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DRAWING THE LINE:
AN EXPLORATION OF HOW LAY PEOPLE
CONSTRUCT CHILD NEGLECT
SASHA EMMA WILLIAMS

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

March 2015

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Abstract

This thesis uses a Foucauldian approach to explore how lay people construct child neglect in England. The concept of child neglect developed after the Industrial Revolution in conjunction with the construction of 'normal' childhood. Both depend on developmental models of childhood produced by psy-complex discourse. However, the knowledge producing the 'normal' family and the disciplinary institutions producing and protecting the 'normal' childhood have been challenged by late modernity, with a potential impact on what can be considered 'abnormal' and therefore neglectful.

Recent years have seen an increasing professional and political focus on both the importance of child neglect, and the role of lay people in child protection – 'everybody's business'. It is unclear how lay people construct child neglect, a category that properly results from political and moral choices made by society. To analyse how lay people construct child neglect, data was collected from focus group discussions between 46 self-defined 'lay' people.

Children were constructed as having developmental needs during childhood, which, if unmet, could cause long term problems for child and society. Four clusters of needs were identified: physical, emotional, training and supervisory. If these needs were unmet, children could be seen as Deprived, Unloved, Uncontrolled or Escaping. However, this did not mean they were positioned as neglected. Neglect required some abnormal adult/parent behaviour. The normal parent was non-neglectful although sometimes temporarily Overburdened, the abnormal parent was neglectful, categorised as Clueless, Underinvested or Unsuitable. Lay people were constructed as having a responsibility to support parents and families within their midst. However the forces of late modernity, particularly globalisation, challenged the normal/abnormal family binary, leaving lay people unclear about where society and/or child protection professionals draw the line between normal and neglectful childhoods. The implications of these constructions for children, parents, state, professionals and lay people are examined and recommendations made.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	4
DEDICATION.....	11
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	12
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	13
CHAPTER 1 - SETTING THE SCENE.....	14
1.1 NEGLECTED NO LONGER.....	14
1.2 RESEARCH INTEREST IN CHILD NEGLECT.....	15
1.3 RESPONDING TO CHILD NEGLECT: A PRACTICAL ROLE FOR LAY PEOPLE	18
1.4 MY INTEREST IN CHILD NEGLECT.....	21
1.5 DEFINING CHILD NEGLECT: A POLITICAL ROLE FOR LAY PEOPLE.....	24
1.6 THESIS STRUCTURE.....	26
CHAPTER 2 - THEORISING THE PROJECT.....	29
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	29
2.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM: ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY.....	29
2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	31
2.3.1 Discourse.....	32
2.3.2 Disciplinary Power.....	33
2.3.3 Power/Knowledge.....	35
2.3.4 Resistance.....	36
2.4 CONSTRUCTING LAY PEOPLE.....	38
2.5 KNOWLEDGE/POWER AND REFLEXIVITY.....	41
2.6 CONCLUSION.....	43

CHAPTER 3 - THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDHOOD AND CHILD NEGLECT IN SIMPLE MODERNITY.....	44
3.1. INTRODUCTION.....	44
3.2 MODERNITY AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT.....	45
3.3 THE BIRTH OF MODERN CHILDHOOD.....	46
3.3.1 Pre-modern childhood.....	46
3.3.2 The Industrial Revolution.....	47
3.4 PRODUCING THE WORKING CLASS FAMILY IN ENGLAND.....	48
3.4.1 Philanthropy and Tutelage.....	48
3.4.2 Legislation.....	49
3.5 THE RISE OF THE STATE.....	50
3.6 EXPERTS AND EXPERTISE.....	51
3.7 FAMILIALISATION: PRODUCING THE 'NORMAL' FAMILY.....	54
3.8 THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD NEGLECT.....	55
3.9 CHILD NEGLECT 1945-1970: THE 'ABNORMAL' FAMILY.....	59
3.10 CONCLUSION.....	61

CHAPTER 4 - CHILDHOOD, CHILD NEGLECT AND LATE MODERNITY	63
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	63
4.2 CHALLENGING MODERNITY: THE BIRTH OF LATE MODERNITY.....	64
4.2.1 Family in Late Modernity.....	66
4.2.2 Childhood in Late Modernity.....	67
4.3 THE 'DISCOVERY' OF CHILD ABUSE.....	70
4.4 LATE MODERNITY AND THE CHALLENGE TO EXPERTISE.....	71
4.5 CARE AND CONTROL: CHILDREN AND CHILD PROTECTION IN THE MEDIA...	73
4.5.1 A Lack of Care: Constructing the Child Victim.....	73
4.5.2 A Lack of Control: Constructing the Child Villain.....	75
4.6 CHILD POVERTY.....	77
4.7 NEGLECT, POVERTY, PARENTING AND POLITICS.....	78
4.7.1 Parenting in Late Modernity.....	80

4.7.2 Seeing Neglect through Neuroscientific Lenses.....	81
4.7.3 Neglect, 'Neuromania' and Early Intervention.....	83
4.8 CONCLUSION.....	85

CHAPTER 5 - CHILD NEGLECT: LAW AND POLICY..... 87

5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	87
5.2 CHILDREN AND THE LAW.....	87
5.3 THE CRIMINAL MODEL OF CHILD NEGLECT.....	88
5.4 CHILD PROTECTION.....	90
5.4.1 Background.....	90
5.4.2 Working Together: Defining Neglect.....	91
5.4.3 The Child Welfare Model of Child Neglect.....	92
5.4.4 The Child Protection Model of Child Neglect.....	93
5.5 THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS MODEL OF CHILD NEGLECT.....	97
5.6 PLACING THE MODELS IN CONTEXT.....	99
5.7 CONCLUSION.....	101

CHAPTER 6 - LAY PEOPLE WITHIN THE CHILD NEGLECT RESEARCH

LITERATURE..... 103

6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	103
6.2 SETTING THE STAGE.....	103
6.2.1 Scoping Study Literature Review.....	103
6.2.2 Categorising Lay People within the Literature.....	104
6.2.3 Expert Words, Lay Mouths.....	105
6.2.4 Approaches to lay research.....	107
6.3 CONSTRUCTING LAY RESEARCH.....	108
6.3.1 Researching Lay Definitions of Child Neglect.....	109
6.3.2 Critiquing Vignettes.....	114
6.3.3 Researching Lay Knowledge of Child Neglect.....	117
6.3.4 Researching Lay Responses to Child Neglect.....	119
6.3.5 Critiquing Surveys.....	121
6.4 RESEARCHING LAY CONSTRUCTIONS.....	122
6.5 CONCLUSION.....	124

CHAPTER 7 - THE RESEARCH METHODS..... 126

- 7.1 INTRODUCTION..... 126
- 7.2 FINALISING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS..... 126
- 7.3 WHO IS A LAY PERSON FOR THE PURPOSES OF MY PROJECT..... 127
- 7.4 CHOOSING A DATA COLLECTION METHOD..... 130
- 7.5 SELECTING PARTICIPANTS..... 131
- 7.6 RECRUITMENT..... 134
- 7.7 THE FOCUS GROUPS..... 136
- 7.8 GROUP COMPOSITION..... 140
- 7.9 MY EFFECT ON THE DISCUSSIONS..... 141
- 7.10 TRANSCRIPTION..... 142
- 7.11 SELECTING AN ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE..... 143
- 7.12 CONDUCTING THE ANALYSIS..... 144
- 7.13 CONCLUSION..... 149

CHAPTER 8 - CONSTRUCTING THE NEGLECTED..... 150

- 8.1 INTRODUCTION..... 150
- 8.2 SEPARATING CHILD ABUSE FROM CHILD NEGLECT..... 150
- 8.3 CHILD NEGLECT IS THE FAILURE OF PROPER DEVELOPMENTAL CHILDHOOD 152
- 8.4 CONSTRUCTING CHILDREN’S NEEDS..... 154
 - 8.4.1 Physical Needs..... 155
 - 8.4.2 Emotional Needs..... 155
 - 8.4.3 Training Needs..... 156
 - 8.4.4 Supervisory Needs..... 156
- 8.5 CONSTRUCTING THE NEGLECTED CHILD..... 157
 - 8.5.1 The Deprived Child..... 157
 - 8.5.2 The Unloved Child..... 159
 - 8.5.3 The Uncontrolled Child..... 162
 - 8.5.4 The Escaping Child..... 163
- 8.6 NEGLECT OR NEGLECTS?..... 165
- 8.7 DISCOURSES..... 166
- 8.8 EXPERT DISCOURSE, LAY MOUTHS..... 167
- 8.9 POSITIONING CHILDREN..... 169
- 8.10 THE MEDIA..... 173

8.11 SEEING NEGLECT.....	174
8.12 CONCLUSION.....	175

CHAPTER 9 - CONSTRUCTING THE NEGLECTOR..... 177

9.1 INTRODUCTION.....	177
9.2 IDENTIFYING THE NEGLECTOR: PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.....	177
9.2.1 The Normal Family.....	178
9.2.2 Parenting and Gender.....	180
9.2.3 Normal Parenting.....	182
9.3 CONSTRUCTING THE NEGLECTFUL PARENT.....	185
9.4 THE OVERBURDENED PARENT.....	186
9.5 THE CLUELESS PARENT.....	189
9.6 THE UNDERINVESTED PARENT.....	191
9.7 THE UNSUITABLE PARENT.....	194
9.7.1 Criminal Parenting.....	194
9.7.2 Disqualified Parenting.....	195
9.8 POSITIONING NEGLECTOR AND NEGLECTED.....	197
9.9 CONSTRUCTING NEGLECTFUL COMMUNITIES.....	198
9.10 CONSTRUCTING THE NEGLECTFUL STATE.....	202
9.11 CONCLUSION.....	205

CHAPTER 10 - DRAWING THE LINE: CONSTRUCTING CHILD NEGLECT..... 206

10.1 INTRODUCTION.....	206
10.2 RESPONDING TO CHILD NEGLECT.....	206
10.2.1 Meeting Children’s Needs Directly.....	206
10.2.2 ‘Doing Nothing’: The Principle of Non-Intervention.....	210
10.2.3 ‘Doing Something’: Constructing Social Services Involvement.....	211
10.3 CONSTRUCTING ‘NORMAL’ IN LATE MODERNITY.....	215
10.4 NORMALITY AND DIVERSITY: DIVERSE NORMALS?.....	217
10.5 CONSTRUCTING THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL.....	221
10.6 CONSTRUCTING THE ROLE OF THE LAW.....	222
10.7 DRAWING THE LINE: RECONSTRUCTING NORMAL.....	224

10.7.1 The Expert Approach.....	225
10.7.2 Challenging Expertise.....	226
10.7.3 The Democratic Approach.....	228
10.7.4 The Current Approach.....	228
10.8 CONCLUSION.....	229
CHAPTER 11 - CONSTRUCTING THE LINE.....	231
11.1 REVISITING THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH.....	231
11.2 REVISITING KEY FINDINGS.....	232
11.2.1 Lay Constructions of Child Neglect and the Psy-Complex.....	233
11.2.2 Lay People and Expertise.....	233
11.2.3 Child Neglect and Gender.....	234
11.2.4 Lay Constructions and Legal Constructions.....	235
11.2.5 Intervening in Child Neglect: Establishing a line.....	236
11.3 REVISITING FOUCAULT.....	238
11.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEORY, POLICY AND PRACTICE.....	240
11.4.1 Changing the Subject Positions.....	240
11.4.2 Rethinking and Reframing State Involvement with Families.....	242
11.4.3 Re-engaging Communities.....	242
11.5 REFLECTING ON MY RESEARCH: LOOKING BACKWARDS.....	243
11.6 REFLECTING ON MY RESEARCH: LOOKING FORWARDS.....	245
REFERENCE LIST.....	247
APPENDICES.....	286
APPENDIX 1.....	287
LITERATURE REVIEW METHODOLOGY.....	287
The review question:.....	287
Initial decisions:.....	287
Search Strategy:.....	288
Refining results:.....	288
Charting the data:.....	289

Data analysis and presentation:.....	290
APPENDIX 2.....	291
STUDIES EXPLORING ASPECTS OF LAY PEOPLE’S DEFINITIONS OF CHILD NEGLECT...291	
APPENDIX 3.....	307
PROJECT PAMPHLET.....	307
APPENDIX 4.....	309
PROJECT COVERING LETTER.....	309
APPENDIX 5.....	310
INFORMATION FORM.....	310
APPENDIX 6.....	312
CONSENT FORM.....	312
APPENDIX 7.....	314
RESEARCH MONITORING FORM.....	314
APPENDIX 8.....	315
PROJECT POSTER.....	315
APPENDIX 9.....	316
FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL.....	316
APPENDIX 10.....	318
REFUSAL LETTER USED WITH CONSENT.....	318
APPENDIX 11.....	319
INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS.....	319
APPENDIX 12.....	322
DIAGRAM OF DEFINITION OF CHILD NEGLECT.....	322

Dedication

For Evelyn:
faith managed.

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List of abbreviations

APA – American Psychological Association
BPS – British Psychological Association
CA 1989 – Children Act 1989
CA 2004 – Children Act 2004
CAF – The Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People
CFA – Children and Families Act 2014
CRAE - Children’s Rights Alliance for England
CSJ - Centre for Social Justice
DCSF – Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES - Department for Education and Skills
DoE – Department of Education
DoH – Department for Health
ECHR: European Convention on Human Rights
ESRC – Economic and Social Research Council
LSCB – Local Safeguarding Children Boards
NCB – National Children’s Bureau
NSPCC – National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OCC - Office of the Children’s Commissioner
Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education
ONS - Office for National Statistics
PAIN - Parents against injustice
TCSW - The College of Social Work
UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Fund

Chapter 1 - Setting the Scene

"...the process of labelling [neglect] is essentially a moral/political process" (Parton 1995: 73).

1.1 Neglected No Longer

This project explores how lay people construct child neglect and was conducted at a time when as Graham Stuart MP, Education Committee Chair put it "neglect is rising up the child protection agenda" (uncorrected transcript, Education Committee 2012:3). In comparison to the latter stages of the 20th century, when researchers would decry the 'neglect of neglect' (Wolock and Horowitz, 1984; Dubowitz, 1994; Hobbs and Wynne, 2002; McSherry, 2007; Horwath, 2007), the 21st century has seen a substantial increase in public, political, campaigning, professional and research interest in child neglect (Dubowitz, 2007). Debates about neglect and emotional harm "have been conducted in the popular media, in professional journals and in academic literature" (Gardner, 2008:15). Research commissioned by children's charities such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Action for Children has found that the public and child protection professionals share concerns about child neglect and how best to respond to neglected children (e.g. Gardner, 2008; Action for Children, 2009; Daniel, Taylor and Scott, 2011; Hutchinson, 2012; NSPCC, 2013; Burgess et al, 2012; Burgess, Daniel, Scott, Mulley and Dobbin, 2013; Burgess et al, 2014).

In 2008, Gardner, in collaboration with the NSPCC, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) and the University of East Anglia, called for an urgent national strategy to address child neglect declaring it: "a major form of maltreatment that has not yet been effectively addressed" (Gardner, 2008:7). Certainly, if not a national strategy, there was an intense research and campaigning focus on child neglect during the course of my research. I began reading for my Ph.D, in October 2010. In 2011 Action for Children, in partnership with Stirling University, began conducting comprehensive annual reviews into child neglect in the UK, "to gauge the current situation with regard to neglect and monitor the effects of changes in national and local policy and practice" (Burgess et al, 2012:5). In 2012 the NSPCC designated neglect one of seven priority areas on which it planned to focus resources (Education Committee, 2013). The same year Action for Children launched a major (and largely successful) campaign to amend the criminal law on child neglect hoping

simultaneously to call public, legal and political attention to neglect as an issue (Action for Children, 2012).

Campaigning activity related to child neglect was reflected in the formal political arena. In 2011, the House of Commons Education Committee began an inquiry into the Child Protection system in England, their early investigations leading them to designate child neglect one of their three key priority areas (Education Committee, 2013). The Committee took up professional recommendations calling for more research into how professionals label neglectful behaviour, earlier intervention in families where children are being neglected, and professional training specifically in the area of child development (Education Committee, 2013). Largely as a result of pressure from children's charities, legal academics, back bench politicians and the Education Committee (Education Committee, 2013) the Coalition Government enacted provisions within the Serious Crime Act 2015 to amend or clarify the way in which child neglect is framed within the criminal law (Home Office, 2014).

1.2 Research Interest in Child Neglect

Political concern about child neglect is linked to increasing research evidence associating neglect with long lasting and catastrophic outcomes for children. Much of this evidence originates from the USA, but the UK child neglect literature is increasing, particularly due to the efforts of children's charities in commissioning British research for practice, educational and campaigning purposes. Systematic reviews of the available evidence on child neglect (Daniel, Taylor and Scott, 2011) and adolescent neglect (Rees, Stein, Hicks, and Gorin, 2011) have helped to codify what can be said to be known about neglect. In addition, government funded research, brought together within "*Safeguarding Children Across Services: Messages from Research*" (Davies and Ward, 2012) highlights the importance of identifying and responding effectively to neglect and emotional abuse. The messages from research seem clear: child neglect has potentially catastrophic effects on children and is at least as damaging as other forms of child maltreatment, the prevalence of neglect is far greater than we know and most neglected children will never reach the attention of child protection professionals. The "overwhelming academic and research evidence of the long-term damage of neglect" (Education Committee, 2013: 23) has led to a new appreciation of the political and professional urgency of preventing children being neglected.

So what does this evidence tell us? Firstly, "that neglect and emotional abuse are associated with the most damaging long-term consequences, yet they are also the most

difficult to identify" (Davies and Ward, 2012:18). All types of child maltreatment are associated with "long-lasting effects on mental health, drug and alcohol problems, risky sexual behaviour, obesity and criminal behaviour from childhood to adulthood" (Gilbert et al, 2009: 68) but neglect appears to be associated with more serious negative and long-lasting effects than other types of maltreatment (Crittenden, 1999; Hildyard and Wolfe, 2002; Burgess et al, 2012). When Meadows, Tunstill, George, Dhudwar and Kurtz (2011) conducted a literature review for the NSPCC investigating the costs and consequences of child maltreatment, they found that even after accounting for maternal depression and poverty, neglect still had a negative impact on children's social interaction, mental health and schooling. Neglect is associated with "measurable developmental damage, including to the child's emotional and social functioning" (Gardner, 2008:7). Neglect is also considered responsible for neuro-developmental and cognitive deficits, deficits in physical and emotional development, behavioural problems and educational problems which can persist into adulthood (Turney and Tanner, 2005; Gardner, 2008; Brown and Ward, 2013). Burgess et al (2012) assert that inter-generationality is a strong feature in child neglect findings - that child neglect is transmitted from one generation to the next, continuing to blight lives and families. Neglected children were more likely to have lower IQs and impaired cognitive and emotional functioning, less likely to engage with school or to succeed academically, less able to manage stressful situations appropriately, and more likely to experience relationship problems as adults than non-neglected children (Meadows et al, 2011).

