, as seen in recent attempts to have Roma

populations removed from France, mirroring action taken in Italy, as a result of the perceived threat that this group posed (*The Economist*, 28 August 2010). As well, the 9/11 attacks in the United States continue to have an impact in different parts of the world, with ethnic and religious difference forming a basis for assumptions about 'moral' extremism. This reflects how, in using similarity and difference, a sense of belonging can also be used to mark out risk. In the context of children, this will be returned to more explicitly in relation to strangers; however it also marks a more subtle element of meaning-creation, with that sense of risk reflecting the moral judgements that have been made.

Jenkins (2004) suggests that classification is at the heart of this sense of belonging and of the formation of a group identity. Without this process of comparison the individual's self-identity, on which the group identity is based, would not be able to be re-affirmed and continued. Douglas (1966) sees categorisation as a basic human process that allows the individual to negotiate the social world and to order their experiences and impressions. This process is the first step in providing a foundation on which an individual can then create an understanding of the constructed world. By labelling and naming, objects can be 'pigeonholed' to provide a basis for understanding and individual meaning. Rapport (1995), who considers this process through looking at stereotypes, stresses how important it is that these stereotypes are not simply understood as assumptions from a particular group but rather as pertaining to individual experiences. He goes further to suggest that labels and stereotypes provide personal tools for the individual to use in dealing with the everyday world:

> Stereotype presents a shorthand: a source of consistent, expectable, broad and immediate ways of knowing of the social world; a ready means by which to embody and express a multitude of complex emotions; a shortcut to generalities, to future possible regularities and uniformities. Such a foundation is very necessary not only as a bulwark against the expected randomness of future events . . . but also as an encouragement towards actions – that vital movement which, if it were not for the bias of the stereotype and the blind spots of perception it incurs, could be replaced by the self doubt and paralysis of trying to see a social environment from every point of view (Rapport 1995: 280).

The idea of stereotypes being 'shorthand' to deal with the challenges of a changing social world is particularly significant when put in the

context of children who have limited experiences. They provide a basis on which children can sort and begin to establish meaning in relation to different people and places. Stereotypes are, to Rapport, intrinsically personal. However, these personal perspectives do come together within a group and are used to reinforce and shape the membership of that group through similarity and difference.

An intrinsic part of ordering one's social world is the ability to recognise what behaviours are and are not acceptable. It is therefore not surprising that stereotypes carry moral meanings. James (1993) has been pivotal in showing the practical realities of stereotyping as a systematic tool in shaping meaning in children's everyday lives. She identifies height, shape, appearance, gender and performance as key bodily factors which children use in assessing similarity and difference. Significantly, these also carry moral meaning, providing children with a basis on which to consider and make judgements on the moral acceptability of themselves and others. For example, displaying a certain amount of sporting ability can raise an individual higher in the perception of others and put them in a position where their moral pronouncements are considered as 'right' (Thorne 1993). At the other end of the social ladder, James (1993) and Thorne (1993) both consider the way in which children respond to others who are seen to be 'fat'. The result of such a label can see an individual being singled out as different, and consequently becoming the target of teasing and bullying. The justifications for such behaviour stem from a separate moral code that applies to those who are different (James 1993; Thorne 1993). In her discussion of this Thorne uses the word 'contamination', which recalls Douglas's (1966) work on 'purity and danger' and more specifically on 'pollution' (Douglas 1966: 113). What this word suggests is an infection, a social infection that gives grounds for an 'infected' individual to be avoided. James makes this link plainer when she says that children link being fat with an unacceptable body shape and then with 'having an unacceptable social identity' (James 1993: 118). All this makes it clear, therefore, that being seen as 'different' has implications for one's ability to enter social groups as well as consequences for how an individual is perceived morally by others.[1] Connolly (1998) demonstrates that it is not just children who apply these moral codes to their peers but also teachers who use them in shaping their understanding of those in their care, which impacts on the way in which they define the morality of children's actions.

The fact that issues of moral acceptability are entwined with stereotypes is important in showing the extent to which children engage

with morality, as well as how that understanding is expressed. It is only through recognising the constant internal-external dialectic that takes place between the body and the social world in children's everyday lives that we can start to build up a picture of exactly what it is that informs and shapes children's perceptions of similarity and difference and how these are used in framing their moral awareness of the world around them. Initially, this will provide the starting point as we search for the moral agent, as we seek to consider the way in which children, through expressing the social, are constantly making and forming moral judgements and decisions as part of their everyday lives.

Stereotypes in practice

The first of Jenkins' three defined orders relating the self to the world around, put forward in Chapter 1, related to the individual as 'I', processing information by themselves, for themselves (as opposed to this being done for the benefit of, or in the presence of, others). By exploring this aspect of the self, one not only is given a clear demonstration of agency but also a helpful foundation on which to consider further the ways in which morality is expressed. As made clear earlier, at the centre of stereotypes is the classification process between similarity and difference. This is important as it provides the individual with a framework to discern between different groups as well as fostering a sense of belonging within groups in which membership is actually sought. Linked to these stereotypes is a set of moral meanings, which further underpin perceptions of similarity and difference.

This investigation of stereotypes was developed as an aspect of the Questionnaire, which invited the children's participation through a recording of five fictional characters who were introduced through a brief interview. Apart from the recording the children were given no further clues about how these characters looked or behaved. Each character was to some extent created with certain stereotypes in mind and the children's responses must be seen within this context (see the Appendix for more). However, the value here was never going to be drawn from their reaction to the audio recording itself, but rather from the image they created and the meanings that they drew.

The descriptions below in Table 4.1 are an amalgam of the children's responses, showing the most frequently occurring characteristics and some of the more unusual attributes associated with the characters; through both it is possible to see some of the trends that emerged

Table 4.1 What does this character look like?

Character	Description
Amelia	Has blonde hair is tall and thin, she has blue eyes and she might have some earrings or be wearing braces. She has glasses. She is smart and pretty and wears expensive sporty clothes.
Mary	Is quite 'old' (about middle age) with blonde hair, she is small and she has green eyes. She is neat and tidy and wears old-fashioned clothes.
Jasmine	Has long brown hair, which may look a bit scraggly, and she is small and skinny. She has blue eyes and is aged about 12 years. She wears old clothes that look poor. Jasmine is shy and poor and that means she can be sad and lonely.
Guy	Has black short hair. He is tall and well-built to fat. He has green eyes. He is about 30 years old and dresses very smartly, in business clothes.
Mick	Has spiky/punky hair is quite big and/or fat. He wears an earring and has brown eyes. He looks messy and might have a tattoo. He wears baggy clothes, trainers and maybe a leather jacket and sunglasses. He is cool.

within the children's responses. Even though the findings in this table are not presented as definitive characterisations, they do reveal the very different ways in which the children defined each character.

However, in order to give these findings meaning within the context of questions of morality, it is also important to establish these characters' sense of right and wrong, as perceived by the children. Once the children had framed their vision of the character, they then had to say whether they thought this character had a good sense of right and wrong.

Figure 4.1 shows only a slight variation in the moral qualities attributed to the three female characters, which is in contrast to the view of the male characters, Mick and Guy. As will become clear, there is a definite association between these moral assessments and the physical descriptions of the characters given by the children. It was also notable that an evaluation of a character's similarity or difference, based on the children's perceptions of themselves, played a significant role in the final moral assessment. The intricate nature of these assessments is highlighted by the fact that in response to each character different criteria were used as the basis on which to justify perceptions of that character's ability to recognise right and wrong.

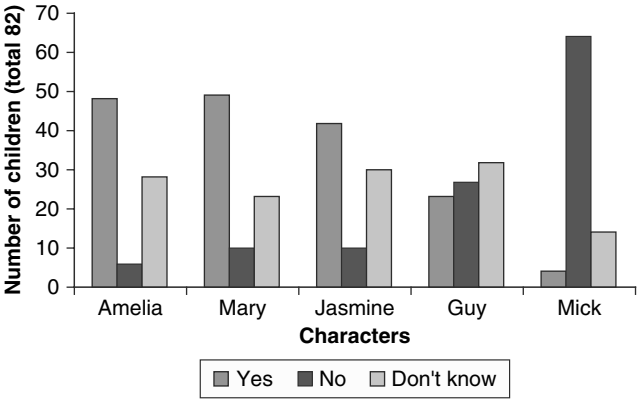


Figure 4.1 Do they have a good sense of right and wrong?

The following sections represent five different categories within which the children's responses fell: age, gender, performance, actual body (body shape and size) and styled body (hair, jewellery and clothes[2]). Each category reflects the everyday presence of morality within the stereotypes the children used to assess others. It is important to note that even though these findings are drawn from the Questionnaire they have been moulded to some extent by the data from other areas of the research. The interaction between these findings and children's everyday experiences is developed further in later chapters.

Age

Adults are obsessed by children's age. It is a critical factor in shaping thinking in relation to morality and children's engagement. For children, age also becomes a common tool in classifying others, particularly in marking out those that are 'different'. This is not surprising since much of a child's everyday social experience, such as what social groups they belong to, revolves around their age. Someone of a different age is immediately 'other' and classified as such. However, one of the adult characters, Mary, who was seen as a Mum, received special dispensation that overcame the age difference and allowed her to be seen as 'similar' to the children. The nature of this similarity was reflected in the level of understanding and closeness that children feel with such adults and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, it was most commonly seen in relation to family members. Apart from this exception, however, age was generally associated with some very specific stereotypes. If a person was

older they were perceived to be stronger and, therefore, a threat (particularly if they were male), and if younger they were seen as weaker. For example, in relation to the latter, Jasmine, who out of all the characters was most likely to be seen as a victim, *'someone who's about to be bullied'*, was referred to as '*not very old*'.

Jasmine was seen to be about 12 years old, an age which the children commonly associated with being a victim.[3] This was in contrast to Mick, the character seen as most likely not to have a good sense of right and wrong. He was seen to be about 17 years old, an age children associated with 'teenagers', a group which they had concerns about, seeing them as unpredictable and as posing a personal threat in the form of violence (discussed further in the next chapter). Here, the perception of Mick's age resulted in the children viewing him as having the time and inclination to raise their concern. They thought that he had a lot of spare time, and he was often referred to as '*hanging around*'. As one child said, he '*hangs around on street corners, he does not want a job and he listens to horrible music*'. However, not only was Mick considered to have the time, his perceived attitude to the world around him provided a further basis on which to behave badly. A repetitive refrain from the children was that Mick did not care, '*he doesn't care about anyone else*'.

These age-related behaviours associated with Mick also have resonance with contemporary adult views of teenagers. Significantly, what emerges is that rather than perceptions of this group as a threat being the sole preserve of adults, children have identical fears. Indeed, the stereotypes on which these children draw in thinking about 'teenagers' replicate many of the attitudes and opinions of adult discourses. However, it is notable that the worries children have are far less audible than those of adults, despite the fact that children are far more likely than anyone else to be victims of teenagers (Muncie 2004).

However, it was not just those a few years older that were seen by the children as presenting a threat. One character, Guy, was styled on a businessman in his thirties. His difference in age from 'teenagers' resulted in him being viewed as a different kind of threat – one based on doubts about his honesty and trustworthiness. Rather than being engaged in acts of violence Guy was seen to be involved in acts such as cheating. This contrast between Mick and Guy is demonstrated in Table 4.2.

These figures show how Mick is linked to fighting where as Guy's unpredictability is summed up through his role as a cheat. It was significant that Guy was perceived as dishonest and a cheat and therefore

Table 4.2 Newspaper headlines – to which character is the headline most likely to refer?

	Amelia	Jasmine	Mary	Mick	Guy
'**Big Cheat** wins lots of money'	5	1	5	10	**60**
'**Fighting** in town causes lots of damage'	3	1	6	**58**	11

untrustworthy, as this is how the children thought about many adults with whom they had little or no contact. The element of trust was a particular concern to the children in relation to men and connected with fears and worries around strangers and the danger that many associated with this group. This is highly problematic for children. Rather than feeling confident in their trust of adults, they are required to assess and test any adult's trustworthiness before accepting them. This suggests, therefore, that children may use ideas of similarity and difference as a kind of defence mechanism. Key adults must therefore think about how they deal with issues of trust if they want to build a constructive relationship with children (this is discussed further in the following chapters).

Gender

Gender is an important filter in understanding the self (Jenkins 2004) and therefore is important when considering moral issues. Some have argued that this is absolutely fundamental as women think differently about morality than men (Gilligan 1982). However, rather than a separate thought process, gender provides an additional layer through which selfhood is experienced (Haste 1999). It is as a result of this that gender becomes significant both in terms of the way in which individuals view themselves but also the way in which they think about others. For these children gender played a clear part in categorising moral assumptions. There was a clear contrast between the male characters and the female characters. In respect of Mick and Guy, it was their maleness that increased their potential for unpredictable behaviour. Central to this seemed to be an innate self-centredness which governed their actions with others, which can be summed up as a lack of care or trustworthiness. However, in part, their behaviour also appeared to be related to notions of overt masculinity in which establishing a male identity, through characteristics such as aggressive, uncaring attitudes, was seen

as vital. It might be argued that the way in which the characters were portrayed on the recording led the children into their responses to them. Mick, for example, spoke about his day as involving

> chilling out with my mates. We sometimes hang about the shopping centre in town or in the burger bar on Queens Street. I haven't got a job right now, but I don't care and anyway I don't really want a job.

Here Mick reflects an attitude of not caring, but one that does not carry any sense of aggression or negativity to others, or reflect actions that might harm others in any way. It was notable, therefore, the extent to which the children read in these additional elements of Mick's character, drawing on personal stereotypes in establishing meaning. It is also worth stating that when this male view is considered in the wider context of the study as a whole, boys were often framed in the role of aggressor. Other research has also highlighted the connection between establishing a masculine identity and fights and male domination of certain spaces. Connolly (1998), for example, comments on how social capital can be gained from boys drawing on 'macho and misogynistic versions of masculinity' (Epstein, cited by Connolly 1998: 105). Indeed Connolly goes further to suggest that this behaviour encompasses language and attitudes drawn from the adult world. This overlap between adult male behaviour and child male behaviour does have consequences for the way in which actions come to be morally viewed by others. The contrast between the aggressive and uncaring attitudes of the male characters could not have been more different from the caring attitudes associated with the females, particularly Mary and Amelia. In relation to Mick one child wrote, '*[he] doesn't really care about anything or anyone*', in contrast to Mary who '*cares about herself [and] cares about her children*' and Amelia who was said to be '*kind and helpful and cares for the world*'. Here the positive moral associations with caring were continually reiterated.

Actual body

Body shape, including height, was one of the key attributes the children used to describe the characters. This is hardly surprising as comments in relation to children and the body are pervasive through popular discourses on, for example, healthy eating.[4] Terms that were used included: big, fat, tall, short, thin, small, all of which were connected with certain moral imperatives. For example being 'fat' or 'big' carried other negative connotations that were also linked to being a 'bad' person. Moral

points were also intertwined with the social presence that someone was ascribed through perceptions about their body; being big, fat and tall indicated a significant social presence, in contrast to someone who was seen as small.

For example, Amelia was one of the characters who was seen to be most likely to know right from wrong, and she was described as being '*friendly*' and '*kind*', in stark contrast to Mick, who was seen not to care and to have a poor understanding of right and wrong. A quarter of the children made reference to Amelia's body shape. However, not one of these related to her being fat and there were only four references to something being big (big teeth and big glasses). The majority of children instead referred to her being '*tall*' and or '*thin*', which reinforced Amelia as a socially significant contributor in a positive rather than negative way. This contrasted with Mick who, although receiving the same number of comments on body shape, had three quarters stating that he was '*fat*' or '*big*'. Not only did this mark him out as a highly visible social character but it was also noticeable that, when Mick was referred to as fat, this was linked to other negative comments such as, '*a cheat*', '*dumb*' and '*dirty*'. Guy was also seen as being big and fat, which marked him out, but as with Mick these comments had negative moral associations. Comments in relation to Jasmine provided the alternative view. More than any other character she was described as being small: '*small ears*', '*small nose*', '*being skinny*'. She was also defined by many of the children as someone who is very shy, lacks confidence and is clearly on the edge of social situations. It was also noticeable that Jasmine drew fewer statements about body size than anyone else, again reducing her significance as a social contributor. As well as body shape being a focus of attention, other fixed aspects of the body, particularly skin colour, were used to mark difference (see Chapter 6). However, even though such stereotypes can provide a starting point to shaping children's meaning (Rapport 1995), it is notable that the 'actual body' for children is flexible depending on whose eyes it is being viewed by. As will be discussed in relation to 'real life' in the next chapter, potential differences can be easily overlooked or re-classified as 'normal'. As one child said in relation to his friend's size, '*it doesn't mean a thing*'.

Styled body

The styled body has been a particular focus socially. Adults are quick to use clothing as a filter through which to form perceptions of childhood more generally. This can be seen in the debates in relation to the way

clothing can 'sexualise' children, or how a hoodie, for example, can be used to mark out a child who is likely to be antisocial (*The Guardian*, 14 May 2005); both perceptions carry particular moral connotations. The styled body, unlike the actual body, can be changed; the ability to choose how to define it reflects the identity of the individual, and the act of choice provides an element of self determination. Here, the major contrast drawn by the children was between being smart, presentable and morally 'good' (similar) and being scruffy, messy and morally 'bad' (different). This related to both clothing and hairstyles.

Hair was the characteristic that the children referred to most, with around half the children making some reference to it for each character. What was significant was the way in which hairstyles could be seen to relate to notions of similarity and difference, which in turn provided moral meaning. The descriptions of hair for all three of the female characters focused very much on different hair colour and whether the hair was '*long*' or '*short*', '*curly*' or '*frizzy*'. A few children described Mary as '*old*', with '*grey hair in a bun*'. Amelia was the most likely to have blonde hair, compared to Jasmine who was more likely to have brown. There was certainly something of the 'princess' or Barbie about Amelia, who was characterised as '*pretty*' and '*rich*', as opposed to Jasmine who was '*poor*'. Overall, however, the hairstyles ascribed to the morally aware female characters stressed normality and conformity, in contrast to the less morally stable men. Indeed, as the character's knowledge of right and wrong was seen to lessen, so their hairstyles became more and more overt and obvious. These ranged from the simply '*gelled*' and '*messy hair*' for Guy, to '*spiky*' and '*punk hair*' for Mick. Hair is a very obvious feature of any person and as such it can be clearly used to make a statement. What is interesting here is that this statement was also seen to reflect a moral element.

Clothing was another aspect of the styled body that was remarked upon. Amelia was seen in a range of clothing from, '*expensive*' to '*sporty*', and this included specific references to '*dresses*' and '*long white socks*'. The trendy nature of her clothes supported her characterisation as a social, friendly and confident person who was easily accepted by others. This contrasted with Jasmine, who was mostly described as wearing '*poor clothes*'. Indeed, seeing Jasmine in 'poor clothes' (with references to clothes being '*ripped*' or '*cheap*') was one of the most common ways for the children to describe her. This socially unacceptable style of clothing reflected and reinforced the ways the children saw Jasmine as a loner, someone on the outer rim of social interaction. However, even though Jasmine's clothes clearly marked her out as being different, this

was not translated into a definitively negative view of her moral positioning, unlike that of the male characters. Jasmine's difference was non-threatening, which, as will be seen in Chapter 6, ties very much into the image of a victim. This puts her in a very different category to Mick. Everything about Mick's clothing highlighted his position as being at the centre of social situations, a claim reinforced by the number of children that refer to him as being '*cool*'. Cool, as described by two of the children, Tim and Matt, is inherently linked with being a significant social actor: '*most of them are popular and to a certain extent they know what to wear and what to do and they're always in a crowd, always mixing with people*.' This visible social role also means, however, that Mick, a key social actor, potentially poses much more of a threat than a character such as Jasmine. This threat increases when put in the context of other aspects of his character, such as being a person who just '*doesn't care*'.

Mick's negative moral perception and '*don't care*' attitude was reflected in descriptions of his clothing as '*messy*'. '*Baggy trousers*', '*trainers*' and '*caps*' were also clothes associated with Mick. These demonstrate a very specific urban style that has developed in part with the aim of portraying a sense of difference. This can be seen in relation to the negative attitudes that have developed around young people wearing 'hoodies'.[5] De Casaro (2004) says that the element of 'grunge' style, which can be connected to Mick, represents difference by asserting a person's independence from other people's opinions. It reflects a broader view that the way we are seen impacts socially on the way we think about ourselves. Cohen reflects on this in relation to older people, but the parallels to the younger generation are also very clear, as in the way in which they present themselves and assert their 'selfhood'; it becomes a 'tenacious re-assertion of their individuality' (Cohen 2004). Hebdige (1979) also made clear that personal style can be used to reflect difference from the mainstream. In this way clothing and music are directed to making a social statement that at its heart is about being different (Muncie 2004). It is therefore not surprising that Mick is described in relation to aspects of difference, but it is also significant to note how these are clearly linked to moral values. Mick's style did create an ambiguity for the children, being seen as both cool and as a threat, as the children saw clear similarities between someone who was cool and someone who was also potentially a bully. In response to what Mick looked like, one child said '*cool, probably has earrings*'. Then to justify the reason why they thought Mick did not have a good sense of right and wrong, they wrote, '*he doesn't have much concern for others*'. Lack of concern, as will be

shown in the next chapter, colours the perception of whether someone is seen in positive or negative moral terms. This means that even though people may wear similar clothing, children are keen to sort them further through the application of additional moral considerations based on other perceptions about their character.

The complex relationship between clothing and perceived moral personality was highlighted most clearly in relation to Guy. His association with moral correctness increased when he was seen to be wearing a suit, '*he is very smart and knows what is good and bad*'. However, when his clothing was seen as more casual, '*jeans and a t-shirt*' or a '*football shirt*', so too was his adherence to right and wrong, '*he's living the way he wants to, not always the right way*'. The children clearly saw Guy's association with football as negative, linking it repeatedly to going to the pub and getting drunk. As one child said, '[he's] *always wearing a football top* [and he doesn't know the difference between right and wrong] *because he goes to the pub a lot and that makes you lose your money and get drunk*'. The fact that moral perceptions of Guy changed with his clothes shows the impact of what one wears on the children's formation of moral opinion.

References to make-up and jewellery were also used to indicate social presence and potential difference. Amelia, for example, was commented on for wearing make-up and having earrings. There was not one reference to Jasmine doing the same. Was this simply because Jasmine was poor, or not as pretty as Amelia, or was it because someone who does not have the same social presence would not wear make-up or jewellery? Surprisingly, it was Mick who stood out in relation to jewellery, with a number of children imagining him having an earring; however, this was not a positive statement but one that further identified Mick as different. The negative association here may be related to class, with comments on Mick referring to him as '*scummy*'. This may also reflect the fact that earrings have not traditionally been seen as male attire, a view that may have been magnified by the middle-class context of the research participants.[6] Glasses were also seen as a marker of difference. However, they were not associated specifically with either negative or positive moral connotations, but with characteristics that ranged from being '*fun*', '*kind*' and '*pretty*' to being '*geeky*', '*gangly*' and '*dorky*'.[7]

Performance

Statements about performance, which focused on behaviour relating to social interaction and belonging, also reflected the association of positive and negative moral connotations with themes of similarity and

difference. The positive statements were connected to improving and developing social relations. Amelia, for example, was associated with being '*friendly*' and '*good*'. Good not only referred to kindness but to doing what adults wanted and expected. Mary was characterised as being '*caring*' and '*kind*'. This selfless persona was caught up within the picture the children had of her as a mother figure. This was in contrast to the other three characters, where 'difference' indicated difficulties in their dealings with the social world. For Jasmine, as discussed earlier, it was her disconnection from the social world that marked her out as different. She was seen as being '*very shy*' and '*lonely*', which explains why she was not seen as fitting in.

However, this did not impact on her ability to determine right from wrong. Even though these attributes are negative, they were not seen as socially harmful or threatening to others. This is in stark contrast to the male characters, whose inability to recognise right and wrong was associated with a disregard for those around them. Guy's lack of care for others is described more in terms of his focus on himself. A number of the children saw Guy as a '*show-off*' and as '*arrogant*', a view on 'performance' that left them confused about how far to trust him. Part of the problem was that the children found it difficult to reconcile his desire to go to the pub with the fact he worked in a smart office, '*I don't know because he has a smart job but he goes to the pub and drinks a lot*'. Alcohol, as discussed in Chapter 6, carries negative moral connotations, which clearly influenced the children's views here. However, there was no need for Mick to be connected with a pub for him to be considered overtly threatening. He was considered to be '*lazy*' and '*un-caring*', attitudes that seemed to fuel the children's labelling of him as, a '*bully*', as '*rude*' and as a '*shoplifter*'. Such comments take us back to where we started this chapter and suggest that social relations are at the centre of shaping children's moral views of others. Positive social relations can reflect a perception of positive moral behaviour, whereas negative social relations or a lack of effort or desire on the part of the other to build social relations carries negative moral connotations. All of this draws from the overarching notions of similarity and difference.

Conclusion

The everyday nature of morality within children's lives is here expressed through their agency, as they seek to position themselves in the context of others, drawing on stereotypes to help bring shape and order

to their understanding. The centrality of social interaction in shaping moral meanings is highlighted, providing a basis to explore further children's moral agency. Through knowledge of what is and what is not acceptable, the individual establishes a sense of belonging, which can be furthered by doing what is 'right' but also by avoiding what is 'wrong'. This understanding is invaluable as children seek to navigate the complex paths of the social world within which they live, as they choose, build, negotiate, break and continue their relationships with others.

5
Negotiating Power Relations – The Self and Others

As the last chapter showed, morality is used by children as a means of filtering and understanding the social world around them. However, this chapter will move on from the five fictional characters and explore more directly the way in which children's moral understanding forms part of their everyday lives, as an expression of individual agency. It will continue to contextualise earlier discussions around the nature of morality and develop further the extent to which moral meaning must be seen as fluid, and tied to individual reflections on the self in the presence of others. It will continue to demonstrate the extent to which the process of self-identity is relevant in the shaping of moral codes through a closer consideration of belonging, and the way in which it is used by the children to help with reinforcing similarity, as well as to identify and avoid difference. However, to really develop this discussion and to further our understanding of children as social agents, it is important to recognise the role of power as an added dimension within children's perceptions of themselves in the context of others. Consequently it must be seen as a central feature of the way in which children develop moral attitudes and opinions as expressed in their daily lives. The chapter therefore looks at this issue by considering the self and others in the context of three different sets of power relations: mutuality, powerlessness and powerfulness.

The inclusion of power

Discussions of power amongst children are limited. Much of the work emanating from the social studies of childhood has focused more on the downward application of power by adults on to children (de Castro 2004). This can be seen in work on child abuse (Kirtzinger 1997;

Christensen 2000) as well as children in schools (Wood 1998b) and in the home (Hendrick 1997). These studies have engaged with the structural processes impacting on these constructions of power (Kirtzinger 1997), but have seemed more hesitant to recognise power as a definitive part of the internal-external dialectic at the centre of the individual's sense of self. Part of the reason for this limited investigation has been that the main focus of many of the studies within this area relates to the contrast between adulthood and childhood (Mayall 2002). This has seen a particular focus on the way in which adults may use their power over children, rather than allowing an opportunity to consider power from the child's perspective, particularly between children themselves. Not acknowledging this aspect of social relationships has a fundamental impact on the way in which we understand children and childhood.

The work of Lukes, which is not written with direct reference to children, does however acknowledge the centrality of power to any consideration of individual interaction within the social world. As he writes:

> Social life can only properly be understood as an interplay of power and structure, a web of possibilities for agents, whose nature is both active and structured, to make choices and pursue strategies within given limits, which in consequence expand and contract over time (Lukes 2005: 68).

If power is such a central aspect of social agency, then it needs to be looked at as a horizontal process as well as a vertical one. This then demands that power must also be seen as one of those filters that shape and form perceptions of self. Fingerson reflects on this as she draws from Foucault (1977) the suggestion that the body is the primary site for negotiated power:

> Power is negotiated through relationships, language and disciplinary practices rather than being an essential element that a person, group or gender does or does not possess. Power is a fundamental aspect of all social interaction (Fingerson 2005: 92).