Children who have been seriously harmed or killed had often experienced aspects of child neglect (Gardner, 2008). Systematic analysis of Serious Case Reviews demonstrated that 60% of the children whose cases were reviewed had been neglected, a far higher proportion than previously thought (Brandon, Bailey, Belderson and Larsson, 2013). In addition, although neglect is often associated with young children rather than adolescents (Stein, Rhys, Hicks and Gorin, 2009; Rees et al, 2011), Brandon et al (2013) found child neglect was a feature in the lives of children of all ages. Child neglect alone caused the deaths of Paul in Islington (Bridge Child Care Consultancy, 1995) and Tiffany Wright in Sheffield (Ward, 2008) and neglect was one aspect of the maltreatment causing the deaths of Victoria Climbié (Davies and Ward, 2012) and Khyra Ishaq (Radford, 2010). Finally, neglect is not only potentially catastrophic for the children who are neglected, but it is costly for society as well (Meadows et al, 2011; Davies and Ward, 2012): "neglected children draw heavily upon public services and resources throughout their lifetimes" (Burgess et al, 2012: 19). Research findings about the catastrophic consequences of neglect have become part of the political discourse in respect of child neglect justifying both concern and action. In a

speech on child protection, then Education Secretary Michael Gove detailed the “extensive evidence of the consequences of abuse in children’s delayed development, poor speech and language, poor school performance, decayed teeth and untreated medical conditions, as well as in numerous emotional and behavioural problems, particularly violence and aggression” as mandating the early and permanent removal of children from neglectful families (Gove, 2012: no page).

Research also indicates that child neglect is more prevalent than child protection statistics suggest. Gilbert et al (2009) concluded from their review of US and UK research that between 6-11.8% of all children at some point experience persistent absence of care and/or injury due to insufficient supervision. To date in the UK, the NSPCC has commissioned two prevalence studies into child maltreatment. The first study, using participants aged 18-24 found 20% reported that they “regularly had to shoulder adult responsibilities at an early age because their parents were ill, disabled, had substance abuse problems or had needed emotional support through divorce or bereavement” (Cawson, Wattam, Brooker and Kelly, 2000:5). A significant minority of young people reported experiencing levels of absence of care and supervision as children that could satisfy professional definitions of child neglect. 6% of participants experienced behaviour classified by researchers as serious absence of care, 9% experienced intermediate absence of care and 2% experienced levels of care that could be a cause for concern. The results in relation to supervision are even more worrying: in total, the researchers found that 37% of respondents reported having experienced levels of supervision which “could be regarded as problematic by the criteria applied in child protection and other professional contexts” (Cawson et al, 2000:11).

Radford et al (2011) conducted a follow-on prevalence study 10 years later. This study found that while physical and sexual abuse appeared to be declining over time, the prevalence of child neglect appeared unchanged. Radford et al (2011) sought responses from two cohorts of children as well as a cohort of young adults finding neglect was the most common form of reported maltreatment in each cohort: 5% of children under 11, 13.3% of those aged 11-17 and 16% of those aged 18-24 were categorised as having been neglected at some point in their childhoods. A category of severe neglect was devised by researchers to include “serious emotional neglect, lack of supervision or physical care that would place a child or young person at risk, or neglect that the young person defined as abusive or criminal” (Radford et al, 2011:43). Under this definition, 3.7% of children under 11, 9.8% of those aged 11-17 and 9% of 18-24 year olds were categorised as having been severely neglected at some time in their lives (Radford et al, 2011).

Only a small minority of neglected children come to the attention of formal child protection services. Harker et al (2013) estimate, for each child known to social services and registered as maltreated, 8 go unnoticed and unregistered. However, child neglect is the most common reason for the NSPCC to be contacted, particularly by the public who are more likely to contact the NSPCC about neglect than any other form of child maltreatment (NSPCC, 2013). These calls are increasing: they have “more than doubled over the past 2 years” and increased as much as 5 times over the past 5 years (Hutchinson, 2012:4). Neglect is also the most common reason for a child to become the subject of a child protection plan: in the year ending 31st March 2014, of the 59,780 children who became the subject of child protection plans, 42.1% were categorised as neglect, 33% as emotional abuse, 10.9% as physical abuse, 4.7% as sexual abuse and 9.3% as multiple (DoE, 2014).

The overwhelming messages from the research seem to be that neglect affects the lives of a significant minority of children, can lead to catastrophic and long-lasting outcomes, and although the vast majority of neglected children do not come to the attention of the authorities, neglect is still the major cause of children being placed on a child protection plan in this country. Clearly we as a society are failing a large number of children in our midst.

1.3 Responding to Child Neglect: A Practical Role for Lay People

The increased concern about child neglect has been accompanied by a new focus on what the public can do to protect children. The extent to which lay people should be involved in rearing other people’s children was the subject of heated political debate in the USA with opposing views set out in (then) First Lady Hilary Clinton’s (1997) bestselling book *“It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us”* and Senator Santorum’s (2005) response *“It takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good”*. In the UK children’s charities sought to mobilise the public to act if they were concerned about child maltreatment. A collaboration between Community Care and Childline published *“Child Protection: Everybody’s Business”* (MacLeod, 1997) exploring the dilemmas faced by members of the public who were worried about a child. In 1999 the NSPCC launched The FULL STOP Campaign “out of a need to unite the public AND the NSPCC behind a new shared vision” (Grounds, 2004:2, emphasis in original).

The NSPCC’s long term strategy included awareness raising, public education, and influencing the law, social policy and professional practice, and it was described as

"particularly important to inform the general public and generate debate about the treatment of children in the UK" (Brooker, Cawson, Kelly and Wattam, 2001: 287). These themes were revisited by Gardner (2008) in relation to neglect; her call for a national strategy included not only reviewing the law, policy and professional practice, but also "raising community awareness" and educating and training the public (Gardner, 2008:4). The Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié (Laming, 2003) emphasised the responsibility that everyone bears towards maltreated children, and by 2004 the statement that child protection is 'everybody's business' had gained "popular currency in relation to safeguarding children" (Holland, Tannock and Collicott, 2011:406). While the FULL STOP campaign ended in 2009, the NSPCC continues seeking ways to educate and engage the public currently focusing more on positive outcomes for children and measures the public can take to prevent to child maltreatment (Farthing, 2014).

What does the assertion "it is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe" (Education Committee: 2013: 12) mean in practice for lay people? According to the NSPCC (undated, no page), the public's role is to alert appropriate authority: "Contact our helpline if you're worried about a child and speak to one of our counsellors". Lay people are the eyes and ears of the child protection system (Radford, 2010; Fisher and Gruescu, 2011; Burgess et al, 2011; NSPCC, 2013): "only the operation of laymen - neighbours, friends, family, the general public - can bring the protection system to the service of the abused and neglected children early enough to be effective" (Dhooper et al, 1991:37). Radford (2010:98) recommended that the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board should educate the public about how to "effectively safeguard and protect other people's children". Experts assert that the public need to be educated and facilitated to perform this role (Tickell, 2013) either through increased publicity about existing services such as NSPCC helplines (Education Committee, 2012), or by creating new forums for lay/expert interaction such as the government web portal (launched in September 2014) which directs the public to appropriate expertise. Laming (2009) pointed out that "if safeguarding children is everybody's responsibility, then everybody should know how, and who, to contact if they are concerned about a child or young person" (Laming, 2009:25).

Investigations carried out after things have gone wrong show that lay people often hold key information about neglected children. Tiffany Wright was starved to death above a pub at the age of 3, despite the fact that relatives, regular pub attenders and the pub landlords each had concerns about the level of care and supervision that she and her sibling were receiving (Ward, 2008). Ward reports: "it is a matter of great regret that no-one shared this information with the care agencies who could have taken action and it should be of

concern to those agencies that people did not do so" (Ward, 2008:7). However, lay concerns are not always taken seriously by professionals. An investigation into the death of Paul showed that in Islington teachers and parents did alert professionals to their concerns about Paul and his family, but the professionals had failed to act adequately (Bridge Care Consultancy, 1995). Similarly, a key finding of the Ofsted (2011) evaluation of Serious Case Reviews was that child protection agencies did not pay sufficient attention to adults (be they parents, grandparents, neighbours or members of the wider public) who had important information that would allow professionals to 'see' and 'hear' the children they were dealing with.

The public are also being exhorted to become more involved with children's lives. If prevalence rates are as high as suggested earlier, the authorities would have difficulty responding to all neglected children. Harker et al (2013) calculate that children's social services would need an extra £500 million to deal with just 25% of the estimated number of maltreated children they are currently unaware of (Harker et al, 2013: 6). There are also political and philosophical objections to the state being solely responsible for combatting child maltreatment. Lord Laming argued that protecting children had become too narrowly focused on professionals, and needed to be taken up as a community responsibility (Laming 2003). The Every Child Matters Green Paper (ECM) (HM Treasury 2003) and Children Act 2004 under the Labour government set out the state's responsibility for the broad wellbeing of all children (Parton, 2006; Broadhurst, Grover and Jamieson, 2009; Hoyano and Keenan, 2010), while reinforcing the idea that society was responsible for this wellbeing and needed to play its role (Holland et al, 2011). However experts argue that lay people need to be educated into this lay role by professional expertise: **"given the prevalence of child abuse there is a need at a societal level for more widespread public information about the crucial importance of early child development, and for public education to emphasise that simple changes in how parents relate to their young children can bring permanent benefits"** (NSPCC, 2011: 1, emphasis in original).

The May 2010 election of the Coalition Government in the UK, and the adoption of the Conservative Party's concept of 'The Big Society' into coalition policy emphasised a political discourse requiring communities rather than the state to take responsibility for the children within them. In The Big Society big government was supposed to be replaced by localism, with local people and the third/voluntary/community sector having the power to make decisions and take action to ensure the health and functioning of local communities (Taylor, Mathers, Atfield and Parry, 2011). ResPublica and Action for Children viewed Big Society political rhetoric as potentially empowering lay people and communities to work together to

support children and families in their midst. They termed this the “21st century village” arguing: “everyone living in a neighbourhood with children shares the role of keeping them safe and helping their families to do so” (Fisher and Gruescu, 2011: 8). The role of lay people is not simply to make referrals to professionals but, more importantly, to reach out to others in the community, to build social capital and “to act early and stem the flow of children who suffer neglect and abuse and end up needing professional services” (Fisher and Gruescu, 2011:8). While The Big Society is considered a failure (Helm, 2014; Wright, 2014; Slocock, 2015) the combination of increasing public demand and decreasing public resources demonstrates the continuing urgency of finding ways to revitalise, engage and empower communities to help themselves (Slocock, 2015).

1.4 My Interest in Child Neglect

I will argue throughout this thesis that alongside a practical role in caring for, safeguarding or protecting children, lay people also need to engage politically and morally with how we as a society define child neglect, and what we consider children are entitled to. However, before doing so, I should perhaps position myself within the discussion. I do not consider myself to be a lay person in relation to child neglect. As a qualified social worker, former family solicitor and graduate member of the British Psychological Society, I am trained in the discourse and practices of child protection in England. However, that professional discourse is one of many different understandings I have of what child neglect ‘means’. As a child of dual heritage I grew up with parents who themselves had experienced very different cultures of child rearing. In Nigeria, I encountered extended family structures and an expectation that older siblings looked after younger ones. Children were often brought up with whoever could provide better prospects for the child or family rather than parents, sprawling networks of obligation ensuring that children could be separated from their own siblings and raised along with distant cousins far from home. There was no benefits system or state safety net. Provision for those truly destitute (such as orphanages) tended to be highly localised and unregulated, run by individual benefactors and religious organisations.

In urban Lagos I encountered children working alongside adults on the streets, trading, running messages, begging or law breaking to make ends meet. These children were not treated as children by the adult community, or by the authorities tasked with maintaining order. Child neglect here seemed to me to be about child poverty, inequality, lack of access to education and medical care, and lack of protection from the arbitrary powers exerted by agents of the state. In the more rural areas of Nigeria that I saw, whole communities were

responsible for the children in their midst, bound by family, tribal, and religious affiliation. However, children were expected to play a necessary and valuable role in community life. Child neglect here seemed more about a failure to teach children their history, their place within the community and their affiliation and obligations to their people.

In England, I encountered a nuclear family system where primary relationships were expected to be between child and parents. Children were meant to be brought up within supportive family environments where they would learn all that they needed, morally and practically to become good citizens and in time good parents. The welfare state was meant to guarantee all families an adequate standard of living, and children were not expected to make any meaningful contribution to the family economy. Instead children were required to attend school until age 16. Within this situation child neglect appeared to relate to a failure of the primary relationships to ensure the child was adequately provided for and a failure of the education system to educate all children adequately. I was however sent to boarding school, an environment within which the primary parent/child bonds were disrupted for large sections of each year and replaced with impersonal adult authority. Rather than learning how to behave from loving parents, codes of honour and behaviour were largely child authored and designed to covertly disrupt the carefully structured institutional rules imposed upon us. Child neglect here would be more about policing: failing to ensure that we remained within school grounds, failing to keep out undesirable others, failure to notice malignant tendencies developing, failure to deliver us to our waiting parents at the end of each term healthy and better educated than we had been at the start of term.

These are very different models of childhood, and no doubt there are many more. In talking about my background I have found that each model contains factors that appear surprising, alarming, even neglectful to those unfamiliar with the model. The importance of understanding and highlighting those different expectations was brought home to me as a solicitor specialising in both family and immigration law within a multicultural community. I found myself wrestling with complex and competing ideas about who could claim to know what was best for individual children, and who or what was responsible for their neglect. "Neglectful" clients would point to other ways of growing up, common in other times or other cultures, which challenged what they were being told by professionals was necessary for their children's development. Alternatively parents would argue that they were doing the best that they could, that their child-rearing was compromised by poverty, a lack of support services for parents, and other structural factors beyond their control, and that they were being blamed for not making impossible choices. In addition, the 'experts' themselves were challenged for their youth or inexperience, particularly if they were not

parents. 'Book knowledge' was ridiculed as unrealistic, formulaic and inadequate in comparison to a parent's knowledge of their child and their situation. It seemed to me that there were alternative ways of constructing child neglect from those utilised by the professionals, alternative understandings that could produce very different results for the state, families and children.

While training in the professional discourses about child neglect, I was very much aware that poverty and inequality also blight the lives of children and families preventing them from realising their full potential. These factors seemed to remain unspoken, separate from the child neglect discourse I was learning and yet hugely damaging for children and their families. As a feminist solicitor I was concerned at the way in which my clients tended to be women struggling to cope in the face of multiple structural disadvantages and socio-economic factors. If as a society we are interested in improving the situation of children as a class, we should ensure that children are not forced to endure poverty and deprivation as a means of state coercion of their parents. Similarly, what children have a right to expect as members of society was no part of the expert delineation of child neglect. The views of lay people and the views of children themselves seemed largely absent from the literature. It seemed to me that the scope of the child neglect category had been reduced, it had been shorn of political and moral imperative and rendered coldly professional.

As a matter of political conviction and social justice, I agree with Parton (1995) that the way in which children are treated and what children can expect as members of families, communities and as fellow citizens is not a debate appropriately restricted to child protection professionals. The boundaries of child neglect are political boundaries, and lay people may reject the views of experts, especially within "inherently subversive" pluralistic societies like ours (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 143). I became increasingly convinced that we need to make decisions as a society about what we consider to be child neglect precisely because those decisions involve the exercise of political and moral choices, not simply professional expertise. However, many of the discussions and the decisions about child neglect are being led, if not made, by professionals. I was interested in exploring what a lay discourse of child neglect would include, whether child neglect as a concept has any meaning for lay people not involved with social services, and if so what meaning it has.

1.5 Defining Child Neglect: A Political Role for Lay People

My argument is that the definition of child neglect is a matter for the general public. While paediatricians may assert that child maltreatment must be understood in the same way as “genomics, molecular biology and immunology” (Christian, 2008: S15) I would argue that neglect and molecular biology are fundamentally different categories. Professor Harriet Ward, in calling for an open debate on what we mean by child neglect, stated that: “the problem is that pretty well all parents neglect their children up to a certain point. What we do not really understand is the point at which it becomes unacceptable and the point at which it will have longterm adverse consequences. I do not think as a society we have identified at what stage of adversity we decide the consequences are so bad that we do have to intervene” (Education Committee, 2011: 22 (uncorrected transcript)). These are questions for society, along with the wider questions of whether neglect is restricted to parents, what we mean by ‘intervene’ and whether the only justification for such intervention is sufficiently serious ‘longterm adverse consequences’. These are all political questions, requiring political responses.

Rather than engage with the moral and political difficulties inherent in child neglect, there are efforts to depoliticise the concept and render it a matter of expert diagnosis. The Education Committee heard evidence of the difficulties some professionals experienced identifying neglect when confronted by poverty or unfamiliar cultural norms. In response, they recommended that social work training should encompass “**a strong focus... on normal child development in terms of emotional, intellectual, behavioural and physical development, and the impact upon it of parental behaviour, including neglect**” as this would improve the identification of neglect cases (Education Committee, 2013: 28 emphasis in original). This would seem to position child neglect within the universalising field of child psychology and paediatrics rather than the contested sphere of politics and social justice. As stated throughout this thesis, several children’s charities aim to facilitate professionals and experts to educate the public about child neglect, rather than seeking to promote debate and public involvement in determining what we want for children within this country, a discussion in which expertise plays only a part.

This project takes the view that: “essentially neglect is a moral category which is open to wide and differing interpretations...[and] the process of labelling [neglect] is essentially a moral/political process” (Parton 1995: 73). Defining child neglect is to participate in a moral and political act which will have consequences for children, adults, the state and society. How child neglect is defined is “central to how it is recognised, managed and

prevented" (Reading et al, 2009: 333). Current definitions are narrow and locate neglect within the family: for example neglect "...happens when parents and carers can't or won't meet a child's needs" (NSPCC, undated: no page). Compare this to the far wider construction of child maltreatment proposed by The National Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Child Abuse: "child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions, or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospects of safe and healthy development into adulthood" (Department of Health, 1996:2). The political, economic and social implications of different definitions are profound and must be engaged with.

There has been some effort to involve lay people alongside professionals in making decisions about child protection. Since 2009 local authorities have been under a duty to try and recruit "lay members representing the local community" onto LSCBs (HM Government, 2013:60). The efficacy and influence of such representation is debatable (Hogg and Williamson, 2001; Pickard and Smith, 2001; Pickard et al, 2002; Alborz, Wilkin and Smith, 2002). As Daly and Davis (1999:61) point out in relation to the NHS, "the interests of the user (patient) and the wider public interest cannot be adequately represented through a structure in which the only voices are those of professionals (along with one lay person)". The lay member role on LSCBs is to "help to make links between the LSCB and community groups, support stronger public engagement in local child safety issues and an improved public understanding of the LSCB's child protection work" (HM Government, 2013:62). The core of the role seems to be the transmission of expertise to the public rather than to bring lay views to the experts or hold expertise to account. Finally, all lay members must undertake child protection training once appointed. This is likely to familiarise them with professional expertise and discourses, making lay people more likely to take "hybrid lay-expert positions" (Kerr, Cunningham-Burley and Tutton, 2007:407; see also chapter 2 for a discussion of the problematic distinction between lay and expert beliefs). Lay membership of the LSCBs cannot be considered an adequate means of involving the public in important political decisions about the definitions, boundaries and appropriate responses to child maltreatment.

Ultimately, to define child neglect is to make a statement about what all children should receive by virtue of being children in England at this time (Brooker et al, 2001; May Chahal and Cawson, 2005). I think this decision should be made by society rather than solely by experts. Examining how lay people construct child neglect is of practical and political importance. Practically as children's services are cut and the community expected to step forward and assume the responsibility of protecting children when necessary, it is important

to ask lay people whether or not they understand this to be their task, and on what basis judgements about neglect and 'doing something' may be made. Politically it is important for lay people to participate in determining what children should receive and from whom they should receive it. Phillip Noyes, speaking for the NSPCC, described the dilemma shared by professionals and public, namely: "what comprises neglect, what should be done and how we should do it" (Education Committee, 2013: 20). Shaping the answers to those questions is indeed 'everybody's business'.

1.6 Thesis Structure

In this introduction I have positioned child neglect as a contested and politically defined category rather than a psycho-medical essentialist category. As such, it is vitally important that lay people play a role in deciding what child neglect is in this society at this time. I have also detailed my own professional and personal interest in the topic and how my background facilitates my understanding child neglect as a social construction. Chapter 2 focuses on the theoretical framework within which my research is situated, with particular reference to the Foucauldian concepts I consider to be of importance. In this chapter I also explore difficulties inherent in categorising people as lay or expert, and of my own position as a child neglect expert, wishing to research lay constructions. Chapters 3 and 4 trace the concept of child neglect from its emergence in simple modernity to its operation in our late modern society of today. Chapter 5 investigates the legal discourses of child neglect setting out the effects of different legal traditions on constructions of children and child neglect. Legal discourse mandates and limits child neglect related practices such as child protection. These chapters serve to set out the background to the topic and the foundations of my research approach.

Chapters 6 and 7 set out why and how this research project was conducted and findings obtained. Chapter 6 in conjunction with Appendices 1 and 2 outlines existing research into lay constructions of child neglect and identifies a research gap - lay constructions of child neglect have usually been controlled, channelled and circumscribed by professional mechanisms such as researcher constructed vignettes or survey questions. The chapter demonstrates that an analysis exploring how lay people construct child neglect is an important contribution to the research literature. Chapter 7 together with Appendices 3-11 detail the design of the project itself, the rationale behind my decision to collect data from focus groups composed of self-identifying lay adults within a pre-existing group relationship, the ethical issues around those choices and how I resolved them. That chapter in

conjunction with Appendix 12 then details the steps I took in analysing my data and producing my findings guided by the Foucauldian analysis framework suggested by Willig (2008a; 2008b).

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 set out my findings. Chapter 8 focuses on the potentially neglected child, constructed as a child whose physical, emotional, training and/or supervisory needs are not being adequately met. This 'unmet need' model is drawn from a developmental discourse and constructs child neglect as resulting in a wide range of long term deficits to the detriment of child and society. The chapter examines how such children are 'seen' by lay people (as Deprived, Unloved, Uncontrolled and/or Escaping), and what subject positions are made available for all children within this discourse, neglected or otherwise.

Chapter 9 focuses on the neglecter, examining how participants position children as neglected not solely based on the unmet needs of the child, but also on the normality or abnormality of parent/carer behaviour. The unmet needs of a child are understood as resulting from one of four types of parenting. The first, I have termed the Overburdened Parent, who has the normal psychological attachment to their children and the skills and knowledge to carry out their parental duty, but is prevented from doing so due to uncontrollable forces. This parent may not be positioned as neglectful, nor the child as neglected. The other three types of parent are constructed as abnormal and neglectful. The second parent (the Clueless Parent) has the correct emotional disposition towards their child but lacks the practical skills and knowledge to carry out their duty and requires assistance and education. The third and fourth categories: the parent who has the knowledge and practical skills to rear a child but chooses not to (the Underinvested Parent) and the parent who lacks skills, knowledge and parental disposition (the Unsuitable Parent) attracted greater censure and were associated with particularly bad psychological outcomes for children. In order to construct the neglectful parent participants were drawing on disciplinary discourses in relation to 'normal' families, 'normal' parenting and 'normal' mothering. This chapter also explores the ways in which some participants positioned the community and state as neglectful.

Chapter 10 explores how lay people constructed responding to child neglect, within discourses relating to the importance of family in child rearing and the importance of family privacy. Participants largely constructed 'doing something' about child neglect as contacting social services. Social services intervention was in turn constructed solely in terms of child removal, an outcome which no group found satisfactory except as a very last resort. The chapter then goes on to explore the fragmentation of the 'normal' developmental childhood

in late modernity and the ways in which for participants this affected their ability to respond to children they were concerned about in their midst. Here discourses of tolerance, multiculturalism and cultural relativism competed with universalising discourses of child development and children's rights.

Chapter 11 brings this thesis to a close. I look again at my research questions in the light of my findings, locate those findings within the literature and explore the implications of my findings for theory, policy and practice. I also reflect on the journey of my research and my journey as researcher and consider where research in this area could usefully continue.

Chapter 2 - Theorising the Project

The social construction of childhood is “the complex interweaving of social structures, political and economic institutions, beliefs, cultural mores, laws, policies, and the everyday actions of both adults and children, in the home and on the street” (James and James, 2004:13).

2.1 Introduction

This project takes the view that child neglect is socially constructed. Decisions about how and when children can be said to be neglected are made within a wide range of very different social, cultural, economic and political contexts, and situations that are considered neglectful in one time and place may not be constructed as such in another. In deciding whether a child has been neglected one is not simply making a factual assessment of particular types of behaviour or situations and their effects, one is also engaging in a moral and political process with regard to the roles, rights and positions of children in society today (Parton, 1995). In this chapter I shall explain what I mean by the assertion that child neglect is socially constructed, identifying the epistemological and ontological foundations of this project. I shall then detail the Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary power, discourse, power/knowledge and resistance which I intend to use as a “tool kit” with which to analyse and explore the discursive framework within which child neglect is constructed (Foucault, 1980b:145). Finally I shall explore the concept of lay knowledge within a Foucauldian framework, seeking to unpack the paradox of my own position within the research, and the difficulties of a researcher like me (a professional with legal, psychological and social work expertise) purporting to analyse lay constructions of child neglect.

2.2 Social Constructionism: Ontology and Epistemology

“The social construction of what?” (Hacking, 1999: title)

Social constructionism asserts that all knowledge is produced within and by very specific cultural, economic, historical, social and political situations (Burr, 2003). Reality is not ‘out there’ to be uncovered and language cannot represent reality in some objective way; rather language, and how we use it, constructs how we see and understand reality (Parker, 1992; Hosking and Morley, 2004). People construct knowledge in the course of social life, and

different constructions give rise to different actions and effects in the social world (Burr, 2003). For positivists the question 'what is child neglect' has a discoverable objective universal answer, deducible from the "accumulation of legitimate knowledge" about the topic (Neimeyer, 1998:136). Social constructionists argue that what is termed child neglect varies over time, between cultures and within cultures as standards and values are negotiated, renegotiated and performed (Horwath, 2007; James and James, 2004; Stainton Rogers, 1992b). "No behaviour is *necessarily* child abuse...some sets of facts come to be labelled as cases of child abuse because they go beyond the limits of what is now considered to be acceptable conduct towards a child" (Taylor, 1992:46, emphasis in original).

My project takes a social constructionist epistemology and ontology. Hacking (1999) emphasised the importance of making clear precisely what is asserted to be socially constructed. Epistemologically, the argument for social construction is uncontroversial. When we attempt to comprehend or describe child neglect, we are forced to use language, discourse, representation and construction (Edley, 2001; Gergen, 2001; MacKinnon, 1989; Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen and Karlsson, 2002). However language and discourse do not provide a window to some 'objective reality', rather they impact upon and create the very worlds they make available to us as researchers (Foucault, 1972; Edwards, 1997; Edley, 2001; Burr, 2003). As Gergen argued, "my realism is essentially situated.....located within a culturally circumscribed tradition or form of life" (Gergen, 2001:424).

The ontological argument is more complicated. To say that child neglect is socially constructed might appear to belittle the appalling experiences of children whose suffering and deaths have become familiar to us through serious case reviews, media reporting, debate, campaigns, and public inquiries. People of all ages can be grievously harmed by their environments and the treatment they receive, and children, like adults, have basic biological requirements that must be satisfied in order for them to survive. To focus on social constructionism and discourse is not to deny the material or extra-discursive world (Speer, 2000; Burr, 2003; Mills, 2003). My argument is rather that child neglect is a social category, and, as a category, it is ontologically a social construction. It is the 'idea' of child neglect, the 'idea' of a neglected child as a particular kind of person that is socially constructed (Hacking, 1999). Adults understand, control and institutionalise childhood in different ways across history and cultures (James and James, 2004; Jenks, 2005), and definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards children vary across cultures, nations and time (Horwath, 2007, Reading et al, 2009). These changing definitions and their effects in society are the social construction of child neglect. As the following chapters

will show, at this time in England, this expertise is claimed by the so-called psy-complex - the professions of psychology, psychiatry, social work, medicine, cognitive science, neuroscience and criminology (Ingleby, 1985; Rose, 1985; Parton, 1991).

To say that child neglect is socially constructed is not to deny its effect. The classification of particular individuals as neglected children is situated within a social setting or as Hacking termed it (unsatisfactorily in his opinion) a "matrix" (Hacking, 1999:11). This matrix in England today includes legislation, institutions such as children's services, the family and schools, the police force, policy makers, researchers, campaigners, children's rights organisations, child protection charities, law courts and legal personnel, the media, and finally those who claim expertise in relation to children. Determining whether someone can be categorised as a 'neglected child' will determine not only what can be done for and to that child and who is responsible for doing it, but also impacts on the history, future and subjective experience of that child and his/her family. For Hacking, child abuse (in which he includes child neglect) interacts with people and their behaviour; being classified as abused or abuser forces people to re-evaluate their behaviour, understanding themselves through the operation of the matrix. As such, the social construction of child neglect is involved in "making up people" (Hacking, 1999:131), shaping who we feel we are and how we feel we should or should not behave.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

To take a social constructionist stance is to adopt a critical attitude towards 'reality', seeking to demonstrate that things seeming natural and inevitable are contingent and constructed (Hacking, 1999; Burr, 2003). This is particularly important in relation to child maltreatment which was "first presented and is still intended to be a scientific concept" (Hacking, 1999:132). While experts, researchers and practitioners seek to scientifically isolate the precise causes and effects of child neglect to better understand, predict, prevent, map and treat it, it is easy to forget that judging what is or is not neglect is primarily a moral and political assessment rather than a medical or scientific one (Parton, 1995).

"Contemporary practices and institutions emerged out of specific struggles, conflicts, alliances and exercises of power, many of which are nowadays forgotten" (Garland, 2014:372). This necessitates adopting a critical attitude to practices and institutions that appear natural, benign and inevitable today. In an effort to embed this critical attitude at the heart of my thesis I shall be using a Foucauldian conceptualisation of the dynamic

relationships between power, knowledge, discourse and resistance. These ideas were largely developed by Foucault during the 1970s and set out in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991, originally published in 1975), *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality 1* (1978, originally published in 1976) and *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (1980). Although I would not claim to be conducting a Foucauldian analysis (see chapter 7), an attention to the 'history of the present' highlights the forces producing and sustaining the practices of the present (Garland, 2014).

In adopting a Foucauldian framework, however loosely, I am situating myself within an approach committed to problematising and critiquing that which claims to be true, common sense or expert (Mills, 2003). I chose this theoretical framework in part due to the paradox of my position within this research. My interest is in researching lay constructions of child neglect but my own psychological, legal and social work expertise in relation to children and child protection complicates my position as researcher. I wanted a framework that exposed those tensions rather than smoothing them over. I was anxious to disrupt notions that expert constructions of child neglect should be assigned a superior status to lay ideas (or vice versa), or that I was seeking to 'test' how 'well' lay people 'understood' child neglect. I also wished to avoid positioning lay views as in some simple sense 'opposed' to expert views, or assuming a power struggle between state and family over how children should be brought up, or situating my work within the liberational aspirations of the social studies of childhood. Rather, I was interested in exploring the multiplicity of knowledges and the complexity of power relationships within lay constructions of child neglect. For me, Foucauldian understandings of discourse, power/knowledge, and resistance provided an appropriate theoretical vehicle within which to situate my research.

2.3.1 Discourse

"A discourse is best understood as a system of possibility for knowledge" (Philip, 1985, quoted in Parton, 1991:3-4)

This thesis is interested in the ways in which lay people construct child neglect; exploring what meanings, if any, they give to the concept. Social constructionism holds that meanings are carried in situated social artefacts, most importantly language and discourse (Burr, 2003; Mills, 2003). Discourse is a wide term with multiple meanings (Kendall and Wickham, 1999) even when used by Foucault himself (Mills, 2003). Within this thesis I use 'discourse' to encompass "historically variable ways of specifying knowledge and truth"

(Ramazanoglu, 1993:19). Discourse is far wider than the spoken or written word, comprising "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Burr, 2003:64). Only through discursive structures can we think about, understand, order, and make sense of either ourselves or the world around us (Foucault, 1972; 1978; 1991, 1980, Parton 1991; 1994; Mills, 2003). Discourse produces and is produced by practices within the social world, containing "political frameworks of social organisation that make some social actions possible whilst precluding others" (Parton, 1991:3). To understand what child neglect is, one needs to explore the range of discourses available at the time in question together with the interactions between the different discourses which give the concept meaning (Foucault, 1970; 1972). Foucault referred to "the complex set of relationships between the knowledges which are produced within a particular period and the rules by which new knowledge is generated" as the *episteme* (Mills, 2003:62).

Discourse produces what we apprehend as reality. This element of production is extremely important - discourse does not transparently translate 'reality' into language, it constructs objects (Foucault, 1972; Parker, 1992). In doing so, discourses "define obligations and determine the distribution of responsibilities and authorities for different categories of persons such as parents, children, social workers, doctors, lawyers and so on" (Parton, 1994:13). Discourse structures language into different systems of statements that when combined or distinguished from each other create particular versions of reality (Burr, 2003; Mills, 2003). However, different versions of reality can be strategically utilised to serve competing ends: "...language... constitute[s] social reality in different ways according to the positions and interests of the groups and individuals involved" (Neimeyer, 1998:138). One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter. Meanings are constantly in flux, contested and conflictual, even amongst people who share the same language and culture.

2.3.2 Disciplinary Power

From a Foucauldian perspective, the emergence of modern childhood and the changing position of children within society were an integral part of a fundamental shift in the operation of power within society (Bell, 2011). Foucault theorised that pre-modern society was characterised by a sovereign or "juridical-discursive" concept of power - a top-down theory of power involving the exercise of prohibition through law, censorship, and taboo (Foucault, 1978:82). However, beginning in the 17th Century the intense social and economic upheaval of the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution generated the conditions for the development of a different type of power relationship within society:

disciplinary power (Foucault, 1978; 1980; 1991). The objective of disciplinary power is to “meticulously, exhaustively and continuously control the activities of bodies” so as to simultaneously maximise both their usefulness and docility (Hoffman, 2011:28). The related concept of biopower focuses on “the species body” (Foucault, 1978:139) and on how whole groups can be regulated to maximise productivity and control populations.

Power was not theorised as something owned by one dominant group of people and exercised on another subservient group (Foucault, 1979; Mills, 2003). Power is more a calculating strategy emerging from the complex interplay of discourses and the relationships of force which permeate them (Foucault, 1991). As such, power is unstable and constantly shifting, being continually reinforced or weakened (Mills, 2003; Lynch, 2011). No longer is the power in society embodied within the person of the monarch, rather it is dispersed throughout society, exercised laterally, hierarchically and most importantly subjectively: we are all simultaneously exercising power and undergoing it (Foucault, 1978; 1980c, 1980d; Mills; 2003). Finally, power is productive (Foucault, 1991; Feder, 2011), it is “something that does something, rather than something which is or which can be held onto” (Mills 2003:35). The operation of disciplinary power produces individuals and subjectivities; it is concerned with mechanisms by which external control and constraints are internalised and used by the self upon the self.

Foucault (1991) theorised disciplinary power operating under particular conditions within disciplinary institutions e.g. the prison, the family and the school. Knowledge is developed about strategies and mechanisms that most increase the docility and utility of subjects. Disciplinary institutions use this knowledge, with specifically appointed members of the institutional hierarchy imposing the strategies and mechanisms (contained within a behavioural programme) on those below them (prison guards on prisoners, parents on children, teachers on children, etc.). Those imposing the behavioural programme carefully watch those subjected to the programme to ensure that it is meticulously observed (hierarchical surveillance). Where the surveillance cannot be escaped (for example within technologies such as Bentham’s Panopticon (Foucault, 1991)) subjects are forced to comply with the behavioural programme (disciplinary gaze). In time, these behaviours constitute normality (norms) and deviations from the programme become abnormal (normalising judgement). Once subjects are visible and norms are established, behaviour can be judged, categorised, classified and punished (examination). Norms are interiorised by subjects who use them to oversee their own behaviour and ensure that they are not behaving abnormally. As these norms exist to optimise their docility and their utility, in acting on them subjects discipline themselves. Those few who remain undisciplined can be dealt with

by the prison system or the asylum (Foucault, 1991; 1980; Mills, 2003; Feder, 2011). It is in this way that Foucault (1991) asserted that discipline, acting on a general undisciplined mass of bodies, makes individuals.

Just as discipline makes individuals, biopower can be said to make populations (Foucault, 1978; Taylor, 2011). Conceptualising people living within particular boundaries as a population requires that they be organised, managed, regulated, and controlled as a population rather than as a disparate group of individuals (Burr, 2003). Like disciplinary power, biopower relies on norms being interiorised by individuals, but it is diffused throughout the social world, focuses on the life of populations or segments of the population (children, parents, families, etc.), and operates at state rather than institutional level. The subject of biopower is not individual bodies but statistics e.g. birth rates and death rates. Biopower seeks to identify factors that can cause these statistics to vary e.g. what factors correlate to improvements in public health, reductions in unemployment rates, juvenile delinquency statistics, and levels of truancy and anti-social behaviour. Biopower operates through "an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls" rather than through the disciplinary mechanisms of disciplinary gaze, normalising judgement and examination (Foucault, 1978:139).

2.3.3 Power/Knowledge

Both disciplinary power and biopower are intimately connected with knowledge, and it is "in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (Foucault, 1978:100). In the composite phrase Power/Knowledge Foucault emphasises the centrality of knowledge to power struggles and vice versa: "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (Foucault, 1980a:52). Power cannot be exercised without knowledge: knowledge generation is vital to identify factors likely to increase or decrease the utility and docility of individuals and populations and to support determinations of what is normal and what abnormal behaviour (Ball, 1990; Burr, 2003). Indeed, the development of disciplinary power and biopower was made possible by "the will to know" characterising our current historical period (Foucault, 1981, cited in Mills, 2003:71). Tools to measure, label and categorise objects (including people) developed alongside a rapid increase in the production of information about them; indeed Foucault argues that Bentham's Panopticon was designed not only to facilitate gaze but also to produce knowledge of better mechanisms through which to increase docility and utility (Foucault, 1991).