Indeed, as this extract firmly suggests, power is not something that is the preserve of a few but something that pervades all social interaction. Fingerson (2005) demonstrated the horizontal realities of power in the everyday lives of young people aged between 10 and 18 years,

showing how children as social agents negotiate issues of the body in relation to the menstrual cycle. In this context, power shapes how the children position themselves in relation to others. For example, a lack of knowledge about menstruation could reduce boys to a position of powerlessness, something that would be recognised and exploited by girls. De Castro (2004), working with the same age group, similarly presents the peer-on-peer realities of power and how the framing of one's own identity is achieved through assessing the power of others in relation to similarity and difference. This work demonstrates that young people's discourses on belonging and the positioning of the 'other' are interconnected with feelings of power. However, power is not something that applies only to older children. Young children have also been shown to recognise and interact with notions of power in a subtle and complex way (Corsaro 1985; Connolly 1998; Connolly 2004[1]), although such studies have generally considered the vertical use of power.

What became clear amongst the children at St Stephens is that by including a focus on power it is possible to understand better children's perception of themselves and others within the continuing discourse on similarity and difference, with significant implications for the development of moral meanings. In order to link the notion of the body with the process of establishing identities and morality, power will be looked at from three different angles; mutuality, powerlessness and powerfulness. Each of these three categories will be considered in turn and will be further subdivided to 'the other' and 'the self'. The section on 'the other' provides a means through which to consider the way in which the children perceive others in the context of that aspect of power. The section on 'the self', by contrast, looks at the way in which the individual responds to the internal realisation of the power they hold, which it must be noted is not fixed but changes between different social settings. What emerges is the extent to which perception of similarity and difference has a significant impact on the moral assessments that form part of everyday interaction. For example, a desire for similarity can result in a child doing something they know to be 'wrong', whereas difference, in the form of greater power, can see children accepting acts as morally 'right' rather than questioning those individuals perceived to be more powerful. The rest of the chapter investigates in more detail the nature of these social processes and the extent to which they reflect and impact on moral decision-making.

Mutuality

Mutuality is about equality within relationships. It becomes clear that such relationships, displayed markedly within peer friendships, are also replicated with key adults such as parents, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. The extent to which a mutual relationship is important should not be underestimated as it provides the basis for that sense of sameness, and thus belonging, which was crucial to the children in their developing sense of who they were in the context of those around them.

The mutual other – belonging

The 'mutual other' sees a focus on behaviour that reinforces belonging through actions that re-affirm a desire to build and maintain positive social relations. If this sense of mutuality comes to be perceived by both parties it results in a special relationship of trust and understanding. The precious nature of such a relationship is significant, and explains why individuals are so keen to find, achieve and hold on to it, to the extent that it may shape their moral opinions. This is expressed particularly keenly in children's peer friendships.

Friends are important allies in helping the individual child negotiate the challenges of the social world. It is through such relationships, for example in schools (Pollard and Filler 1999), that, it has been argued, children 'are likely to foster a feeling of belonging and a sense of identity' (Rubin cited in Pollard 1985: 46). Such a position, it may be also be argued, is too categorical in its exclusion of other relationships that impact on children's lives; however, the point is that friendship is a hugely significant part of the development of self-identity. Children's friendships therefore reflect that need to re-affirm their conception of themselves in light of the multitude of others who inhabit their social worlds. Using their perception of similarity and difference, children are able to start sorting who is and who is not a possible friend.

Building a friendship

Looking at this process in more depth one can start to consider the extent to which these friendships shape moral meanings. For friendship is not automatic amongst peers. This challenges adult perceptions that children can simply be lumped together as potential friends. The following discussion shows the way in which children will sort people through searching for similarities, as the first step in creating a friendship. The boys were asked what sort of person they would talk to:

Matt *A friend*
Tim *Or somebody who doesn't talk about rubbish, like someone who like talks about the same things that you like, say if they like football and you like football. You don't know them but you talk to them.*
SF *Got the same interests?*
Matt *Yeah got the same interests*
SF *How would you know that?*
Tim *You'd like try and make friends*
Matt *You'd sort of like give them a compliment and then start off a conversation*
Tim *Like going to a new school. Even though quite a few of my friends are going, you're going to make more friends, you might just ask them a few questions like what hobbies do you have, what interests*
Matt *Also if they were playing a game you could join in and then you sort of find out*
Tim *Like if I saw someone wearing a Chelsea shirt I'd talk to them about football, Chelsea*

The boys here identify a number of subtle techniques through which to assess whether someone is 'similar' and worth having as a friend. Matt suggests that you might '*give them a compliment*'. In so doing he is opening himself up to see whether this new person will respond mutually. If the compliment is not returned, Matt need not pursue the relationship any further. Tim identifies a more direct route to testing similarity. He proposes the use of questions, '*you might just ask them a few questions*'; this would then put him in a position to contrast the interests of the other person with his own, and thus reach a conclusion on sameness. However, the techniques do not stop there. For the boys also demonstrate that similarity can be proved practically as well as visually or verbally. Matt suggests that you might invite someone to join in a game. This would in itself be an opportunity for that individual to prove themselves, as Matt says, by assessing their performance in the game; '*you sort of find out*' whether they are suitable candidates for friendship. The final technique is that of observation, through which similarity might be demonstrated by appearance (themes considered in the previous chapter). Here a football shirt is, for one of the boys, a sign of similarity. However, even though an element of similarity is established for the boys, this did not mean that these 'others' had their complete trust.

Tim *I wouldn't like get really close to them, you could be talking to them about football or something but they might not be very nice people.*
Matt *You just don't know, if you're talking to them about one thing you just don't know, they could be really horrible about another thing.*
Tim *Say if you mention something …*
Matt *Be really cautious*
SF *Until you know them well?*
T&M *Yeah*
Tim *If you make friends with them you start going nearer to them, then you know what they're like*

Real friendship is something that Tim suggests only develops over time, as individuals develop trust in one another. So, even if an element of similarity is discovered you still have to be '*cautious*'. What the boys demonstrate in both extracts is that the realisations of similarities can create a foundation of mutual respect from which 'others' can be invited to belong and from which a relationship may build.

The making of good friends

By definition a friend, therefore, as well as being '*loyal and kind*' was someone with whom children wanted to share social space. This then provided an opportunity to spend time with one another and particularly share experiences through talking but also by being prepared to listen. The process of sharing with one another was a considered step as the children sought to identify actual friends from acquaintances. It is through this process of quality control, in the context of similarity, that children, with time, are prepared to deepen a friendship and learn to trust others, as defined by the extent to which the friend is seen to have a good understanding and knowledge of them as an individual. This is summed up by Emmy, who says that her friends

> *would be understanding, they're would be like you, most people that I am friends with are quite like me, not that our eyes are the same colour or anything, they're like me, they kind of think like me, they're like basically the same people.*

However, it is important to note that this desire for this quality of friendship, based around understanding, was not something that was unique

to the girls. Gilligan (1982) argues in relation to the broader topic of individual 'rights' that boys are not engaged with the sentimentalities and sharing involved in the caring relationships that girls have. However, as Thorne (1993) points out, one needs to be cautious about being too categoric about gender differences. She argues that research has been guilty of looking to promote gender difference rather than to show similarity. This focus has resulted, she suggests, in a loss of subtlety that has led to an inability for researchers to effectively analyse the complexities of social interaction. In keeping with such findings, this research found that intimate friendship relations were just as important to boys as they were to girls. They were just expressed in different ways. For example, a girl might express the importance of her friendships by crying if she '*broke up*' with a friend, whereas a boy might express his friendship by saying he would fight to defend his friend. It is only within the context of the mutual perception of the self, vis-à-vis others, that true friendship can arise, as it is only when the other is seen on this equal level that trust, closeness and personal understanding can be fostered. All of this, as will be seen, has implications for moral growth within what is a shared social world.

The mutual self

Having recognised what the children were looking for in others, one must then look at how that impacted on their sense of self. How did their desire to be part of a mutual relationship impact on the way in which they developed and shaped moral meanings within interaction?

Being one of the crowd

The children at St Stephens were aware that difference could easily be established and, once linked to an individual, it could result in exclusion and not the mutual relationship that they desired. It was therefore important that on a broader scale, children were seen to fit in. One way of doing this was by portraying oneself as normal or average. James (1993) talks about the importance of 'conforming', the aim of not standing out. This perception of equality in relationships is crucial to the concept of mutuality, as shown in the following extract, which highlights the children's desires not to be seen as 'different' in front of their peers. The discussion arose in response to children's feelings about being asked to do something by their teachers:

Andy *At swimming I hate it because I can't do breaststroke.*
Liam *I don't like it because sometimes in PE, like we have to do on the mats, we have to do all these certain things, like ballerinas we all like ohh (annoyed)*
Andy *I love gym*
Liam *It's really like embarrassing like to everyone else*
Tim *We have to show people*
Ali *Sometimes we have to show people*
Andy *I don't like it when there is something that I can't do and I have to show it at the front of the class and I make a total embarrassment*
Ali *Some of the teachers make you do it when you don't like it and it's really embarrassing because you can't do it. Because you have to show people something, what if we don't . . .*
Andy *like it*
Liam *When we're doing this game that we've made up he [the teacher] always goes easy, not on Ali because she's like good at sports, but on all the other girls. He [the teacher] throws the ball at us trying to get us out and then, he throws it the other way, just to get us out*
Andy *We should all be treated the same*

A strong theme in the above extract is standing out for not being good at something. Indeed, Andy talks of the '*total embarrassment*' that failing can result in. It is important to note that this embarrassment stems from failing to perform in front of their peers, '*it's like really embarrassing, like to everyone else*', says Liam. It is not clear whether Liam is referring to the embarrassment of a friend failing in general, or to the particular embarrassment his friends might face if they saw him fail, whatever way he has cleverly protected his own self image from the embarrassment of not succeeding. What is also interesting is that all these examples relate to sport. It suggests that children do not want to be seen to fail in relation to sport because this results in a perception of a failed body, and such a negative view of the body, as was discussed earlier, results in potential social difference. Liam further indicates this when he talks of how annoying it is if the teacher makes it easy for the girls but hard for the boys, with the result that some boys will be out of the game before the girls. This he considers will reflect badly on their male image. Being seen as different can impact on the way they are perceived by others and consequently by themselves. The best way to

provide a level of protection against being seen as different is therefore to be seen the same as everyone else. This is summed up in the final statement '*we should all be treated the same*'. It also carries moral significance for one's ability to navigate the social world more easily if one is not seen to stand out. This is demonstrated explicitly by Connolly (1998) in the context of race, where perceptions of 'difference' from teachers resulted in negative moral stigma being attached to the actions of black boys, whose behaviour was consistently viewed as 'aggressive and troublesome' (Connolly 1998: 119).

Consent – 'don't worry it didn't really hurt'

Another important aspect of friendship was seen through the use of consent to physical contact. It was only when the children felt that they were being respected within the context of a mutual relationship that consent applied. This raises a number of very important questions about the way in which the individual sees their body, and how this impacts on the moral meaning ascribed to an act of physical contact. For example, the idea of a friend being close by, even touching, made the children feel pleased:

SF	*So how would you feel if they [your friend] came [within a metre of you]?*
Emmy	*Fine, absolutely fine*
Nic	*Yeah*
SF	*And what about if they came [right up close]?*
Emmy	*Still wouldn't bother me*
Nic	*I'd feel glad really*

Even the boys talked about friendship in relation to physical closeness. Here Tom explains that someone coming close to him immediately '*means they are a very good friend. They'd feel more happy wouldn't they?*'.

Games also proved to be a means through which sameness is established and mutuality could be expressed in relation to the acceptance of physical contact. This was both in terms of having one's own personal space invaded, but also invading others':

Becky	*You have to hurt someone if you're playing squash.*
Eli	*Or murder slapsies when they can't move and you go and whack them*
SF	*Oh, and is that alright?*
Eli	*Yes*

Becky *Yes*
SF *Why?*
Becky *Because if they know the game then they know what's going to happen, if they're going to be slapped really hard and they wouldn't play it if they didn't know the game so (little laugh) I didn't know the game and I got hit*

To Becky, the moral acceptability of physical contact is provided through consent, which is far more likely to be acknowledged when there is a perception of mutuality. Indeed, Becky makes it clear that one's positioning in time and space provides the implicit basis of acceptance. However, the idea that simply placing oneself within a space at a particular time justifies physical contact was qualified by two of the older boys in relation to sport. Both boys played a lot of sport but it was only to those they considered friends, or on a wider scale, equals, that consent for physical contact was automatically given:

Tim *Or you could always in something like sport they could crash into you, but then they might be your friends. Like I play for Linton Youth and Matt plays for Linton Lions so we can play each other and Matt bangs into me and I bang into him, we won't be annoyed with each other*
SF *Why is it okay though?*
Tim *One they're your friends and two its sport and football's quite physical and people are coming in with challenges and you know if one's mistimed it, it might take you out*
Matt *Usually it's not on purpose and if it was like your friends then obviously it's not on purpose*
Tim *Unless it was on purpose, but usually it's not, they're just attempting to win the ball and they might just miss …*
SF *Can you tell when it's on purpose?*
M&T *Yeah*
Tim *Yeah you can tell by their face. Like once when I was playing I saw this guy and one of our players was running down the line and we saw his face and it was really like that, and he was really trying to stamp on him. And one tried to do it on me as well, you could just see their face and the way they come in*

What this discussion shows is that allowing physical closeness and even at times rough physical contact is something that is special to mutual relationships. Such a relationship brings with it a level of consent

that allows privileged contact. However, when the interaction moves away from mutuality, as it does at the end of this extract, then it has different implications. The desire for power to be exerted over the 'self', as the act described above suggests, is a recurring theme that marks the separation between behaviour that is 'okay' and 'right' and what is unacceptable and 'wrong'. These themes clearly have wider implications for debates around smacking, child abuse and child exploitation: as a result they will be returned to in the following chapter.

Preserving friendship – the power of peers

A mutual relationship and the equality it represents paves the way for establishing closeness, which is also linked to feelings of trust and security and a sense of belonging. It is, therefore, as suggested earlier, not surprising that children want such a relationship. This does, however, have a range of moral implications and, as will be shown, can lead children to behave in ways that they would normally avoid if it were not for the desire to hold on to a mutual relationship. The influence on children by other children to behave in such ways is commonly termed 'peer pressure'. However, the connotations that this phrase has can be misleading.

At times, it is used to suggest some kind of physical threat; however, it is the important social statement of belonging, through being and having a friend, that provides the pressure on the individual to maintain a relationship with others.

Anna expresses the difficulties this causes within daily social relations:

Anna *Well I've sort of been in it but um, it's just when friends have broken up and loads of people are trying to make me take sides. I really don't want to take sides because I want to be friends with everybody. But if I be friends with everybody someone…*
Kate *doesn't like you*

The result is that children are continuously caught up in situations where they have to try and work out how to negotiate their way through moral dilemmas so that they do not lose their friends. When this dilemma moves into a moral domain then the implications can result in children being persuaded to do things that they would not otherwise have done, simply in order to fit in:

Mike *These people down the street were friends with me but they all like rode their bikes down this big lot of stairs and they asked me to do it and I said no, because it looked . . . it wasn't stupid it was just a lot of stairs. And I said no and then they just laughed at me. So I eventually did it*

SF *How did it make you feel?*

Mike *It made me feel not very good about myself, because I was being teased and stuff*

SF *So why did you do it in the end?*

Mike *If I wanted to knock for them or something they'd just say, they didn't want to come out and play with me and anything*

Mike knew that unless he did what his friends wanted he would be marked out as different and would consequently no longer belong. He was therefore persuaded to follow a strategic course of action that would ensure that these others would remain his friends, so if he '*knocked for them*' in the future, they would be willing to come out and play. In completing the task set, he confirmed himself as an equal and removed any potential for him to be seen as different. By proving himself he ensured that he was accepted as part of the group. As another child said, there are many situations in which they could be asked to do something wrong in order '*to prove yourself*'. The awkward balance that children are constantly being asked to strike is illustrated by another example in which Clara chose to disobey her friends' commands:

Clara *Yeah my friends found a locker key at the swimming pool and they said open it and see what's in there*

SF *So how did you react?*

Clara *I said I don't want to do it because I'd be the one who gets into trouble*

SF *Did they put pressure on you?*

Clara *Yeah*

SF *How?*

Clara *They were just saying, they were pushing me or telling me to unlock it and, and I said I didn't want to do that.*

SF *Were they your age?*

Clara *Just a bit older*

SF *So what happened?*

Clara *They just walked off in a strop and they didn't talk to me.*
SF *Do they talk to you now?*
Clara *No*
SF *All because of that?*
Clara *Yeah*

Here the consequences of not giving into this pressure are made clear. Clara's 'friends' first asked her to do something that was 'wrong' and then they turned to physical acts of intimidation in order to 'encourage' her. Not acquiescing to their demands resulted in Clara being definitively cut out of the group – '*they just walked off*'. They have not talked since.

The possibility of being excluded was very real to all the children. Other children talked of how they could be barred from a game for refusing to act as their peers directed, '*they will just kick you out of the game and then you won't have anyone else to play with*'.

Dares were a common activity amongst the children and Nat and Jim show below how closely this too is linked to maintaining friendships and reinforcing belonging. What is interesting about dare games is that they invite the individual to make a decision about remaining on an equal level or being demoted. This reveals that even though there is a presumed sense of equality within the group, the group is constantly reinforcing and shaping identities by questioning its members' belonging. By asking each other to do dares the group monitors and regulates its collective identity and the moral boundaries of the group. The tasks that are set often involve the individual doing something they might, when looked at objectively, see as 'wrong'. What the individual is then forced to do is to assess whether other members would see the act as so wrong that they would not do it either. Therefore, by refusing, a sense of equality might in this case be retained. However, it is often much easier to accept a dare. This is a guaranteed way of confirming your place within the group and achieving social capital. In the following extract, Jim shows his determination not to be pushed into doing something that he knows is wrong. However, there is a limit and at the end of the extract Jim explains what kind of pressure would be needed if he were to give in:

SF *Okay, if you knew something was wrong would there still be occasions when you'd do it?*
J&N *Yeah*

Nat *Say I'm with my friends and their daring me to do it and they started insulting me and calling me a chicken I would do it, because I don't want to lose friends. A lot of my friends, well people I've hung out with in the park, have said, if you don't like … do something, that's really naughty you can't ever play with us again. I'd really try to see if I could do it, I would go to lots of trouble*

In this extract Nat and Jim discuss the pressures that they could face. Nat talks of how he would do a dare if it meant maintaining his friendships and not losing his social status. He would even go to '*lots of trouble*' to maintain these ties.

Laura also demonstrates how dares can lead you to do something that you would not normally do, even something that is 'wrong':

SF *Are there certain things that might be wrong but you'd do them anyway*

Emma *If someone dared you to do them*

Laura *If it was a good dare, not if it was a bad dare and it was a bully or someone that asked you then of course that would be force. But if it was your friends then just little bit, like show your knickers or like that, but then you don't have to do it or it doesn't really matter if you do it because it is only your friends who have dared you to do it*

Dares provide a means of reinforcing a sense of similarity and belonging. Within this context children are constantly making judgements and decisions that see them weighing up competing pressures, such as their personal moral code, with the need to demonstrate those ties of friendship. For some, as with Laura, friendship provided a safe context in which to refuse a dare. However, Toby, in a separate conversation, suggests that it is harder to turn down a good friend than a simple acquaintance. Toby said: '*if they are your friends but they're not like really badly your friends then you might say no*', implying that if they were good friends he would be more likely to say 'yes'.

This awareness of the consequences of not maintaining the ties of friendship means that children do, at times, have to balance maintaining friendships with doing something that they know is wrong. At other times this desire to belong and to please one's friends means that the morality of the act itself can be hard to define, such that it is not clear to the child whether the action is right or wrong. As commented on earlier, different groups have different ambitions and in following the shared

aims of the group the individual's moral perception may be heavily influenced by the nature of those relationships. In the following extract Toby comments on how the relationship with his friends, his desire to belong and to have fun, both individually and collectively, affects the way he thinks about acts as right and wrong. Here Toby had been asked whether throwing a stone through a window would be something that was wrong:

Toby *At the time when I was close to my friends I would probably not know that it was wrong, because I was probably just having fun with them, you're having a laugh and then you start doing it until something bad happens when you realise its wrong*
Alex *But why don't you stop yourself?*
Toby *I think I would try to, but then suddenly they're all like come on Toby (imitating an encouraging and friendly tone)*

At the opening of this extract Toby reflects how hard it is, when one is with friends, to recognise an act as wrong, as opposed to having some fun. Within the context of the desire to maintain mutual relationships it is clear that the children take strategic decisions to behave in ways to please their friends. The fuzzy nature of right and wrong means that, as with Toby, situations may well arise where they are caught up in an action which they know to be wrong, but which, amongst the group, brings pleasure through reinforcing a sense of belonging. It is only when those social constraints around him are removed that Toby agrees he would be able to see the act for what it is.

Powerlessness

As suggested earlier in this chapter, notions of 'difference' can be divided between indications of 'difference' due to weakness or due to strength. This section seeks to explore the former, and to consider the implications of 'difference' based on a lack of power. It becomes clear that the children are very aware of the negative social connotations of being seen as powerless. It is therefore in their interests to do what they can to avoid such a label through seeking to assert some sense of similarity to those around them, even if this means exploiting fluid moral boundaries. All the children had at some stage been in a position of powerlessness, from which they had to negotiate a way of restoring their sense of self to a recognised and accepted level of belonging. For some this was harder than others.

The powerless other

Understanding the powerless other is important, as it is through considering the attributes of difference ascribed to powerlessness that one is increasingly aware of those that may be characterised as a 'suitable' victim. A common theme here is the extent to which the powerless other is an outsider, marked by their social isolation and being the 'odd one out'. It is directly that sense of limited or restricted social protection, as a result of a lack of similarity, that allows the exploitation of difference through a focus on what you wear, how you look and how good you are at joining in.

Joining in

A characteristic of the 'powerless other' is of someone who plays a marginal role in general social interaction. This was demonstrated in Chapter 4 in relation to the fictional character Jasmine, who was commonly seen as '*shy*' and '*lonely*' and '*keeping herself to herself*'. It was, in part, the perception that Jasmine would not join in that marked her out as 'different'. In Jasmine's case this 'difference' resulted in her being seen as vulnerable and, therefore, lacking power. The following extract sums up the importance of encouraging those who might be on the perimeters of social interaction to join in, thus challenging any notion of 'difference' and the subsequent threat of being bullied:

Tim *You might let them play in sports games, and then they might get involved in it and then they could be doing things like, then they might join rugby and football and get fitter and stronger and that bully might not always pick on them*

Matt *If you let them join in then they will sort of like be able to learn more, if you know what I mean?*

Tim *And then they're running around getting a lot, lot fitter than if they were sitting on the side playing chess or something*

Here the boys are considering how someone who is 'different' in the first place might establish themselves and show that they do belong. In order to avoid the threat of being bullied the boys identify a course of action through which the individual not only grows physically but also socially. Joining in with sport, the boys suggest, will increase the individual's fitness, but it will also allow them to '*learn*'; both will then help them to avoid being bullied. However, to suggest that it is important simply for those who may demonstrate some physical weakness to

join in is not the complete story. With the character Jasmine, her difference and subsequent lack of power stemmed from her limited social interaction, rather than from any other overt perception of 'difference'. Indeed, this is a position that many children find themselves in. There is no obvious 'difference' about them, but if they do not establish themselves socially within a new space then a 'difference' may be found, which results in them being effectively barred from belonging. Being seen to join in is therefore important for all, as a means of building social relationships and navigating social space. It is not necessarily proving oneself at sport that helps, even though being good at sport may add to social status; it is simply the willingness to join in that matters, as Tim and Matt suggest:

SF *Does it help you get on with other people if you're good at sport?*
Tim *Not if you're good, if you join in*
Matt *Join in, you don't necessarily have to be good but as long as you join in*
Tim *You might not in football get the ball all the time, but you're running around enjoying yourself, and then let's say if you do happen to score a goal then you're pleased*

Being seen to join in carries power in itself. It demonstrates first and foremost that you have a network around you, friends that can stand up for you if required. However, it also provides a forum through which individual children can demonstrate their skills, through which they can potentially attain greater social capital. Not joining in therefore results in a lack of power for two reasons. It demonstrates that the individual is not part of a larger social group and it does not provide any means through which the individual can rise in the social hierarchy. It is the realisation of this that leaves those who are seen as not 'joining in' vulnerable and potentially 'different'.

The way you look

As indicated above being powerless was characterised as nervousness about social interaction, reflected through being shy, lonely and small. The previous chapter noted the connection between these characteristics and 'victims'. The following perceptive conversation not only identifies the impact of being considered different and weak, it also shows how this classification is clearly linked to bodily features, which for some provide justifiable targets for attack:

Amy *Sticks and stones really, really do hurt but names – like, say if I went up to Cas and said I don't like you because you have got different coloured hair to me or different coloured skin, say I went up to any coloured person and said I don't like you because you're not my colour you're not like me so I'm not going to play with you. If I was that person I would be really, really upset. I'd think I wish I was that colour now because it really does hurt you*

Cas *If you went up to somebody and said you've got different colour eyes to me, wow, nobody cares but then you think oh I wish I was that person*

Amy *Normally, though, they don't do things about the eye colour they do it about the hair colour now or colour skin*

Cas *Yeah, you can't just go up to somebody and go you've got spots on your face, nobody cares if they've got spots on their face*

Amy *I've got a friend who's really, really spotty and someone went up to her and called her pizza and things like that cos she had so many spots*

SF *How old was she?*

Amy *She was 14 so she can stand up for herself but she's really spotty and this other girl who was around 13 came up to her and goes pizza, you're a pizza. And I've got another friends whose mum's around 53 and just had another kid, someone went up to her and said you're scum you know, you're mum's just had another kid at that age*

Cas *People have kids at any age*

Amy *And teenagers think that they can just go and pick on younger people because they're younger. And, say, if they were in year 7 and I was year 6, they would think they're better than me because they're in a different higher school to me, and even though it's only a year it's secondary school to primary school*

SF *Does that make a big difference?*

Cas *They think they're the best*

Amy *It doesn't make a big difference to us*

Cas *And some people pick on people about like, um, there's a person who's just come from somewhere, Ahmed comes from somewhere like Pakistan or something like that and people make fun of them, going you're a Paki or something like that …*

Amy *You're chocolate face or something*

SF *What people here do that?*

Amy *No, but there's people by the park, they're quite scummy up there, they go look at your face you're all brown*

Cas *Ahmed and he's got like two sisters and a mum and they come from like some other country and they go and moan at them because they're from a different country, nobody cares that they're from a different country, oh wow you are from England*

Throughout this conversation the girls attest to the fact that visible characteristics, including skin, size and age, are used as the means to signify difference. They also identify the source of the attack as groups who '*don't know any better*'. Such comments again seem to draw on the class background of the participants. Amy makes it a clear class issue when she describes the perpetrators of the racist attacks on her friend as being '*scummy*'. Negative moral characteristics are linked to a lack of care, for one's physical presentation is a repetitive sociological theme. Dick Hebdige points to this in his work on punks in the 1970s. What this work highlighted was how this group's desire to react against middle-class values saw them adopting 'cheap trashy fabrics', with 'nasty colours long discarded by the quality end of the fashion industry' for their clothes (Hebdige 1979: 107). It is a continuing association between social class, moral behaviour and difference that is being reflected here.