Disciplinary institutions (schools, prisons, asylums, etc.) rely on knowledge to inform them of how best to structure time and activities in order to produce a range of desired human behaviours (Marshall, 1990; Foucault 1991). However, "it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (Foucault, 1980a:52). In order for something to be considered true other possible truths have to be discredited (Mills, 2003) giving rise to "a battle for truth", or at least "around truth" (Foucault, 1980e:133). Facts are not unearthed during some disinterested search for truth, they are produced by legitimising processes undertaken by recognised authorities (Mills, 2003). Truth therefore becomes 'truth' – produced, supported, affirmed, collected and disseminated by a wide range of strategies that ensure that 'truth' is widely circulated through society and carefully distinguished from competing statements that are 'false' (Foucault, 1980e; Mills, 2003). In this way a regime of truth is produced: inseparable from the power relationships and systems of power that it justifies and supports and by which it is created, sustained and extended (Foucault, 1980e:133).

Discourses prescribe what can be said, thought and done and dictate who can speak and act, under what circumstances and with what authority (Foucault, 1972; Ball, 1990). Some statements are widely disseminated while others are kept out of circulation through the operation of external exclusions: taboo (which makes particular subjects very difficult to talk about and limits what can be said), the distinction between the sane and the insane (mad talk is not taken as seriously as sane talk) and through the distinction between true and false (Foucault, 1965; 1972; Mills, 2003). Those positioned as experts are sanctioned to speak the truth, while those who cannot bring themselves within the expert category will find it more difficult to be accepted as knowledgeable. The production and circulation of 'truth' and the suppression and exclusion of 'untruth' is the province of a range of institutions and practices closely linked to the academy (e.g. universities, government departments, publishing houses, professional and scientific bodies, research councils, etc.) (Foucault, 1972).

2.3.4 Resistance

Discourses are at their most successful when they are accepted at face value as 'real' or 'common sense' (Neimeyer, 1998). However, there are no rules setting out which discourses will succeed and dominate at any particular time or within particular social circumstances (Foucault, 1978; Kendall and Wickham, 1999). Prevailing discourses can never establish total dominance over alternative discourses that could alter or replace them (Burr, 2003, Mills, 2003). All discourses should be seen as highly fragile and contingent, made up of a myriad of discursive segments that could also form part of a number of

different discursive strategies (Foucault, 1972; 1978; 1991; 1980). This instability gives rise to the possibility of resistance - like a well-constructed mosaic the apparently solid picture is in fact a composite of many different segments, and therefore will always be vulnerable to being broken apart and/or or reconstructed differently. Where the joins cannot be seen, where power can hide the mechanisms by which it operates, it is more likely to succeed (Foucault, 1978). However, where there is an awareness that "it does not necessarily have to be like this" (Parton, 1998:7) then the prevailing discourses can potentially be resisted and remade using different strategies and/or combining alternative discursive segments (May, 2011). Thus resistance and challenge force prevailing discourses to continually defend, reaffirm and reproduce their truth (Burr, 2003).

Resistance is not a straightforward concept. It must exist: where there is a power relationship there must also be a possibility of resistance (Lynch, 2011). However, resistance is not beyond the existing discourses but rather latent within them. "Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault, 1978:101). It has been argued that the French terms used by Foucault express ideas that are wider than their English counterparts, and that the possibility of resistance, of 'something different' is more evident in the French terms than the translations of them. *Pouvoir* contains potentiality within the power, *savoir* is wider than expert knowledge and perhaps should translate as knowledges including as it does folk knowledge, common sense and informal knowledge and *assujettissement* denotes not only the subjection of individuals to power but also the spaces for action opened up within discourses by subject positions (Feder, 2011; Heyes, 2011). While some will passively accept the judgement of experts, others resist and rearrange the classifications within which experts seek to position them (Hacking, 1999). However resistance should not be seen as the activity of enlightened individuals - "there are no margins for those who break with the system to gambol in" (Foucault, 1980b:141). Finally, resistance is not synonymous with improvement or progress. Discourse is emergent and fluid, so one can never say what particular shape resistance discourse may take or predict what particular society may result from it.

2.4 Constructing Lay People

“When is a lay person not a lay person? The answer is probably always” (Dyer, 2004:342).

Adopting a Foucauldian approach to Knowledge/Power forced me to negotiate the implications of my decision to research lay constructions of child neglect. In the introduction I stated that I considered myself a child neglect expert. I had to unpick that ‘common sense’ self-categorisation and see where this apparent expertise derived from. As stated earlier, discourse prescribes who is considered an expert and under what circumstances expertise can operate (Foucault, 1965; 1972). Expertise relating to child neglect is overwhelmingly produced by the psy-complex and in particular developmental psychology. Over and over again psy-complex discourse is reaffirmed and reasserted within the training and practice of those empowered to work with children, particularly those responsible for child protection.

Alongside increasing concerns about child neglect have come increasing demands that professionals working with children, particularly social workers, receive better training in child development knowledge. This knowledge is positioned as key to better child protection professional practice by the Family Justice Review recommendations (Norgrove, 2011), the Education Select Committee Inquiry into the Child Protection System (Education Committee, 2013), the Working Together government guidance (HM Government, 2013) and the Knowledge and Skills Statement prepared by Isabelle Trowler, Chief Children’s Social Worker (Trowler, 2014). The ‘Knowledge’ section of the Personal Capabilities Framework positions psy-complex knowledge at the heart of the professional capabilities required to practice as a registered social worker (see TCSW, 2014) and courses qualifying people to be social workers are often criticised for not training students well enough in child development knowledge (e.g. Munro, 2011; Narey, 2014; Ofsted, 2014).

As stated in the introduction, I have degree level qualifications in law, social work and psychology. As a registered social worker and non-practising children and family law solicitor I have recognised expertise in child protection. I am familiar with the professional child neglect related discourse, and have taught psychological models of child development to undergraduate and postgraduate social work students. If employed as a social worker, a Court would accept my child neglect expertise (although my judgement would be open to scrutiny). I am an expert. However, psy-complex knowledge is not confined to psy-complex experts, it circulates through society performing the disciplinary function of normalisation. Expert ideas from the social sciences are taken up and widely disseminated

through popular culture (Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006) as expert knowledge spirals back and forth through lay systems (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006; Giddens, 2013). Lay people are part of the circulation of expertise, and participate in the power relationships made available by this knowledge. Disciplinary gaze, though primarily theorised as hierarchical, also operates laterally and from bottom to top (Foucault, 1979). In making child protection 'everybody's business', non-professionals are discursively allotted a specific task in maintaining expert disciplinary gaze through the mechanisms of lateral surveillance and surveillance-by-proxy (within which non-professionals alert responsible authorities if they become concerned about children) (Bloor and McIntosh, 1990; Peckover, 1998).

My purporting to divide the adult population of England into a professional/expert category and a non-professional/lay person category was therefore problematic. In addition, expertise is associated with legitimacy, expert speech will be attended to, non-expert speech risks being discarded (Foucault, 1972). For an expert to position someone as a non-expert is an assertion of power. Yet, the 'lay person' position has its own discursive power: the power to contextualise expertise and hold experts to account. This democratising discourse surfaced in the health field in the 1970s (Pickard and Smith, 2001), a time associated with late modern questioning of experts and expertise (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; 2013; Milewa, Buxton and Hanney, 2008; Prior, 2003; Dyer, 2004; Ferguson, 2004), but it was not until the 1990s that lay knowledge was afforded its own legitimacy and status alongside medical knowledge (Popay and Williams, 1996; Shaw, 2002; Prior, 2003). Within this discourse lay people are positioned as in an equal relationship to holders of medical expertise, possessing their own specific, legitimate and at times competing knowledge (Prior, 2003; Kerr et al, 2007; Kernick and Mitchell, 2010). The recruitment of lay members to LSCBs (see introduction), occurring some 10 years after the presence of lay members within Primary Care Trusts (since replaced by Clinical Commissioning Groups) is located within this movement.

Lay knowledge may be better appreciated within the social work child protection arena than within the medical field. While there is an increasing emphasis on applying psy-complex expertise within social work, so "by extension less lay or common-sense judgements" (Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006:324), social work knowledge remains contingent, experiential, uncertain, and often confusing (Jordan, 1978; Macdonald, 1995; Parton, 2000; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006). Lay knowledge has always played a vital role in social work practice and social workers draw on lay ideas and 'common sense' as well as expert theoretical frameworks. As Parton argues, the difference between social workers and other

professionals such as doctors and lawyers is that social workers are prepared to “forsake the formality of their roles and to work with ordinary people in their ‘natural’ settings, using the informality of their methods as a means of negotiating solutions to problems rather than imposing them” (Parton, 2000:454). As a result, social workers are perhaps more attuned to democratising discourses, inclusion and social justice than other psy-complex experts.

My project is situated within this democratising discourse, taking the position that lay people have knowledge which must be attended to alongside expert discourse. Not all matters can be determined by expertise alone: public moral argument should not be usurped or undermined by expertise claims (Fisher, 1987, cited in Kinsella, 2002; Parton, 1995). The various roles of state, expert, family and community should always be up for debate (Gibbons, 2008). However, while ‘lay person’ may be a useful political position, the lay/expert divide remains “widely applied, but inadequately examined” (Kinsella, 2002:192). Dyer (2004) puts forward several alternatives; ‘lay’ may refer to a lack of expertise, a gap in knowledge, or a different kind of knowledge: perhaps experiential or phenomenological knowledge as opposed to a technically specialist knowledge. For Hogg and Williamson lay people are defined by who they are not; because they have not been socialised and trained in expertise, they are “assumed to have retained the ‘ordinary’ norms and values of the society” (2001:3). Yet common sense lay understandings are constructed in “an increasingly plural and complex environment of knowledge” (Kangas, 2001:89) filtered through and imbued with professional discourse (Shaw, 2002) in a process De Swann (1990:14) termed “proto-professionalization”.

I raise this issue, not to resolve it, but rather to highlight from the start the problematic and artificial nature of the ‘lay people’ category. Expertise is contingent and contested and must be discursively negotiated, asserted and constructed by those claiming, resisting or subjected to it. Subject positions of ‘lay person’ and ‘expert’ are available to be taken up during social interaction due to a “purposive flexibility in people’s accounts of themselves and others” (Kerr et al, 2007:389). Thus a nurse may be a medical expert when a person collapses in the street, and yet a lay person for the purposes of membership of the General Medical Council (Entwistle, Renfrew, Yearley, Forrester and Lamont, 1998; Hogg and Williamson, 2001) and neither mandatory expert training nor prolonged exposure to expertise diminishes the ‘lay-ness’ of lay board members (Epstein, 1996; Dyer, 2004; Shaw, 2002). We become particular types of people as we learn to think of ourselves in particular kinds of ways (May, 2011) and as we act as experts or lay people (Kerr et al, 2007). Within child protection, under carefully prescribed conditions, trained, qualified and registered professionals have been granted legal powers (due to their specialised

knowledge) to impose particular actions on children and families: a legal construction of expert and recognition of expertise. This is the position my research adopts, but I do recognise the hierarchal truth-speaking privilege constructed by use of the terms 'expert' and 'lay'.

2.5 Knowledge/Power and Reflexivity

In addition to the complications inherent within the lay/expert division, is the more fundamental one: I am not only an expert seeking lay constructions of child neglect, I am conducting Ph.D. research within an academic institution. I am therefore trying to gain a more elevated expert status (the Ph.D. qualification) in an expert setting (a university), with expert supervisors and referees, in a department specifically geared towards producing expert knowledge about children (The Centre for Applied Childhood Studies). I am immersed in expert discourses about children and child neglect. In addition, academy discourse regulates my work and position in the academy as a Ph.D. student (Hastings, 2010). In order to be awarded a Ph.D. I must produce an original contribution to knowledge. Within a Foucauldian approach, all knowledge is potentially dangerous: "we must be very suspicious of any information which is produced, since even when it seems most self-evidently to be adding to the sum of human knowledge, it may at the same time play a role in the maintenance of the status quo and reaffirming of current power relations" (Mills, 2003:72). This is a concern even if my research aims to explore, test, and perhaps transgress against the regime of truth that surrounds children in today's society (Hollinger, 1994).

I cannot stand outside Power/Knowledge or outside discourse. As an expert researcher interrogating lay knowledges I am in power relationships with lay participants. What I must try and do is account for my own position as expert and be aware of the possible effects my expertise could have on my data and my interpretations. This requires a highly reflexive stance throughout the project, not simply during data analysis. A vital part of Foucauldian analysis is "recognising strangeness in all social arrangements" (Kendall and Wickham, 1999:8), strangeness in my own understandings as well as those of my participants. Parker (2005:34) issues a reflexive challenge to radical researchers "to consider the role of the researcher's cultural membership, how those cultural resources can be manifested within the text and made available to the reader, and also to problematise things that the researcher would otherwise take for granted".

I have tried to respond to this challenge throughout the research process. Finlay (2002:536) suggests that from the very start of the research process "researchers could fruitfully examine their motivations, assumptions, and interests in the research as a precursor to identifying forces that might skew the research in particular directions." Tufford and Newman (2012) draw from the phenomenological literature to recommend researchers reflect carefully on their beliefs and values, emotions, knowledge, culture, experience, academic reflections and hypotheses. To be clear, I was not seeking to engage in epoché or to bracket out my experience; that would be theoretically incoherent. Rather, I was interested in phenomenological techniques that would facilitate reflection on my thoughts and emotions, to help me recognise my own constructions of child neglect, the knowledge informing them and the power relationships within them; I wished to trouble my common sense.

The two methods I used to facilitate this reflexive process were writing and talking through my research. Throughout the project I wrote about what I was reading, thinking and feeling; thoughts which were then collected together in a more coherent form and sent to my supervisors in advance of supervision. The document formed the basis of supervision and talking through it with my supervisors was an important part of my reflexive activity. After the supervision session, I reflected on supervision in writing, capturing not only the advice of supervisors but also where that advice seemed located within the literature, my own responses and the way in which my thinking had developed as a result. When designing the project itself, I wrote about the range of possible options I had and my reasons for making each of the choices I made. By doing this I tried to turn my thoughts and feelings throughout the project into accessible data that I could discursively explore and analyse at will. I was also fortunate enough at crunch times to have a partner with whom I could talk through my ideas when I felt lost, or confused, or stuck. Gentle and supportive cross examination was often revelatory in assisting me to better appreciate the discursive complexity I was wrestling with.

The question then became how much of this information would be contained within the final thesis. Disclosing too little about myself risked withholding important social facts from the reader that could inform their judgement about my research findings, revealing too much information seemed self-indulgent (Lincoln and Denzin, 1998; Hanrahan, Cooper, and Burroughs-Lange, 1999; Norum, 2000; Finlay, 2002; Nelson, 2005). In my view ethics requires some level of disclosure; as Norum argues, "researchers are biased. This is not good or bad. It simply is. Thus, it is both sociological good sense and an ethical obligation to disclose those biases" (Norum, 2000: 337). I felt it necessary to include information about

my professional and personal background and my commitment to social justice within the introduction as I consider these are relevant to my comprehension of child neglect. I considered it important to detail my reflexive process here. By exploring the history of child neglect using a Foucauldian approach I seek to present the dominant discourse as a discourse, opening up a necessary critical space between what is dominant and notions of 'truth'. My data collection and analysis chapter (chapter 7) details not only my choices, but also my reasons for making those choices together with how I produced my findings from the data. My thesis concludes by reflecting on the research process and my role as researcher (chapter 11). It is hoped that these sections will give the reader tools with which to better understand and contextualise this research.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have located my research within social constructionism and outlined the importance of the Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary power, discourse, Power/Knowledge and resistance to my research into lay constructions of child neglect. I have used a Foucauldian theoretical framework to problematise the lay-expert binary, and my own position as reflexive Ph.D researcher. It is not however my intention to conduct a Foucauldian analysis in the full meaning of that term. Foucault's opening up of concepts was historical in nature, his goal to chart the development of particular discourses and modes of power. I want to open up child neglect differently, by collecting data not from the experts authorised to speak but rather from lay adults living alongside children in our communities who are currently being exhorted to play a role in preventing and responding to child neglect. Nevertheless, child neglect as a concept has a history, and the task of the next three chapters is to outline that history through time, from its beginnings in the upheaval of the Industrial Revolution to the present day, and to set out the legal framework within which child neglect, as a legal concept, is practiced.

Chapter 3 - The Development of Childhood and Child Neglect in Simple Modernity

“We must recognise that the social, moral and physical separation of children and childhood from adulthood has a long history” (Mayall, 2006:11).

3.1. Introduction

Childhood as we understand it is not inevitable or natural (Hacking, 1999). The small adult of the English Middle Ages is very different from the child or adolescent of the early 21st Century (Aries, 1962; Parton 1985; Mayall, 2006). Changes in the lives of young people are often constructed through the narrative of progress: practices of a barbaric past replaced by a benign and enlightened present (Parton, 1985; Steedman, 1990 quoted in Jenks, 2005: 54). However, the languages and concepts we use are not transparent, self-evident, natural or normal - they have a history (Foucault, 1972). Modern childhood emerged from the social and economic upheaval of the Industrial Revolution. Increasingly constructed as a natural or biological stage of the life course, modern childhood is a mechanism through which the lives of young people could be intensively regulated and disciplined within the private and semi-private spaces of family and school.

This chapter traces the development of childhood and child neglect from the mid 18th century until the 1970s. During this time power/knowledge increasingly divided the population into segments: adults and children. Children were constructed as needing to undergo particular child rearing practices (‘normal’ childhood) in order to become normal and pro-social adults with the chronological passage of time. Child rearing became an activity voluntarily assumed by normal families (particularly mothers) and was accomplished using knowledge and expertise from the rapidly developing psy-complex, particularly developmental psychology. Neglected children were positioned as not having had normal childhoods and were abnormal, undisciplined and a threat to good order as a result. This discourse was so successful that by the 1960s psychological understandings of how best to manage, discipline and regulate the lives of children were generally accepted as normal and natural.

3.2 Modernity and the Enlightenment

“Modernity as a summary term is seen to refer to the cluster of social, economic and political systems which emerged in the West with the Enlightenment in the late 18th century” (Parton and O’Byrne, 2000: 19).

Before looking at the development of modern childhood, it is important to identify what I mean by simple modernity/modernity/modernism. Philosophically and rhetorically modernity is rooted within the Enlightenment, 17th -18th century European scholarship championing the progressive forces of liberty, equality and fraternity, science, progress and reason against the ‘darkness’ of feudalism, injustice, oppression and superstition (Rosenau, 1991; Wokler 1998; 1999). The principles of modernism - democracy, liberal individualism, liberal humanism, and the importance of science - so closely reflect Enlightenment ethics that modernism is sometimes termed the “post-Enlightenment project” (Wokler, 1999; Lawrence, 1999; Stainton Rogers, 2003; Grant, 2005).

Modernity discourse conceptualises human history as progressive and occurring through the development of human reason (Lawrence, 1999; Vogel, 1999; Parton and O’Byrne, 2000; Stainton Rogers 2003). In simple modernity human order was no longer seen as governed by God or nature, but instead as vulnerable and requiring scientific support and guidance (Parton 1994; Parton and O’Byrne, 2000). Enlightenment discourses of cognitive and moral universalism produced a belief that a true and reliable understanding of the nature and essence of humanity would improve the human condition (Vogel, 1999; Lawrence, 1999, Parton and O’Byrne, 2000). The search for this knowledge led to the development of scientific method (Giddens, 1990; Rosenau, 1991; Stainton Rogers, 2003). “One type of certainty (divine law) was replaced by another (the certainty of our senses, of empirical observation) and divine providence was replaced with providential progress” (Giddens, 1990: 48). Those producing such reliable knowledge or truth (expertise) were seen as experts in relation to that field of knowledge (Parton and O’Byrne, 2000).

Evocations of modernity through Enlightenment thought, “mask and disguise a concrete socioeconomic-cultural form” (Lawrence, 1999: 3). Modernism was a system for producing social goods such as order and security, and for ensuring that scientific truths were harnessed for the benefits of human society (Parton and O’Byrne, 2000). For Lawrence (1999:3) modernity is multi-faceted, comprising “a structural organization of state, economy, society and culture; a power-complex and a mode of consciousness”. Under modernism the relationship between individual and state was redrawn; the state recognising

fundamental rights and liberties of the citizen and the citizen in turn recognising the state's authority to restrict those rights under particular circumstances (the social contract) (Lawrence, 1999; Stainton Rogers, 2003). The modern state was also a "developmental state" (Lee, 2001: 27) educating the public in accordance with the emerging scientific knowledge so that they might better perform their roles as useful and productive citizens (Parry, 1999; Lee, 2001).

3.3 The Birth of Modern Childhood

"...From the late seventeenth century onwards, a new attitude towards children began to manifest itself and this was closely related to social changes which had particular impacts on the nature of community and the role of the family" (Parton, 2006:9).

3.3.1 Pre-modern childhood

Whilst "few who have studied the evidence would now argue that the concept of childhood did not exist in the past" (Thomas, 2000:10), childhood in Medieval France was enormously different from modern childhood. Work inside and outside the home was expected of all on attaining physical autonomy (Aries, 1962; Parton, 1985; James and James, 2004; Mayall, 2006) and 3 and 4 year olds could be employed in factories and mines and held legally responsible for wrongdoing (Stainton Rogers, 1992a). The modern institutions of childhood - the family and the school - existed in very different forms in the Middle Ages. Feudalism invested male family heads with almost complete control of family units (Donzelot, 1980) and Medieval schools were places of clerical instruction for males of all chronological ages (Wyness, 2012).

Pre-modern society had laws to deal with young people in vulnerable situations who were considered to be a social problem. The Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 was in part a response to "the perceived threat to social order from children who are being raised by vagrant, dissident or criminal parents and learning false values" (Dingwall, Eekelaar and Murray, 1995:214). The Poor Laws gave the parishes in England responsibility for cases of 'neglect' leaving the Assizes to deal with occasional child cruelty cases (Ferguson, 2004). Before the Industrial Revolution in England the social and professional regulation of parent-child relationships and the penetration of expertise into working class families was almost non-existent (Ferguson, 2004).

In pre-modernity, children were understood through very different discourses. Jenks (2005) argues that two dominant and opposing traditions about the nature of younger people repeat throughout history and across cultures, traditions he terms Apollonian and Dionysian. Apollonians position children as essentially 'good', naturally moral, angelic and wise. Conversely Dionysians position children as essentially 'bad', naturally evil, corrupt and pleasure seeking. These traditions both had their 18th century champions. Increasing Evangelism fuelled Dionysian discourses relating to original sin and debased nature, while Apollonian constructions espoused by Rousseau's *Emile* (first published in 1762) and the Romantic poets demanded protection for the innate innocence of children against corrupting society. A third view was that essential human nature, good or bad, does not exist – rather we are all the products of experience and environment. This theory, although present in Greek philosophy, found purchase with the publication of Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) which positioned the minds and souls of infants as blank slates on which experience would write for better or worse.

3.3.2 The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution unleashed rapid, tremendous and unprecedented forces on the English people during the 18th and 19th centuries (Hall, 2011; Hobsbawm, 1962; 1975). Changing production methods, work patterns and environments, rapid population growth, urbanisation and conditions within the industrial slum combined to produce instability, dislocation and social and economic upheaval (Parton, 1985; Ferguson, 2004; Burman, 2008). The bourgeoisie, alarmed by escalating social ills such as crime, depravity, pauperism and disease, and fearful of the radical currents unleashed by the French Revolution, successfully found ways of controlling the lives of working class people (Parton, 1985; Hall, 2011; Hobsbawm, 1962; 1975). Control over the working class was achieved by transforming the family, and those responsible for the transformation "were entirely representative of the new, so-called bourgeois, order" (Donzelot, 1980: xx).

3.4 Producing the Working Class Family in England

3.4.1 Philanthropy and Tutelage

Bourgeois philanthropy produced the working class family using disciplinary techniques of moralisation and normalisation (Donzelot; 1980; Parton, 1991; Rose, 1999; Dingwall et al, 1995). For disciplinary power to operate, the working classes needed to be opened up to surveillance: "making them *visible*" (Ferguson, 2004:56 emphasis in the original). This was accomplished through the mechanism of philanthropy - financial assistance and help was offered to those struggling working class people who demonstrated commitment to leading productive and virtuous lives. The virtuous life was based on bourgeois values, ideas and organisation and centred on the domesticated family: Christian marriage, male wage labour, sobriety, female good housekeeping and a commitment to the moral upbringing of children (Rose, 1999). Thus "philanthropy, and subsequently social work, developed at a midway point between individual initiative and the all-encompassing state" (Parton, 1994:17).

The family was intended and expected to moralise children (Parton, 1991; Donzelot, 1980; Dingwall et al, 1995). However, increasingly the working class family was exhorted to operate according to the new medical sciences (Parton, 2006). Medical science claimed to be producing new expertise on the best way to raise healthy children, a developing discourse which reclassified debauchery, drunkenness, depravity, degeneracy, and other social ills as medical rather than moral issues, and so requiring medical expertise and medical solutions. Within this new knowledge, social ills were constructed as flowing from faulty constitutions produced by childhood events which if unaddressed could be generationally transmitted (Rose, 1999). To prevent this, medical science began to provide bourgeoisie families (and through their philanthropy, working class families) with child rearing norms which were claimed to devolve from a scientific charting of the essence of life: "...professional expertise underpinned by the power of a claim to truth" (Rose, 1999: 130). The normalisation of childhood using knowledge from medical science had begun (Donzelot, 1980; Rose, 1999; Ferguson, 2004; Parton, 1985; 2006).

Philanthropy as a disciplinary mechanism was ineffective where parents refused to apply for it. This weakness resulted in the development of tutelage: a mechanism for those who could not provide for themselves adequately but were resistant to bourgeois normalisation and moralisation (Donzelot, 1980). Tutelage, a form of coercive preventative intervention in families, was increasingly available: by the mid nineteenth century delinquent children could be removed from their families and placed in reformatories (Hendrick, 1990/1997).

Following Donzelot (1980) Parton (1994) argues that a discourse concerning 'the social' emerges in the mid nineteenth century as a third type of space, neither private nor public but existing between the two, which "produced and was reproduced by new relations between the law, administration, medicine, the school, and the family" (Parton, 1994:16).

3.4.2 Legislation

Legislation had a very important role in producing modern childhood. The developing family law incorporated both the philanthropists/social workers and also the knowledge bases within which the new norms were transmitted. The new knowledge of medical science, psy-knowledge, was legitimised and used to authorise social work intervention in families. The law acted as a "filter for the failures of normalisation by social work practices to be passed to the more explicitly repressive institutions when necessary" (Parton, 1991:14). Increases in knowledge about children were matched by increasing controls exercised over them, as differences between children and adults were enshrined in legislation. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act made parents responsible for children (Parton, 1985) and a raft of legislation followed removing younger children from the workplace and restricting the working hours of all children. Between 1780-1850 regulatory mechanisms such as the Chimney Sweepers Act 1788, the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act 1802, the Factory Acts of 1833 and 1844, The Mines Act 1842 and the Ten Hour Act 1847 were informed by psy-knowledge. New knowledge positioning child wage earning as inimical to the natural and necessary dependence of children upon adults proved so effective that by 1850 it was no longer normal for young people to be wage earners (Hendrick, 1990/1997).

Throughout the nineteenth century children were removed from public spaces for their own good. Universalising psy-complex discourses positioned all children as requiring environments tailored to meet their needs: the family and the school (Hendrick, 1990/1997). Knowledge and expertise was extended to the abnormal childhood. As children's dependency on adults was normalised, connections were made between delinquency and early parental treatment (Parton, 1985). Delinquency was abnormal, so must result from a lack of proper dependence on adults. Legislation also changed the boundaries between childhood and adulthood. By constructing a category of juvenile in relation to young people up to the age of 16, The Youthful Offenders Act (1854) extended the length of the normal childhood and children's enforced dependency on adults (Parton, 1985; Hendrick, 1990/1997; Thomas, 2000).

3.5 The Rise of the State

By the late 19th and early 20th century children's lives were becoming increasingly important to the state (Parton, 1991; 2006; Hendrick, 1990/1997; Rose, 1999). Discourses relating to imperialism, nationalism and nationhood were growing in prominence and children were seen as a vital state/national resource as future adults, parents and wage earners. Legislation gave the state increasing powers to take coercive measures in the lives of children and families (Parton, 1991) in an effort to preserve British racial supremacy (Hendrick, 1990/1997; Rose, 1999). Schooling became part of the normal childhood and afforded the state access to the daily lives of large numbers of children. Increasingly, the normal/normalising childhood was constructed as not simply in the interests of the state, but also something children were entitled to expect - the genesis of the children's rights movement (Hendrick, 1990/1997). This very concept of a right to a childhood perhaps served to highlight the way in which increasingly children were no longer afforded or able to exercise the same civil rights as adults (Thomas, 2000).

Compulsory elementary schooling was introduced in the 1880s due to concerns about 'bad habits' producing pauperism and crime (Walkerdine, 1984; Burman, 2008). Schooling was intended to replace bad habits with good ones (Walkerdine, 1984), preventing undesirable characteristics from being passed on (Hendrick, 1990/1997). The child study movement (experimental pedagogy) was formed in the 1890s, its proponents using science to identify manipulations of children that would produce more better quality adults and improve the stock of future generations (Hendrick, 1990/1997; Rose 1999; Burman, 2008). Universal schooling made large numbers of children visible and available to experts, providing a venue for the study and comparison of children by psychologists, sociologists, doctors and educationalists.

Tools were developed to study children in ways that would provide responses to the dominant concerns of the time. At the start of the 20th century feeble-mindedness and racial degeneration were high on the political agenda (Hendrick 1990/1997; 2007; Rose 1999). New knowledge and new mechanisms to discern these undesirable characteristics were required (Rose, 1999). The psychometric test (developed by Binet in 1905) was designed to separate 'normal' children from 'retarded' children (Binet, 1905:191), but also produced hierarchies of normality. For the first time children could be directly tested on a wide range of parameters to see how 'normal' they were. Technologies of examination were joined by a range of other normalising devices, most notably the idea of childhood being a time of development ("the 'ages and stages' model of childhood" (Wyness, 2012:85)). This

led to the birth of the discipline of developmental psychology and its claim to be the final arbiter of knowledge regarding childhood and children (Rose, 1999; Hendrick 1990/1997; 2007; Parton, 2006; Burman, 2008). Psychology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry focused on mapping, categorising, influencing and where necessary healing children's minds; an effort which continues today.

Universal and inescapable schooling produced children ('pupils'), making them different from and dependent on adults ('parents'/'teachers'), and regulating and disciplining the behaviour of both (Cunningham, 1995; Hendrick, 1990/1997; Wyness, 2012). The properly functioning family and mass schooling were positioned as the foundations of social order and future racial and national prosperity (Hendrick, 2007). Between 1880 and 1918 further legislation facilitated surveillance of and intervention in working class families, realigning and remaking them in accordance with the new middle class expertise (Hendrick, 2007). Childhood was too important to be allowed to happen naturally, it needed to be adjusted and manipulated by experts (Rose, 1999). The normal childhood was also becoming ever more saturated with and inseparable from psychological knowledge (Rose, 1999; Hendrick, 2007; Burman, 2008). The developing arena of social research also produced increasing volumes of statistical information about many different aspects of children's lives, allowing the state to position children as a population and exercise control over them under regimes of health, welfare and hygiene (biopower) (Walkerdine, 1984; Parton, 2006).

3.6 Experts and Expertise

Expertise in relation to the 'normal' childhood went through distinct phases. While nineteenth century philanthropists used religious expertise to address the deviance and immorality believed to reside within poor urban families, by the 20th century the expertise was overtly 'scientific'. The theory of eugenics emerged in the latter part of the 19th century (Levine and Bashford, 2010) and Galton's influential book *Hereditary Genius* applying Darwin's theories of natural selection to humanity was first published in 1869 (Paul and Moore, 2010). Eugenics positioned those within a pauper class as abnormal; the undeserving and pathologically poor, lacking in intellect, morality or economic sense (Mazumdar, 1980). Evolutionary biology and doctrines of heritability claimed that undesirable and anti-social traits could, if not eradicated, pass on through the generations to infect future society (Mazumdar, 1980; Rose, 1999; Welshman, 2006; Gillies, 2014). Science appeared to demonstrate that "the problem lay in the germ plasm shared by these few thousand families of the Residuum": a disease of the individual not of society

(Mazumdar, 1980:215). Eugenics was positioned as scientific truth backed up by available statistical data, and was supported by a range of public intellectuals including influential mathematicians (see for example Pearson's *The Problem of Practical Eugenics* published in 1912), economists (John Maynard Keynes served as director of the Eugenics Society from 1937-1944), and opinion formers such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb (founders of the Fabian Society), writer George Bernard Shaw, and William Beveridge (architect of the welfare state) (Brignell, 2010; Mazumdar, 1980; Freedland, 2012).

Although "eugenic-inflected preoccupations with 'problem families' and their pathologies dominated welfare and public health agendas until the 1960s" (Gillies, 2014: 210), eugenics as an academic discipline was "scientifically and ethically discredited" by its association with Nazi practices (Barnett, 2004:1742). In its place came psy-complex knowledge of child development and maturation (Hendrick, 1990/1997; Burman, 2008); knowledge which is integral to constructions of the modern child. This knowledge: a) contains a notion of normal mental development that b) properly occurs during the early stages of the life course, c) needs a specific environment to bring it about (childhood), d) together with physical development, can be scientifically plotted, examined and assessed and e) if not accomplished correctly will have ongoing and even intergenerational ill-effects. This psy-complex knowledge has succeeded in gaining widespread acceptance both within professional and/or academic constructions of childhood, and in common-sense conceptualisations of children (Jenks, 2005; Mayall, 2006; Wyness, 2012).

The task of childhood is for unfinished children to become finished adults by growing up (Woodhead, 1990/1997; Jenks, 2005; Mayall, 2006). This 'dominant framework' through which childhood is understood can be depicted in two main ways. The psy-complex discipline of sociology highlights "children's lack of mental *contents* (cultural values and conventions)" while the psy-complex discipline of psychology is concerned with their inability to execute particular "mental *processes* that amount to 'rationality'" (Lee, 2001:38, emphasis in original). Psychological theories of childhood employ the discourse of development, a concept "borrowed from biology" and implying that "the characteristics of an organism change over time according to a pattern" (Thomas, 2000: 21).

Socialisation theories from sociology are concerned with how children best acquire those cultural values which enable them to take up their place in society. This involves "the idea not only that children are shaped to the requirements of a particular culture or society, but that they are in effect *made* social in the process" (Thomas, 2000: 15; emphasis in the original). Writing in the 1950s, Parsons argued that "much evidence" indicates that "the

major value-orientation patterns...are laid down in childhood and are not on a large scale subject to drastic alteration during adult life" (Parsons, 1951:101). Children internalise the values, norms and knowledge they need to be accepted as fully human members of society (Parsons, 1951).

Developmental psychology asserts that mental processes have to develop within specific pathways and that the development of these processes can be enhanced or impeded by the environment (Rudolph Schaffer, 2004; Smith, Cowie and Blades, 2011; Jenks, 2005; Burman, 2008). Theories of cognitive development (Piaget, 1954; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969/2000; Smith, Cowie and Blades, 2011), maternal deprivation and attachment (Bowlby, 1951; 1969; 1988), psychosexual development (Freud, 1900; 1905; 1920) and psychosocial development (Erikson, 1950/1963; 1968) all claim that children acquire specific abilities at age determined stages. If children fail to acquire these capabilities at the correct time then their future social and psychological functioning may be catastrophically and permanently affected. Psy-complex knowledge is concerned with producing well-adjusted, docile, and productive adults ready to take their place in society (Rose, 1985; 1999; Mayall, 2006; Burman, 2008).

These psy-complex discourses effectively disenfranchised and oppressed children as a group (James and Prout 1990/1997; Lee, 2001; Mayall, 2006; Jenks, 2005; Wyness, 2012). 'The child' was conceptualised as "a formal category and as a social status embedded in programmes of care, routines of surveillance and schemes of education and assessment" (Jenks, 2005:5). Psy-complex knowledge positions all children as incompetent and unfinished in comparison with all adults (Qvortrup, 1994; Holloway and Valentine, 2003; Tisdall and Punch, 2012). Children's 'natural' incompetence makes it 'necessary' for adults to direct their lives and activities by exercising power and surveillance over them: "though adults may listen to children, adults know best what is good for children" (Mayall, 2006:13). Children are also constructed as dangerous to themselves and to society if improperly socialised (James and James, 2004; Jenks, 2005). "...We have developed a psychoanalytic vocabulary of motive that ascribes all pathological conduct to the dysfunctional integration of the effects of the culturally based rituals that are instrumental in our becoming adult" (Jenks, 2005:7).

Mechanisms needed to be found to disseminate the rapidly accumulating expert knowledge about 'normal' children to parents and throughout society. This was initially achieved using widely available popular literature, for example the paediatrician Holt's (1894) *The Care and Feeding of Children: A Catechism for the Use of Mothers and Children's Nurses*, the

behaviourist Watson's (1928) *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* and the advice dispensed in the 1930s by the prolific agony aunt Ursula Wise (psychoanalytically trained educational psychologist Susan Isaac). Spock's seminal *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* first published in 1946, consisted of "a distillation of Freudian ideas repackaged as 'common sense'" (Hendrick, 2007:757). The 1950s saw the rise of Child Guidance Clinics providing psychological instruction on how best to produce happy families and well-adjusted children leading Aries to note in 1962 that: "we are obsessed with children's physical, moral and sexual problems" (quoted in Jenks, 2005: 55-56).

3.7 Familialisation: Producing the 'Normal' Family

"In an efficient 'caring' society, child rearing and education liberate the individual into compliance" (Jenks, 2005:41).