Racism

As touched on in Amy and Cas's conversation above, the colour of one's skin is potentially a mark of difference. Even though racism was not seen to be a problem within the school by the head teacher, it was certainly something that the children were aware of both inside and outside school. Their awareness reflected both the harm it causes and how it can be used against others. In the following discussion the children were planning their play (as part of their discussion group activity) and thinking how wrong behaviour could be demonstrated:

Mike *Ask them to steal the eggs and then use them to throw at the shop*

Emmy *Could be like somebody who's racist because they don't like the people who run it because they are a different colour*

SF *Does that happen often?*

Rob *Yeah yeah*

Evan *People who are racist, they're not nice. It happened down my road . . .*

Emmy *Black and white people are the same really because they have only got different colour skin it's not like they've got, it doesn't mean that they have got, like horrible lurgies. That's what some people think but they don't really*

Mike *With my stepdad he was on a Tube, and I think it was because he was Jewish or something and a load of boys bigger than him, about five of them just came on the Tube and beat him up and he's got moulded teeth now because of it. I'm not sure why they actually did it to him but I think it's just because they felt like it, but they really hurt him*

Ryan *It happened to my friend when we were … some time in year 3 or 4*

Emmy *Who?*

Ryan *Claire. We were sitting in the dining room table and some people were asking Simon why he had a birthmark near his eye and then someone shouted out, look at Claire she is one big birthmark because of her different coloured skin, because it was the same colour as Simon's birthmark*

SF *Does it happen at school quite a lot?*

Ryan *It used to happen, cos usually people who came from different countries, they kept on leaving the school because people were making fun of them*

Emmy *No but it was mostly … it was the old year 6 boys like Jim Lane and …*

Mike *George Clark pushed my sister's neck up against a rusty …*

This discussion shows the varied nature of racism and the children's awareness of it, from singling out a shop because the owner is of a different ethnicity, to racial attacks on trains, to name-calling at school. It is worrying that the only reason why Ryan says that this kind of thing was not seen as common at school was not because people had recognised the impact of it but because there was a lack of opportunity. However, even though this behaviour was accredited to children who had now left the school, this did not mean that racist behaviour at school had ceased; rather it continued under the radar of staff, as Harry's audio diary showed:

Have you seen anyone else do anything wrong today? *Yes.* **Where did you see it?** *At school.* **Who was it (describe them)?**

His name was Alan Hardy, he's a little bit chubby, um, you can't really describe his hair colour because its hard to tell. But he's in the school council and he's quite well known at our school.

> *He's been singing this sort of ah, rude and insulting song its like ah, bling, bling, everybody sing, sing, this is the Paki rap, their ain't no black in the Union Jack,*[2] *so send those Pakis back. And I think that's really insulting on the black people and pakistanians or whoever.*
>
> **How do I know this is wrong?** *Well because it's insulting black people and pakistanians, or whatever you call them.*
>
> **Would you ever do this?** *I might do it say to a teacher, I won't actually sing it out loud like he does, like [for] popularity.*

Harry is particularly critical of this boy, who he refers to earlier in his report as '*well known*', because he believes that the only reason he sings it out loud is to try and achieve some kind of status or, as he says, '*popularity*'.

The last two sections demonstrate the dangerous nature of difference, and how a misplaced desire for social capital may impact on the moral meanings attached to actions, so that in order to support their *own* sense of belonging and identity children may seek to attack and exclude others.[3] We now extend this discussion by looking at how the internalisation of powerlessness might impact on the self and the subsequent construction of moral meanings.

The powerless self

The internalisation of those perceptions of powerlessness in others, unsurprisingly has a marked impact on a child's sense of self:

> Ed *When I was in my reception they all used to call me Lanky, all the people in year 6, and I got really annoyed so I told my mum and they got told off and they stopped.*
> SF *How did it make you feel?*
> Ed *I didn't want to go to school, every time my mum said, go on it's time to go to school I said I don't want to go*

This is not a unique response to a child having to negotiate their physical body in light of different social influences and the result was that Ed lost his social confidence and did not want to return to that arena. A Save the Children video (Save the Children, n.d.) on bullying highlights what happens if children are not able to redress the balance of being seen as different. One contributor's reflections on bullying summed this up: 'it made me feel very lonely and made me think and wonder, are these things they're saying true? Am I just completely

worthless?' (ibid.). The individual begins to question his or her place within the social world and it is therefore not surprising that they seek ways through which to re-establish their position. The ways in which they do this are highlighted in the rest of this section. What becomes clear is that children are prepared to employ a far more flexible notion of morality if it means that they are perceived as belonging.

Climbing up the ladder: a bid for equality

As suggested above, the 'powerless other' was seen as different, opening the child up to personal attacks that exaggerated that difference. As the following section demonstrates, it was very important for the children to avoid being categorised in this way. They sought to find ways through which they could neutralise any potential perceptions of difference, so that they could be seen to fit in. In order to do this the children needed to adopt a flexible moral approach. This can initially be seen in the way in which children responded to friendship disputes, where they depart from the themes of caring and being kind, discussed earlier, in order to redress an imbalance in which they recognise a sense of powerlessness. James (1999) comments on how friendship-naming practices can be an important power issue, as can be seen in the following example. Cara establishes some power over Adam when she does not name him as a best friend; Adam then has to work out how to bring Cara back down to his level.

Cara	*I am very friendly, my best friends are Erin, Laura and Mary . . .*
Adam	*Why didn't you pick me?*
Cara	*And my best food is sweets*
Adam	*Why didn't you pick me then?*
SF	*Do you think that was a good description of Cara?*
(Laugh)	
Adam	*Well I find her sometimes annoying [and] I know who are my friends, they came to my party, did I invite you (turning to face Cara)? No. You can come next year*

Adam equalises the relationship and restores his sense of self-esteem through telling Cara that he knew who his friends were because they came to his party and she was not one of them. Such verbal jousting was a common feature of the school day and such disputes were relatively quickly addressed, but in order to do it, Adam had to resort to a moral position that allowed him to belittle Cara and to challenge her notions of belonging. But what Adam skilfully allows for is the potential

to reinstate their friendship, by saying in relation to his party, '*you can come next year*'.

However, when the powerlessness was based on something more fundamental, such as physical size, then individuals had to do more in order to re-establish a sense of equality with those around them, to the point where they ignored or reconstituted boundaries around what behaviour was considered 'right' and 'wrong'. Lacking size can leave the individual in a situation where they feel that they lack power. A common theme for those who faced challenges to their personhood through a lack of size was the need to establish other attributes that could stop them from being seen as powerless, and promoting themselves as equals. One such attribute was to make people laugh. For example, Steve was much smaller than the other boys in his class and for this reason he stood apart. His lack of size was something that resulted in him being particularly sensitive to potential vulnerabilities. He said in relation to another member of his class, '*he goes Steve do this, do that, do that, do that. Sometimes he goes I'm going to bog wash you. He blackmails me doesn't he?*'. He also talked of being '*bogwashed*' at secondary school and having his dinner money taken. However, he sought to protect his place amongst his classmates by promoting himself as a comedian. When describing himself he said he was '*funny*', '*silly*', '*the class clown*'. Steve recognised the social value in making people laugh, and despite the fact that he was frequently told off by teachers, he was willing to draw on this in order to define his social position. Jack, like Steve, was smaller than his peers, and he suffered from Asperger's Syndrome. In Jack's case this meant that he was visibly behind his peers both academically and in the playground. Jack recognised this difference and, like Steve, sought to position himself amongst his peers by telling jokes. This need to make people laugh was a driving force in Jack's life and provided him with a means of trying to establish some sense of equality with his peers. However, what the following extract demonstrates is that in this desire to be accepted, Jack is quite prepared to do things that he knows are wrong if it will help to reinforce his identity as 'funny' and thus *his* place amongst his peers. Here I had just asked Jack whether he had ever rung someone's doorbell and run off:

Jack	*Only once*
SF	*Why did you do it?*
Jack	*Because it was a dare*
Cara	*Was it Claire's door? Jack, you always knock on Claire's door* (Laughs)

SF *Did you think it was wrong?*
Jack *Yeah*
Cara *So why did you knock on the door?*
Jack *Because it was a dare*
SF *So why do you do a dare? If it was wrong?*
Jack *Because I think it's quite comical*
(Clara laughs and Jack then acts it out)
SF *If you know its wrong do you do it because it's quite funny?*
Jack *Yeah*

For Jack being funny was so important to his sense of self-identity that he would act in a '*comical*' way even if he knew it might be 'wrong'. This reinforces the earlier discussion on peer pressure. However, it shows an extra level of vulnerability because, for some children, the desire for sameness is intense and they feel a great need to prove themselves. A lack of self-esteem and a perception of the self as powerless clearly fuels their efforts to achieve equality and, therefore, acceptance. As in Jack's case, this can have a definite impact on how they think about right and wrong. Even though Jack knew that the act was 'wrong' it was more important for him to act in a way that he perceived could raise his status.

Accepting it: a way of fitting in?

Being viewed as potentially different does have a big effect on the morally strategic actions that the child invokes in order to belong. As seen in relation to Jack, this includes behaving in ways that are 'wrong', so that a perception of powerlessness is overlooked and the individual is seen as an equal. However, another way in which those who perceived themselves to be powerless sought to establish a sense of mutuality was to positively classify the morality of actions against them. To react by involving adults or making unsuccessful attempts to fight back would immediately give further ammunition to support claims made against them of 'difference', both in terms of their own perceptions and those of others. However, by accepting *it*, the children were hoping to demonstrate that there was nothing different about them, that they were 'average', just one of the crowd.

This can be seen particularly through the fact that such children who perceived themselves to be powerless were far more likely to accept physical attacks as a normal part of everyday life. Consent, as discussed earlier in relation to physical contact, was given when the children felt themselves to be within a mutual relationship. However, this was

tightly defined and if the sense of mutuality was broken, consent was no longer implied, with the result that actions that were morally seen as 'okay' took on another more negative meaning. However, as shown below, powerless children were far more likely to continue to consent to actions against them even when that sense of mutuality was not present. The reason for this, as suggested above, was that they wanted to avoid fuelling any potential labels of difference. For example, when Steve (who was discussed earlier) was asked how he would react if someone hit him, he replied, '*I would cry … I won't fight back, I don't want to fight, I don't like fights*'. However, central to Steve's lack of desire to assert himself was his perception that his lack of size would mean that he would not be successful. This was also seen with Jenny, who when asked to describe herself, the first thing she said was: '*I am easily hurt, I'm fragile, I'm easily scared, if anyone pops a balloon I jump. I don't like being the centre of attention … I'm shy.*' When she was asked how she would react when hit she said, '*If they hit me hard I'd just say please can you not hit me hard*'. However, not only were these children more likely to absorb this physical act of aggression against them and not fight back, they were also more likely to simply accept what happened to them and not do anything about it. Nic, who described herself as being *shy* at school, when she was asked if she would tell said:

> *I don't know really, I think if it was really hurting me and I was about to cry I probably would tell Miss but then if it wasn't that hard I think it's only a push, because I was shy. Because if you tell the bully might come back and hurt you because you told on them.*

Such issues have implications in relation to bullying in schools as well as to attacks and exploitation outside school. Katz et al. (2001) showed how part of a child's social status was forged around their ability to take mild bullying. They went further, however, suggesting that bullying had to be taken if an individual was to earn respect. However, such findings do not just relate to bullying in schools. Aye Maung's (1995) study showed how children and young people were likely to categorise physical assaults against them as 'just something that happens'. The consequence of this definition in relation to these acts is that those who are most vulnerable, the powerless, are least likely to report acts against them. This raises concerns that such individuals accept these acts of aggression as something that they deserve because of who they are. It means that children who perceive themselves as powerless are more vulnerable due to the increased possibility that they will define acts against them in

morally neutral or, it may even be argued, affirmative ways (that they deserve it), without question, as part of their efforts not to be seen as 'different'.

Powerfulness

Power, as has been demonstrated, is a constant everyday issue for children, and as implied by the discussion on powerlessness, children are continually aware of the greater power of others. This affects the way they think about others, shaping those moral frameworks that were considered in the last chapter. The result is that the 'powerful other' was considered by the children to be connected with physical superiority and negative moral social behaviour, such that they were seen as a threat and as a group to be avoided. However, a realisation of one's own power was regarded somewhat differently to this brutish picture. Children with power portrayed themselves as skilful social negotiators who used personal power or the power of others to morally shape and define social interaction. In doing so they demonstrated that power could be used as a tool for bestowing belonging and for engineering mutual relationships.

The powerful other

The image of the 'powerful other' can be summed up as a perceived threat that needs to be avoided. This threat is most commonly associated with attacks to the physical body. However, those with more power can also be seen to present a threat to social standing. Both have the effect of making the individual question and challenge their notion of themselves and where they belong. Difference is fundamental in separating the 'powerful other' from 'mutual others' and, as discussed earlier, this difference can be further refined in relation to strength. Strength brings with it a sense of unpredictability, in which violence and the potential of physical force are potent. This perception of strength can be marked out in the 'powerful other' through factors such as age, gender and race, creating the notion of a group who are not to be trusted on account of significant moral concerns.

The threat of violence

As has already been seen, the children in the study used stereotypes to help make sense of their social world. In the context of the powerful other, this process of ordering is directly linked with children's fears and worries about the spaces within which they live their everyday lives.

It is notable that a common theme of difference seen in Chapter 4, which carried negative moral overtones and associations with power, was centred around a lack of care or respect. Intertwined with the unpredictability that a lack of care was symptomatic of was the potential threat that this group were seen to pose. The following example shows the clear connection between the moral stereotypes discussed in the previous chapter and the 'threat' that is part of the aura of the 'powerful other'. The difference here is first and foremost visual; however, the associations that are connected to it reveal a thread of underlying fear:

Andy *Punks murder people, they kidnap people, they …*
Sam *All punks?*
Andy *Most of them and they smoke … and they get really weird hairstyles and they chase you … and they rape … [and] they threaten you with drugs and drinking*

This association of 'wrongdoing' with punks shows, as Rapport (1995) noted in relation to stereotypes, a sense of order and immediate reference. Here Andy has simply categorised all social evils as associated with the most extreme and different group he knew – punks. It demonstrates effectively the way in which stereotypes, rightly or wrongly, are used to frame understanding. Here they provide Andy with a basis for ordering his social fears (Douglas 1966). What is significant, however, is that the use of these stereotypes may vary, with the children framing fears in different ways. Laura, who was described by others in her class as a good example of a friend, came from a very loving and open family. It was therefore interesting to hear her views in relation to black people expressed in such negative terms:

SF *What about black people then?*
Laura *Well they're usually bad aren't they?*
Emma *Yeah they're the ones that get into trouble*
Laura *Like the twin towers*
Emma *Yeah exactly some of them can be good but most of them are bad I think*
SF *Really, why do you think that?*
Emma *Because of Iraq*
SF *Because of Iraq?*
E&L *Yeah*

The basis of this morally negative view was initially physical difference. Notions of whether this difference indicated strength or weakness, and

thus perceptions of bad or good morals, were then shaped according to the context, in this case Iraq.[4] The combination of a perception of difference and the threat posed as a consequence of what the children knew about what was happening in Iraq saw this sense of 'difference' take on negative moral overtones. It is significant that this view is seen to apply to the majority of black people. This may highlight further the limited experience that these children have of different ethnic groups. However, it also shows a plainer truth that has blighted many minority groups for centuries, and that is the connection between perceptions of difference, threat and a subsequent determination to associate such groups with a weak sense of morality.

The realisation of that threat within everyday life can be summed up by the fear of personal violence. Actual violence, defined as physical conflict with someone outside of the child's social group (and kidnap, discussed in more detail later), was an experience that the children at St Stephens had not had. However, these significant fears were prevalent in the way in which they made sense of the social world, impacting strongly on their construction of the powerful other. The images they created drew strongly on everyday discourses as children responded to what they read, saw and discussed, which, added to their limited actual knowledge, created an abundance of fears and myths that had implications for their construction of moral meanings.

Why were these fears of violence against the self so real for a group of children who were relatively safe? This can only be understood by recognising the suggestion that the body is a central element in the development of personhood. The children do not want their personhood challenged through an attack on *their* body. A sense of one's body as weak brings within it a sense of 'acceptance' as discussed earlier, with immediate implications in terms of vulnerability as well as further sustaining this self-perception. For someone who has an image of themselves as socially confident and capable, a physical attack could result in a complete assault on their notion of their sense of self. It is therefore unsurprising that children live in fear of such threats, since these attacks do not only leave a physical scar, but can also bring into question the individual's understanding of who they are.

The perceived level of violence imagined by the children is illustrated in a comment following a piece of drama. In this scene, some bullies had tripped their victim onto the floor and then kicked and punched him. The children were questioned about the level of violence they were enacting:

Harry *Well we've got to like pretend to kick him, because that is what some people would do, they wouldn't like just trip him up and go oh and walk off, they would kick him and that's what I've seen people do.*

Harry is quite clear that it would be silly to pretend violence did not happen because it does. Those in this drama group reinforced the atmosphere of violence through offering their descriptions of these bullies: '*he'll probably just wear all black and like he wears a hat and he won't take it off.*' The boys go on to describe the bullies with reference to martial arts films and suggest they would be carrying penknives, reflecting the different sources on which their version of 'reality' was based. It is using these militaristic and aggressive overtones that the children highlight the threat that bullies pose, and although in developing these ideas the children clearly used some dramatic licence, such images were not unique. Further examples included a conversation about a group of 17-year-olds and what weapons they would '*realistically*' be expected to have:

Joe *They would have a weapon*
Tom *knuckle dusters*
Joe *A gun*
Tom *It would have to be hidden*
SF *A hidden gun?*
Joe *A hand gun*
Tom *In, like their waistcoat*

Even though these children were unlikely to come into contact with those that had a gun, their fears were real and formed a strong aspect of the way in which they made sense of the social world, allowing them to label those that were potentially very dangerous and best avoided.

These concerns were further heightened by an additional association between the 'powerful other' and substance misuse. The children classified drinking, the use of drugs and smoking as negative moral actions and associated such activities with groups such as bullies and/or teenagers and other adults. Jack shared his experience of teenagers at a party where he was shocked to see a pregnant girl drinking. He went on to say how the party moved out onto the streets and things got quite rowdy: '*my dad went out and they started throwing bricks at the door, they were really drunk and they just went crazy*.' Some of the others also talked of the way in which alcohol makes people do unusual things and indeed the frightening nature of this unpredictable behaviour was

shown in the drama that Jack and his group eventually put together. This drama showed a group of drunken men singing and shouting as they walked through the streets and kicking walls, they saw a man coming the other way and beat him up. They were then arrested and, whilst being arrested, they continued to insult and struggle with the police. This drama, portrayed from the child's viewpoint, made a connection between unpredictable behaviour (both in relation to violence and substance misuse) and extreme antisocial acts and moral corruption. This leaves children's understanding of the 'powerful other' as those who have little or no regard for the social world, and those who have a different set of morals in which the boundary between what is right and wrong is unclear. This lack of clarity reinforces notions, therefore, that this group has the potential to bring moral disorder, destabilising and upsetting the harmony of the individual's known world. Such themes echo most markedly those concerns and fears adults had in relation to children, portrayed in earlier chapters. However, here it is children themselves who are expressing such concerns about those who are older.

Teenagers – perceptions of age

The pervasiveness of the teenager within notions of the 'powerful other' have been seen already. This is perhaps not surprising as one of the major classifying symbols of the powerful, for children, is age. Being younger was seen as a sign of weakness but being older, with its connections to greater size, strength and experience, was a sign of power. The dynamic nature of age was heightened further for the children due to the rapid and marked differences taking place in their own bodies and those of others around them. Aimee picked up on the impact hormones were having on the behaviour of her teenage brothers, which she saw as affecting the way they assessed right and wrong:

> *It doesn't make them bad it just makes them have another side to them. Say they're normally good, but then they might turn bad for an hour, but my brother always says sorry.*

However, the underlying theme behind this comment is the sense of unpredictability that surrounds teenagers, as noted in Chapter 4. This factor was more visible in relation to size, as with the rapid biological changes around the age of 10; this meant that children who were a couple of years older could appear far more physically developed. Greater age was synonymous with greater power and was a concern most frequently expressed in relation to 'teenagers'. The following

discussion provides an interesting insight into the way in which children thought about teenagers both at secondary school and out in the neighbourhood:

SF *Are people more likely to be bullied in secondary school?*
Brad *Definitely*
SF *Why?*
Brad *They're just older than you*
SF *What, if they are older they are more likely to …*
Brad *yeah*
Dan *That's what I was going to say, once you get older then you do become more aggressive*
Rob *I think as they get older they think more evil thoughts*
SF *Why do you think people think more evil thoughts as they get older?*
Rob *Probably, maybe because they were tortured or beaten up at primary school and they have to take their anger out on the younger ones?*
SF *Do you think that happens quite a lot?*
Dan *Yeah*
Mike *It's also because there is like a wider range of people at secondary school, it's a wider range of personalities, like some nasty people and some nice people and like they get a bit more cocky when they get a bit older and they think its cool to pick on little ones*
Harry *Cos you go from being like the oldest in the school to like the youngest in the school and you are a lot smaller than everyone else and people just think it will be easy to pick on you because you are a lot smaller than them*
SF *Do you think that's why people often pick on people because they are smaller?*
Harry *No, but you like usually get people who are older picking on people who are younger*
SF *Do we all agree with that?*
All *Yeah*
Gill *Old people, even if they like you or something, but there is someone they really didn't like in their year or in the year above, they could start to pick on you because they couldn't take on the big ones*
Tom *It's not just because you're little it's because your not, it sounds stupid, but because you're not old. It's because you're not old and tough*

Being older, teenagers as 'others' are seen as '*evil*', an evil clearly associated with the physical threat that this group pose and the presumption that they are more likely to use their physicality to emphasise their position. As Dan puts it, '*once you get older then you do become more aggressive*'. This extract also helps to define the physical context within which children see bullying, which invariably is enacted by an older person on a younger person. It is on this basis that this group focused on secondary schools as a site of bullying, where those who have just left primary school are seen as being particularly vulnerable (a theme of specific relevance as all within this group were only weeks away from leaving primary school). The issues around size seem to be implied within the stereotypes attached to age, such that age alone is enough to mark out potential group membership, as Tom suggests it is '*not because you're little . . . it's because you're not old*'. This statement also carries relative value and suggests that children, even as they get bigger, perceive that they will always be marked out, for there will always be those who are older trying to exert power over them.

Gender

The 'powerful other' was significantly more likely to be connected with males. The reason for this was the perceived physicality of the boys as opposed to the girls. Throughout, the boys talked about being in physical fights, and even though the girls discussed fights, fighting did not have the same prominence. The general notion that females are less likely to be aggressors is replicated in the way in which the children regard adults. Here Becky explains why mums would not be involved in a fight:

Becky	*If it was my mum she wouldn't because she can't fight, no mums can fight I don't think*
SF	*It's just men?*
Becky	*Mostly men yeah because women are sensible and they don't like to get hurt*

Becky does not associate her mum, or in fact any mums, in any way with fighting: '*women are sensible and they don't like to get hurt.*' However, the children did not have the same problems in connecting men to such behaviour.

Significantly, it was boys who were most commonly depicted as victims of the 'powerful other'. However, the children did perceive a particular vulnerability in relation to females (this is discussed further

in relation to strangers later). A number of the girls actually talked about experiences that their mothers had had with male partners, in the context of domestic violence, a position they had obviously given thought to in reaching their conclusion that girls were more vulnerable than boys. Girls were seen to be less physical in relation to their male contemporaries. Even though there was an assumption that girls were less physical and therefore generally not seen as targets of a male-led attack, when girls were the victims it did not stop them, as one drama showed, being pushed and shoved by the boys as vigorously as any male victims. When I asked whether girls would be treated in this way by the boys, the boys simply replied, '*yeah, we're bullies*'. Such a response reiterates one of the central tenets of morally negative behaviour, that of not caring; it therefore does not matter to the bullies who you are.

There was one drama in which the girls did take on the role of aggressors. These roles had come about due to the awkwardness the boys in this group felt when telling Amy what to do. Amy was socially confident and held a prominent social status within the class, unlike the boys in this group, who were rather shy. What was significant about this drama was not only that girls could in fact take on this role, but that they had to work much harder than the boys in order to establish a physical threat. Prior to the drama the girls acknowledged that it was only if their demands were supported by some kind of overt threat that they would get their way:

SF *If there were a group of lads and you were a group of girls do you think you are going to be scared by just hearing what they have to say to you?*
Amy *If their sort of shouting threats*

Even though the girls feel as though '*shouting threats*' should be enough, as the drama progressed it became clear that there needed to be a physical presence behind these threats. Indeed what this drama went on to show was that it was only when the girls demonstrated that the threat they posed was a reality that it was taken seriously by the boys. The result was that it was not until verbal comments were supported with aggressive intonation and physical action that the boys accepted the girls' directions. This interaction reflected the general assumption that girls were less likely to be seen in the role of aggressor and needed to do more to establish their credentials for force.[5] This overt display of violence reiterated a common theme of the other dramas that the perceived

realisation of a physical threat increased both the potential danger and expectation of negative moral behaviour.

Trust – stranger danger

Perceptions of the 'powerful other' provides the individual child with a level of moral understanding, ordered through stereotypes, that can form a protective barrier of awareness. Anyone who is seen to fit within this category is seen to be different and therefore needs to be avoided. However, some adults do not fit the classic depiction of the physically more powerful other, summed up through 'teenagers'. This was commented on in relation to the character Guy, as noted in the previous chapter. Guy was not seen necessarily as a physical threat, but more as someone who could not be trusted. Indeed, there was a common underlying question mark around trust and children's views of many adults with whom they had little or no contact, with the result that they found it difficult to know who was there to help. Parents are very active in pointing out to their children the dangers of the 'stranger' who might harm them when out in the neighbourhood, rather than in seeking to overcome the way those who are potentially there to support or help them are seen. The result is that children may not differentiate between one type of stranger and another so that all unknown adults that reflect aspects of the 'powerful other' are categorised as dangerous and thus to be avoided. This is explored further in Chapter 6 in relation to children's reluctance to approach adults in the neighbourhood.

The commonly held themes associated with strangers were highlighted by the only all-girl drama group, who looked at issues around kidnap and abduction and in so doing highlighted fears around strangers that were more actively held by the girls rather than the boys. The drama showed a woman being kidnapped from the streets at night after going to a pub. She was then tied to a chair and a sock stuffed in her mouth. Even though the drama focused on someone outside of their age group it became clear that the fears in relation to strangers and being kidnapped were real enough. The following discussion followed questions about whether the girls felt there were many people who would kidnap:

Amy *Yeah*
SF *Really?*
Sarah *Yeah*
Liz *Like Holly and Jessica*[6]
Sarah *That was up North though*

Liz	*. . . so they still got kidnapped. And there is like loads of people going round and you can't exactly do anything, because they keep on going around and (stopped speaking)*
SF	*So does that worry you?*
Liz	*Yeah*
SF	*Who else?*
Amy	*It worries me, because my mum told me about this kidnapper that goes around in a van*
Anna	*Yeah*
SF	*What, round here?*
Anna	*Yeah*
SF	*So how does that affect you when you are walking around?*
Anna	*Scared*
Amy	*Because I'm the only one who has to take my dog out. And so because I have got quite a big dog he needs lots of exercise, so I can't just take him around the block because he needs lots of exercise, so I have to take him on long walks*
SF	*Amy, does that mean you keep your eyes open more?*
Anna	*Yeah*
Jane	*My dad lives next door to a river and when I take his dog for a walk, he's really cute, I get quite worried because I have to walk him, there is no other places apart from the M10 or the A10 or whatever it's called. There is no other way to take him up the river apart from the A10, so I have to take him up the river*
SF	*So what's the point that it is scary walking up the river?*
Jane	*Yeah, cos someone could walk up behind me and push me in*
Sarah	*It was a swamp monster*

This discussion shows the moral perceptions that have developed around strangers, views that have been influenced by the media as well as by friends and family. It is notable that the case of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman involved girls of a similar age to the participants and it clearly had a direct or indirect (through the comments and fears of others) impact on them. It is significant, however, that it is difficult for the girls to really define what the threat is. It is not until Amy is asked that she says someone '*could walk up behind me and push me*'. However, it is not just hard for them to know what the nature of the threat is, it is also hard to know who the perpetrator might be, as summed up by the final line of this extract – '*a swamp monster*'. What was clear was that this type of threat involving strangers was perceived to be more of an issue for females than males, with young women being at risk from

older men. As James said, '*usually young ladies or women are kidnapped by older men or people like that*', a view supported in a vote by a large majority of his classmates. The children perceived that they did face a risk in walking around their neighbourhoods. But they also assumed a way of negotiating this risk. For what these views in relation to strangers reflect is a self-defence strategy, which operates by children recognising 'difference' and the moral stereotypes associated with it. Based on this they can then identify those they think need to be avoided.

The powerful self

Unsurprisingly, none of the children admitted to being a bully or being a violent neighbourhood troublemaker. Rather, the realisation of the 'powerful self' was exhibited more in relation to the way in which the children used power to reinforce and confirm their social positions, particularly in the context of peer relationships. One way children recognised they could exert power over their peers was by reverting to adult authority. The following extract focuses on David who was desperate to be part of Harry and Matt's friendship group. It was only when David strategically reverted to the 'supreme' power of adults that he was able to establish a position of power that granted him entry into the group. Ironically, it was through this use of power that he sought a 'mutual relationship'. (This discussion started with the children thinking about what would happen if David hit one of them.)

Matt *Well basically if I went and told an adult David would get off.*
Harry *David always gets off with all the adults*
Matt *He always gets off whatever he does*
Harry *Because everyone thinks David is so good, so if we go and tell Miss Heater it's 'I'm sure he didn't mean it, I'm sure he did it by accident' and then if we went and say that Jan McMulling went and did the same thing, I went and told the same Miss, she would say, 'now Jan why did you hit Matthew, what was the point in doing that', because all the Misses think that. Because every kind of Miss knows David Jones, Miss Fletcher, Miss Lloyd and all that because they have all had loads of experience with us because mainly it's David whose been breaking us up, isn't it?*
Matt *He went and told Miss Fletcher because he knows that Miss Fletcher doesn't like me, she doesn't really like us … I told her off because she is not allowed to do what she is doing, but*

now she's much better but she still doesn't like me. So if David wants to play with me or wants to get me in trouble, which he often does, then he goes and tells Miss Fletcher

SF *How would you react?*

Harry *Well I would ignore it, but normally I, I, I kind of know David if he hits you, you say, David, why do you do that and he's 'oh I didn't mean it'. We were playing a game um, when we used to play blind man's bluff, and I was blind man. I pulled my hat over my eyes, I was walking around, David, everyone was going in staying about two metres away and then touching them and then running, but David came right up to me, made a noise, I turned round but he knew I was going to hit him, and then he said 'oh you did that on purpose because you can see'*

Matt *And he went off crying and if he doesn't get his way that's it, there is nothing you can do about it, so basically we've got to let him have his way, otherwise it just happens, it just repeats itself, over and over and over again*

This extract shows how David was able to manipulate the social environment to ensure that he was not told off. Moreover, David was also able to turn his positive social relations with the teachers into power, which then resulted in him getting away with things and prising his way into the group. David had therefore established a position of power through a careful and knowledgeable use of the moral process. The other boys are resigned to this, realising that the only real way to deal with someone who has the ability to manipulate situations is to let them have their own way. Indeed, this was a common theme that can be associated with 'cool' people.

Achieving the status of 'cool' could give an individual social capital, as seen in Chapter 5. Such a person was seen as popular, they were seen to fit in and were accepted. As a consequence they provided a level of 'sameness' for others to live up to. However, even though 'cool' people were defined as individuals who could easily manage and fit into a busy social situation, they could still be categorised as 'different' through displaying negative kinds of behaviour associated with greater power towards those around them. As a result being cool for children of this age was not always positive. For example, '*they don't care about their friends*' because friends are seen to be inferior. As noted in Chapter 5, the character Amelia was seen to be good and popular but, as part of the consequence of being described as pretty and wearing jewellery, she was also thought to be a person that '*probably likes people's attention and*

will do most stuff to get it'. The result is that such people, as well as using power to ensure their sense of belonging, '*can be hurtful*':

Ella *Some people are really nice but some cool people you just don't want to get very close to because they're the sort of people you can't trust even though they're really, really popular*
SF *How would you feel if those people came [near you]?*
Ella *If those people came near I wouldn't be too bothered but wouldn't really like them to come much closer*
SF *What about you Nic?*
Nic *Um, I'd feel a bit nervous actually because you don't want them to go away and tell their friends that, say you did something wrong or you said something wrong, and then they would go away and tell all their friends and then everyone would know and talk about you*

This extract sums up the dilemma. While some cool people can be really '*nice*', others have the potential to affect the way that children are seen on a social level and thus threaten their belonging. It was therefore important for those who fitted this category to try and conform and to use their power carefully, otherwise they would be classified as more powerful and be avoided. If they were successful in their use of power then they could create a smokescreen around being powerful, and even though they appeared as an equal they would be able to shape and define moral behaviour.

Setting the boundaries

This section develops further the extent to which popularity and power can allow certain children to engineer morals within social interaction. As has already been demonstrated, greater power is commonly associated with greater age and size, which are accompanied by an increased social presence and confidence. This can be used by the powerful others in pursuit of their own ends, through forcing those around them into negative behaviour, or in actually defining moral meanings to justify their actions. However, greater power can have more positive application, so rather than it being used to satisfy selfish ambitions it can be put to selfless use in equalising the way in which those who are potentially 'different' are seen within a group. An example of this has been discussed in a previous section, where a child who was an outsider and therefore potentially without power and different, was invited to join in a game. The opportunity to play the game offered by those with the power to include or exclude gives the individual the chance to belong.

Another way in which those with power can influence how others are seen is by actively challenging the morality of social behaviour targeted towards potential outsiders. For example, one of the boys, Ted, was seen as 'different'. He was larger than his peers with the result that he was an easy target to be seen as fat. This led to him being called names such as '*sausage face*', '*sausage mouth*' and '*sausage belly*'. And, I was told, '*by the way, Ted wears bras*'. Without any other intervention Ted could have found himself quite isolated from his peers. However, Bret was not happy for Ted to be excluded in this way. Bret, unlike Ted, was 'cool', a successful and prominent social actor, who was constantly sharing stories about his exploits with his older friends in the neighbourhood. Bret also made it clear that he did not like to see others picked on. He therefore sought to use his social status to see that Ted was not excluded by challenging the label of 'difference'. Bret said, '*well they don't like my friend Ted because he's a big lad, he's just a big lad and they take the mickey out of him*'. Bret used his social position to diminish Ted's potential difference by explaining that he is '*just a big lad*'. The widespread repetition of this fact strengthens Bret's opinion that there is nothing Ted can do about this. Bret therefore, rather than consigning Ted to being 'different', seeks to re-define any potential barriers and establish Ted as an equal.

However, recognising one's own power also allows the individual to have the confidence to question and challenge the moral basis of another's actions against them. Matt was a social leader who was at the top of the social hierarchy within the school. His ability to set the basis for moral meaning was highlighted in response to a question many of the other children had been asked. The question was: 'How would you react if a bully hit you'? Unlike the majority of the other children whose response was that they would accept it or fight back, Matt, towards the end of the following extract, asserts a position that no-one else did:

SF *Okay, if a bully came up and hit you how would you react?*
Matt *Hit back*
SF *Would you?*
Matt *Yeah I would*
SF *Would you tell anyone else about it or deal with it yourself?*
Matt *Well if they sort of hit me hard, I would hit them back and say what was that for and if they gave a reasonable answer, you'd just say don't do it again and probably tell someone. If it was*

serious you'd tell someone but if it was just like a one-off hit back you probably wouldn't say anything, only to your mum and people like that

Tim *I might hit them back or I'd just look at them and smile, try again . . .*

SF *So would you deal with it yourself?*

Tim *Yeah or might get some of my friends, not to jump on him and kill him, just to say go away, because if their there he won't pick on one of us because then all of us will take him on*

SF *Is there a difference between how you would react in school and how you would react out of school?*

Tim *Don't really know*

Matt *I don't think I would hit them back*

Tim *Not in school*

Matt *I don't think I'd hit them back, I think I was being a bit hasty there, I think I'd say well that didn't hurt what was that for, and if they said something or if they hit me again then you'd have to hit them back or otherwise they'd keep on doing it*

Matt demonstrated that as a result of his own self-confidence he would not, on reflection, simply follow through with a snap reaction and just hit back. Rather, he would seek to re-define the act against him, first by saying he was not hurt and then by asking why he had been hit. On this basis he would be able to make a judgement as to whether the act was right or wrong and then act accordingly. Through questioning the morality of the act Matt not only asserted his powerfulness by taking the moral high ground, he also engineered a basis on which to define and set moral meaning.

A perception of greater power clearly has implications for the way in which moral behaviour is defined and shaped. In respect of the 'powerful other', an undercurrent of fear engendered by a perceived lack of concern for others colours the way in which social action is viewed. This attitude provides a foundation through which the children considered that others could be compelled into acting in a particular way, even though they may know that what they are doing is wrong. Significantly, the levels of mistrust that accompanied characteristics of the powerful other resulted in children accepting they had to deal with moral situations on their own without the help of certain adults, who they perceived as 'strangers' because of a lack of trust. Power, however, was not just destructive. As the last section demonstrated, a realisation of power could be used to positively frame social interaction, both from

the point of view of the individual's self-interest and of the inclusion of others. Moral meaning, therefore, is not fixed but, as this section shows, is a dynamic process that responds to the subtleties of social interaction.

Conclusion

Three different themes of power were explored, although it must be noted that the children did not find themselves restricted to just one of these categories; rather, as part of their daily interaction they are constantly moving between them as they assess and re-assess themselves vis-à-vis others. Within this children are balancing complex moral dilemmas which impact on their sense of belonging and fundamentally on their understandings of self. Power is at the centre of this social process in which children reflect on similarity and difference as they shape moral meanings. Morality therefore comes to be reflected as an element of social interaction in which children are constantly using understandings of morality to make strategic 'plays' in the game of traversing their everyday worlds, with the prize being a sense of belonging. Each 'play' demands the child demonstrate incredible skill as a social agent, as they draw on a depth of knowledge about the social world, not only in relation to themselves but also to others. Their ability to do this, sometimes instantly, demands that they draw on past experience, and on stereotypes. These fragments of social knowledge are very influential, shaping social judgements and subsequent decisions, all of which have a direct impact on moral behaviour.

6
A Learning Process – Making Sense of Social Experiences

With an ongoing focus on punishment or the fear of punishment as a means of dealing with an innate tendency in children to do wrong, the child as a moral learner is, for some, a contradiction in terms. The sense of agency that reflects children's capacity to develop meanings of their own is at best limited and at worst ignored absolutely. This chapter seeks to explore the way in which children develop their sense of moral awareness, building on themes in the last chapter in respect of relationships and the different nuances that perceptions of power generate. The extent to which children seek to draw on guidance from within mutual relationships becomes apparent, with additional implications in relation to ways of bestowing, regulating and enforcing moral knowledge. By looking at children in relation to the spaces within which they live their lives – home, school and the neighbourhood – it is possible to look at interaction with key adults and the changing and differing effects that these separate social arenas have on the process of moral learning based on experiences.

In each of these spaces children demonstrate agency as they react to social interaction in constructing meanings. It is therefore as a response to the social world and their desire to be part of it that children develop a sense of moral understanding, as they seek to recognise what is and is not acceptable. This demands an awareness of rules and codes, through which conformity within society is to some extent guided (Douglas 1966). This has been acknowledged in relation to children in the context of games, where rules provide order and define interaction (Goodwin 2000). However, this capacity to engage with and acknowledge rules is not for children limited to games; rather they are a necessary element of social relationships themselves (James 1993). An ability to draw on rules in creating a sense of order demands an element of experience on the

part of the social agent. Raffel (2004) recognises this in the context of children in building on theoretical positions identified earlier. However, Raffel places the recognition of moral rules within a broader relational context, in which 'one needs to learn to see rules as potential indicators or signifiers of communal goods or values, as vehicles for the expression of one's communal value commitments' (Raffel 2004: 125). This reflects the extent to which moral definitions are shaped and defined collectively as a process of interaction. It is therefore not the case, as Piagetian theories might encourage, that moral understanding develops out of fear; rather they develop as part of a social process of engagement (Haste 1987) in which others play a significant part as guides and interpreters. The acceptance of moral development as a process of learning demands therefore an investigation of the relationships surrounding children's experiences. It should be recognised that within these relationships one is not just looking at the horizontal exchange of information but also at the vertical interrelationship between different parties, as children seek to make sense of the world around them.

A body of experiences

Although this chapter deals with children's experiences, it is first important to establish the framework within which meaning develops. It is, therefore, necessary to consider Bourdieu's notion of habitus, mentioned in Chapter 1, in more detail. Habitus for some has been seen to be the 'mediator between structure and practices' (Tomanovic 2004: 343) as it provides a subconscious body of experiences 'inculcated as much if not more by experience as by explicit teaching' (Jenkins cited in Tomanovic 2004: 343), on which adults and children draw in creating meanings. Bourdieu's definition of habitus is 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions' based on experiences, which form the 'basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences' (1990: 54). Habitus does not override the agent's freedom of action, but recognises that there is only a certain body of internal data that the individual can draw on in framing their actions and behaviour. Their social agency is therefore expressed by drawing on an internalised body of experiences, which subconsciously affects the way in which they think and act (Connolly 1998). Connolly provides an example of a girl who grows up in a violent home. The images of violence that she experiences, he suggests, become internalised and form part of the 'child's habitus'. The result is that this set of violent experiences 'tends to guide her future behaviour and predisposes her to think and react in certain

ways' (Connolly 1998: 18). He suggests, therefore, when she is faced by a violent situation herself, she has a choice of how to react, but these actions are limited based on her past experience. This example shows that a child's habitus has implications for that child's moral behaviour, in this case affecting the way in which the girl reacted to acts of violence. It does not stretch this example too much further to suggest that her habitus not only governs her actions, but also the way in which she thinks about the morality of her actions, with habitus providing a starting point from which she can shape and construct moral meanings.

The importance of habitus and the application of experience must however be seen within the further context of the individual's desire to achieve capital. This desire to achieve capital was seen in Chapter 5. Capital(s) reflect dominant discourses within society and take a number of forms. Connolly defines it in this way:

> Capital can be understood as a range of scarce goods and resources, which lie at the heart of social relations. The struggles over such resources provide the main dynamic through which social stratification and change can be understood (Connolly 1998: 20).

Connolly creates an image of individuals seeking to acquire one of the many forms of capital, and through this process habitus develops. For example, he suggests, masculinity and femininity carry capital, the result being that aspects of such behaviour become an internalised part of the individual's habitus, shaping and framing thought and action.

Within a moral discourse a desire for social capital has potential to play a significant part. Social capital 'Combines both the individual's own status and esteem and the reflected esteem of others in the individual's social network' (Brooker 2002: 177).

In the context of morality, social capital refers to the way in which the child achieves status as a consequence of the way in which he or she presents themselves to those around them. This was demonstrated explicitly in the last chapter as the children sought to position themselves in relation to others. This is a broad definition of social capital, and is not being suggested to the exclusion of other forms of capital.[1] However, what this definition provides is an invitation to think about what it is that will result in the development of status and esteem in the eyes of others. It is this that is significant within a moral discourse.

This process can be understood further through the notion of fields, 'the social arena where struggles take place over specific forms of capital'

(Connolly 1998: 23). What 'fields' allow is a separation in terms of space and a contrast between arenas such as home, school and the neighbourhood, with implications for the moral meanings developed in each (Fielding 2001). However, as Connolly notes, a focus on fields limits the extent to which the complex social interactions that are present in these arenas is recognised. It is the need to accept what he terms 'interdependent social relationships' that is key.

It is Elias and his notion of figuration that provides a basis for Connolly's (2004) argument. Elias suggests that it is only through the understanding of figuration that we can move beyond a rather one-dimensional focus on these different spaces. It is thus by looking at the network of relationships that the individual child is a part of within these spaces that one can see the context within which habitus is formed. No longer, as with fields, is it simply a process of looking at capital acquisition; the social process behind it, and significantly the role of power as a force that needs to be balanced within children's relationships with others, must be considered. This was highlighted in the three categories of power used in Chapter 5 and re-asserts the extent to which power can not be underestimated as a factor in shaping meanings. However, it must also be noted how power as an influencing social force can be seen to change between relationships as children move from one 'figuration' to another. These relationships, Connolly suggests, result in the formation of habitus, and by recognising children as operating within many sets of relationships it can be argued that they have 'multiple habituses' (Connolly 2004: 90), which shape their thinking and behaviour. How this sense of habitus, in the context of 'interdependent social relationships', impacts on moral thinking is explored in this coming chapter, as we look at how children build, develop and draw on individually created moral codes as they position themselves within different sets of relationships. Not only does this convey the extent to which children present their agency, but also how that process of agency is shaped by a variety of social contexts as children call on previous experiences in shaping meanings.

Learning from experience

The children at St Stephens were very clear in their own minds that moral knowledge develops as part of a learning process (Jans 2004). The children saw this process being built on their everyday experiences, recognising their intimate involvement in the creation of meaning. A phrase that the children often used was '*learning a lesson*'. Ironically,

this same phrase is used by adults but with a different emphasis. For adults learning a lesson is focused on teaching children that if they do something wrong they will 'learn a lesson', raising the threat of punishment, a short, sharp shock. For children, however, 'learning a lesson' was more about building up a foundation of knowledge from which they could then understand the morality of an issue for themselves. Within this age was important, not as a marker of stages of development determining different psychological levels of moral capacity, but as an indicator of levels of experience. The children suggested that as you get older your experience increases and so consequently your moral perception: '*if you're smaller, its harder to know whether its right or wrong, but as you grow up you see because people have already told you*.' Building up this body of experiences is fundamental and links back to theories on habitus, discussed earlier, which suggested that children's responses to a particular set of circumstances can be seen as limited to knowledge based on past experiences that have been internalised.

In some situations it is the experience itself which the child finds that they learn from. Without certain experiences it meant, as Georgia said, that you could end up doing something 'wrong' for no other reason than '*you don't always know when you've been naughty*' and you need someone to tell you that what you are doing is 'wrong'. Georgia referred to the example of going to a friend's house without first asking, and then being confused when her mum told her off. Being caught doing something 'wrong' is a way of building up one's experiences. However, it is not simply being told off; rather, this must be seen as part of a process of realisation in which children give meaning to the acceptability of acts. Understanding what is right or wrong is part of building up experiences, as Tom and Andy explain:

Tom	*You kind of teach yourself*
SF	*How do you teach yourself?*
Tom	*If you do something you might get shouted at or someone might get angry with you and you'll learn*
Andy	*You'll learn from your mistakes*

Tom acknowledges that getting caught has an impact and from this you can learn, which Andy follows up by saying you '*learn from your mistakes*'. The boys did learn from being told off; however, rather than being shouted at, the boys later suggested that that there were ways of maximising such a learning opportunity through more effective communication. As one boy said, '*not tells you off* [sic] *but just tells you that's*

a bad thing to do and the ones who were doing it were naughty and bad'. That need for explanation was recognised by Nat and Joe, two boys who openly admitted that they got into trouble frequently:

SF *So it's being told off that's important to you?*
Joe *Yeah*
Nat *It's being having it explained to me, why you should or shouldn't do it*
SF *So who does the explaining to you, who's the person who's best to tell you . . .*
Nat *Best to tell me if it's right, my nan*
SF *Your nan?*
Nat *You know I told you yesterday that instead of shouting they should just sit you down and explain, that's exactly what my nan does and I understand her a lot more, and do more what she says. If someone shouts at me it will still be a little bit in my mind saying* [for me] *to do it. But if someone explained why I shouldn't do it, it completely goes*
Joe *I think my mummy because all of the others just shout and they don't do anything else. Dad's really sleepy and mum just, she shouts first and then turns and makes you want to duck out of it and then later on she comes to you and says come on, like in the lounge and that and chats*
SF *And then explains it?*
Joe *Yeah she'll say what I have done*

Both boys emphasise that being reduced to the position of accepting and submissive powerlessness does not help them in their quest to establish moral meanings for themselves. What they both wanted was someone to sit down and explain to them what they had done and to recognise their potential as social agents.

Although explanation was important, the children did not directly need to be told something in order to draw meaning from it. Being in the vicinity of others being told off could also effectively communicate the acceptability of an action: '*if you see other people getting in trouble for doing it and then you see other people doing it again, you think I'm not going to do that, it's going to get me into trouble*.' The way children engaged with TV, a medium often associated with leading children astray (Buckingham 1993), demonstrates the extent to which children draw meaning from vicarious experiences. Here Kylie and Anne tell me

how they know murder is wrong, not because they have been told but because of what they have learnt from watching television:

SF *Has anybody actually told you, you shouldn't murder?*
Anne *Not really*
Kylie *You kind of get the general idea when you see people on television dying*
SF *Is that what makes you think you should not do that?*
Anne *Yeah, television and radio and that kind of thing, like Casualty and The Bill, if you see people getting arrested for stuff then you see that you're not supposed to do it*

This explanation suggests that an amount of self-reflection is needed for the individual to build up a moral picture of an act. Emotions and feelings also provide children with a guide to making moral sense of an experience. Here Kerry was asked to identify an act that was 'wrong':

Kerry *Bad language*
SF *Yeah?*
Kerry *Swearing and stuff*
SF *How do you know swearing is wrong?*
Kerry *Parents use it when they fight [and it] makes me want to hide from the noise*

Kerry's moral opinion is based on her negative association between bad language and her experience of her parents swearing when they fight, which makes her want to hide. This reflection on personal experience highlights, as in all the examples above, children's capacity to engage with moral issues as an element of social agency. Ideally, the children wanted an explanation from which to develop meanings; however, they did not always need this as they built understandings based on other sources, drawing on their own feelings and emotions. Indeed, the subconscious way in which meaning does at times develop was recognised by the children who on occasions said that they simply knew right and wrong because they had '*brains*' or '*just knew it*'; or put in another way, because they had 'common sense'.

However, rather than common sense being simply an inner voice of 'reason', it can be more accurately associated with the specific social experiences which that child had had, thus making this less about 'common' sense but more about an 'individual' sense. However, while this body of experience is in the first instance personal, living in the same

culture means that children may find that they share experiences, which combine to create 'common sense' (Shutz 1967). It is such 'common sense' that is presumed to inform moral judgements but, as this chapter will show, such decisions, even though they may draw on a shared culture, are ultimately made by the individual child within the context of the experiences they have had. In developing expectations of children in relation to morality, therefore, thought must be given to *their* moral experiences. Within this it is important to protect the integrity of the individual, whilst recognising the extent to which others may be part of a process of shaping a 'shared' meaning. It is that desire to explore further this process that leads us into those spaces in which children live out their everyday lives, namely home, school and the neighbourhood.

Home

Home is an interesting space within moral discourses. Chapter 2 reflected on the extent to which patriarchy gave responsibility to the family, and fathers in particular, as a means of preserving and ensuring social control. Today, families are increasingly being called to take on the role of controller or enforcer, rather than educator. This can be seen with the increasingly punitive stance towards (supposedly lax) parents whose children are seen to have done wrong. This argument is also reflected in legislation on smacking. England continues to allow children to be smacked, as it also protects the rights of parents to control and punish their children (as discussed earlier). But what of the role of parents as educators? Steps that include making citizenship a subject in schools could be argued to question or even undermine the role of parents as moral guides rather than moral enforcers. The findings here reflect other research (Mayall 2002) which suggests that children recognise and respect the role that parents play as moral educators. In fact, the children at St Stephens believed that not only were their parents best placed to provide them with such education, but that they were also the most qualified.

The problem for any adult taking on the role of educator is the extent to which that education is instilled as a result of adult power. It is significant how this particular theme is centrally important in the child's choice of effective moral educators. This desire by children to have a mutual relationship with moral educators is reflected in books on parenting that provide guidance on the need and importance for adults to establish 'mutual relationships' (Dinkmeyer and McKay 1989: Biddulph

1998). These relationships reflect, as one would expect, themes defined in the previous chapter in relation to mutuality. Thomson and Holland take the notion of mutuality and consider it in terms of the 'ethic of reciprocity', which they clearly link to the authority of a parent. Indeed, as a result of establishing this mutual relationship, adult acts of power are redefined, such that an act even as forceful as smacking can be seen as legitimate and as a proper use of this authority. In a similar way to consent in the previous chapter, the children at St Stephens did recognise their parents' use of authority, and when exercised within the confines of a mutual relationship they accepted their parents' use of control as part of efforts to make them a more effective and skilful moral operator.

When the children were asked 'who gives the best advice' the children were clear; those with whom they see themselves having the strongest mutual relationship. Indeed, it is that sense of protecting similarity, and belonging, that becomes a central part in shaping and defining this particular moral relationship. Mums most strongly exemplified that idea of the 'mutual other' and therefore, within the context of this study, were undisputably the adult that the children thought was the best to offer them moral advice and guidance. A mum's credentials were linked to the perception of her as a carer, a role that was seen to develop and nurture similarity and thus offer belonging (similar to friendship in the previous chapter). With parents this is supplemented by an additional capacity to love, in which the child recognises their place as a primary concern. Neale suggests that 'proper' parenting involves the child feeling 'a profound sense of being loved and valued' (Neale cited in James 1999: 191), further cementing the bonds of similarity and belonging through knowledge and understanding of the individual.

That sense of being understood and being known is crucial within moral education. The following extract follows the suggestion from one member of the group that parents needed to be taught right from wrong; this was met with a flurry of challenges:

Gerry	*No. Parents understand you*
SF	*Parents understand?*
Gerry	*Yeah parents do understand because they know you and parents know like their children*
SF	*Who agrees with that? Rob . . .*
Rob	*Yeah*
SF	*Ryan*
Rob	*Yeah*

Alex *They know how you feel because they have been with you a lot longer than . . .*
Rob *. . . teachers*

Here the children consider which people are the best at instructing them about right and wrong, and conclude firmly that it must be parents. Central to this conclusion is the belief that parents understand their children best, because they have spent the most time with them. This did not necessarily reflect the amount of time they spent with them at present: however, it certainly reflected the time spent together in the past.[2] For example, some of the children drew on the fact that parents '*started us*', which provided a clear explanation as to why parents should have a better understanding of a child than anyone else. Others made simple reference to the amount of time that they spent with individual parents and used this to explain the central role that parents play. On this basis it is clear to see why mums are identified as being the people who are best at giving advice, as they were the group with whom children spent most of their time. However, it was not always the case that 'mum' was seen as the best. Kelly, for example, explained that her dad was the most effective moral educator, '*because he's the one who like spends time with me*'.

As a result of this special relationship and the time invested in it, the children saw their parents as '*trained*' moral educators, as it was parents who through this experience of looking after them had built up the most complete knowledge of them and their behaviour:

SF *Do you think parents are good to tell you about what's right and wrong?*
A&L *Yeah*
Amy *They're trained*
SF *They're trained?*
Amy *They're normal*
Lisa *They know about you, they know what you might do*

What this discussion highlights is the individual nature of moral learning. Parents are seen as the best moral educators because they know most fully what experiences an individual child has had. They are more likely therefore to provide guidance in relation to particular rules and also respond with the most appropriate sanctions for that individual. This in itself says much about the development of moral awareness. It shows yet again that it is a fluid process, which is not automatically

achieved by the individual but which is based on experience, in which children make mistakes. This moves right and wrong from being an issue of control and constraint to one of learning, which through a sense of understanding, care and individual awareness, can see the educator turn a mistake into a constructive experience that supports the child's developing moral knowledge.