The separation of private and public positioned 'normal' private family life as beyond state regulation and shielded from state scrutiny (Parton, 1985; 1991; 2006). The 'normal' family was constructed as governed by universal laws of natural family love and duty. The liberal state would not prescribe child rearing practices; it was for parents to decide how to parent their children (Rose, 1999; Graham, 2008; Parton, 2014). In order for this formulation to succeed, parents needed to voluntarily assume responsibility for socialising and moralising children in order to produce docile and useful adults (Parton, 1991; Ferguson, 2004), and the private domestic sphere needed to be "permeable to moralisation and normalisation from outside" (Rose, 1999: 129).

"Familialisation" was the mechanism through which children and parents were disciplined to commit to the aims, morals and values of society (Rose, 1999:128). The connection between state and family was "based on the ideal of the small nuclear family unit" (Parton, 1985: 42) in which women were positioned as responsible for child rearing and disciplined into motherhood (Donzelot, 1980; Rose, 1999; Ferguson, 2004). Discourses around 'motherhood' naturalise and normalise social constructs such as the primacy of the mother-child bond, maternal love, nurturing, caring and femininity (Swift, 1995; Rose, 1999; Turney, 2000; Featherstone, 2004; Jenks, 2005). It is 'normal' for a mother to do her best for her child (Ferguson, 2004) and disciplinary power mechanisms operate to ensure mothers subjectively wish to behave normally, adapt their behaviour to what is expected of the normal mother and censure themselves where they feel they have failed. Thus "family

autonomy, wishes and aspiration, and activation of individual guilt, personal anxiety and private disappointment” regulate motherhood and child rearing (Rose, 1999:132).

The family is not the sole disciplinary institution of childhood: universal education entrenched the mechanisms of disciplinary power in the lives of individual children requiring each to improve and civilise themselves “for the benefit of the social health of the community” (Rose, 1999: 124). However, Donzelot argues that women were “chosen by the medical and teaching professions to work in partnership with them in order to disseminate their principles, to win adherence to the new norms, within the home” (Donzelot, 1980: xxii). This is the process of therapeutic familialism (Rose, 1999; Hendrick, 2007) in which mothers are disciplined into choosing to govern their children in accordance with psychological norms and expertise (Rose, 1999; Parton, 2006), educating themselves on what is normal from the manuals, literature, and media productions providing psychocomplex child rearing advice. This continual circulation of expertise makes specific knowledge widely available throughout society (Ferguson, 2004) and incorporates psychocomplex norms into our own ‘free’ understandings about childhood and child rearing.

3.8 The Development of Child Neglect

“For a phenomenon to take on the guise of a social problem requiring some form of state intervention, it first has to be defined and constituted as such...” (Parton, 2014:14)

In analysing the development of modern childhood from the Industrial Revolution until the 1960s, Hendrick (1990/1997; 2008) identified four interrelated themes:

1. movement away from a particular and fragmented experience of childhood to a more uniform and supposedly ‘natural’ one transcending geographies and social classes;
2. the increasing dominance of the institution of the family and the domestic setting in children’s lives;
3. the increasingly compulsory relationship between the State, the family and child welfare; and
4. “the political and cultural struggle” to universalise the emerging construction of childhood (1997:34).

These themes demonstrate the increasing hold of disciplinary power on the bodies of children through the institutions of the privatised family and the age segregated school

(Wyness, 2012). The rise of psy-knowledge dictating how 'normal' should be achieved and measured was integral to the development of modern childhood.

It is only against the background of developing disciplinary discourses constructing the 'normal' childhood that 'child neglect' can be properly explored. Child neglect was conceptualised as the failure to rear a child in accordance with what developing psy-complex knowledge and practices constructed children as needing to develop normally. A child's developmental needs were supposed to be met in the normal childhood. In contrast, a childhood in which children's needs were not met was constructed as abnormal. Child neglect was constructed in accordance with abnormal childhoods. Where normal childhood was constructed as the necessary environment for the development of the productive pro-social adult, a neglectful childhood was constructed as producing the opposite.

Whist we speak now of child protection, from the 19th century up until the 1960s both the English state and the US were predominantly concerned with the protection of society from criminal and anti-social acts carried out by delinquent children or future delinquents (Parton, 1979; 1985; Pfohl, 1977; Bell, 2011). In the US, poverty and city life were believed to engender "'lower class' delinquency" (Pfohl, 1977:313) which would perpetuate itself if not curbed. Intervention was therefore preventative penology; for example the 1825 statute enabling the opening of the first New York House of Refuge was passed to prevent children "mingling freely with society's dregs in alm houses or on the streets" (Pfohl, 1977:313). Abuse and poverty were considered to be part of the same condition and to create the same undesirable results.

Similarly in England by the 1880s, "philanthropic and political concern for the vagrant and street child were familiar motifs of respectable society" inspiring fear and pity (Ferguson, 2004:35). The street was positioned as the antithesis of the family home, and those inhabiting it seen as opposing family, order, progress and civilisation. Early measures to counter 'neglect' were designed to deal with children thought to pose a public and social menace: for example the 1868 measure mandating Boards of Governors to prosecute wilfully neglectful parents who had endangered the health of their children was intended to tackle pauperism (Parton, 1985). Benevolent individuals responded to London's homeless and destitute children by removing or rescuing them from the streets into shelters and schools. Many of today's influential children's charities were founded at around this time: in 1869 Methodist minister Thomas Stephenson set up 'The Children's Home' (now Action for Children) in London, Thomas Barnardo opened his Ragged School in the East End of London in 1867 and his first home for boys in 1870 and in 1881 Edward Rudolf, founder of the

Children's Society, obtained church support to open the Church of England Central Home for Waifs and Strays.

There were occasional demands to protect children from adult cruelty in England (Parton, 1985) but it was events in the US that focused attention on the need to protect some children from their carers; what Hacking (1999) called the last great Victorian crusade. In 1874 a media campaign highlighting the plight of Mary Ellen Wilson, a child being grievously and frequently injured by her foster parent, moved Henry Bergh (the founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) to act (Parton, 1985; Lazoritz and Shelman, 1996; Hacking, 1999). Bergh established the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1874, and the campaign crossed the Atlantic, inspiring the establishment of the Liverpool Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1883, the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1884 and the NSPCC in 1889.

From its inception the NSPCC sought to publicise the problem of child cruelty, intending to educate the public, demonstrate the inadequacy of existing controls and campaign for greater regulation to protect children (Parton, 1985). The NSPCC annual report 1895-6 (extracted in Parton 1985:34) is unequivocal: "it was nothing less than a national education which was undertaken...it was a crusade primarily to the intellect of the nation". The NSPCC proved extremely successful at harnessing public and political opinion and it was instrumental in producing "the first legislation specifically to outlaw child cruelty" (Parton, 2014: 15). In 1889 the Prevention of Cruelty to and Protection of Children Act was passed making it an offence for anyone over 16 with custody, control or charge of a boy under 14 or a girl under 16 to wilfully ill-treat, neglect, or abandon the child in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health. The Poor Law Children Act of 1889 also gave Boards of Guardians new parental powers over deserted children, their remit expanding in 1899 to include orphans and children whose parents were considered unsuitable because they were disabled, unfit or in prison.

As stated above, in the 19th century children could be rescued from parents found to be behaving in a damaging or immoral way towards them and, much less frequently, such parents were punished (Parton, 1985). By the beginning of the 20th century, most of this work was carried out by charitable organisations and the NSPCC, and there was no distinction made between destitute children, delinquent children and children who had been subjected to adult cruelty. Ferguson (2004) argues that, like the other children's charities listed above, the NSPCC were also primarily engaged in cleaning up the streets: "the

suffering of children was not the only question at issue. Also relevant were struggles surrounding the values and survival strategies of the poor and the autonomy of working class culture" (Ferguson, 2004:36). Maltreatment, maladjustment and delinquency were considered part of the problem of child care "for which neglect was the main focus" (Parton, 1991:13). The NSPCC Inspectors' task was to identify children who needed to be rescued and remove them to a shelter or place of safety.

This focus on rescue and removal was to change. Informed by psy-complex knowledge, the developing professions of social work and child psychology emphasised the importance of the normal childhood being located within the family and the protection of the home (Pfohl, 1977; Ferguson, 1984). From 1900 increasingly child welfare professionals sought to shape parental practices and expectations rather than to remove children from their families (Ferguson, 2004). Between 1900-1914 home conditions took over from street children as the main focus of intense professional surveillance and concern. "Here we have the social construction of the 'dirty', 'dysfunctional', 'neglectful', 'problem' family as the marginalised, dangerous 'Other' and a category of 'neglect' case that dominated twentieth century child protection and that continues to have a powerful presence to this day" (Ferguson, 2004:64).

Child protection decisions in England became privatised, moving away from courts and children's shelters (where they had largely been located since 1889) to home visits, hospitals and medical examinations. This affected the professional power balance (Ferguson, 2004; Parton, 2014). At the turn of the 20th century doctors had deferred to the knowledge of Inspectors (early social workers) in relation to children. However, the increasing authority of the medical profession and the centrality of the medicalised examination in determining whether a child was being correctly treated ensured that after 1910 medical expertise became pre-eminent (Ferguson, 2004). This was not the only change - as child protection moved off the streets and into the home, public concern over child cruelty appeared to fade away (Hacking, 1999, Wyness, 2012, Parton, 2014). There may be structural reasons for this. The women's movement, which had provided much of the impetus behind concerns about child cruelty, declined in urgency after the granting of universal suffrage (Parton, 2014). However, child cruelty also became less visible to the public when the NSPCC stopped publicising cases of child death believing that such cases undermined public trust in the authority of experts and expertise (Ferguson, 2004; Parton, 2014).

Childhood had changed. Parton (1985) argues "by the beginning of the twentieth century it is possible to identify a quite distinct conception of childhood and a separate social, legal and institutional space for children". By the mid-1930s the institutional framework of child protection had developed, made up of medicine, social work, the courts and the police (Ferguson, 2004). However, legislation continued to construct neglect in relation to concerns about juvenile delinquency. The Children Act 1908 did not separate cruelty and neglect from delinquency (Parton, 1985) and the Children and Young Person's Act 1933 (CYPA, 1933) had developed from the 1927 Departmental Committee on Young Offenders. CYPA (1933) provided a definition of neglect relating to culpable adult behaviour rather than child welfare, an amended version of which is still in use today (see chapter 5). By law, the removal of children remained the primary response to families considered to be failing in their duties towards their children. This approach would change with the development of the welfare state.

3.9 Child Neglect 1945-1970: the 'Abnormal' Family

"...The more moralistic, neohygienist strategy of the beginning of the century was increasingly superseded by a more psychosocial strategy informed by the emerging science of human relationships" (Parton, 2006:17).

The Second World War and the development of the welfare state transformed the practice and philosophy of child protection. The evacuation of children from war-afflicted areas drew attention to the extreme levels of poverty and deprivation in the inner cities (Parton, 1985). In addition research into the evacuees produced knowledge highlighting the centrality of attachment relationships for the healthy psychological development of young children and the catastrophic effects of maternal deprivation (Bowlby, 1951; Smith et al, 2011). In post war Britain child rescue could no longer be seen as an adequate response to the deprived conditions in which many children were growing - the scale of the problems were simply too great (Parton, 1985). Increasing psychological knowledge seemed to affirm that children needed their family in order to develop normally. There was optimism that psychology would improve social life for all (Hendrick, 2007) and people working with children and their families were expected to be well versed in the developing expertise of the social sciences so as to properly help the next generation.

The 1948 Children Act sought to pull together these different ways of thinking about children and their families. The focus of the state moved from the punishment of bad

parents to the welfare of children. Children were positioned as both members of their families and as citizens of the new welfare state. The "post-war welfare settlement" (Featherstone, 2013: 316) mandated a particular family type - the patriarchal nuclear family with the male breadwinner and the female care provider. This family was the natural family and flowed from the essential natures of men and women. "As the emphasis was on the strength and formative power of the natural family this meant trying to maintain children in the family" (Parton, 1985: 42). Where things were going wrong, the state and families needed to work in voluntary partnership to keep families together (Parton, 1985). It was the job of the state through the newly established Children's Departments to provide services for those children deprived of a 'normal family life' (Parton, 2006).

Child protection became "part of an expert system which was concerned generally with child welfare" (Ferguson, 2004: 92). The requirement that Children's Departments be staffed by professionals who had received specialist training led to the rise of social work as a profession (Parton, 1985; 2006) and located the essential knowledge base of social work practice firmly within the psychosocial sciences (Parton, 2006). It was assumed that the welfare state and the reforms to children's services had put an end to children being affected by structural problems such as wide scale poverty and deprivation (Parton, 1985). As a result social workers tended to adopt a medicalised and psychoanalytical view of family problems, locating the causes of child neglect within the family, and usually the mother (Parton, 1985; 2006; Wyness, 2012).

While the response to families may have been radically altered by the 1948 Act, the motivation behind the response had changed very little: "the overriding concern and rationale was to do something about delinquency" (Parton, 1985:45). Delinquency was overwhelmingly seen as caused by problems within the family, and, more particularly by disrupted relationships or a negative environment in the early years (Parton, 1985; 2014; Wyness, 2012). Parton illustrates this construction using the Ingleby Report (1960) detailing the collection of experts (prominent academics, senior civil servants and members of the Fabian Society) who "made explicit links between child neglect, deprivation and delinquency" (Parton, 2006:21). Children presenting as troubled or troubling were positioned within the same family dysfunction, the so-called "unified theory of deviance" (Handler, 1973 cited in Dingwall et al, 1995:9). Intervention was mandated because "the child in danger would in time become the dangerous child" (Ferguson, 2004:100). The difference between deprived children and delinquent children is that the former had not (yet) been in trouble with the law. Neglected children were still primarily constructed as posing a threat to society.

"Perfidy and wickedness were replaced by neglect as the professional and commonsensical grounds for assessing children's delinquency" (Wyness, 2012:132). As fewer children died as a result of deprivation and neglect, judgements about whether or not children had been neglected were increasingly based on the moral character of the parents and in particular the mother (Ferguson, 2004). As normal mothering was positioned as a 'natural' state, women who had failed to provide it were seen as bad, abnormal or unnatural. For a mother, becoming the subject of social work attention was "profoundly shameful" (Ferguson, 2004:94). Being constructed as a neglected child was also morally problematic: such children were positioned as morally tainted or degraded and as needing to be morally reclaimed and rehabilitated (Ferguson, 2004). Early intervention and treatment were seen as a way of checking the effects of the family pathology which could otherwise continue into adulthood and into the next generation (Bowlby, 1953; Winnicott, 1964; Parton, 1985; 1995). Neglected children were not worked with because of what they had experienced, but rather to avert what they were likely to become: the present victim was less relevant than the future threat to society (Ferguson, 2004).

3.10 Conclusion

As I have demonstrated in this chapter "in effect, cultural and historical forces privatised childhood" (Wyness, 2012:133). Developing psy-knowledge had removed children from the public street and the workplace locating them instead within the disciplinary institutions of school and private family. Childhood had been extended, regulated and codified. Child rearing responsibility had been allocated to women who were disciplined to use child development knowledge to produce a normal childhood for their charges. Neglected children were those who had not had a normal childhood and who were therefore susceptible to the trait of delinquency, pauperism and depravity. At the start of the 1960s psychological discourses constructing childhood and child neglect had achieved widespread acceptance. Children were considered to be developing beings, sequestered from the public arena for their own good and the good of society. The twin disciplinary institutions of family and school operated according to norms from the psy-complex. Women were largely, and non-controversially, responsible for child rearing, and accomplished this within the private and disciplined family. The new Children's Services seemed to be working well and to have public support and confidence: "expertise and belief in a 'science' of child protection remained largely un-interrogated at a public level" (Ferguson, 2004: 102). Things seemed to be getting better for children; as Parton argues: "in 1956 even the NSPCC was arguing

that 'cases of physical ill-treatment are less severe than they were', and recorded that of 98,277 children helped by the society in the previous year 64,291 were suffering from neglect" (Parton, 1979:435). However, as I shall set out in the next chapter, this consensus "...based on the family as the primary mechanism for ensuring the welfare of children, with social workers entrusted with the state's key responsibility for child welfare, began to collapse during the 1970s" (Parton, 2014:19). This was to have an enormous impact on constructions of children, childhood and child neglect.

Chapter 4 - Childhood, Child Neglect and Late Modernity

“What we are witnessing at the beginning of the twenty-first century through the public upheavals in child protection are genuine transformations in social relationships, expertise and knowledge.” (Ferguson, 2004:22).

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I detailed how neglect, conceptualised as the abnormal childhood, developed parallel to discourses of the ‘normal’ childhood. By the 1960s there was no discursive distinction between neglect, deprivation and delinquency. Intervention into neglect was required to ensure children received the normal disciplinary developmental space needed for them to become useful and docile adults – ‘normal childhood’. Without a ‘normal childhood’, the resulting family induced pathology would continue into adulthood and possibly into the next generation. The normal childhood had been delineated along developmental lines, and progress, increasing scientific knowledge and expert practice were together seen to be improving the conditions of children.

In the 1970s the modern optimism of ideas about progress gave way to the more pessimistic uncertainties and ontological insecurities of late modernity (Parton, 2014; Ferguson, 2004; Parker, 2005; Hendrick, 2007). Late modernity discourses profoundly affected constructions of the normal and abnormal childhood, and understandings of child neglect. In this chapter I explore the fragmentation of the concepts of childhood and of child neglect, as liberation movements, individualism and globalisation challenged the norms embedded in therapeutic familialism, and the certainties of modernism and its experts gave way to the scepticism of late modernity. The chapter ends with an outline of the ways in which new political settlements, expertise, and emerging medical technologies such as neuroscience have combined to produce new knowledge and renewed political and professional interest in child neglect and the ‘early years’.

4.2 Challenging Modernity: the Birth of Late Modernity

Different labels have been applied to our current period: post modernity (e.g. Lyotard, 1984; Harvey, 1989; Parton, 1994; Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998) late modernity (e.g. Giddens, 1991; Parton, 2006; 2014; Wyness, 2012), liquid modernity (e.g. Bauman, 2000) or reflexive modernity (e.g. Beck, 1992; Beck, Bonss and Lau, 2003; Ferguson, 2004). What is agreed is that the period from the late 1960s to the present day has been a time of tremendous social, political and economic upheaval (Giddens, 1991; Fukuyama, 1999; Wyness, 2012). The post war Fordist economies - promising economic growth, political stability, high adult employment and long term job security - began to collapse into economic instability (Harvey, 1989; Lee, 2001). In Britain, economically the 1970s saw a retreat from welfare, amid a widespread perception that Keynesian ideas had failed to deliver the economic growth and low unemployment promised by progressive liberal societies (Jamrozik and Nocella, 1998; Webb, 2006; Hendrick, 2007). The increasingly stratified labour market produced growing disparities in income and increasingly divergent lifestyles between the rich and the poor (Parton, 2006; Featherstone, Morris and White, 2014). Job security was reorganised into job flexibility: mandating movements of people between occupations, geographical locations, peer groups, networks and identities (Hobsbawm, 1994; Fukuyama, 1999; Lee, 2001). The "standard adult", whose identity was stabilised by ties of employment, location, peer group and family had been transformed into the flexible adult, able to adapt, move and change (Lee, 2001:8). What Lee terms "our 'age of uncertainty'" had begun (2001:7).

The challenge to modernity was not only economic, but also social and cultural (Parton, 1994; 2006; Fukuyama, 1999; Lee, 2001). Increased population mobility and diversity led to the fragmentation of traditional communities (Grayling, 2009; Browne, 2009). Social problems seemed resistant to the solutions of the new social sciences (Parton, 1994; 2006; Webb, 2006). Modernist and universalist narratives of science were challenged and disrupted by social movements such as the different feminisms, LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) liberation, multiculturalism, individualism, identity politics and globalisation (Parton, 1994; 2006; Fukuyama, 1999; Lee, 2001; Hendrick, 2007). As Parton (1994) argues, the discourses of simple modernity depended on constructions of continuing human progress, of the ability of science to provide truths capable of unlocking the human condition, of the triumph of reason over tradition and religious dogma and of the enlightened populace producing social improvements throughout the benevolent nation state. Late modernity fragmented these assumptions into "forms of institutional pluralism, marked by variety, contingency, relativism and ambivalence" (Parton, 1994:28). The bonds

of tradition, church, authority, community, and the institutions of society were seen as disintegrating (Bauman, 2009).

Individualism and globalisation have produced different understandings of social life (Hobsbawm, 1994; Wyness, 2012). Individualism has “increasingly dismantled the legal, economic and moral barriers that had previously kept men, women, children and young people ‘in their place’” (Parton, 2006:54). People became increasingly knowledgeable, sceptical and critically reflective about their social worlds and their place within them (Parton, 2006; Wyness, 2012). From the 1950s immigration into Britain exposed the therapeutic childhood to competing cultural norms and different types of child rearing environments (Stainton Rogers, 1992b; Wyness, 2012) and continues to do so: figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) indicate that in 2013 at least 32% of all the children born in England and Wales had one or both parents born outside the UK (ONS, 2014a). Browne argues that within a single generation Britain moved from a homogenous monocultural society to a heterogenous one where “a supermarket of different religions are competing cheek by jowl; each with its own value system” (Browne, 2009:97). Proponents and detractors of multiculturalism have discursively highlighted narratives of cultural cohesion and community fragmentation (Cantle, 2001; Finney and Simpson, 2009; Rehman, 2007; Neuberger, 2009; Bailey, 2009; Huq, 2013).

As communities and social institutions have fragmented, there has been a concern that values, norms and experiences, the glue holding communities together, are no longer shared (Parton, 1994; Fukuyama, 1999; Lee, 2001). This has led to mistrust between communities, races and generations (Bailey, 2009; Grayling, 2009; Bauman, 2009). Parton (2006) argues that freedom to choose between a range of value systems combined with the falling away of traditional roles causes “a rise in *ontological insecurity* and *social anxiety* ...our sense of certainty becomes weakened and an absolute sense of one’s normality becomes disorientated by the growing relativism of values” (Parton, 2006:57, emphasis in original). In 2007 83% of respondents to a BBC commissioned poll said they thought Britain was in moral decline, with only 9% of respondents disagreeing (cited in Browne, 2009). Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that individualism, declining community, declining values, loss of moral boundaries, a decline in social virtues, apathy, failed institutions and a democratic deficit were constructed as social evils by the public (Harris, 2009). The modern institutions of childhood and the family were not to escape the disrupting and fragmenting forces of late modernity.

4.2.1 Family in Late Modernity

“The most dramatic shifts in social norms that constitute the Great Disruption concern those related to reproduction, the family and relations between the sexes” (Fukuyama, 1999:36).

The forces of late modernity were particularly challenging for the institution of the ‘normal’ family responsible for child rearing. In England, the post-war consensus that the nuclear family was the correct place for child rearing began to collapse in the 1960s and 1970s (Gillies, 2014; Featherstone, 2013; Parton, 2014). Feminism, the changing position of women in society and other liberation movements challenged constructions of normal and abnormal family arrangements (Coles, 1995; Fukuyama, 1999; Graham, 2008; Hendrick, 2007; Layard and Dunn, 2009; Browne, 2009). Women, particularly married women, began to return to the workplace in ever greater numbers resulting in the outsourcing of childcare (Parton, 2006; 2014; Hendrick, 2007). The election of New Labour in 1997 saw the “rejection of a key premise underpinning the post-war settlement”: that of the male financially supporting his family and the female caring for children and running the household (Featherstone, 2006: 305). As women took up positions as family wage earners, child rearing was more difficult to position solely as a maternal task within the domestic sphere.

Families also began to fragment. From the 1970s, divorce rates rose, marriage rates fell, and the number of children living in single parent families and/or born outside marriage increased (Parton, 2006; Browne, 2009; Wyness, 2012; Featherstone, 2013). Coleridge J, a retired judge of the Family Division and founder of the Marriage Foundation, evoked this sense of fragmentation in asserting: “In some of the more heavily-populated urban areas of this country, family life is, quite frankly, in meltdown or completely unrecognisable. In some areas of the country, family life in the old sense no longer exists” (Daily Mail, 4th April 2008 cited in Browne, 2009:95). In 1963, 6.92% of the 854,055 children born in England and Wales were born outside marriage. By 2013 while overall birth rates had fallen, the number of children born outside legally registered unions had increased dramatically: 47.37% of the 698,512 children born in England and Wales were born outside marriage or civil partnership (the latter category made available by the Civil Partnership Act 2004) (ONS, 2014b). Statistics showed that in 2013 there were almost 1.9 million lone parents with dependent children in the UK (ONS, 2014c).

Instability and flexibility in the labour market was matched by adult relationships becoming increasingly transient (Parton, 2006); the so-called ‘romantic’ relationship replaced by the

'pure' relationship that exists only as long as it meets the needs of those involved (Giddens, 1992; Lee, 2001). The Millennium Cohort Study reported that by the age of 11, 40% of children in England born at the turn of this century had experienced at least one change in their parents' relationship and 12% of children within the sample lived in blended households. In comparison almost 90% of those within the 1958 cohort were still living with both parents at the age of 11 (Connelly, Joshi and Rosenberg, 2014). The concept of the stable nuclear family rearing children within the disciplinary institution of lifelong marriage was melting away, making family life "more complex and, potentially, made the position of children more precarious" (Parton, 2014: 48).

4.2.2 Childhood in Late Modernity

"Public perceptions of what children need are... in disarray" (Jenks, 2005: 132).

Children, not merely neglected children, are sometimes said to be in crisis as a result of late modernity. The normal developmental childhood is seen as unstable and fragmenting (Jenks, 2005; Hendrick, 2007; Kehily, 2010) largely due to the breakdown of the traditional family and the changes in family life and family structures explored previously (Hendrick, 2007; Graham, 2008; Layard and Dunn, 2009 and the continuing work of the Marriage Foundation). However, some argue that the institution of childhood is changing to the detriment of all children, not simply those from so-called 'broken homes'. If 'normal' childhood is itself changing, this must affect constructions of the 'abnormal' childhood of child neglect.

"The maintenance of the boundaries between children and the adult world requires constant vigilance and action on the part of adults, and the cooperation of large numbers of children" (Lee, 2001:59). Late modernity has blurred the boundaries between childhood and adulthood rendering them increasingly meaningless. As argued in the previous chapter, developmental discourse positions standard adults as 'finished' products in contrast to whom children were 'unfinished' products, developing and changing as they became adults. As adulthood has been rendered unstable and incomplete, and change and development is required throughout the life course, the difference between adulthood and childhood is less apparent (Lee, 2001). Technological advances have reversed the 'natural' adult-child positions - in the digital age children are positioned as knowledgeable and expert while adults are seen as incompetent and needing guidance (Byron, 2008; Facer, 2014). Children have also entered the marketplace as consumers, engaging in consumer culture in the same ways as adults do (Buckingham, 2014; Layard and Dunn, 2009).

This exposure of children to media and commercial pressures is said to be causing the child to be replaced by the adult-child hybrid (Postman, 1994; Schor, 2003; Jenks, 2005; Palmer, 2006; Wyness; 2012). This adult-child is positioned as exposed to unsuitable aspects of the adult world that, as children, they are not sophisticated enough to understand. Digital and mobile technologies are said to provide platforms for the dangers of consumerism, aggression, sexualisation (particularly of girls), and the possibility that children will be preyed upon by digitally experienced adults who mean them harm (predatory paedophiles) (Holloway and Valentine, 2001; 2003; Byron, 2008; 2010; Pilcher, 2014; Layard and Dunn, 2009). In response adult authority has increased and extended areas of surveillance and control over children's lives to prevent their access to aspects of the adult world considered unsuitable or dangerous (Byron, 2008; 2010; Facer, 2014). Campaigns have been launched to protect and preserve modern developmental childhood in the face of such threats: e.g. *Toxic Childhood* (Palmer, 2007), the Daily Telegraph's *Hold onto Childhood* campaign launched in 2006 (Fenton, 2006) and *The Good Childhood Guide* (Layard and Dunn, 2009).

A related concern is that children are being distracted or prevented from engaging in the normal childhoods they need in order to develop appropriately. The unregulated time children spend interacting with technology is positioned as causing sedentary and unhealthy lifestyles in children which in turn are linked to an obesity time bomb primed to explode at some point in the future (Ebbeling, Pawlak, and Ludwig, 2002; Layard and Dunn, 2009; Kehily, 2010; Lawrence, Hazlett and Hightower, 2010). The Millennium Cohort Study indicates that of their sample 35% of children born around the millennium were classed as overweight or obese at 11 (Connelly and Chatzitheochari, 2014). However, adult anxiety may also force children to adopt sedentary lifestyles in order to remain under adult surveillance, often indoors. Risk averse parents are said to infantilise children, curtailing childhood experimentation and exploration and making them fearful of the world around them (Furedi, 2002; 2004). This argument asserts that unwarranted adult anxiety about the safety of children has led to children's developmental lifeworlds and learning experiences becoming increasingly restricted, organised, barren and claustrophobic (Furedi, 2002; Cunningham, 2006; Gill, 2007).

Adult withdrawal and the decline of adult authority are claimed to have exacerbated the disintegration of 'normal' childhood (Graham, 2008; Furedi 2002; 2004). The individualism of modern adult lifestyles is held partly responsible, but increasing intergenerational distrust is also blamed. Within this discourse adults fear being positioned as potential paedophiles

and resent needing to be licensed in their dealings with children (Furedi, 2002; Furedi and Bristow, 2008; Neuberger, 2009). Adults are also increasingly wary of children as a group: according to ONS Social Trends data, between 1992-2006 the "number of people worried about teenagers hanging around on the streets was up by half" (cited in Browne, 2009:93). 69% of adults surveyed felt that children's sense of community had lessened, only 5% thought it had strengthened (Layard and Dunn, 2009). This late modern discourse of community alienation does not seem to be borne out by empirical research; Holland et al (2011:410) concluding from their research review: "together, research on informal childcare, informal support networks for parents and children, and local or class-based parenting cultures in the UK strongly challenge dominant views of contemporary Britain as a society in which adults, overall, fail to provide care, give support, show interest or exercise responsibility for other people's children".

The single childhood of modernity is becoming many childhoods in late modernity, "fragmented and stratified by class, age, gender and ethnicity, by urban or rural locations and by particularised identities cast for children through disability or ill health" (James and Jenks, 1996:317). Parton (2004) explored the differences between childhood in England in the 1970s and at the millenium by comparing the 1974 Inquiry report into the death of 7 year old Maria Colwell and the Inquiry into the death of 8 year old Victoria Climbié in 2000. Individualism and globalisation impacted on Victoria's life as they had not on Maria's. Maria's identity, history and family relationships were known, she was situated within a homogenous working class community that tried to protect her, and those involved with her largely shared her white English speaking cultural affiliation. Victoria on the other hand was entirely unknown until after her death. She did not speak English. Her name, her history, her family relationships, her medical needs, and her immigration status in the UK were unclear and obscured. The local communities in which Victoria lived failed to notice or intervene in her situation and professionals involved in her life were themselves from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. As Parton points out "we are not simply talking about diversity here but incredible complexity and fluidity" (2004:85). Where the normal childhood has fragmented, it is correspondingly difficult to state what the abnormal or neglectful childhood might look like in all circumstances.

4.3 The 'Discovery' of Child Abuse

"Children have been ill-treated by adults throughout history, but it is only occasionally that concern about the issue has gathered any momentum" (Parton, 1985:20).

The discovery of child abuse was to have an enormous impact on constructions of child neglect. In 1962 the American Medical Association published "*The Battered Child Syndrome*" detailing the discovery of a clinical condition potentially leading to disability and death caused by caregivers applying extreme physical force to infants and young children (Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller and Silver, 1962). Identified by paediatric radiologists in Denver, battered child syndrome was constructed as a medical illness that required medical expertise to diagnose, research and treat it (Pfohl, 1977; Parton, 1985; Hacking 1999). Battered child syndrome was understood through a disease model rather than a social one and, contrary to Victorian constructions of child cruelty, it was not an affliction of the poor but rather could be found within all social classes (Hacking, 1999). The new illness was caused by individualised parental traits (impulsivity, immaturity, lack of self-control, selfishness) rather than social, cultural or economic factors (Kempe et al, 1962; Parton, 1985; 2006; Bell, 2011). Within this medical model, the syndrome could be transferred between the generations and treatment involved separating children from their batterers in order to effect a cure on both (Hacking, 1999).

Presenting child abuse within medical discourse rather than as a by-product of poverty or inequality, allowed it to attract a broad cross party political support and funding (Parton, 1985; Hacking, 1999). Battered child syndrome - rebranded as child abuse - expanded rapidly and widely to absorb different types of child maltreatment (Hacking, 1988; 1999). Sexual activity between children and adults became a type of child abuse in the 1970s (Hacking, 1999). However, child neglect proved less easy to absorb and the question whether child neglect should be included in a national definition of child maltreatment has been the subject of a "3 decade-old controversy" in the USA (English, Thompson, Graham, and Briggs, 2005:190; for a review of the development of child neglect definitions in the USA see Rose and Meezan, 1993). Despite this controversy, the establishment of the International Society for Child Abuse and Neglect in 1976 formally linked child abuse and child neglect within expert discourse, and a new journal entitled *Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal* was launched to disseminate this new knowledge to the world stage.

The medicalised construction of child abuse arrived in Britain in the 1970s (Parton, 1979; 1985). While the NSPCC Battered Child Research Unit was established in 1967 and had published articles on child abuse within professional journals, neglect, deprivation and delinquency remained the main focus of the NSPCC's work and campaigning activity throughout the 1960s (Parton, 1985; Ferguson, 2009). It was the death of Maria Colwell in 1973 and the subsequent inquiry and report in 1974 which first focused intense media, political, expert and public attention on child abuse as an issue (Parton, 1985; 2006; Franklin, 2014). In Britain the concept of child abuse has also proved "malleable and expansionist" (Hacking, 1988:54) and by the 1980s incorporated physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect and applied not just to babies but to children under 18 (Parton, 2006). Importantly "it was assumed that child abuse, as with the battered baby syndrome, constituted a readily identifiable reality, which was often hidden from view" (Parton, 2006:32). It was the task of the experts to expose, identify and root out this new danger to children.

4.4 Late Modernity and the Challenge to Expertise

"One consequence of the undermining of universal science, knowledge and truth, is that all views, interests and arguments are potentially valid..." (Parton, 1994: 28).

Child abuse with its vitally important role for experts reached public consciousness at the point where public belief in expertise, a feature of simple modernity, was beginning to wane. From the 1970s onwards, experts and expertise in relation to children were subjected to challenge and in many cases found wanting (Ferguson, 2009; Parton, 2014). As stated in Chapter 3, by the 1960s expertise in relation to children was largely viewed through the dominant framework of child development. While increasingly child maltreatment is "a legitimate subject of inquiry in a range of disciplines" (Korbin, 2010:217), when things go wrong particular experts - "psychologists and sometimes psychiatrists" - are resorted to for their child-related expertise (Mayall, 2006:13). The medical elaboration of child abuse entrenched the pre-eminence of psy-complex expertise in child protection investigations and practices (Pfohl, 1977; Parton, 1985; Rose, 1999). Child abuse experts needed to use medical or scientific knowledge bases to be taken seriously (Hacking, 1999).

Expertise, both medical and psychological, has at times been shown to be wrong. The Cleveland scandal publicly discredited the reflex anal dilatation test as diagnostic of child

sexual abuse (Secretary of State, 1988). More recently in 2003 the accuracy and reliability of medical expertise in relation to causes and probabilities of infant deaths within a family was successfully refuted resulting in the quashing of the murder convictions of Sally Clark, Angela Cannings and Donna Anthony and the jury acquittal of Trupti Patel (Batty, 2006). R v Al Alas and Wray [2011] as reported in LB of Islington v Al Alas and Wray [2012] illustrated the complexity and at times contradictory nature of medical expertise (medical experts were unable to agree about whether a child had died as a result of child abuse or rickets). Psy-complex knowledge has also been resisted, with challenges both to the discipline of psychiatry (Szasz 1961; 1970 and Laing, 1960) and psychology (Stainton Rogers, 2003; Parker, 2005; 2007; Holloway, 2007). Psychological critiques have also been concerned with analysing the position psychology plays in social regulation (see for example Henriques, Holloway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine's (1984) *Changing the Subject* and Rose's (1985) *The Psychological Complex*).

From the 1970s it became increasingly clear that the increases in psychological knowledge had not led to the increases in social harmony anticipated by modernism (Pfohl, 1977). Crime, delinquency and social problems persisted. Unemployment rose rapidly in the 1970s with attendant increases in poverty and social deprivation. As poverty became more widespread, experts struggled to maintain the argument that social problems stemmed from individual traits such as immorality rather than structural ones (Pfohl, 1977; Parton, 1994). More widely there was "a failure of the various 'social sciences' and the various modern experts who operated them to contribute to social well-being" (Parton, 1994: 23). Despite this, psy-complex knowledge in relation to child development was almost untouched by this emerging critique, remaining entrenched within child welfare and child protection practice (White, 1998; Hacking, 1999; Burman, 2008; Jenks, 2005).

Whilst psy-complex knowledge remained unscathed, social work practice in relation to children was increasingly criticised during the 1970s (Parton, 1985; 1991; 1994). Harris (2009) argues that professionalising social services in the 1960s produced divisions between experts and lay people over what the social work task should be. There was also growing evidence that modern social work "simply did not work" (Parton, 1994:24). As Parton's (1991) review of events demonstrates, research from that period concluded that long-term social work with families was ineffective and social work monitoring of abusive families counterproductive. Rising numbers of children in care demonstrated the failure of preventative social work, and increasing use by social workers of their compulsory powers showed that voluntary arrangements between families and professionals were not working either. Children were found to be languishing in care for no good reason, losing contact

with their families and becoming increasingly institutionalised as a result. Variable social work practice resulted in very different rates of children taken into care throughout the country (Parton, 1991). However, what did most to undermine the public's faith in social work expertise in relation to children were a series of public inquiries into situations that had gone tragically wrong for children.