The responsibilities of parenting

These middle-class children also felt that parents not spending time with their children could have consequences. In one discussion the children had just been talking about drugs and whether it was ever an issue in primary school, and then Isaac said:

Isaac *Some like families are a bit broken and like someone's mum can't cope or something and they need to work full time to get money there and they don't have enough time to look after their children to make sure they are doing the right thing. And then they get into the habit of doing bad things and it just carries on*

The consequences of such parenting could, the children thought, extend into adult life, as was demonstrated in the comments after one of the dramas. The children were asked what sort of people might be involved in crimes such as kidnapping. Tom replied, '*people who really haven't been told right and wrong by their parents* … '. Anne and Kylie explained how someone could end up like this. I had just asked about whether they thought all parents gave children appropriate guidance:

SF *So do you think all parents think that?*
Anne *No, not all because some parents just buy you something to make up for it*
Kylie *And some parents don't like to tell you off or ground you, I think that's wrong because a child could just grow up to be stroppy and they will do everything that they want to do*
Anne *And they'll be determined to bully people*
Kylie *And they'll go around and be nasty to everyone because they don't know the difference between right and wrong. You can't just suddenly put it into somebody, you have to work at it*

The consequences are clear. Without proper moral guidance children could end up being '*stroppy*', '*determined to bully*' and '*nasty*'. The children are in little doubt that parents have the responsibility to provide

them with positive moral guidance to help prevent them turning out like that. However, this is something that needs to be invested in, for in relation to morals, '*you can't suddenly put it into somebody, you have to work at it*'.

This position does not result in children denying themselves agency, but recognises that they need a positive set of experiences on which to build their lives. Parents themselves sought to reinforce their position of responsibility, as can be seen in the following conversation. Michael had been discussing how boys who committed vandalism did so because their '*mums let them do anything they want*'. When he was asked where his views came from, he replied:

> Mike … *my nan and my mum they say when we're on the bus, like teenage boys get on and their swearing or talking about other things like that or saying horrible things about other people, they say to me I hope you're not going to turn out like that, because I've brought you up well*

Parents often mark themselves out as a measure, which they then use as a tool in morally educating their children. Here, Michael talks about how his mum identifies the behaviour of other children and then challenges Michael not to be like that because of the way he has been brought up. Dealing with this situation in this way achieves two things. First, it reinforces the closeness of the relationship between Michael and his mum, appealing more to mutual respect than to anything else. Second, it encourages Michael to recognise that his mother acknowledges her responsibility and appeals to him to follow her advice. In respect of both individuals, this strengthens the similarity between them and fosters a sense of belonging by drawing on their difference to others. Indeed, the parents I spoke to were clear of their own educational responsibilities and many parents talked about the importance of acting as an example for their children. By encouraging a child to act in a similar way to themselves the parents are again seeking to reinforce bonds of sameness in the hope that this will result in their children's moral knowledge mirroring their own, in the belief that such an understanding will best equip their child to deal with the social world. However, it must be noted that the role these middle-class parents adopted did leave questions about whether being so active in assuming responsibility for their child limited the children's ability to take responsibility for themselves.

A sense of commitment

If parents are seen to hold this honorary qualification as moral educator, what is it about this relationship that makes children want to listen and not only that but follow parental instruction and guidance? Finch and Mason's (1993) work, although not specifically about children, highlights the subtlety of family relationships and how this impacts on the extent to which families bonded together as part of a harmonised cultural unit. Within this the level of responsibility that each member of the family felt for one another was seen as key. They argued that this sense of responsibility was a product of the particular 'kin-ties' within the family and reflected that need to belong, as demonstrated through dependence and interdependence among its members. This theme is reiterated in other work, where the home is recognised as a place of mutually effective caring (James 1999; O'Conner et al. 2004), in which the child manages such relationships with others as they grow in independence (Solberg 1997). It is this foundation of mutuality between child and parent that suggests that within families there is a sense of commitment between members. It is this realisation that provides the basis for that sense of responsibility that children feel towards their parents (although this may be to differing degrees). This is reflected in the following discussion between Amy and Lisa:

SF *So what makes something right, how would you know?*
Lisa *It would kind of make her [mum] feel happy and you don't forget her and you think about her*
SF *And is it important to make her feel happy?*
Amy *Yeah cos she's the one that gave birth to you so*
SF *What do you reckon Amy?*
Amy *To start off with she gave birth to you, she is like your very first friend*
SF *So is it important to make them feel good?*
Lisa *Yeah my mum. My dad I don't know him and I don't really care about him*
Amy *She knows you better than anyone else, and she gives you pocket money during the week*

What stands out in this discussion is the mutual sense of responsibility between the girls and their mums. Their mums are owed a debt of gratitude; they brought the girls into the world and continue to look after them today. The girls therefore have a sense of wanting to repay their mums and they feel they can do that by making them feel happy.

By managing this relationship correctly the girls 'win', not only emotionally, but also practically; '*she gives you pocket money*'. One of the mums commented on this herself. When I asked why her children did what she wanted, she replied, '*they want you to be happy*'. In as much as it ensures the pleasant sensations of happiness, such an attitude also serves to reinforce the close relationship between parent and child, as well as reinforcing those all-important bonds of similarity and belonging. Mia, in another interview, seems very aware of her mother's moods and the ways in which she can impact on these. She talks about not wanting to do anything wrong, like shouting at her mum, in case it upsets her. Her concern for her mum was central in helping her define acts that are 'wrong', as well as determining what was 'right':

> Mia *I know what's right when my mum smiles at me. I do know, because sometimes my mum smiles at me and I think that's alright or like say if my mum was feeling down and she just started smiling one day, I'd feel really happy*

Seeing children as social agents with the power to manipulate their social environment helps to explain why it is important to Mia to make her mum happy. An act that brings happiness to others and praise to the individual in turn creates a pleasant social environment, a sense of harmony. This was reflected in the children's diary accounts. Here acts that were defined as 'right' within the home were those behaviours that promoted positive relationships. For Nic, an act that was 'good' was demonstrated by making her '*mum and dad and brother a cup of tea and some milk shake*'. The reason she gave for being good like this was '*because I felt good and my mum and dad were pleased with me [and] my mum said thank you*'. For Andy, his addition to social harmony, and therefore an act of 'good', was when '*my cousin Oliver came round and I helped look after him*'. Why was it good? '*Because I felt good, because he's so cute and I felt responsible*'. When asked if he would do it again he said, '*most definitely*'.

In contrast 'wrong' within the home was invariably linked to sibling rivalry and fighting and the negative impact of behaviour on relationships. The three dramas that looked at 'wrong' in the home all referred to some kind of sibling rivalry, whether it was disrupting a younger child's game, siblings 'telling on' each other or squabbles over what programmes to watch on television. These themes were also prominent in the discussions:

SF *What would be seen as something very wrong at home?*
Will *I sometimes have arguments with my brother and it leads to wrestling*
Alan *I get told off as well like Will, because all my brothers and sisters, cos there is nine in my family, I am overrun by sisters, I have five sisters and one brother, and you just get wound up with them sometimes and you just lash out*

This desire not to upset the harmony of the family, to disrupt the mutual caring relationship or to lose the trust of parents was important to all. The girls were more able to express this in terms of their emotional thoughts and feelings[3] although both boys and girls recognised equally the role of their parents as moral educators.[4]

As mentioned above and in Chapter 4, trust is critical, as part of understanding the children's desire to maintain that bond of commitment to one another. Here the girls are explaining to me why they were worried about being caught doing something 'wrong', by their parents:

SF *So what worries you most about being caught?*
Anne *Them remembering it*
SF *Who?*
Anne *Your mum and dad or . . .*
Kylie *. . . anybody, they might have trusted you up until then, parents won't then be able to trust you to go out when your older*
Anne *Cos, when my brother does something bad then he's not able to go out with his friends, my mum doesn't even like him going to [the local town] on his own, but she lets him but if he's been really bad then she doesn't trust him*

The children recognise that not fulfilling their commitment to their families will result in a breakdown of trust. If they lose their parents' trust then their growing autonomy, and the freedom that goes with it, can be restricted or lost altogether. This also goes some way towards explaining why this sense of commitment is so apparent in the home, as this is a particular space in which positive relations lead to a marked increase in the opportunities for self autonomy.

Many of these themes can be looked at through psychological theories that suggest that the 'self' experiences happiness through doing good for others (Brandt 1996; Gleitman 1995). However, a sociological perspective lays a strong emphasis on reinforcing ties of belonging. Throughout this discussion on home, each aspect has in some way reiterated the

child's desire to reinforce their sense of similarity with their parents. As a result children are able to perceive a mutual relationship within which they see their parents wishing to act in their best interests, a position furthered by the view that parents have the best personal knowledge and understanding of their child. Such relationships clearly play an important part in a child's moral development, through establishing a set of experiences or habitus, which provides a strong foundation for further moral education. The children themselves raised concerns over relationships where there was not this fundamental bond (the extent to which this and the nature of changes in relationships as children get older impact on developing moral understanding are important, although they sit outside this research). However, the way in which perceptions of power can impact on moral learning do provide indications of the way in which different types of relationships affect children's experiences and ongoing developing moral understanding.

Sanctions

As the discussion so far suggests, the most effective way for parents to encourage moral learning is to appeal to the individuality of the child within the context of a loving relationship.[5] One implication of this was how hard children found it to identify any explicit 'rules' at home. Rules within the home were implied, such that children would morally assess their behaviour by considering the implications it might have on their relationship with others. Similarly, clearly defined sanctions did not form a part of the child's experiences within the home. As the parents involved in this study suggested, punitive sanctions were not really necessary:

> Mrs G *There's hardly any discipline because, um, this sounds so sort of, but I don't have to tell them off, you know. I have to tell them off for bickering or you know for punching one another, I do have to stop that but in terms of getting things wrong other than between themselves I can't. And even then I can't totally discipline them because I see it as practice for the rest of the world, so if they can't practise being a bit emotional with one another then … they've got to practise somewhere. So on the whole there isn't a lot of sanctions going on round here but Danielle gets it wrong occasionally with friends. I just talk it through and say I was a little bit disappointed because next time you can try this one, you know. I tell them off for running round the house on roller-skates but on the whole I don't*

In all the families the parents sought to develop their children's moral learning through strong, mutually caring relationships, for they felt that children through such relationships will be able to develop their own sense of right and wrong by reflecting on their actions within the context of those around them. As a result the parents did not feel that it was necessary to impose particular rules. The extent to which this position was shaped by class this research could not say, but it is notable that all the families presenting this view were two-parent middle-class families.

The discussions about sanctions with parents were limited. However, as the dramas showed, sanctions were a part of everyday family life and the children were very aware of the greater power their parents held. But it was only when this power was seen to be misused that the children would question or challenge it, with the result that children were willing to accept some restrictive sanctions as legitimate.[6] In this drama a mother is responding to her two sons ruining their sister's game:

Mum *I have had enough of you two (raised voice – use of arms) I am going to ground you for two months. No PlayStation, no computer playing, no television, nothing you like at all*
Mum *Go and play in your room for two hours*
Mum *And think about what you've done*

This extract shows the kind of sanctions that a parent might use, which include the withdrawal of privileges and telling a child to stay in their room. Even though the practicalities of removing toys required the parent to be more powerful, such actions were accepted. This next extract shows parents using another type of sanction.

Mum *What's going on here (loud and forceful) Right, stop. Zac, how dare you beat up your brothers and sister, now go to your room. Now. And don't eat and don't watch TV in your room I'll pull the plug out. That's it, any more of this and there'll be no football tonight. I'm warning you, no football club tomorrow if any more of this carries on. Say you're sorry to your little brother*
Boy *Sorry little idiot*
Mum *That's not a proper apology, say sorry to your sister*
Boy *Sorry*

Mum *And you [little brother] stop it I am warning you, and no pudding tonight. That's it (smacks little brother) to your room, you're asking for another smack*
Boy *It's not fair*
Mum *I'm warning you – straight to your room or you will be spanked – wait till your father gets home. Straight to your room (lots of noise). No exceptions*

Here, within the drama, there was a lot of shouting used in order to deal with a sibling confrontation. However, Mum here escalates her power from the withdrawal of privileges, to physical force, which was further backed up by the threat of telling the boy's father. It is interesting to note that as soon as the sanctions become physical and threats start to be used, the boy then states that '*it's not fair*'. This reflects those comments on consent in Chapter 5. While the relationship was perceived to be mutual, consent was given; however, as soon as this perception alters to one of more and less power, that consent, or more specifically in this case, that recognition of legitimate authority, is questioned and challenged. Smacking provides an excellent example.

Smacking was a sanction used by parents within the home to which the children responded in different ways. At the centre of their views on whether or not it was acceptable was the perception of the mutual relationship and the issue of consent. If the child felt satisfied that they were part of such a relationship and that by engaging in a piece of behaviour they were 'consenting' to the potential of being smacked, then it was seen as legitimate. Similarly when a child does something 'wrong', a number of children accepted that their act implied consent to the sanctions that followed:

Joe *Oh I get smacked loads*
SF *Is that okay?*
Joe *Yeah. I do really bad stuff*

The problem with smacking came when the sanction was seen as one person exerting power over another. In these instances, rather than the child morally learning from the experience, they ended up resenting and feeling angry about the way they had been treated:

SF *What would make you stop doing something again?*
Beth *My mum's okay but if my dad would stop like moaning at me, if I do something bad he moans at me and then he moans and moans and doesn't stop and then I start crying again because he keeps moaning at me*

SF *Nic?*

Nic *Well I don't think they should like shout at you and like smack you and slap you, but I don't think there is much point in that because that is just going to scare you of them. What they should do is just sit you down and talk to you about it. Cos if they're smacking you and shouting at you it's not doing anything*

Dave *I don't think parents should hit you or really row with you I think they should just like say it once and then go again if you do it again . . .*

Isaac *I don't think parents should hit you because it hurts and um (laugh) and it usually just makes you angry and you start calling them names. When you are away from them you start calling them names so it doesn't do anything good really*

The children make the point that talking about why their action was unacceptable is far more beneficial than a punishment that simply focuses on the physical body. They want to be included in understanding the moral meaning attached to their actions and a response that demeans them and reduces them to the position of powerlessness does not allow that.

The trouble with dads

It was fathers that were more commonly associated with the excessive use of authority. The following discussion from a piece of drama emphasises the arbitrary use of power:

Mum *What's this I hear about you cleaning up toys, that means you have been playing with them.*

Boy2 *No, no, they were all over the floor and we thought . . .*

Dad *No questions boy*

Boy2 *We thought we could just clean them up for you*

Dad *Stop*

In this extract the dad became more the enforcer than the educator and this theme was not unique. In one home-based drama the mum continued to take the lead role but the threat of 'dad' was used to back her position up, and in another, the dad's return from work saw the children being subjected to both verbal and physical attacks. It was noticeable that in the everyday experiences that the children shared, discontent with the moral learning process at home was often linked to their fathers. This generally related to children's relationships with their fathers not being perceived as being on the same level as those

with their mothers. Mums fitted within the mutual stereotypes (see Chapter 5) far more easily than dads, whose size and gender reflected negative attributes that were commonly associated with those with greater power.

The difference may be a consequence of the fact that it is mothers who generally spend more time with their children, the result being that fathers are not as clear about the boundaries set or how to enforce them. As one Mum said, '*[my husband] works long hours. So it is hard for him sometimes as he might say yes to something which they're not allowed to do and I will have to say no they can't do that*'. However, fathers also have to overcome the additional physical attributes associated with the 'powerful other' (for the impact of size and strength, see Chapters 4 and 5), with the result that they need to work hard in order to dispel any such connections. Achieving the right balance as part of a relationship that shows respect, whilst at the same time being able to provide clear moral guidance, is not always easy, as displayed by the description of the father in the following extract:

Harry *Once my brother was being really annoying, he wouldn't go to bed, he wouldn't brush his teeth and, um, my mum got so annoyed she slapped him round the face but he had a cough so he was crying really loud, then my dad came in and said what's all this noise, went over to my brother and he was wearing a collar like this and lifted him up like that right to his face and said go and brush your teeth right now and get into bed. So he went to brush his teeth, put his pyjamas on, went to bed and said can I have some water and they're really annoyed, water now, then my dad says fine I'll give you some water so he gives him the glass of water, and he says, want some water? and then he smacks, he throws it all in his face, just because he didn't want to go to bed*

SF *What did you think of that?*

Harry *I don't think my dad should have been that angry because it was a Friday night and we weren't doing anything the next day, so I think, and it wasn't that late it was only about half past eight, so I think he should have been able to stay up a little bit longer, and it's because we've got babies and toddlers living next door, we weren't being that loud either, we were just laughing loudly sometimes but we weren't laughing that loud*

Harry was annoyed at the way his father behaved, as his dad's reaction was not proportionate to the behaviour it was aimed at preventing. From Harry's perspective it also did not acknowledge the individual circumstances of the situation, and there was a consequent breakdown in their mutual relationship. The breakdown in relationships that smacking potentially causes led many children to challenge the fairness of smacking and to suggest that it was just something that happens when parents cannot think of a better option.

Another extreme example of parents over-using their power in order to ensure control was in relation to child abuse. The children equated child abuse with an adult's inability to control their reactions. The result was an explosion of adult power in which the child suffered. The children therefore argued that it was the responsibility of adults to maintain their self-control. The children did acknowledge that, at times, they did deserve to be sanctioned, told off and even smacked, but such action was only accepted when it occurred in a mutually caring relationship. Consent, as outlined earlier, was seen as key to acceptable physical contact. The child would accept invasion into their personal space if it were a recognised response that they had risked in undertaking that action, similar to that for bullying. One girl in particular talked about how she was smacked at home. This found expression in the resigned attitude she had to her physical body, which was most clearly illustrated when she said that she would simply ask a stranger who hit her in the street not to hit her too hard. This reflects other findings that make a link between a low self-esteem, smacking and being bullied (Thompson et al. 2002).

All the children agreed that physical punishment, or parents getting frustrated or angry, was not the most effective means of achieving moral awareness, as such power actions resulted in the dismantling of any notion of a mutually caring relationship. In the past parents would regularly send their children away to receive their education (Hendrick 1997b). Today, based on these discussions, there is an argument in favour of parents being close to the moral learning process, as it helps to reinforce the mutual care and strength of commitment between child and parent. However, for others having a parent as an enforcer rather than an educator, when enforcing includes reducing the child to a position of powerlessness, can be very detrimental. Indeed, getting sanctioning wrong can result in a dismantling of any notion of similarity, reducing the very bond of belonging and thus damaging the reason why children, in general, want to get it 'right'.

School – preserving order

Bourdieu (1971) writes of the importance of school in providing a 'habit forming space'. It is within the school that he suggests the child really starts to pick up those skills and abilities that are going to help them deal with social interaction. The emphasis that Bourdieu puts on schools would suggest that they are the proper and most effective places for moral learning but, in this study, even though the children acknowledged the teachers' role to educate them about academic matters, they questioned their ability as moral educators. The children seemed to be very well aware of the difficulties that Mayall (1994) alludes to about school being a space in which teachers see children as objects that form part of a project, rather than focusing on individual needs. The following extract highlights the contrasting role of teachers as opposed to parents. The boys had been asked who was the best person to teach them about right and wrong:

Andy	*Parents I think*
Tom	*No, maybe teachers, but parents must be because they're the ones that started us, when we went to school we knew about right and wrong, so it must be them, but then teachers make it obvious*
Andy	*The teachers tell you all you know*
SF	*Do you think teachers are as good as parents?*
Andy	*Maybe a bit lower*
SF	*Why a bit lower?*
Andy	*Because they don't um … they don't know what you're like … Yeah parents, the people you spend most time with*

Children obviously recognise that teachers do have a particular role as educators; indeed, Andy says that teachers '*tell you all you know*'. However, as moral educators teachers are seen in a very different light to parents. Even though teachers do make right and wrong '*obvious*', they are not seen to be responsible for children's fundamental moral knowledge. As Tom points out, when children arrive at school they already know about right and wrong thanks to their parents. Even though teachers do '*spend more time with you*', at school this time is severely restricted. The result is that on an individual level a teacher is not perceived to have the same knowledge and understanding of the individual nature of that child. As Andy is keen to point out, '*they don't know what you're like*'. But why is this important?

Morality, particularly in the context of mundane everyday social interaction, is such that it can not be defined in terms of black and white, rather it is full of shards of grey. To know where the boundaries are, therefore, can be hard. The people who are most effectively placed to ensure boundaries are consistently maintained are those people who know and understand the individual child best, such as parents. Such a relationship provides for a logical and methodical learning process, which builds on the individual child's past experiences. School can not accommodate such a personal focus. There is not time or opportunity for teachers to build 'mutually' perceived relationships, nor is there the time for them to respond personally in order to clarify the morality of an individual child's actions. Without the type of relationship referred to at home, explicit rules take the place of the reflective consideration children and parents give to their behaviour at home. The result is, as Tom points out, that school makes right and wrong '*obvious*', but it does not necessarily empower children as moral agents.

A space of rules

School, more than home or the neighbourhood, was seen by the children to be dominated by regulation and was the space in which the children found it easiest to identify rules. Significantly, these rules were directly related to the maintenance of order and ensuring control by focusing on limiting basic social interaction, such as communication and mobility, as highlighted in this extract:

SF *So are the rules different at home and at school?*
Anna *Sometimes*
SF *Like what?*
Anna *Like you're not allowed to talk and you're allowed to talk at home*
Kay *Running around*

Rules relating to not talking or running were the most commonly recognised within school. Such rules suggest a very different set of values from those at home. Indeed, the rules themselves do not draw on the emotional aspect of moral definitions that was so apparent in the home, particularly in relation to issues around commitment and duty, which were integral to a mutual relationship. Rather, at school an act is wrong because it has been defined as such by an adult within the context of maintaining order, not necessarily because of the emotional impact it has on others. The explicit use of rules within schools as opposed to implied rules in the home (James 1993) reflects the historical growth

of schooling itself. Here a growing desire to ensure the positive moral development of children led to the perceived need to ensure that all of a child's actions, principally those of boys, were monitored. The school itself provided a perfect arena within which surveillance could be successfully carried out, supported by the imposition of rules aimed at diverting the child away from any potential to commit 'wrong' (Ariès 1962).

One outcome of the way in which rules are defined within school can be seen in relation to bullying. Here fixed definitions within schools have made it easier for actions to be given clear meaning, thus making it more likely that bullying is reported and acted on (Thomson et al. 2002). However, even though strict definitions might mean actions are easily defined, questions still arise about the extent to which such a system encourages children to really understand the impact of their actions on others, so that bullying is not just recognised as 'wrong' but that children are aware of why it is wrong. This is exacerbated by the fact that the way such rules are enforced provides little or no opportunity for explanation to the children.

A matter of time

As mentioned earlier, not only are teachers unable to build relationships like those at home, they also do not have the time to invest fully in the moral guidance children want. The following extract reiterates the centrality of time as an ingredient on which to build a relationship from which children can effectively develop their moral learning. What is important here is that even though these boys were at times self-confessed trouble-makers, they did want to learn about right and wrong. The problem that they continually found was that when they were told off they were never given an explanation:

Josh *Well they never exactly explain it because they haven't got a lot of time*

Nat *They tend to think …*

Josh *get on with it …*

Nat *I've got to get on with this lesson, so I'll just send them to the hall for five minutes*

Josh *I think we shouldn't get sent to the hall because then we're missing out on the lesson … I think what we should have, we should have like a co-teacher that teaches you about right and wrong and when the teacher sends you out to the hall the co-teacher goes and explains everything to you and why it is wrong*

SF *So you think in each class there should be two teachers?*
Josh *Yeah*
SF *One teacher who does the explaining?*
Josh *Yeah and one just teaches you normal lessons*

The children's idea of having a second member of staff whose focus is on building relationships and furthering moral understanding, rather than fulfilling a lesson plan, is perceptive. It provides scope to deal with the recurrent problem of classroom disruption in a way that seeks to build relationships, rather than simply enforcing the power differentials between teacher and pupil. Time remains the central issue in laying the foundations for personalised moral instruction, something that teachers in the present system are always going to be pressed to offer. This is not to say that teachers do not have a role as moral guides, but how they approach this can range in effectiveness.

Of course the other side of moral guidance is praise and children clearly respond to praise offered by teachers to the point that this is something that they will work towards. However, this was only mentioned in the diaries and not in any of the interviews or discussions.[7] There was far greater discussion about not wanting to upset teachers. As Andy said, '*yesterday and today, I was shouted at in class for saying the answers and making people laugh, so I had better stop that*'. This attitude, that was focused on avoiding being told off, may have been because the children did not want to talk about pleasing a teacher in front of their friends (as part of the discussions). However, it seems more likely that the focus on not wanting to get into trouble took priority over thoughts they had about seeking to please.

'That's unfair' – teacher power

As Josh and Nat suggest above, the time teachers have to invest in the individual, to explain the reasons, is limited. School is about control rather than preserving and maintaining the mutual relationships seen in the home. This need for control makes moral discourses in school about moral absolutes rather than recognising the personal process of understanding and reflection that has been shown to be key to meaning-acquisition for the social agent. Teachers, like parents, are recognised as authority figures, but the limitations on relationships means that rather than establishing a sense of mutuality with the children in which acts are seen as legitimate, teachers are likely to be perceived as more powerful. Other research has explored similar themes (Franchi 2008), and reinforces the notion that the most effective teaching occurs when

things are explained (Montandon 2002), whereas a bad teacher overuses their adult power (Aynesley-Green 2007[8]). The following extract provides a common perception of teacher–pupil interaction in a moral context, as understood by children. Prior to this intervention the drama had shown two boys attack another in the playground:

Teacher	*Stop there! Go against the wall, you shouldn't bully in school*
Boy 1	*We know*
Teacher	*No you don't*
Bullied Boy	*Give them detention Miss*
Teacher	*You are in detention tomorrow lunchtime, you are in detention Wednesday lunchtime, got that?*
Boys 1&2	*Yes Miss*

The language here is directive and leaves no room for discussion. While it might be argued that power was appropriately used, this response leaves little scope for the individuals to communicate their side of the story.

It is the use of arbitrary power that upsets children and this can be most clearly seen in relation to everyday mundane interventions. The need to maintain control in these situations means that teachers do not have time for explanation, ensuring order is the priority. Teachers, as demanded by the institutional culture, must therefore undertake the role of the more powerful, with the result that children are left questioning the legitimate nature of the teachers' actions. The following extract reflects how mundane interaction can impact on the child's sense of powerlessness within the classroom:

Amy	*I think they're evil because he [her teacher] gets carried away about hockey and then he starts saying did you see the game last night, and of course we didn't because it's like on at 12 o'clock. So we start talking and he tells you off for talking*
Kirsty	*I think teachers are evil especially ours . . . because he was talking to me yesterday so I answered him and he said, 'Kirsty get on with your work'*
SF	*What, so he spoke to you?*
Kirsty	*Yeah, so I answered, and he said, 'Kirsty stop talking'*
SF	*Was he joking?*
Kirsty	*No he forgets things, doesn't he?*
SF	*So how does it make you feel when he does that?*

Kirsty *Makes you feel like he's evil*
SF *So does it bother you?*
Amy *It's a bit annoying when it's not your fault*

Here teachers are classified as being '*evil*' because of the small mundane everyday interactions through which the children are reminded of their powerlessness. One sketch shows the sense of injustice, but also the way children perceived teachers. This drama involved the children questioning the teacher, played by Louis, as to why he had shouted and whether that was fair:

Louis *Of course it's fair, you shouldn't have been talking or nothing, we're teachers*
George *Children are sensitive, you don't know what they're like*
Louis *I don't really care what they think, they shouldn't be chatting or nothing in class, this is serious boy*

Louis thus stereotypes the teacher's reaction to children chatting by using imperatives,[9] reaffirming their position of control and leaving no room for further discussion. It appears that it is not necessarily the act of 'chatting' that is in itself '*serious*', it is the fact that, through chatting, the children challenge the teacher's authority and control.

Another of this group's sketches continued with this theme by depicting another everyday, mundane situation in which the children were asked to do some work which the teacher then rips up and puts in the bin. This drama stemmed from the discussion in which the children expressed their frustration with not having their efforts within the class recognised:

Mia *In some work they say you're doing this on your own. But some of the work we don't understand. They're quite annoyed when you have done about a line or something, but we didn't understand it*
Louis *We want them to appreciate what we can do (general agreement)*
Andy *I've got one, when you like cross something out cos it's wrong and you've done a scribble they shout at you cos they're like (in fast furious voice) this is something, now do it again, do it again*
Tom *They screw up your work if you do it a tiny bit wrong*
All *Yeah (noise)*

SF *How does that make you feel?*
Louis *We've tried our hardest and then they like, put it away and throw it away*
Mia *The other day we had these cards that we had to make ourselves and some of them didn't work properly and he just chucked them in the bin, but we spent time on making them*
SF *How did it make you feel*?
Louis *Upset*
Mia *Annoyed*
Andy *Because we've spent ages on them*
Mia *We've spent our time and you think what's the point of doing it if you're just going to chuck it in the bin, there is just no point. And he would shout at you if you didn't bring it in but then he just chucked it in the bin*
SF *So how do you deal with it, do you just accept it or what?*
Andy *We have to accept it because if we shout at them we will go to Miss Phillips [the head teacher] and she will probably suspend us if we shout at her*

The above discussions show the nature of adult power at school and how the children react to it. They want teachers to recognise the effort that they put in and they want teachers to be more aware of the difficulties that they face as individuals. Adults, they suggest, need to try and understand issues from their perspective, with the potential that this may lead to acts being reclassified in favour of the child. At home, a minor indiscretion would be dealt with through a process of negotiation within the context of a mutual relationship. At school, however, there is no opportunity to debate. Judgement is quick and unforgiving and children just have to accept it. The difference in the way in which power becomes an issue in relation to these two spaces is highlighted in a school's most powerful sanction, that of suspension or expulsion. The reality of this is that the school is able to get rid of a problem, an option that is not open to a family, where there is a greater sense of commitment and thus a stronger basis for constructive negotiation. Even though primary schools rarely use suspension or expulsion, these sanctions do remain for the children symbolic of a lack of commitment without the option for negotiation, an attitude that extends to the perception of sanctions in general within the school. Indeed a recent report into exclusion reflected the extent to which it can be an easy option, doing little to develop a sense of commitment or improve behaviour (Barnardo's 2010). A major implication of this is the continuous threat

of power, such that acts are not legitimised in school in the same way that they are at home. The result is that a teacher's effectiveness as a moral educator is limited.

Getting it right? – the challenge for staff in schools

Children do, however, recognise that some adults at school are willing to engage with the individual by making sure that they have '*listened to both sides of the story*'. Josh and Nat share another example of this:

Nat *I think Miss Phillips [the head teacher] is quite good at sorting out problems. Because I did a trade the other day with my friend, my sort of friend Robert, and all of a sudden he said he wanted to trade back and I didn't want to and so Miss couldn't sort it out so we went to Miss Phillips. Miss Phillips always has the sensible way to sort out the fair way. She listened to both sides of the story and she made us trade back but now Robert's not allowed to bring his cards in so I got an unfair part and Robert got an unfair part*

Josh *Nathan, remember when you were like really, really, really like annoying me and intimidating me in the playground last year*

Nat *Yeah, I had to run away from you*

Josh *I ran and I jumped and you cut your knee so badly*

Nat *It was funny*

Josh *And we went to Miss Phillips and she just sat us down and said What's the problem? she listened to both sides of the story, exactly the same as that, and she gave us both a fair thing that we stay away from each other. But now we've made up*

There were a number of positive comments from the children about the way in which the head teacher dealt with moral situations. In the extract the boys note the time that the head teacher spent with them, '*she sat us down and … she listened to both sides of the story*'. As a result. Josh explains, she was able to arrive at what he perceived to be a fair judgement for both; '*she gave us both a fair thing*'. Notably, it was only the head teacher that the children talked about in such positive terms as a moral educator, as someone who was able to respond to their needs. Such a finding can not be disconnected from the fact that the head teacher did not have to deal with the day-to-day issues of running a class. In dealing with these situations she was able to concentrate on those children who were involved, alone in her office, without having to also maintain control of their classmates. It further highlights the importance to children of having such situations dealt with on a personal level. It also

supports the perceptive comments that Josh and Nat made, considered earlier, about having a member of staff who has the time to isolate those involved in a situation, and who can then provide personally focused moral guidance.

Since 'fairness' is so important to children, schools need to be very clear about how to handle moral issues and the labelling of behaviour as 'right' or 'wrong'. The head teacher said that rules were necessary to '*protect other children and staff*' from children '*who are making life unpleasant*'. However, it is not the rules per se that cause the problems of injustice that the children feel; it is the way in which rules are enforced. Pollard (1985) notes that, when children perceive illegitimate power is being used against them, they start to consider the fairness of the interaction. When asked whether there was any kind of policy or guidance given to her staff regarding discipline and sanctions, the head teacher said that they did not have any official policy because sanctions, from her perspective, were only relevant to a very small minority of troublesome children. Therefore it was not a priority to get something down on paper. However, from the children's perspective, unfairness stems from a misuse of power in everyday situations, which affect many of the children and not just a few. These everyday decisions by staff, simply by the nature of the social arena in which they are played out, result in challenges directed at the self, which, as Pollard (1985) commented, have the potential to damage or threaten self-esteem.

One area where the lack of clarity in staff guidance had implications for the children was in the playground. The playground, as touched on in the last chapter, is a space in which there is a lot of social interaction and as a consequence moral issues often arise. However, often this space is policed by Mid Day Supervisors (MDS) who have very limited knowledge of the children. With little knowledge of the children these members of staff are in a difficult position when faced with the moral situations that arise every day in the playground, a position made harder by the lack of clarity about which sanctions are actually available, as demonstrated in the following extract of a conversation with some of the school's MDSs:

SF	*When someone does come to you with something, you said you felt a bit restricted in terms of what you could do. What can you do and are the sanctions you use useful and helpful?*
Clara	(laughing)
Tracy	*That's a good question*
SF	*Really, are you limited . . . ?*

Tracy *We have never been really told, have we?*
Clara *Not really, we just try and deal with it ourselves and if we can't then we will maybe send them in to Miss Phillips or …*
Tracy *… yes …*
Clara *… you know, find a teacher to deal with it. Or that's what I do*
Tracy *Yes, me too*
Clara *If it's not something I know how to deal with*

Without any official policy about dealing with situations the MDSs had to rely simply on their power as adults. It is not surprising, therefore, that the boys spoke passionately about the 'run-ins' they have with the MDSs and how unfairly they felt they were treated. All the MDSs could do was to try and talk to the children and hope that, through developing relationships, their advice would be accepted. It was interesting to note that their view of being effective moral educators was linked to the amount of knowledge they had about the children, replicating their own experiences as parents:

Clara *Some children react so quickly and we don't know their backgrounds, if the children have got specific problems, we may not know*
Tracy *no we don't …*
Clara *… so some children might be different to deal with than others. So that's where, as with your own children, you know*
Tracy *Some children get upset very easily*
Clara *Yeah*
Tracy *… you only have to talk with them and they burst out crying and you feel …*
Clara *So you know there is probably more to it than we know about*

Clara makes the point that as a parent you do know your child and therefore know how to respond to them in the most appropriate way. Indeed, this sums up the contrast between home and school. At home parents are thought to know and understand their children, with the result that they can assist in the moral learning process on an individual level, whereas at school there is not the same relationship. Teachers and other staff at school do not have the same knowledge of the child and therefore the children find it harder to legitimise any sanctions that are applied. At home sanctions form part of a constructive learning process, whereas at school sanctions have the potential to create a sense of

injustice and ill-feeling. This section has, however, suggested that this does not need to be the case. In fact it showed clearly that adults within school can act under a badge of legitimate authority. However, this demands effort to build and develop mutually focused relationships, which move away from sanctions that are arbitrary, and towards methods of engagement that focus on the individual moral learning needs of that child.

Neighbourhoods

The neighbourhood provides a further contrast to home and school, it being the space in which children are most commonly depicted as behaving in ways that are 'wrong', as discussed in earlier chapters. The result is that it is a space in which children are seen 'as out of place, a destabilising presence on the social order' (Mathews 2003: 102). Indeed, it is this perceived potential to destabilise the neighbourhood that has driven policy and practice towards children in this public arena, resulting in them being seen more often than not as offenders, despite the greater likelihood of them being victims (Wood 2005). The result is that the neighbourhood is not a space for moral education; it is a space within which children are expected to have already learnt what is morally acceptable and they are therefore treated accordingly. Thus, the role of the police is not focused on guidance and support but on catching and convicting. This extract was part of a conversation about whether the police would respond to a call from an old person to children knocking on their door, and whether this response would be different today to when one of the parents, Mr I, had been a boy:

> Mr I *I don't think the police would turn up now. There was much more respect for authority then. You'd be in their bad books, rather than threatened with a criminal record. If a policeman came along, he'd clip you round the ear, you know. I wouldn't dream of telling my dad that the policeman had hit me, because dad would have said he would have had good reason to have hit you. Except that authority in my age they did, you wouldn't do it again … it's changed authority*

It was not only the police that Mr I referred to as guiding or correcting behaviour, but local parents and other adults as well. Such an image promotes acceptance of the idea that children will make mistakes, and if they do then there were 'concerned adults' there to help. This position is far from the children's experiences today (IPPR, 2006[10]).

Lack of regulation

A major factor that makes the neighbourhood different to home or school is that in the neighbourhood regulation is very limited. At home or school, actions are given clear moral definition, both implicitly and explicitly, by 'concerned adults'; such adults were simply not mentioned by the children in the context of the streets. What was noticeable from the interviews was that, during questions about who might intervene out in the neighbourhood if someone did something 'wrong', the police were never even mentioned, a finding that is symptomatic of the children's lack of contact with the police. As discussed later, the police were discussed in the dramas, but here their roles were very firmly defined. So what was it that impacted on moral decision-making out on the streets? The following extract is a conversation the children had about throwing a stone at a window, and whether it was something that they would do:

Andy *If I know I would get into trouble then no, because I don't like getting into trouble*
Tom *It depends what time it is*
Andy *What window it is, if it's a double-glazing one*
Tom *If it's like when you really, really like your friends and you just, you know you can't refuse, but then*
Andy *If you're like bullied*

While there were slight worries over being caught, more practical concerns affected the children's thinking – what time it was, what type of glass was in the windows and, most particularly, the nature of the relationships with others. All these criteria took priority over any concerns about being caught, a theme that was replicated in other discussions, as shown in the following extract of a conversation between Lana and Ellie:

SF *Why wouldn't you crack a window?*
Ellie *It's not nice for whoever owns the pub*
Lana *It would get spiders everywhere. I hate spiders*
SF *Get spiders everywhere?*
Lana *I hate spiders*

Lana's concern was not about being caught and arrested by the police or being spotted and shouted at by a passing adult; she was worried that they would let spiders into the pub. In fact actually being caught by an

adult in authority when 'fooling around' was very rare in the children's experiences. In all the experiences shared there was only one account in which an adult had intervened to challenge the behaviour of one of the children (an old lady who didn't want people playing in a shared pathway by her house). There were no examples shared of children actually being caught doing something 'wrong'. Such views reinforced the children's opinion that adults in authority are not visible regulators of the neighbourhood, a realisation that was not without consequence.

No-one to turn to

As suggested above, the perceived lack of regulation of the neighbourhood by 'concerned adults' had a number of implications. One is that it provides greater freedom to more powerful groups like teenagers to establish social dominance through their own moral codes. As seen in Chapter 4, the unpredictability and violence associated with this group makes children particularly vulnerable, both in terms of succumbing to pressure to do something they do not want to do, or simply to risking a physical or verbal attack. If a child was the victim of such behaviour at school then there would be people to tell, but out on the streets children found it hard enough to identify a 'concerned adult', particularly one that would be interested in helping them. The children did not feel that if they approached a shopkeeper or a police officer that they would be listened to, let alone believed. When a class of children were asked, 'do you think a shopkeeper would listen to you if you told them you were being forced to steal?', over three quarters of the children immediately put their hands up to say that no they would not be listened to. This lack of trust in adults is interesting and raises questions about who children can turn to, with the result that they were well aware of the need to take responsibility for themselves:

Mike *Hurting people is wrong but sometimes you have to do it*
SF *Why would you have to do it?*
Mike *If someone was in a fight and there were no grown-ups around or no-one you could tell you'd have to go and stop it or kind of hit someone to get them off of the other person*

However, rather than getting involved in situations, as Mike suggests here, the more common way for children to respond to something happening to them out in the neighbourhood was just to accept it, a perspective that raises concerns over the way in which children respond to victimisation (as reflected in Chapter 5). Darrel and Steve described, for

example, how a bully in their road jumped on Steve's remote-controlled car and scared them so much that they had to hide every time they saw him. What was significant about this conversation was that they did not at any stage mention an adult who helped in passing or to whom they might have turned for support. Throughout the research only four different groups of adults were mentioned in connection with space regulation: a head teacher, a lifeguard, neighbours and the police. The first three were all only mentioned once, with the police being mentioned slightly more. But even then there were specific criteria that were attached to the police's involvement in a situation. First something needed to have happened and second, the police needed to have been called. If the police did attend a situation, it was perceived that the person involved, no matter what they were thought to have done, or their age or background, would simply be arrested and taken away. There was no perception that the police had any discretion which they might be able to apply in situations where moral guidance in the form of a warning might be enough. This meant that the police were seen to act in the same way, whether dealing with a child who had been forced to shoplift, drunk and aggressive teenagers or children who, for fun, were knocking on people's doors. This suggests that the children did not in any way see the police as moral educators or even as adults who in passing would help with a problem. The police were seen as spatial enforcers on behalf of adults, rather than being concerned with the role of guardians for all within the community.[11]

Relying on your own code

As mentioned above, a consequence of children not getting any support, or indeed moral guidance, was a realisation that they needed to take responsibility for themselves. Morals in the context of the neighbourhood were therefore framed in light of concerns about personal safety. Moral acceptability was related directly to the protection of personal integrity, with over 60 per cent of 'rules' identified by the children being associated with this space and its links to 'stranger danger'. The rules were significant because it became clear that in establishing a moral foundation on which to make sense of the neighbourhood, laws played only a minor part. Only 20 out of a potential 260 rules for the neighbourhood could be related to a law. Of these 20 rules, the majority were against antisocial acts such as graffiti, vandalism and dropping litter, with a few children mentioning the crimes of murder and theft. As highlighted within one drama discussion, the children did not feel

that laws applied to them. Rather, they sought to rely on their own moral understanding, a code of conduct built on experience:

SF	*Why is something like this (kidnap – the theme of their play) likely to happen outside school and home?*
Jane	*Because there are rules in school and home*
Amy	*Yeah, but there's rules out of school*
Jane	*They're laws not rules*
Amy	*Yeah well I call them rules*
SF	*Why are they rules not laws – don't laws come into home and school?*
Anna	*No because thingy [government] don't make them up do they?*
SF	*Where do the government make the laws for?*
Anna	*Outside*
	(Noisy discussion)
SF	*Rules and laws are different, why?*
Liz	*Its not against the law for babies to chew wires but its certainly against the rules*
Sarah	*They're rules as in do this, do listen …*
Amy	*Cos we have the St Stephens Code of Conduct, don't listen, don't interrupt, I mean do listen, don't interrupt, do work hard, don't waste time (helped by others), do be kind, don't hurt people's feelings, do be honest*
Jane	*So basically that's like our laws*
Any	*Do be gentle*
SF	*That's like the laws of your school?*
Liz	*That's our rules, rules not laws*
	(The others agree)
Amy	*The reason why rules and laws are like the same because really if you're in your house or school you can like (pause) go up to someone and blow their head off and go bang*
SF	*You're not going to do that at home, is that what you're saying?*
Amy	*Yeah*
SF	*Why are you not going to do that at home?*
Anna	*Because it's stupid*
Sarah	*But it's not stupid out in the town though? … These are going to be rules for outside as well*

This confusion over what is a rule and what is a law is significant as it raises questions about the application of law to children's lives. Their discussion draws on the differences between spaces and the way in

which their actions are defined within them. The children acknowledge that in the neighbourhood rules are not so easy to define and, even though they are aware of laws, they were not clear as to whether they applied to them. Sarah summed up the vagueness of their position by saying that the laws were made for the '*outside*'. Undeniably the neighbourhood was a space into which children were keen to graduate. However, they did this with moral guidance being drawn from their own personal moral codes built on experiences in other spaces, not from their understanding of the law.

Fun

Impacting on the children's personal moral codes was the desire to have fun, '*I think fun is the only thing that matters*'. Fun provided justification for '*fooling around*', even for acts that were 'wrong', '*because you might be having a laugh*'. It is this desire to have fun that provides the motive for children's interaction with their peers out in the neighbourhood. The relevance of this, particularly in relation to concerns about antisocial behaviour, becomes more apparent when we look at what acts might be seen as 'fun'. One frequent example was ringing someone's doorbell and then running away. In an extract quoted in Chapter 5, one boy responded that he behaved like this '*because I think it's comical*'. Having fun, by implication, encourages the reinforcing and furthering of relationships; therefore, it becomes a tool for maintaining peer relationships, achieving social capital, which for the less powerful provides a potential step towards mutuality. This can make the individual vulnerable to exploitation; however, children are also vulnerable to the way in which their actions are defined by others. For what may be seen as fun to the child may be seen as 'antisocial' by others. The consequence of this is that the child may end up facing punitive, condemnatory action simply through a desire to have a good time. This raises questions about the willingness of adults to acknowledge that children need a space for fun. Indeed, adult ambitions to restrict children within this space does little to encourage the sense of citizenship or commitment which were so important to building relationships of mutual respect within the home.

Conclusion

The material in this chapter reinforces the personalised nature of the moral learning process and how children's conception of what is seen to be right and wrong is not an absolute construct but a fluid one, based on developing experience in different social environments. In each of

the spaces, the children, in the context of a range of social relationships, assumed different 'taken for granted' predispositions or habituses (Connolly 2004) to which further experiences were added, shaping the distinct moral codes that were seen to apply in each social arena. In building up their knowledge of what was 'right' and 'wrong', the children sought constructive personal experiences from which they could develop their moral understanding and thus their ability to navigate the social world. As part of this, key adults took on important roles, the effectiveness of which was directly linked to the children's perceptions of those relationships.

Being known and understood was a very important factor in legitimising the use of authority and in building up a sense of commitment. However, this acceptance of authority raises significant questions about society's formal means for directing moral behaviour. For in the context of both the police and the courts, the children's perception was very firmly of a powerful authority group versus a powerless 'wrongdoer', in which the powerful exercised speedy and summary judgements aimed at getting the wrongdoer 'out of the way'. This image is the antithesis of the moral learning process described above, and it stands as a warning to adults to recognise the need to engage with the individual child. If children's perception of moral guidance, whether in home, school or neighbourhood (Sparks 2000), reflects archaic notions of punishment, fear and control, it will impact on their engagement with it and their ability to grow in knowledge and understanding of what is and is not acceptable within society.

Section IV
Concluding Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts – Time to Be 'Bothered'

'I'm not bothered' is an iconic phrase that has become popular in summing up the perceived attitude of the young towards the rest of society. It suggests a lack of interest or care, so that children, focused on themselves, will do and be whatever they choose. It is just such perceptions of the young which pervade adult thinking that result in the ever-present spectre of the Ominous Child and leave children outside of moral discourses. To maintain this status quo, in which children continue to be defined in terms of the threat they pose and adults in terms of their capacity to dictate and govern, is easy. However, the children from St Stephens *were* bothered. They were interested in improving their capacity to engage socially, as they grew in their understanding of what was and was not acceptable. They also recognised the significant role adults needed to play as guides and educators. Add to this an acceptance of their skill as social agents who on a day-to-day basis are engaged in moral dilemmas and it is clear that the status quo is no longer credible. It is time to assert a new foundation for such discourses, within which we are all bothered about the relationship between children, morality and society, basing our understanding not on assumptions but on allowing children's voices to be heard.

It must be reiterated that the findings in this work do not seek to present a complete and universal answer to the issues of children and morality. Rather, the case study represents the individual thoughts and opinions of a group of middle-class children sharing their own life experiences. These experiences were unique to them, each approaching questions of morality on the basis of particular predispositions which framed and shaped their actions and the moral meaning attached to them. It is because of this, rather than in spite of it, that this case study has been effective as a means of directly recognising the child

as a social agent, engaging with morality on a day-to-day basis, as these individual children seek to make sense of their everyday worlds. As such it recognises that children with different backgrounds and in different places may draw different moral meanings from their experiences. The arguments, therefore, in the preceding chapters must not be seen as complete but rather as a foundation on which further research can build on the claims made here, broadening the scope of investigation amongst children and therefore allowing a deeper and more accurate body of knowledge.

Changing constructions of childhood and morality?

In his book for adults about children, *The War for Children's Minds,* Law (2007) asks the questions 'how do we raise good children?' and 'how do we make moral citizens?'. This desire to find answers shows the relevance of these debates to contemporary society. However, the basis on which Law seeks to find his explanation reflects the ongoing belief in the status quo and the acceptance of a universal perception of both childhood and morality. In defending this position Law draws on Kant and his theories that moral awareness applies equally to all, and that therefore children are able to think for themselves and, as a consequence, must take personal responsibility. An increase in individualism (Nasman 1994) and a rejection of values within society more broadly, whether from religion, family or school, are not a problem to Law, as in keeping with Kantian philosophy, the universal application of reason means the child remains capable of knowing right from wrong.

However, as the developing arguments have shown, it is not correct to disconnect the child's moral competence from the social world that they are part of. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre (2007) makes the case that moral reasoning and thinking today is founded on a less substantial basis than philosophical thought in the past. He identifies in particular English moralists such as Hume and their Emotivism and rejects them on the basis that they do not have a solid thread through which to assess and judge moral action. It is that point of reference that MacIntryre notes in the philosophies of Aristotle and Aquinas that he finds so compelling, for they link moral understanding with the individual and their society, acknowledging the capacity of the individual to engage. This idea, in contrast to Law's position, consequently sees morality defined by social experience, such that alongside the individual child the influence of 'others' is significant in sharing, shaping and developing meanings, even values. This has significant implications for

the way in which we seek to answer those questions of Law's posed above.

Unfortunately it is a lack of adult engagement in partnership with children as individual meaning-makers that has been a prominent theme in the early chapters. Adults have relied on and continue to draw on assumptions about children as a universal group in which children are equally capable or incapable of moral understanding. This approach impacts on policy and practice as highlighted by the ambiguous connection between age, competence and morality as described in Chapter 3. Indeed, it is the arbitrary nature of the age of criminal responsibility as defined in English law that provides the best example of this. Here, irrespective of individual policies, the principles for dealing with children reflect presuppositions about the role of both the child and the adult in relation to discourses on morality. Adults, reflected in the processes of law, are there to control and punish as they demand and then enforce society's moral expectations. Children, on the other hand, are there to be shaped, as they are forced, through the implementation of power, to reject their latent capacity to challenge and destabilise, as they succumb to the adult will of society. This dictatorial attitude to children and to wrongdoing, with its historical roots seen in Chapter 2, is the antithesis to the moral learning process described in Chapter 6, with its implications for moral education, whether at home, school or, more formally, within the 'justice' system. This calls for a re-evaluation of the popular way in which we seek to make sense of children and morality, and demands a growing realisation of our joint responsibilities to one another as social agents.

The application of these arguments can be seen directly in the current discourse in English law in relation to antisocial behaviour. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (Asbos) were first intended to deal with neighbourhood disputes (Muncie 2004; Campbell 2002), but have become synonymous with children, morality and communities. 'Asbomania' (2008) reflected this concern for children as a threat, as well as providing a means for responding to it. The social prevalence of the notion of Asbos and their relationship to young people has also acted as a means to highlight children as moral decision-makers and their ability, or lack of it, to make sound moral judgements. The need for antisocial behaviour to be dealt with reflects another concern over the growing egotistical focus of children's lives, summed up by that notion of not being 'bothered'. A wide-ranging report from the children's charity The Children's Society (Layard and Dunn 2009) highlighted that sense of individualisation in children's lives, where lifestyles limited

the extent and inclination to engage with others, striving for the 'me', rather than the 'you'. Indeed, that sense of individualism has been identified by some as limiting or restricting the moral scope open to us: 'contemporary social relations are now orientated towards compulsory self-interest and atomization in a cultural climate where it is becoming increasingly difficult to make moral decisions' (Winlow and Hall 2006: 17). It is unclear how much of this introverted outlook could be seen as the result of the way in which children have been relentlessly targeted and pursued. However, it appears to be this recognition of a cultural climate, with the individual centre-stage, in need of change that is behind the drive of the new United Kingdom government to review the role of Asbos. The incoming Home Secretary, in presenting her position in relation to antisocial behaviour, suggested that 'we need to re-establish that sense of personal and social responsibility' (May 2010). Such a comment seems to recognise that the individual is part of this process, but to what extent is this increased drive for responsibility really about change?

Indeed, one might actually question the extent to which the possible rejection of Asbos (Home Office 2011) is simply a means of pacifying coalition partners or demonstrating a separation of policy from the previous administration, when all that is really happening is a dispersal of powers in relation to dealing with children as, for example, prison places for children increase (CYPNow, 20–26 July 10) and measures are put in place for greater powers for teachers to ensure discipline at school (Guardian, 1 October 2010). Significantly it is the same 'social' institutions that remain at the heart of combatting antisocial behaviour. The role of the police remains central as the public face for enforcing legislation. The nature of the working relationship between the police and children has been commented on as being far from 'effective' (Bland and Read 2000; Loader 1996; Anderson et al. 1994) and although the police have sought to address this (ACPO 2008), the extent to which previous attitudes towards children have changed remains open to doubt. However, the role of the police within our communities must be seen within a new context as plans are put in place for policing to become more popularised, as the public are invited to elect police commissioners with the power to sack chief constables. It is here that the major concern in relation to change lies, for it is the public who the Home Office wish to be at the centre of the fight against antisocial behaviour (Home Office 2011). However, this is the same public that have accepted and supported the previous policies targeted at children, defining their conceptions of both children and

morality, who will be voting for those who have the power to direct policing.

This presents the potential paradox where the individual is identified as the problem, yet the response remains entwined with universal conceptions of both childhood and morality, as popular opinion, rather than actual knowledge, takes precedence. As such, can there be change?

In May 2010, opening the legislative programme of her new government, Her Majesty the Queen announced that the forthcoming session would be based on 'freedom, fairness and responsibility' (Queen's Speech 2010). These are positive ideals, but to what extent will they carry meaning? Hitherto voiceless social groups are at last being heard; however, arguably, children still do not have that freedom. Without such a voice, adult assumptions continue to dominate policy and practice, resulting in a lack of justice and a sense of unfairness. Without engagement, who is there to be responsible to? If traditional assumptions about childhood and morality continue to be accepted and children are seen as antisocial or evil, it is clear that those themes of the Ominous Child will re-emerge in other guises as children remain a group to be controlled and constrained.

Moral agency

It is developments in academic thought that have presented a new foundation to guide our thinking in relation to children and morality. These changes in relation to structure and agency, looked at in Chapter 1, can be argued to have freed children from the constraints of the past (Chapter 2). Indeed, the development of the 'new paradigm' in respect of children suggested that it is only by considering children within the context of their social worlds that it is possible to understand them more fully. It means that even though their experiences of life may be different to adults', children nonetheless remain competent and active social agents capable of constructing and shaping meanings.

The notion of the self provided a framework to explore further this sense of agency, a consideration of the process by which individuals assess themselves in light of those around them, including in respect of the acceptability of their actions. The developing argument, therefore, sought to position morality as an aspect of the day-to-day, as a filter through which the individual child made sense of his or her social world. Chapter 4 developed these themes as it further explored the extent to which morality provided a means through which children could respond to the social world as they asked fundamental questions

about their own identity and sense of belonging. Through the notion of similarity and difference, it was possible to see how children built and developed moral stereotypes through which to order the world around them (Rapport 1995). Aspects of these positions drew on a shared culture, but as Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrated further, this capacity for moral agency stemmed from personal reflections on their own experiences through which individual children were able to establish their own sense of moral meaning. Significantly, children recognised that moral knowledge provided a means through which they could associate or disassociate themselves with or from other individuals or groups, this impacting on their place within the home, their choice of friends and decisions about who should be avoided when out in the neighbourhood. Such findings suggest that children not only have the capacity to engage with morality but that moral engagement extends to every aspect of their social life, providing them with a means through which to navigate the world around them.

By adding the additional variable of power to the discussion of similarity and difference it was possible to explore further the way in which morals form part of children's lives and how they came to be expressed. Chapter 5 distinguished between the three power relationships of mutuality, powerlessness and powerfulness, positions that children were continually shifting between with each having implications for the way in which moral meanings were defined and enacted within their everyday lives. What this showed was the way in which the children formed moral meanings through asking questions about their self-identity in the context of different social arenas. Moral expression must therefore be seen as a dynamic process, constantly changing with time and space.

The implications for adults

A changing dialectic

A constant theme in previous chapters has been the way in which understandings of children and morality are adult-centric constructs. This can be seen to have advantages for adults, allowing means of control. However, it also has disadvantages. By its nature, this stance sees adults setting themselves up in opposition to children rather than in communion with them. It assumes, rather than draws on, reality. An example is knowledge expectation, in which adults presume a level of moral understanding in children. It is the focus on such expectations that is

misplaced. The criminal law expects that on a child's tenth birthday, along with blowing out their candles, children go through a moral transformation that means that overnight they become omniscient in relation to what is right and wrong according to the law. For the children of St Stephens, morality was a long way from the fixed and absolute model imposed by adults; rather it reflected many variables which impacted on the way opinions were formed about what was right and wrong. This is shown in this final extract:

SF *What makes something wrong?*
Neil *If you meant to do it. If somebody asked you to do it or not. If like something that your friends tell you to do is bad, like smash a window, and then you went to a building site and you had to smash the window and your dad tells you to do it, it wouldn't be wrong*
SF *What do you reckon Joe?*
Joe *If it's a building site then it's wrong even if your dad tells you to do it . . .*
Neil *No, smash it to reconstruct it.*
Joe *Oh right that would be right, yeah.*
SF *So if a friend said to you to smash that chair up would that be right or wrong?*
Neil *If it was one of my friends I wouldn't, but if something like the world depended on it, if it was really big stakes and that was the only way to stop it from happening then I'd do it*
SF *Joe, what do you reckon?*
Joe *Same as Neil but if it was just one of my friends [who] like dared me I wouldn't do it because that would be silly, but only if it was like a scrap chair and was going to be scrapped anyway*

This conversation with Neil and Joe reflects how arriving at a moral meaning is not a straightforward process but is dependent on numerous factors. For example, forming an opinion on smashing a chair depends on where you are, who you are with and why you are doing it. It is interesting how the boys reflect on the nature of the request being made to them, whether they were 'dared' or whether 'the world depended on it'. These subtleties do not reflect a moment of moral realisation, but the growth of experience during one's life. The reliance on experience also provides the limitation, as children are restricted in their ability to shape moral meanings according to the knowledge that they have developed. For each child, as discussed in Chapter 6, this body of experience or habitus will be different, and will impact on the way in which moral

meanings are shaped. Here, in this conversation, the children can be seen sharing opinions as they look to collectively arrive at an answer, allowing each other to benefit from their own experiences, as these are managed to help frame a moral judgement. The centrality of the social in the consideration of morals was reflected throughout the findings. It was clear that in framing their opinions the children did not simply draw on a fixed list of moral definitions, but on social experiences as they reviewed their actions in the context of others'.

These findings show that not only are children capable of actively engaging with morality but that morals are expressed as a fundamental part of their day-to-day lives. Definitions of what actions are 'right' and 'wrong' must therefore not simply be seen in a legal context (as in the criminal law – Chapter 3) as fixed, but are clearly dependent on the way in which the individual perceives themselves in the context of others. This means that notions of morality are transient and are continuously being shaped and re-shaped. Children are aware of this and are constantly having to balance different moral meanings in different social spaces. However, to support this process and to speed up meaning-making in social interaction (Raffel 2004), children do develop moral codes as part of a personal learning process. These codes grow out of individual experiences and form an important navigational aid to the social world. However, there is a contradiction between the way in which children seek to learn and the way in which many adults seek to teach (Chapter 6). The latter is based on those archaic assumptions that continue to emerge in this discussion in which punishment is central and where there is no room for mistakes. But as the previous chapters have shown, the child's thirst for moral knowledge goes deeper than just knowing whether an act is unacceptable. To develop full moral understanding children want to know why the act was 'wrong' and how they can handle the situation better in the future. It is through recognising this process, both in terms of power relationships and the importance of understanding, that has implications for the ways in which adults can get more positively involved in children's moral 'learning'. However, this means adults engaging with children and developing meaningful partnerships across the zones in which they live their lives.

The importance of belonging

Mutual relationships were key to the children's sense of belonging. They were considered in the context of friends but also of certain key adults. Understanding the nature of this relationship is important as it forms the basis of efforts for more effective engagement with

children. The desire to be part of such a relationship, epitomised by trust, understanding and care, had a significant effect on the way in which children framed their moral understanding, as they made efforts to reinforce and re-affirm their similarities to those around them, knowing that any perception of difference may carry negative connotations. This resulted in children reinforcing the bonds of friendship through targeting the difference of others, as groups created their own moral meanings (a theme that relates to the criminological perspectives presented in Chapter 1). These meanings, as Matza (1964) suggests in relation to deviance, did not develop separately to the rest of the children's social worlds, but within it. As a result children could be seen to balance different moral meanings as they pursued ways to reinforce friendships through actions that, for example, key adults may have defined as wrong. So compelling was the desire to belong that it provided constant justification within the creation of their meanings as children sought to affirm their social position.

The importance of belonging as an influencing factor was illustrated further through the different power dimensions discussed in Chapter 5. For example, for some children the perception of powerlessness had the additional consequence of removing a force field of protection, expressed in relation to physical consent. It saw children question their sense of worth and value as a social participant and as a result saw them as more willing to accept and normalise 'aggressive' acts towards them. This immediately highlights the extent to which a lack of belonging compromises children, leaving them vulnerable. This contrasted to the powerful, where there was evidence of how children skilfully employed power to shape and define meanings that promoted mutual relationships and a sense of belonging. However, this section was dominated by children's own fears in relation to the 'other' and how their own belonging was threatened and challenged by 'difference' as defined by power. Both marked the extent to which children's moral agency must be seen in the context of their relationships, a theme that is central to children at home, school and out in the neighbourhood.

'Freedom' – home

The importance of home should not be underestimated. It is the place where a body of moral experience is developed which impacts on children's future actions and developing sense of self. As a result parents are in a particularly influential position. Parents, on fulfilling certain acts, such as spending time with their children, were not seen as 'different' on

account of their age but were recognised as part of a mutual relationship. The nature of this caring and trusting relationship then provides a means to encourage moral codes, as children seek to demonstrate their belonging to their parents. This desire to 'get on' sees children employ positive actions as they seek to create a sense of social harmony. As a consequence of this special relationship, children saw their parents as being the best 'qualified' to support them in their moral learning. That sense of legitimacy, derived through the nature of the relationship, is significant and invites further consideration of the way in which we seek to 'teach' moral understanding to children (even in the context of those who may have broken the law). Parents were not just seen as the people children would listen to most, but also the ones from whom punishment was 'accepted', to the extent that even acts such as smacking were not always seen as 'wrong'. This is an argument perhaps at odds with many opinions expressed within the current debate on smacking (Barnardo's 2010). However, the context here is notable, in that these were not the views of all of the children. Rather they were those of individual children who, within a particular relationship in which they felt respected, adopted a moral meaning in which a smack was seen as a legitimate part of *their* personal moral learning journey.

All this reflects the sense in which responses to moral mistakes must focus on the individual, both in terms of the initial action and the application of any sanctions. In general the nature of the interpersonal relationships within the home, and the focus on positive relationships displayed in this case study, mark out the potential of the home to contribute to the way in which children develop their moral understanding. This draws on the finding that the home was a space in which rules were not defined and in which sanctions were limited. As a result moral boundaries developed through negotiation and with increased opportunities for children to rely on their own sense of responsibility as they tried and tested 'moral codes' within a safe learning environment. The ideas of trust and mutual commitment so central to this process in the home must therefore continue to be reflected in the other spaces in which children live their lives.

'Fairness' – school

School is very different to home. The moral qualities of the rules in school do not draw on the emotional threads at the centre of the moral codes developed within the home. At school, an act is 'wrong' because it is deemed 'wrong', not necessarily because of the impact it has on social

relationships. This raises questions (framed as a result of this case study) about whether schools actually help to support the codes of morality learnt within the home, which are so effective due to the nature of the relationship between child and parent.[1] At school teachers do not have the time to invest in such relationships, with the result that they were not seen by the children at St Stephens as legitimate moral educators in the same way as parents were, with children often feeling unfairly treated when told off or sanctioned. This was not always the case, and when staff did find the time to listen, more effective outcomes could be achieved. However, the opportunities for staff to do this were limited.

Unfortunately the desire within schools for control, re-energised by recent policy announcements,[2] often result in snap judgements over guilt, which does not support moral learning and calls into question this institutionally ingrained aspect of school life (Mayall 1994; Aynsley-Green 2007). Indeed, a lack of clarity about adults' role in reacting to low-level wrongful behaviour exacerbates the sense of injustice that surrounds moral interpretations at school. The re-focus on control must therefore be reviewed, questions asked about whether action could be taken to reduce the level of injustice children feel and steps taken to promote positive moral awareness through developed relationships. In a further contrast to home, school as a space with little or no room for negotiation can also be argued to not provide the same scope of opportunity for children to take responsibility for their actions. This questions further the extent to which schools in their current approach are effective places for moral learning. Schools also need to recognise and build on the opportunities they have for defining certain actions within a confined space, and to use these effectively to tackle some of the negative consequences of similarity and difference, such as bullying. By not avoiding moral issues (Short 1999) schools can more effectively support the way children use notions of similarity and difference to ensure that children are fully empowered to negotiate the social world and that all are able to develop a sense of belonging.

'Responsibility' – the neighbourhood

The sense of injustice stemming from the impersonal nature of moral correction in school is further heightened out in the neighbourhood. Here the strength of relationships is even more limited and the nature of the sanctions more extreme. Moreover, the neighbourhood stood out as offering very little moral guidance. Children as a result realised that here they need to rely on their own moral codes. This in itself is not

negative, as it encourages children to take responsibility for their actions and to experiment with the moral codes learnt in other spaces. However, the children were simply not aware that there was very little room for them to make mistakes, with the line being very fine between having fun and breaking the law. That sense of vulnerability to social pressures but also to victimisation was also highlighted by the children not having any sense of a safety net (which they had at home) as they struggled to identify adults they might turn to if in need of help.

Despite the concerns children have about the neighbourhood it is an arena into which they are keen to graduate. It is seen as a place of fun, somewhere that they can leave the adult world behind and spend time with their peers, seeking and winning social capital. Part of the appeal of this space comes from children wanting to grow into adulthood and the autonomy that this brings. On this basis, rather than discouraging children from using this space, they should be encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility and ownership towards it. Indeed, within the home it was clear that a sense of duty and commitment governed behaviour; this same sense of commitment needs to be encouraged in our communities. This will not be achieved through legislation that has only limited application to the lives of children. What other research shows is that by encouraging children's participation and ownership of such spaces, issues such as antisocial behaviour can be effectively addressed (Case and Haines 2004). In this way opportunities develop for children to build mutual relationships with groups that would previously have been perceived as more powerful, with the potential for this to encourage that sense of commitment and duty displayed within the home.

Another important means of ensuring children's ownership and sense of responsibility within the neighbourhood, and therefore their moral commitment to it, is to see that they feel safe. Adults are keen to promote the idea of children as a threat. However, it is far more realistic to portray children as victims and not offenders (Muncie 2004). In the neighbourhood children feel they are without the adult protection that other spaces provide which is, of course, one of the reasons why this space is so enticing. However, efforts do need to be made to ensure that if something were to go wrong children would know what to do and who to turn to. The children in this study did not think that adults would be interested in helping them if they were in trouble; in fact they felt adults were more likely to work against them. The police were seen very much as an adult tool to help maintain order, and not as a service available to children. This perception of the police also induced an aura

of 'powerfulness' around them, which consequently led to them being categorised as a group to be avoided. As a result the police and other groups of key adults need to take seriously the importance of establishing relationships that do not present them as strangers but as effective moral educators who can be trusted to act in the child's best interests (Aynesley-Green 2007).

It is not just the police but the criminal process as a whole that needs to re-establish its legitimacy with children. This requires the individual to be a more central focus of the system, which can only be truly effective through a greater concentration on moral rather than legal guilt. Continuing to expect all children as they turn ten years old to have a full understanding of the criminal law equal to that of adults is misinformed and counterproductive, particularly bearing in mind the very limited extent to which education on the law forms part of the curriculum for children's learning.[3] This restrained approach to 'citizenship' education, reinforced recently by rejections of developing the subject in a more definite way in schools, do not further the moral responsibility or scope for further understanding that the children in the case study seemed to want. It is only by establishing a proper foundation for engagement, in which each party better recognises the role of the other, that effective moral citizenship can move forward.

Just the beginning

Children have been shown to be capable of engaging with morality, with moral dilemmas forming a constant part of their everyday life. It is significant that children's moral understanding is based on personal social experience, framed by processes of agency and not by suddenly reaching an age of 'reason', or having a desire to commit 'evil' driven from them. In assessing moral knowledge, therefore, adults need to recognise that children are different. This is not because they lack capacity to engage with morality, but is due to the limited nature of their experiences so far. Moral understanding is part of a continual learning process in which children look to marry the competing pressures that are part of social life. Children will do things that are 'right' and 'wrong' and adults need to respond effectively to both, helping children learn how to prioritise and manage competing pressures as social agents.

This book has presented a foundation on which children can be freed from the restrictive notions that have surrounded them in the past and continue today. By recognising the child as an active member of society with the capacity to construct and define meanings, an opportunity is

presented in which children can also be part of shaping a fairer society, with measures that reflect them and their needs. Responsibility is not a one-way process. For children to grow in their sense of commitment and responsibility to others, society needs to exercise its responsibility to them. This means there is a need to look beyond the notion of the child as a potential threat who only responds to punitive and rigid control. Rather, a more subtle and complex understanding of children and their relationship with morality must be acknowledged, one that recognises the role children are engaged with on a day-to-day basis as they seek to make sense of the social world around them. Children are not objects within their communities but active members of them with the capacity to contribute to moral discourses. As a result they are an untapped force of potential through which communities can grow in their acceptance of one another, as the voices of all are heard.

Appendix – A Voice for Change

This review seeks to provide further information on the methodological approach to the empirical research considered within this book. This must begin with contextualising the child within research. Chapter 1 demonstrated the extent to which individuals have had to struggle to free themselves from those around them and to be seen in their own right as capable of engaging with morality. Lee (1999) refers to this distance between the voice of the child and adult assumptions as the 'ambiguity of childhood', which is characterised by knowledge of a particular child on the one hand and knowledge of childhood on the other. It is this presumed knowledge of childhood that has been shown to take precedence in relation to policy and practice affecting children's lives. This furtherance of attitudes based on 'knowledge of childhood' also continues to demand a concentration on children as a corporate body, rather than recognising the individual. It is a foundation that for many is accepted as 'sound' (Oakley 1994). However, increasingly on the basis of theories that acknowledge children's agency such presumptions do not stand up to scrutiny. Oakley argues:

> Grand overreaching abstract generalisations substitute for empirical studies of children in their everyday environments, [therefore] we learn not about children's perspectives, but about adult concepts of childhood (Oakley 1994: 22).

The reliance on such 'knowledge' has been compounded by the fact that children, like other minority groups, have been excluded from research (Oakley 1994). One significant reason for children's exclusion has been that as a group they are not 'generally understood as having relevant knowledge to contribute to modifying their own and others' lives' (Mayall 2002: 175). This is particularly pronounced within discourses on morality with its focus on questions of reason and competence, and concerns over children's threat to adult power. By devaluing children's voices it has allowed for knowledge to remain based on a universal perspective based on assumptions (Mayall 2002).

As a result, rather than 'sound' knowledge reflecting actual experience of individuals within the minority group it represents only expected experience as perceived by the dominant group. The consequence of not having a voice is that the conditions affecting social positioning become 'organised by relations external to the everyday world and beyond the power of individuals to control' (Smith, cited in Mayall 2002: 25). Even though these comments were made in relation to women they are equally pertinent to children. As discussed in earlier chapters, knowledge about children is often not based on the reality of children's everyday experiences. Rather, it is based on a perceived need for children to be controlled. The danger of basing policy on the views of the powerful is that it leads to a continuation of misunderstanding and domination (Hooks 1989), which does not help to solve the 'problem' the legislator identified in the first place.

Morality presents a particular problem, for even though increasing efforts are made to try and include children, the extent and depth of their involvement remains questionable (James et al. 1998; Morrow and Richards 1996). In discussing the child as a moral agent, Mayall suggests that 'this idea is one we have been taught to find difficult, even a contradiction in terms' (Mayall 2002: 87). Mayall goes on:

> Perhaps the moral status of childhood provides the most dramatic instance of misfit between the adult structuring of childhood and young people's own knowledge and experience. Young people find that adults routinely reject or ignore their moral competence, yet they do engage with moral issues . . . A further twist to this tangle is that adults also expect young people to take moral responsibility both at home and at school [and particularly in the neighbourhood]. This adult neglect and indeed conceptual misunderstanding accounts for one of the strongest findings . . . that children find their participation rights are not respected. This misfit between experience and societal concepts has to be explained (Mayall 2002: 138).

It is this challenge to adults that stands out here, for it is only through breaking down those barriers of misconception and misunderstanding that the way will be opened for children to be better engaged in moral discourses. It is as a response to this challenge that the arguments developed in this book are therefore supported by empirical research in the hope that children's voices will be heard.

The importance of age

Age has been a constant barrier to children and their participation in morality. One of the issues around age has been the extent to which it marked competence to engage. However, as thinking has developed in relation to the individual child's agency, so it has been recognised that age does not need to restrict children's participation in research; rather research must simply ensure that it approaches children in a relevant way. As a result researchers must be aware of the need for different methodological tools to be designed such that they 'adopt practices which resonate with children's own concerns and routines' (Christensen and James 2000: 7; Harden et al. 2000). Some may still challenge the extent to which methods can ever reflect children's competence, as acknowledging competence in this way goes against some of the dominant views on childhood, particularly in relation to morality. It is, therefore important to stress that it is not a question of competence but rather one of difference (Morrow and Richards 1996; James et al. 1998). Solberg, in considering age in relation to research methods, suggests:

> My tentative conclusion to 'ignore age' does not imply that children do not possess qualities different from adults. Rather my suggestion is that our concept of such qualities should not influence the ways of approaching children in social science research. It should be open to empirical investigation to explore the significance of age and status within different contexts and situations, to explore doing rather than being. My exhortation not to take account of age is meant as a recommendation to researchers to make an effort to set

> aside what we already 'know' about how children and adults differ when they embark on fieldwork (cited in Jenks 2000: 70).

This view rejects suggestions that children have nothing to add to research and stresses that it is important that age does not prevent children's voices from being heard. Chapter 1 referred to research into very young children and morality which has shown how contextually relevant methods can result in effective sharing from children. By thereby recognising the nature of this 'difference', and constantly reflecting on it (Davis et al, 2000), children can be valid research participants in areas from which they previously have been excluded.

Data collection

The children chosen as part of the case study were described in detail in the introduction to Section 3. As noted there, these children provided a useful sample with whom to explore this capacity for social engagement and particularly moral competence. However, the extent to which the children were capable of participating was defined by the methods that were used. Already the need for methodological tools to be relevant for use with children has been put forward; however, it is also important that these tools are relevant to the research itself. This empirical investigation was concerned with demonstrating agency, but it also set out to do this in a way that challenged, albeit in a limited way, aspects of the universal approach so common to adult thinking. Through combining quantitative and qualitative techniques the opportunity to do this was increased. Quantitative techniques, suggests Qvortrup (2000), allow consideration of three key features of childhood, namely, the structural, the normative and the regulative. These themes all combine in a moral discussion due to the interrelated nature in which laws within society develop, drawing on 'norms' in creating and shaping 'regulation' within the confines of 'structural' understandings of concepts such as age. By using quantitative research methods, it was therefore going to be possible to build up a more detailed picture of those structures within which social rules develop and in which children learn about themselves.

There has been debate over whether quantitative methods fall within the bounds of the social study of childhood (James et al. 1998), with some arguing that they are only for those interested in facts, in contrast to qualitative techniques that investigate the construction of meaning (Tulloch 2000). However, that does not mean that the two are mutually exclusive. Oakley (1999) points out how necessary it is that we move away from thinking that qualitative methods are the sole methodological approach for researching minority groups, for, as she suggests, the methods themselves should not be used to define the nature of the topic being researched. Rather, she concludes: 'we need to examine all methods from the viewpoint of the same questions about trustworthiness, to consider how best to match methods to research questions, and to find ways of integrating a range of methods in carrying out socially useful inquiry' (Oakley 1999: 166). It is therefore by combining these two techniques that one can construct research that can provide information on the micro aspects of children's lives but that can also explore how this relates to the structures, including adult generalisations, that pervade the spaces in which children live (Tulloch 2000).

A range of research tools were therefore required. A wide scope of traditional tools were considered, with thought being given to the extent to which they would allow children to engage and participate fully and thus provide valid and reliable results (O'Kane 2000). In addition I wanted to create an atmosphere in which the children were keen to share, particularly due to the nature of the topic that we were going to be jointly exploring (Mayall 1999). That atmosphere, amongst other things, needed to be impartial, fun and exciting. The extent to which all children were involved in all aspects of the research was limited, which meant that certain voices are heard more than others. However, these voices show us into a social world in which moral understanding is paramount as children seek to navigate their way through the complexities of day-to-day life.

The methods

Part 1 – All children

The research divided into two parts. Part 1 involved all the children and comprised three activities – a personal fact file, a questionnaire and drama.

Personal fact files – data collection

I needed to build up a stock of knowledge about the children and what they thought of fundamental moral questions. This information was going to be particularly important as a means of contrasting data received in other areas. To collect this information the children were given a personal fact file. It gave me information on that child, their age, sex, name, but also what rules they saw at home, in school or out in the neighbourhood. These questions were simple and explored morality through direct questions, with the key areas considered being: lying, taking something, hurting others and fooling around, all of which related to future themes in the research. Although this exercise was only meant to be a cursory reflection on the issues, it did provide some very insightful and compelling data and a useful pool of supplementary knowledge.

Questionnaire

I wanted to ask quite a lot of children a fair number of questions. I wanted these questions to reflect moral dilemmas. To explore such dilemmas the children needed to be given information from which they could provide their answers. The process through which this questionnaire was produced therefore provides a useful illustration of how research tools can be adapted so that they are appropriate and relevant for children within the context of the research effort.

A questionnaire as a format might at first not be particularly compelling for engaging children. Whether it is a self-completion, face-to-face or postal questionnaire, each presents challenges for use by a child, particularly in relation to literacy (Scott 2000). Whatever the children use needs to recognise their different abilities. In this case that meant that I did not want children to be left having to read long sections of text in order to answer a question. Similarly I did not want them to have to write lots of text in order to answer. However, by combining the idea of self-completion with face-to-face responses a questionnaire was designed

that allowed some discourse between researcher and participant and allowed the children to contribute effectively.

At the centre of this design was storytelling and the recognition that children, as part of their day-to-day routines, are used to hearing, reading or watching stories. Here the information was to be given to the children in the form of a 'story' which the children could listen to and then respond to questions. The material required for the questions was therefore presented as part of a dramatic script – a radio show, recorded by actors. This was the played to each class in turn, with the recording being paused when a question was asked. The 'hosts' took the children through the questions, and I, simply as operator of the equipment, was there to support children if they did not understand and to ensure all children had the time to respond to the questions. The children then wrote their answers in a prepared booklet, designed to make written participation easy for all abilities.

The questions were split into three sections: 'different situations', 'different people' and 'newspaper headlines'. The first section asked the children about whether certain acts were 'right' or 'wrong'. These acts were carefully selected in order to reflect issues relating to the children's everyday lives. The four actions were, lying, taking something, hurting others and fooling around, just as in the personal fact files. However, in the questionnaire the children were given different dilemmas or scenarios involving these actions. This extract from the script provides an example of the flexibility that the radio show provided.

Henry: Well, thanks Catherine, now for question 4, and for this we have a new character, Charlie. Now remember don't worry about what you think of Charlie – remember these acts are made up and it is the act not the person you need to judge. Charlie is going to give some examples of lying. So listen carefully for question four.

Charlie: I had been out all day trying to find my mum a birthday present. She is really fussy and it took absolutely ages but at last I found what I was after, it was one of these silk scarf things. Anyway I was bringing it home and my mum saw me carrying something. She asked me what I was holding, I said nothing and she said look I can see it, and I said oh, it's just something that I had brought home from school.

Henry: Okay, question 4. It's the same as before, a) judge the act, fill in b) if you think the act was wrong and then c) would you do this? Now listen carefully for question 5.

Charlie: There was one time when I was going to the cinema. I was with some of my friends outside and the cool gang from school appeared. Some of them are quite friendly but they like you to be like them, you know those kind of people. They were all smoking and one of them said to me – do you smoke, I had never smoked before and I never intend to smoke but I thought it would look bad if I said no so I said yeah I smoke.

Henry: Question 5 you lot, you know what to do a), b) if you need to then c), so get circling. Here is question 6

Charlie: On this same trip to the cinema, the cool gang had disappeared and I had now thrown my cigarette into the bin. My friends and

I were not sure what we wanted to see. There was this one film that was a 12 and I was only 10 at the time. But I really wanted to see it, so I asked for my ticket, the man said how old are you and I said I was 12 two months ago.

Henry: Last question for Charlie, number 6 a), b) if you need to, then c).

This allowed deeper consideration of the meaning children gave to these actions; whether there was scope for the moral definition of an action ever to shift, and if it could shift, what the basis for such a variation would be.

The second major theme considered in the questionnaire was stereotyping. The children were introduced to five characters with very different backgrounds. Again these extracts from the radio show script provide an indication of the way in which these characters were presented to the children (the results of this were looked at in detail in Chapter 4).

Amelia: My name is Amelia Jackson and I live here with my Mum, Dad and my brother Tony. We all get on really well and I enjoy being at home. Oh, but don't misunderstand me I really like school as well. I have loads of great friends and I get on well with all the teachers, even though I don't really like my Art teacher Mrs Lewis; however, she seems to like me. I am pretty good at all subjects and I try to work really hard as I want to be a doctor when I am older.

Mick: My name's Mick, um, I, ah spend most of my day just kinda chilling out with my mates. We sometimes hang about the shopping centre in town or in that burger bar on Queens Street. I haven't got a job right now, but I don't care and anyway I don't really want a job. Well that's it really.

Mary: I'm Mary Lyons I am married and have three children. My children seem to take up most of my time. My day starts when I wake them up and then it's getting them out of the house and off to school. After that I spend a while tidying up all the mess that is left and trying to get the house ship-shape. It is surprising how long things like ironing and washing take. Some days I will go and do some shopping to make sure the children have something tasty for tea. And all too quickly it's the end of the school day so off I go to pick them up. And that's me I suppose. Another biscuit?

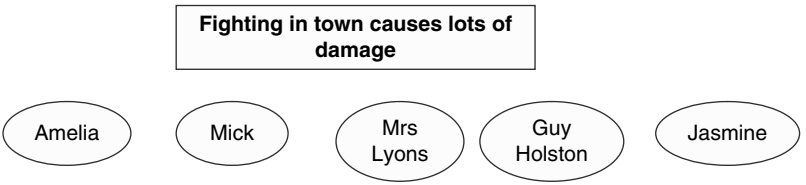
Guy: I'm Guy and I work here in this very smart office. There are about thirty other people who work here but I reckon I have the best job and I have been here for a while now. I really enjoy sport even though I can't say I do as much as I like, and too many of these business lunches quickly means you're out of shape. But I do watch a lot of sport, particularly football, but I am not that fussy and you will often find me and my mates in the pub sinking a few pints while watching a match of some kind. Oh yeah, and I am now the darts champion at my local pub, a pretty impressive title to hold don't you think?

Jasmine: Yes, that's right [I'm Jasmine]. I quite like being at home but my mum is often out and I don't have any brothers or sisters so it can

be quite lonely. I like listening to music and I would really like to play an instrument but we can't afford it. My favourite treat is going to the cinema; we don't have a television and so this is always really exciting. Ah, I don't know what else to say.

The characters were designed to give opportunities to explore the way in which the children thought about different groups and whether personal characteristics impacted on an individual's moral nature. This was added to by asking the children to relate these perceptions of these characters to newspaper headlines.

Read the headline – who might it refer to?



The themes presented in the headlines included fighting, being bullied, cheating and rescuing a cat, all of which provided an additional, more defined element to the way the children came to form a moral opinion of these characters.

Drama/discussion groups

As stressed above, this work, as well as looking at the structural issues of morality, also set out to explore the extent to which morality was a part of children's lives. This required an opportunity in which they could share their feelings, thoughts and impressions about aspects of the moral world they lived in. Focus groups offered a proven tool for collecting qualitative data from children (Hill et al. 1996), as well as further establishing that relaxed and non-threatening environment that was seen as important to this research (Krueger 1994). Fun was also suggested as part of the desired atmosphere, so I decided to invite the children to develop some drama around which our discussion would be based. Thus data was taken from their pre-performance musings, their rehearsals and their performances.

There were five different storylines for the drama and each class was broken down into five groups. Each group was told their storyline first.

1) You are with a friend and they want you to do something that is wrong. What happens next?
2) A person is picked on by another person. What happens next?
3) Someone does something very wrong at home; they get caught. What happens next?
4) Someone does something very wrong out and about, they get caught. What happens next?
5) You are asked to teach some adults right and wrong. What happens next?

From this, the children would enter into a discussion for around ten to fifteen minutes, leaving a further ten minutes for them to put a play together. For each storyline I had prepared a set of questions through which to structure and guide the discussions. The questions encouraged the children to think about who might be involved in these situations, where the drama would be taking place and what kind of acts were involved. All this allowed further investigation of themes already explored in the questionnaire and personal fact files, but in a way that on this occasion directly related to the personal experiences of the children. Having these storylines as a focus did prove useful in guiding the discussions and in providing a means for questioning the ideas and characters that the children decided would form part of that drama.

Once all the groups within a class had taken part in a discussion and prepared a piece of drama, the class was brought together so that everyone could watch the plays. The idea behind performing in front of the class was that it would then provide a further means for investigation with other children, sharing how common, or not, different experiences were.

Part 2 – A few children

Part 2 looked to provide some more detailed data on sixteen children. It was with this group that I sought to explore more about the everyday nature of morality in their lives, how their moral understandings changed between different spaces and how they used morality to make sense of the world around them. These sixteen were first invited to take part in an interview.

Interviews

Interviews were chosen as a means to investigate the more personal thoughts of the children and how their experiences impacted on their moral understanding. Each of the sixteen children were invited to choose a friend to bring with them for their interview. Each of the sixteen discussions lasted for about twenty-five minutes and were split between two pre-prepared areas of investigation. One focused specifically on questions about right and wrong, the other looked at issues of the self and others. In relation to right and wrong the children explored what they thought right and wrong was, what made something right or wrong and how it came to be defined in this way. This involved looking at themes about learning and how regulation and sanctions impacted on children's construction of morality. The interviews on the self and others first looked at relationships and then went on to explore these in the context of different groups and experiences associated with bullies, victims, friends and adults.

Diary

All the work I carried out with the various children had the constant that I was present. Therefore, particularly in the context of investigating different spaces, I wanted to invite the children to share in their own time and, to some extent, in their own way. Therefore, the seven children who took part in the home interviews were asked to complete a five-day diary (sixteen children had agreed to take part in this element of the research although this only resulted in seven families

actually taking part). This diary could be written or recorded, and the children were provided with some guide questions. These questions included:

a) Have you done anything today which was wrong?
b) Have you done anything good today?
c) Have you seen anyone else do anything wrong today?
d) Did you learn anything about right and wrong today?

Answering yes to any of these questions would then lead the child on to another set of questions, which gave them the opportunity to provide some details.

Research at home and school

This involved seven families. The idea of the home interview was to consider the way home life impacted on children's moral understanding. The questions were framed to re-visit themes that the children had been asked about during other aspects of the research, but particularly in the interviews. Of the families who took part, some of the interviews were with just mums, some had both parents there and three had the children involved as well. It was important to hear the views of the parents and their ability to share provided further perspective on the responses that the children gave. This was not targeted as a central part of this piece of research. However, what was shared was significant to the extent that it allowed an opening into the moral life within homes, as seen by parents, which had implications for their children and the way in which their moral understanding developed.

Interviews were also conducted using a similar format and set of questions as used for parents, with Mid Day Supervisors and the head teacher at St Stephens. These interviews, like those with the parents, sought to consider adult perspectives on themes that the children had been considering.

Ethics

Any work with children should be formulated within a well-defined ethical framework. This is important for any children who are participating, for gatekeepers (such as parents and teachers) and for the researcher/s themselves. Indeed access may to some extent be dependent on the ethical presentation and structure within which the research programme is set to develop (Grieg and Taylor 1999). Being a male researcher means that gatekeepers are even more attentive to issues of safety. A first step to satisfying this was achieved with a CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check. The adult-child power relationship is also something that is commonly raised in relation to child research (Harden et al. 2000), and as a male researcher it is something that I am always conscious of; this is discussed in more detail below.

As Roberts (2000) points out, Alderson's 1995 work for Barnardo's still provides the best guidelines for the creation of an ethical piece of research. It provided a framework from which to consider issues such as the choice of topic, the selection of subjects and issues of confidentiality and harm.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality is important at a number of levels. Gatekeepers want to ensure that data will be kept securely and not be exploited and, on a more practical level, the children wanted to know whether teachers and parents would find out what they said. In response to this it was important to provide reassurance that material recorded both on tape and video would not be publicly accessible. When using audio or video equipment the group were always asked if they were happy for the material to be recorded, which led to further discussions about how the information would be stored and used. The children were told that their comments were confidential unless a matter of seriousness arose that I felt had to be passed on to an appropriate adult.

The children and their teachers were also informed that all names would be changed for presentation within the research itself.

Harm: It is always hard to prejudge what harm might arise from any research. However, thought was given before entering the school of how to prevent or minimise any harm. All the children were going to be asked to draw from their own experiences in responding to the questions and as these were dealing with morality there was the potential for children to disclose an act against them. As mentioned above, children were told that there was no right to absolute confidentiality and that in certain situations I would need to pass the relevant information on to a more appropriate person. Making such information clear meant that should such a disclosure need to be made there was no breach of trust.

Throughout the discussions I was aware of the potential discomfort that some children might feel talking about moral issues and, therefore, there were situations where discussions needed to be re-directed in order to avoid problems. It was in fact noticeable that children felt more comfortable sharing information, for example on smacking, when they were part of the drama groups, as opposed to in the interviews. In the larger groups there were others who could empathise with their experience and therefore it perhaps felt easier to share. Throughout the interviews and discussions I kept a list of helpline numbers to be distributed if it was felt appropriate.

Consent: Burns (2000) describes informed consent as the most fundamental ethical issue. Considerable effort was made therefore to ensure that both adults and children were aware that their consent was a free decision and could be withdrawn at any time. In the leaflets created for both adults and the children, consent was specifically dealt with. In relation to Part One of the research, parents were sent a letter, via their child, in which they were asked to contact the school if they had a problem with their child being involved. For those in Part Two a further letter of consent and confirmation was sent to the parents with a stamped addressed envelope to return a reply slip at the bottom of the letter. It was felt that such a method was less intrusive than simply phoning. Part of achieving consent is making the potential participant feel comfortable with the subject area, an issue that had greater resonance due to the fact that questions of morality are pertinent to all and have the potential to produce strong emotions. I was aware of the worries parents might have had that the research was an assessment of their parenting skills. Such concerns were dealt with in the leaflet. However, parental involvement was not high.

Leaflets: As noted above, two leaflets were produced, one for children and another for parents or carers. The leaflet aimed to provide a clear outline of what I was doing and why and touched on the ethical concerns people might have. They were designed to be age-appropriate and to provide clarity as to the purpose of the study, as well as reassurance in terms of confidentiality and associated issues.

Reliability

The issue of assumptions and their impact on our approach to children and childhood has been such a major theme in the previous chapters that it is important that brief comment is made in relation to reliability. In exploring processes of agency it was necessary that children were invited to share in relation to their own everyday experiences. The methods outlined above therefore sought to provide that opportunity and freedom for all the children to engage. Further techniques allowed checks to be made on reliability, which considering the nature of the topic, was important. For example, children were questioned in a familiar environment alongside people they knew (Greig and Taylor 1999; Scott; 2000; Mayall 2000). This also helped to act as a means for thoughts shared to be peer-validated. Questionable comments or statements would be challenged, which would lead to the original child clarifying or withdrawing the statement. A further check was offered through comparing data across the different methods. As Abrahamson says, 'to rely upon a single measure, or to utilise a single method, exposes the researcher to the risk of erroneous interpretation' (Abrahamson 1983: 62). This resulted in continual cross-reference throughout the chapters.

Research and power

Another significant factor in assessing the reliability of this work arose from the way in which the children responded to me. I was very aware of the potential that I had, particularly as an adult and as a man, to be seen as more powerful. It was therefore important that I was not seen as another teacher. I sought to deal with this in a number of ways. This included simply being known as 'Sam', through to methods engaged within the research techniques themselves. For example, the recording was scripted so that the instructions came from the characters rather than from me, as in the following extract.

> Catherine: So let's get going. You need a pencil and your answer sheet. All got that? Right, now turn to section 1. You are going to hear some stories, don't worry about who is saying them, as the stories are just made up, just listen to what they have to say.
>
> After hearing the story you need to look at your answer sheet. There are 3 questions, a) b) and c). a) asks you to judge the act. Let us know whether you think the act was right, wrong or if you think it depends on other things, then circle 'it depends'.

> Now you only have to answer part b) if you judge the act to be wrong. You then need to let us know how wrong that act was. 1 is not very wrong and 5 is very, very wrong. Circle whichever one you think it is.
>
> Then it's part c). Here you need to let us know whether you would do this act; you have four choices, no way, maybe, probably and yes – and you just circle one of these.
>
> Henry: All got that? Any problems then put up your hand now.
>
> Right let's get going. Coming up is question 1.

My role therefore was simply to check that everyone had heard what they had been asked to do, rather than requesting it myself. I was therefore able to play a supporting role, rather than a dictatorial one.

I tried to maintain a similar stance in relation to the drama/discussion groups. Here, the flexibility of the questions and the freedom that the children had in order to develop their own ideas certainly helped. If children did start to take advantage of this freedom then I left it to their peers to intervene and to sort it out, a role in which they were very effective. Although the children were seeking to complete a defined task (a drama, the interview), clearly the level of freedom that the children had within these sessions was more than they would have with a teacher, which was a positive thing; however, it also raised questions about whether the children felt uncomfortable having such freedom at school.

Working with children in groups certainly gave them greater confidence as well as providing a means of peer regulation. This sense of confidence was demonstrated by the only all-girl discussion group that I worked with. As part of the discussion we started to think about kidnapping and whether girls were more vulnerable than boys. In response to this two of the girls mentioned situations that their mums had been in with partners. The girls did not provide any details (this may have been different with a female researcher) but certainly they felt comfortable enough to mention these experiences. Significantly, my maleness did not stop them from touching on these issues, a factor that was highlighted when a few boys entered the room we were in to collect their books, at which time the girls stopped talking and waited until the boys left before continuing.

This approach was also used in the interviews, where I spoke to the children in pairs. To remove that sense of me pursing an agenda I tried to ensure that there was flexibility within the interviews, with the discussions following directions led by the children. In this way it became more of a three-way conversation rather than some kind of interrogation in which I was simply pursuing a fixed agenda. However, it was only with the diaries that the children were totally free from my presence in responding to the questions. This method was used only with a small number of children, even though it did demonstrate that giving children that additional freedom and opportunity for reflection could produce some very interesting results.

Through a strong rapport with the children and through spending time with them, relationships were certainly built within which they trusted me and were prepared to share their thoughts, as demonstrated by the material in the

empirical chapters. However, it needs to be recognised that my presence and the way in which I approached the research and the children will have had some impact on the data collected and, as with any research of this type, that clearly needs to be taken into account.

Conclusion

This research provided some interesting findings. But it must not be seen as the end but simply the beginning of a developing body of work that can help adults move beyond the restricted processes of thinking that have dominated the past, as the call is made to allow children to be engaged in those social processes that impact directly on their everyday lives.

Notes

1 Agency, Identity and Belonging

1. An example of this was seen during the Putney debates of 1647 as the soldiers of the New Model Army debated a new constitution for England. The depth of this change was summed up by Colonel Thomas Rainsborough who said, 'for really I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he; and truly, sir, I think it's clear, that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government' (cited in MacIntyre 1966: 153).
2. This significant shift in thinking can be seen in the 'existential theories' of Kierkegaard and later Sartre (Thompson 2005).
3. However, a major criticism of this work was the exclusion of women (Tierney 1996)
4. In his work *Delinquency and Drift* (1964) Matza points to three stages of becoming deviant. Stage one can be summed up as a desire to belong. New members will watch the behaviour of others, thereby giving a foundation to what is the norm. This involves children following others into committing illegal acts in order to affirm their belonging. Stage two is a process of neutralisation in which the new group members disassociate themselves from the idea that what they have done is 'wrong'. Stage three accepts that the person may now be involved in criminal behaviour, but this does not mean this has to continue. The individual is a product of free will and, therefore, knows that actions are illegal and that they may be caught.
5. For more on this, see Piaget (1967), Chapter One.
6. For Piaget was not alone (Kohlberg 1984) and even beyond his own field his voice had reflected and reinforced the dominant thinking of the day. This was also seen in sociology, where Talcott Parsons' theories on socialisation also limited the extent to which children were seen as free to exercise any sense of agency. Parsons (1951) was prominent in developing an understanding of the child as a reflection of social order. His position was that society could normalise all, that it could shape a potentially unstable object, the child, into a coherent and disciplined member of society. Parsons said, 'society becomes the monitor for all order and it further inculcates a set of rules and conduct which are enforced less by individual will and political sovereignty, than by society's own pre-existence' (Parsons cited in Jenks 1996: 14). For the child this meant childhood was a time of indoctrination into the values and norms set out by their predecessors. In this respect it resulted in the 'successful transmission of culture from one generation to another' (James et al. 1998: 23). Children were thus a product of social structure rather than agents within it, and even though this construction recognised the relevance of the social it still promoted a universal and passive interpretation of the child.

7. James et al. (1998) consider the application of Freud's work in relation to childhood under the heading of the unconscious child, within which they argue he ignores children's agency; see James et al. (1998), Chapter One for more.
8. Within the sociological field Corsaro's work in the late 1970s marked this shift from children as passive to active participants in the social world. His work recognised that children were far from social objects that simply received instruction; rather he argued that children were aware of the function of different social processes, actively engaging with them to aid their ability to effectively interact with their peers (Corsaro 1979). For more on the general historical development of these ideas see James and Prout (1997), Chapter One.
9. Despite calls from the UN for smacking to be banned the UK remains without an outright ban. Increasingly countries are introducing legislation to this effect, recently in Hungary, Portugal and Venezuela. Despite changes to the law in England and Wales, parents can still smack if it is 'reasonable chastisement', even though many parents do not see smacking as an effective tool, but cling to it as a last resort (Bunting et al. 2010).
10. The examples here in relation to victims suggest that in cases of abuse children should have more confidence to trust their instincts, which is hard unless children recognise that they have ownership of their bodies in the first place.
11. Turner (1984) defined these two opposing groups as the foundationalists and the antifoundationalists. The foundationalist position acknowledges the body as a material entity but one that is independent of the social context within which it exists (Prout 2000). James et al. (1998) challenge the extent to which this stance can extend our understanding of children and their interaction with their bodies, since this one-dimensional view of the body revolves around adult conceptions. The antifoundationalist view, on the other hand, seems to provide a multi-dimensional view with the result that the body is lost amongst the layers of representations.
12. See Jenkins (2004: 72), which refers to a number of Goffman's works, all of which deal with related aspects.
13. Research that looked at peer relationships with children aged around five years old.
14. Some research has suggested that children at six months know the difference between good and evil. It reflects the relevance of moral discourses, but also the extent to which science is increasingly acknowledging children's agency within these debates (*Daily Mail*, 10 May 2010).
15. This work identifies three different groups of children Pollard termed the good group, the jokers and the gangs. Each of these groups approached social situations in different ways, with their actions reflecting different moral meanings. For example, the meaning attached to 'having a laugh' contrasted between the good group for whom it would mean actions and behaviours that would please the teacher, to the gang who would employ cheating to provide their fun (Pollard 1985).
16. The history of the interrelationship between boundaries and rules as means for creating order by defining what is and is not acceptable is dealt with in Chapter 3. It reflects arguments developed by Douglas and others and

demonstrates the extent to which the 'moral' is simply, but importantly, a part of routine social order (also Haste 1999).

17. It must be acknowledged that some children are confronted with very defined structures where agency is extremely limited, for example, in the case of child soldiers. Such examples raise interesting questions about the inter-relationship of structure and agency and the way this impacts on the moral meanings that children develop.

2 The 'Ominous' Child – Childhood and Morality as Social Constructs

1. Pelagius was a contemporary of Augustine in the 4th century. Pelagius approached the idea of original sin from an opposite viewpoint to that of Augustine and the Roman church in general. For Pelagius each child was born in the image of God. Sin and evil was not innate but simply a product of human life, obscuring the goodness.
2. This very strongly reflects the teachings of the church as defined by Augustine who saw sex as the supreme example of sin in the form of lust (Lane 1984).
3. In Edinburgh in 1580, the reformed Kirk wanted to abolish Christmas holidays so the boys were forced to petition the council for their holidays. When this was refused, the boys armed themselves, leading to disorder. This recurred again and again until 1595 when one of the boys shot dead one of the bailies trying to recapture the school. The trouble continued in Aberdeen where these wealthy children's response to authority was condemned (Cunningham 2006). In the north of England this idea of barring became a ritual; schools would even have a period of amnesty on all behaviour, handing out no sanctions.
4. This attitude to removing the problem can be argued to be behind part of the thinking that saw children from the 1920s to 1960s sent to Canada and Australia, as part of a 'welfare' programme. It reflects the extent to which these themes traverse different moments in history, re-emerging in a slightly different form.
5. Martin Luther, and those who followed in the Protestant tradition, challenged moral views from the past as they sought to re-position the individual in light of a changed relationship with God (Lane 1984). Luther's challenge saw key philosophers such as Aristotle dismissed merely as a 'buffoon' (MacIntyre 2007: 165).

3 The Ambiguous Child – Contemporary Constructions of Children and the Law

1. Devolution within the United Kingdom impacts on the extent to which policies cross between Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Criminal law as it affects children is only significantly different in Scotland, where there is a separate criminal process.

2. The press had demonstrated an increasingly aggressive attitude towards children (Muncie 1984), given an outlet by the murder in 1993 (see the press reviews from Chapter 1).
3. In doing this Jenks refers to the work of Postman (1983) who presented a thesis on the disappearance of childhood, linked to the ever growing multimedia influences impacting on children's lives.
4. R v G [2003] UKHL 50, considered the case of two boys aged eleven and twelve years who had started a fire which went on to cause considerable damage. They argued that they foresaw that the fire would burn itself out, but it did not. In the trial the judge directed the jury that they were not allowed to take into consideration the boys' age and lack of maturity in reaching their decision. The House of Lords, however, overruled the trial judge's decision and said that it was only right that their age be taken into consideration in such cases.
5. Child Safety Orders were for children under ten years old who were at risk of becoming involved in crime.
6. Such as to take children home, by force if necessary, if unaccompanied and under the age of sixteen years, in a designated zone between 9pm and 6am (*The Observer*, 15 May 2005; Muncie 2004; *The Guardian*, 21 July 2005). This measure was challenged in the High Court, where it was found to be in breach of the individual child's rights (*The Guardian*, 21 July 2005).
7. The Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 included provision with Parenting Orders to demand parents take responsibility for their children in relation to truancy and school exclusion (Bainham 2005).
8. The police are also getting involved with other programmes of intervention such as 'multi-agency safeguarding hubs', a technique that is being introduced to divert children away from the criminal justice system. This, combined with notions of wiping criminal records clean for young offenders on reaching their 18th birthday, are interesting, but the extent to which they will have a real impact on approaches to children caught up in the system is yet to be demonstrated (*CYPNow*, 12 July 2011).
9. Domestically, the Convention was ratified in 1991, but the United Kingdom has stopped short of incorporating it into law, therefore restricting its influence to one that is no more than persuasive. The recognition of rights was further added to with the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law in the Human Rights Act 1998.
10. In 1989 the UN General Assembly adopted the UNCRC. The roots of this document can be traced back to 1924 and the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child (James and James 2004).
11. Only two countries have failed to ratify, the USA and Somalia. In the case of the USA, however, domestic focus has been given to the entitlements of children under the Bill of Rights, providing in some ways perhaps a more comprehensive and effective cover for children than the convention itself, due to the legal bite that it provides: the lack of such bite is seen by some as one of the major failures of the convention itself (James and James 2004; Archard 2004).
12. The UK's approach can be considered further through the role of the Children's Commissioners. Their role is to promote the interests of the child, with particular attention to five key areas known as the Every Child Matters

Agenda: physical and mental health, protection from harm and neglect, education and training, their contribution to society, and social and economic wellbeing. It is important to note that the role of the Commissioners is one of influencing rather than anything stronger, with the result that questions have been raised about their effectiveness.

4 Stereotypes – Positioning the Self

1. Opie and Opie (1959) develop this in relation to language and how it is used to regulate similarity and difference.
2. Categories designed with reference to classification used by James (1993)
3. It must be noted that the children repeatedly associated the age of 12 years with being a victim. This is an age when access to social arenas is growing both in relation to school and the neighbourhood. Indeed, many of the fears the children expressed in relation to bullying were tied in with those early years in secondary schools.
4. It is important to note that, both in relation to the actual body and the styled body, children today are under increasing pressure to look a particular way. Recent research (reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, 6 September 2010) has shown the extent to which girls feel obliged to look attractive, and how this pressure is becoming one of the negative aspects of being female. For some this leads to complete rejection of what are seen to be social norms – displayed through what they wear and how they look. Importantly, much of this pressure is generated by a culture from amongst peers themselves, and shows the different ways in which social pressure is created – not just vertically but also horizontally.
5. 'There is a moral panic over hooded teenagers' (*The Guardian*, 14 May 2005). This claim stemmed from high-profile rhetoric that followed the banning from the Bluewater shopping centre of people wearing 'hoodies'. It sparked further discourse about this item of clothing. In so doing the item of clothing on young people took on particular meaning, as summed up by the subtitle title of this article, 'How a top can turn a teen into a hoodlum'.
6. Connolly (2004) does note how clothing and jewellery take on greater significance within a working-class context, and it may be such findings that are being reflected here in the meanings that are attached to what Mick is perceived to wear.
7. Glasses here are not portrayed in an exclusively negative way. This indicates a shift from the past where those who wore glasses were marked out for derision (Opie and Opie 1959: 172). Glasses now are becoming more of a fashion item.

5 Negotiating Power Relations – The Self and Others

1. Notably in this work, Connolly moves away from viewing power in absolute terms and, drawing on the work of Elias (1978), he argues that power should be considered in terms of 'power ratios' (Connolly 2004: 92). This use of 'power' is demonstrated to have useful application in the context of adult-child relationships and encourages reflection on the way in which power is

balanced between these groups, rather than making the simple assumption that adults are just more powerful.
2. This is a recognised phrase, used by skinheads and the National Front in the 1970s. It was used as the title of a book looking at the positioning of the black community in society (Gilroy 1987).
3. As Cohen (1986) suggests, boundaries are an important way of marking who is similar and therefore belongs and who is different and thus should be excluded.
4. These interviews took place at a time when Iraq was in the news daily.
5. Females are increasingly becoming the focus of media reports of girls taking the lead in violence. Research has shown that female arrests have gone up, but it does not suggest that this is a result of changes in offending behaviour, but rather of changes by policymakers and law enforcers (Heidensohn and Gelsthorpe 2007).
6. This is a reference to Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, victims of the so-called Soham murders in August 2002.

6 A Learning Experience – Making Sense of Social Experiences

1. More specifically, some have argued that there is a 'criminal capital', relating to the status given to the knowledge attainment and then the commission of offences. Interestingly in one review, Halpern reflects on some of the restraints to this interpretation of capital, influencing behaviour. It is suggested that 'social ties . . . create interdependent systems of obligation and restraint that impose significant costs for translating [in this case] criminal propensities into action' (Halpern 2005: 115). This reassertion of the social in the development of meaning is fundamental and reflects themes from other chapters. As well as criminal capital having application to issues of morality, so too, it has been argued, does spiritual capital. Spiritual capital relates to 'resources of faith and values derived from a commitment to a religious tradition' (Lee and Horwath 2009), and by definition has application to considerations of shared values, as well as day-to-day application in children managing moral issues.
2. Christensen (2002) develops the discourse on the time children spent with their families. Within this she identifies five qualities of time, including having someone there for you. However, her discussion does not extend as far as to include the importance of time in creating a sense of trust from which knowledge can be shared and imparted.
3. This is unlike respondents in O'Conner's (2004) study, in which the boys were equally willing to draw on their emotions and feelings in expressing their thoughts about their relationships.
4. Some research has reflected on the extent to which boys in particular react to authority (Hallden 1994); this was not seen in this research.
5. This is in contrast to themes from developmental psychology, where Piaget (see Chapter 1), for example, argued that prior to reaching an age of reason, rules were followed as a response to instructions, rather than as a consequence of understanding. Indeed the nature of children's obedience

was restricted to merely being a reaction to on the one hand 'affection' but also 'fear' (Piaget 1967: 36). However, it must be recognised that Piaget did also note important themes in relation to respect and mutual cooperation; however, these had limited application in that they were only active in children once they had reached the age of 12 years. These views were reiterated by others, such as Lawrence Kholberg (Haste 1999).

6. Corsaro (1985) notes the overly violent way in which children replicate everyday aspects of life in play, which raises a note of caution in reflecting on the nature of activities within the dramas.
7. For example Lana talked about how the teacher had explained how they could achieve team points by tidying up the classroom at the end of the day. This was something pursued by Lana and others during the week in order to achieve the positive recognition of the teacher, for a clearly defined act that brought praise.
8. Aynesley-Green (2007) provides an example of a boy who was seen passing an item to another child in the class. The teacher saw this and presumed it was drugs. The boy was taken to the head teacher and strip-searched. The item he was passing was some chocolate. The boy did not even receive an apology.
9. Corsaro (1985) uses imperatives as an analytical term to identify command-giving or warning-related comments directed at controlling others.
10. This report suggested that adults in Britain were less likely to intervene in youth behaviour and violence when compared to adults in other countries (IPPR 2006).
11. These findings reflect research that suggests that children are not empowered out on the streets, with children unsure of their relationship with the police (Loader 1996).

Concluding Thoughts – Time to Be 'Bothered'

1. Unfortunately, not all children have the benefit of positive relationships with their parents, raising questions that are beyond the focus of this book about the way in which 'school' impacts on those children's moral understanding.
2. See the White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching* (Department for Education 2010) which sets out policies that seek to increase the powers of teachers in dealing with discipline in school; these include increased powers of search and confiscation.
3. Citizenship remains an optional part of the National Curriculum for primary schools in England. Recent reviews that have promoted an increased role for citizenship (Rose 2009; Cambridge Primary Review, 2009) have been rejected by the new coalition administration, which is reviewing yet again the place of citizenship education in schools.

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