4.5 Care and Control: Children and Child Protection in the Media

4.5.1 A Lack of Care: Constructing the Child Victim

Before the inquiry into the death of Maria Colwell (Secretary of State, 1974) social work was a private activity carried out by social workers who, in the spirit of modernism, optimistically believed that they could use their expertise to help their clients' situations (Parton and Thomas, 1983; Parton, 2006). However, from the Maria Colwell Inquiry (Secretary of State, 1974) onwards, high profile public inquiries and Serious Case Reviews relating to abused and neglected children have exposed social workers to, at times, extraordinarily hostile critical scrutiny (Parton, 1985; 1991; 2006; 2014; Scourfield, 2000; Masson, 2006; Franklin, 2014). The names and often faces of the children whose appalling deaths precipitated some of those inquiries remain familiar to us: Jasmine Beckford (London Borough of Brent, 1985), Kimberley Carlisle (London Borough of Greenwich, 1985); Tyra Henry (London Borough of Lambeth, 1987); Victoria Climbié (Laming, 2003); Khyra Ishaq (Radford, 2010); 'Baby P' (Peter Connelly) (Haringey LCSB, 2009; Laming, 2009); Daniel Pelka (Lock, 2013). Time and again, social work expert practice was condemned - social workers lacked training, experience and supervision, multi-disciplinary communication was ineffective, social workers wrongly prioritised the needs of adults over the needs of children (Parton, 1994; 1995; 2014), and, in relation to Baby P, social workers were too tied up with meeting technological demands to do their jobs effectively (Parton, 2014). Importantly, these tragedies are seen as resulting from individual or departmental failures in social work practice rather than the psy-complex expertise informing those practices. If anything, the inquiries have strengthened the general belief that all children can be saved if only social workers do their jobs correctly (White, 1998; Ferguson, 2004).

The inquiries were often run by judges along judicial lines. This meant that the investigations took on the adversarial nature of English courtroom proceedings, were conducted within the right/wrong discourse of the law and focused on allocating blame and

responsibility (White, 1998). The media gave high levels of coverage to these inquiries and to publicising the core messages about social work and social workers produced by each one (Parton, 2014; Franklin, 2014). The Colwell Inquiry associated social work with incompetence, inaction and failure in the eyes of the public and the media (Parton, 2014). The inquiries into the Cleveland affair (Secretary of State, 1988; Parton, 1991) and the Orkneys (Clyde, 1992) produced a construction of social work failure in which social workers over-reacted and unjustly removed children from their families on the flimsiest of pretexts. Press coverage from Maria Colwell in 1973 to Baby P in 2007 has depicted social workers as either “ineffectual wimps incapable of protecting children... or alternatively as bullies whose unjustifiable interventions in the private affairs of families have resulted in their precocious break-up” (Franklin, 2014:27). Meanwhile professional practices towards and (lack of) care for vulnerable children were also scrutinised during investigations such as the ‘Pindown’ Inquiry (Staffordshire Child Care Inquiry, 1991), the Edlington Inquiry (Doncaster LSCB, 2009; Carlisle Review, 2012) and the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (Home Affairs Committee, 2013). The dominant media discourse in relation to the social work profession is that it is failing children and society (Franklin and Parton, 2001; Franklin, 2014): “what was alleged amounted to professional neglect” (Parton, 2014:167).

The media did not simply report these scandals, it changed how child abuse and neglect were understood and responded to (Parton, 2006; Franklin, 2014; Lonne and Parton, 2014). In late modernity people increasingly depend on the media for information, opinions, a sense of community and explanations for social evils such as child abuse and neglect (Milne, 2005; Parton, 2006; Ferguson, 2009). Media campaigns “are, at the same time, *narratives*. They are implied accounts of why the world is as it is” (Wagg, 2014: 108, emphasis in original). Reporting on publicly available material from Serious Case Reviews was an effective way for the media to attract audiences and pursue a social and political agenda (Milne, 2005; Warner, 2013; Parton, 2014). However, focusing on these “heavy end cases” obscured the types of neglect cases that form the daily reality of children’s social work (Parton, 1995:87). The media also focus on a particular manifestation of child maltreatment, that of the abused and neglected child. Cases where children died solely as a result of neglect (for example Paul in Islington (Bridge Care Consultancy, 1995) or Tiffany Wright (Ward, 2008)) have often not received the levels of publicity given to those cases that also involve the deliberate infliction of extreme pain and suffering on a child.

4.5.2 A Lack of Control: Constructing the Child Villain

“Stories that sell fear, sell newspapers” (Minton, 2009: 135).

The media not only construct children as victims but also as villains (Layard and Dunn, 2009; Grayling, 2009; Wood, 2010). This construction is best illustrated by media coverage of the murder of two year old James Bulger by ten year olds Jon Venables and Robert Thompson in 1993. Events that were an appalling tragedy for three families became symbols of both the crisis in childhood and the need to reorder the relationship between the state, the family and the child (Parton, 2014). Surveillance technology (CCTV images) helped ensure saturation coverage of the story (Franklin and Petley, 1996; James and Jenks, 1996) providing a visual report of the Apollonian child being lured to his death by Dionysian fiends. The tragedy was predominantly reported as symptomatic of a national moral crisis engulfing a sick society, a society in which family life was disintegrating, absentee feckless fathers abandoned responsibility for their progeny, and feral children learned about life and morality from violent video games (Franklin and Petley, 1996; Green, 2008; Browne, 2009; Petley, 2014). Press and politicians spoke with one voice: the Sun newspaper called for “a crusade to rescue a sick society” (quoted in Browne, 2009:93) and Tony Blair, then shadow home secretary, asserted in a speech days after James Bulger’s death that there needed to be “the rediscovery of a sense of direction as a country” and that people needed to “start talking again about the values and principles we believe in” to avoid “moral chaos” (quoted in Petley, 2014:2).

As stated in chapter 3, by the 1960s to position children as ‘bad’ was to say that they had not had normal childhoods i.e. that they had been neglected. As the ‘normal’ childhood began to be contested and fragmented in late modernity, media and political discourse identified a model of ‘abnormal’ childhood, said to be producing an underclass (Hayward and Yar, 2006; Garrett, 2009; Jones, 2011; Tyler, 2013; Bristow, 2013; Welshman, 2013; Warner, 2013; Parton, 2014). Jones (2011) terms this the “demonisation of the working class”. Poor parenting and problem families were increasingly held responsible by politicians of all parties for anti-social behaviour; statements about social exclusion from New Labour and the broken society from David Cameron’s Conservatives both incorporated ideas around the intergenerational transmission of immoral and anti-social values by a moral underclass resistant to change (for discussion on the underclass see Murray, 1990; 1994; 1996; Levitas, 2005). These ideas were eagerly taken up and amplified by the media.

Underclass discourses are often essentialist, constructing any perceived parental failure as a manifestation of deep rooted biological or cultural pathology. This retreat into essentialism may be a reaction to the "pervasive ontological insecurity" that is the late modern condition (Parton, 2006: 58). Fundamentalist movements of whatever creed may have at their heart the maintenance of parental/patriarchal authority against the late modern challenge of fragmentation, flexibility and plurality (Castells, 1997; Lee, 2001). Essentialist explanations ensure the superiority of some views over others, provide an explanation for inequality and allow for responsibility to be avoided (Parton, 2006). This may make them popular and easy to disseminate in an era of crowded media markets and limited attention spans. Essentialist explanations are however a prerequisite to demonising sections of society (Young, 1999; Parton, 2006). It is essentialist discourse the media largely draws on when reporting on child villains and their abnormal families.

Several events were interpreted as epitomising the collapse of morals and parenting within what David Cameron was by 2010 calling 'Broken Britain' (BBC News, 2010). The media paid considerable attention to the squalid lifestyles of those meant to be caring for Baby Peter at the time of his death in August 2007. In February 2008, exposure of the faked abduction and drugging of Shannon Matthews by family members caused further disgust and outrage about the apparent physical and moral degradation of particular communities in late modern England (Warner, 2013; Williams, 2010; Stokes, 2008; Parton, 2014). This outrage was brought full circle by the Edlington case in April 2009 which echoed aspects of the Bulger case 16 years earlier. In the Edlington case two children, newly taken into foster care, seriously assaulted three other children (Doncaster LSCB, 2009). It was reported that the assaulters had grown up in deprived and depraved family circumstances and causal inferences were made between such childhoods and the production of a delinquent and violent underclass (Sergeant, 2009; Walker and Wainwright, 2010; Bingham, 2012; Place, 2013; Parton, 2014). By the time of the 2011 riots in England the media and politicians alike were easily able to blame social disorder on the failure of parents within sections of the community to inculcate the correct moral values into their offspring (Bristow, 2013; Tyler, 2013). Structural issues such as the effects of racism, inequality and poverty were rendered invisible within this narrative (Reicher and Stott, 2011).

4.6 Child Poverty

“Poverty is the single greatest threat to the wellbeing of children and families” (Barnardos, 2014: no page)

Poverty harms and kills far more children than child abuse (Hacking, 1999) and research study after research study has demonstrated that poverty and child neglect are connected (see for example Pelton, 1978; Wolock and Horowitz, 1984; Parton, 1995; Gillham et al, 1998; Hobbs and Wynne, 2002; Ghate and Hazel, 2002; Slack, Holl, McDaniel, Yoo and Bolger, 2004, McSherry, 2004; Spencer and Baldwin, 2005; Katz, Corlyon, La Placa and Hunter, 2007; NSPCC, 2008; Meadows et al, 2011; Burgess et al, 2014, Jutte, Bentley, Miller and Jetha, 2014). Disentangling child neglect from poverty has proved extraordinarily difficult in research, policy and practice (Parton, 1995; Scourfield, 2000) and may have led to neglect being considered less harmful or less serious than child abuse (Wolock and Horowitz, 1984). The nature of the association is unclear - “it is inappropriate to assume that one causes the other; both may be linked to a third and hidden set of structures and mechanisms” (Parton, 1995:72). However, statistics over a range of time periods indicate that at each point disproportionate numbers of children from low income families are known to social services in comparison to families not in poverty (Pelton, 1978; Garrett, 2002; Jutte et al, 2014).

Poverty affects a large number of children in the UK. More than half of those involved in the Millennium Cohort Study were in poverty during one of the five research surveys completed to date and 17% were said by researchers to be in poverty during four or all five of them (a condition categorised as ‘persistent poverty’) (Mostafa and Platt, 2014). In 2012/2013 27% of children were living in households on relative low income, 13% of children experienced low income and material deprivation, and 4% of children were living in severe poverty (HBAI (Households Below Average Income), 2014). New Labour’s promise to end child poverty by 2020 is unlikely to be met (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014), and more children may be leading impoverished and restricted lives now than in 1999 when the promise was originally made (Gordon et al, 2013; Dorling, 2014). Rising inequality rates have led to increases in relative poverty and greater numbers of children who are too poor to live according to the norms of society (Grayling, 2009; Layard and Dunn, 2009; HBAI, 2014). Yet this worsening of the lives of those at the bottom of the income scale has been accompanied by a hardening of attitudes among public, press and politicians towards poor families (Gordon et al, 2013; Parton, 2014). Wagg (2014) argues that media appeals and national fund raising efforts for poverty focus very narrowly on destitute Third World

children (the 'genuinely impoverished') in contrast to which British children are identified as 'not poor'. Relative poverty is variously seen as not real poverty, or as not related to structural inequality but rather resulting from people making bad or irresponsible life choices (Lawson, 2009; Bamfield, 2012; Dorling, 2014).

4.7 Neglect, Poverty, Parenting and Politics

"New Labour created the conditions for the perfect storm of today: catch them early, focus on children, and identify and treat the feckless and risky" (Featherstone et al, 2014: 1739).

In the previous chapter I showed how neglect, poverty, deprivation and delinquency had often been seen as part of the same condition. In late modern Britain too, while some campaigned to eradicate family poverty (the Child Poverty Action Group was established in 1965) for others, improving family finances was not the remedy. In a 1972 speech, Sir Keith Joseph MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Services, set out his theory of the cycle of deprivation. Joseph asserted that there was an imperfectly understood process that repeated itself from generation to generation preventing people from achieving their physical, emotional or intellectual potential (Welshman, 2013). Returning to this theme two years later, his party out of office, Joseph (1974, no page) warned the Edgbaston Conservative Association "the balance of the population, our human stock is threatened". The threat is expressed in underclass discourse and worth setting out in full: "a high and rising proportion of children are being born to mothers least fitted to bring children into the world and bring them up. They are born to mothers who were first pregnant in adolescence in social classes 4 and 5. Many of these girls are unmarried, many are deserted or divorced or soon will be. Some are of low intelligence, most of low educational attainment. They are unlikely to be able to give children the stable emotional background, the consistent combination of love and firmness which are more important than riches. They are producing problem children, the future unmarried mothers, delinquents, denizens of our borstals, sub-normal educational establishments, prisons, hostels for drifters... A high proportion of these births are a tragedy for the mother, the child and for us" (Joseph, 1974, no page).

Joseph focused on the 'problem family', families he positioned as struggling with a lack of personal, temperamental, intellectual, financial and social resources, whose "misfortunes were inflicted from within" (Welshman, 2013: 124). These families were constructed as producing and reproducing not only a disproportionate number of children, but also social problems such as bad parenting and broken homes. This was the cycle of deprivation, the

solution to which is seen as behavioural rather than structural change (Welshman, 2013). However, mainstream political attention was elsewhere. The 1970s and 1980s saw the “neglect of neglect” identified by Wolock and Horowitz (1984). Courts, researchers, research funders, practitioners and policy makers focused attention and resources on the emerging area of child abuse, rather than child neglect, to the alarm of researchers and practitioners (e.g. Minty and Pattinson, 1994; Stevenson, 1998; Hobbs and Wynne, 2002; McSherry, 2007; Horwath, 2007). In 1988, the first year in which national statistics are available, in England, 29% of registrations on the Child Protection Register were made under the heading of physical abuse, 13% under the category of physical neglect, 15% sexual abuse, 5% emotional abuse and 38% under the category of grave concern (Parton, 1995). By 1993, the numbers of children within the grave concern category had reduced to 8% of the total, emotional abuse increased to 10%, physical neglect and sexual abuse had almost the same numbers of registrations at 24% and physical abuse remained the specified category under which most children were registered (34%) (Parton, 1995). Neglect was therefore the fastest growing category (Parton, 1995) and may well have featured within the lives of children registered under other categories (as demonstrated by Brandon et al, 2013). For comparison, in the year ending 31st March 2014 59,780 children became the subject of a child protection plan, 42.1% categorised as neglect, 33% as emotional abuse, 10.9% as physical abuse, 4.7% as sexual abuse and 9.3% as multiple (DoE, 2014).

The lack of political attention to child neglect was to change with the advent of New Labour as a political force in 1995. In order to distance their project from ‘Old Labour’ and appeal to Conservative voters New Labour had engaged in “a significant rethinking of attitudes to crime and the family and the links between crime and the family” (Featherstone, 2004: 89). This also addressed increasing concerns throughout the 1990s that feckless and irresponsible ‘absent fathers’ were depriving boys of role models and increasing the chances that their children will be a burden on the state (Featherstone, 2013). In the 1997 general election New Labour’s campaign was built around 10 promises to the electorate. These included:

- “1. Education will be our number one priority, and we will increase the share of national income spent on education as we decrease it on the bills of economic and social failure
4. We will get 250,000 young unemployed off benefit and into work
6. We will be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, and halve the time it takes persistent juvenile offenders to come to court

7. We will help build strong families and strong communities, and lay the foundations of a modern welfare state in pensions and community care" (Blair, 1997: no page)

The specific political focus on the lives of young people, in their homes, in schools, the young unemployed and juvenile offenders is apparent. The victory of New Labour was to result in the redrawing of a social contract, the post war welfare state replaced with the social investment state (Giddens, 1998; Featherstone, 2004; Fawcett, Featherstone and Goddard, 2004) within which "investing in children is seen as crucial" (Featherstone, 2006a: 8).

New Labour conceptualised "poverty and disadvantage...[as] pathological deviations from what was essentially a fair and harmonious society" (Parton, 2014:39), categorising them under the general heading of social exclusion: a term difficult to distinguish from poverty and carrying underclass connotations (Levitas, 1998; 2006; Axford, 2009). Levitas (2006) argued that New Labour drew upon Charles Murray's construction of the morally deficient rump of society, comprised of people pathologically disengaged from pro-social values and behaviours (the moral underclass discourse). Within this discourse parenting and youth indiscipline is particularly problematic, mandating a punitive remoralising agenda in relation to children's behaviour. Legislation followed, widening the remit of the criminal law within the lives of children and parents. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), parenting orders and curfews, and lowered the age of criminal responsibility to 10 (Petley, 2014). While the ECM agenda was intended to improve the lives of all children along a range of outcomes, by 2006, New Labour felt that parents within particular families and communities were proving resistant to change and improvement (Featherstone et al, 2014; Parton, 2014). This led to New Labour's *Respect Action Plan* in 2006, a new initiative emphasising early intervention as a way forward (Parton, 2014).

4.7.1 Parenting in Late Modernity

"When one sees children, one 'sees' parents. When one sees children who have problems, one looks for parents, especially mothers." (Jenks, 2005:39).

New Labour shaped parenting discourse in particular ways. As stated above, the dominant construction of children positioned them as social investments, and the welfare of children was positioned, explicitly, as an investment in the future of the state (e.g. HM Treasury, 2003:14). The dominant construction of parents positions them as responsible for their children (Featherstone, 2004; 2006a). As Featherstone (2006a) argues, contrary to the

post war welfare consensus and therapeutic familialism, the New Labour government expects both parents of children to be in paid work. In addition, "parenthood has been uncoupled from marital status and reconstructed as life-long, binding and tied to biology" (Featherstone, 2006a). Parents are positioned as responsible for all aspects of their children's lives and behaviour and can be held legally accountable for acts committed by their children. Most importantly, these are parental duties, not maternal ones; Labour strategically mobilised gender-neutral parenting language in relation to children and childcare (Daniel, Featherstone, Hooper and Scourfield, 2005; Featherstone, 2006), and "the term parent is used almost ubiquitously" (Featherstone, 2006: 299). The gender neutral language was not matched by efforts to tackle gender inequalities in child rearing, operating rather to obscure the gendered reality of child rearing in Britain (Daniel et al, 2005; Featherstone, 2006; 2010).

Parents are expected to parent their children in particular ways to achieve normal development (Churchill, 2011; Parton, 2014). Late modernity has seen a significant increase in the production of parental pedagogy through a range of outlets (for example the extremely popular Supernanny programme) (Jensen, 2013), and childhood has remained at the forefront of public consciousness (Hardyment, 2007; Kehily, 2010). Some have argued that this proliferating and at times contradictory child rearing expertise confuses parents producing disengagement, futility and paranoia (Rose, 1999; Furedi, 2002; Graham, 2008). Many of the organisations engaged in seeking to protect children also aim to guide parents in parenting e.g. the *Good Childhood* (Layard and Dunn, 2009) and *How to Support your Child's Wellbeing* (both produced under the auspices of the Children's Society) and the NSPCC's guides to keeping children safe in a range of situations. This focus on parenting emphasises the role parents are expected to play in child protection and discursively combines the concept of abnormal parenting with child maltreatment. Finally, parents are still required to exercise disciplinary functions over their offspring: "we can infer as a minimal requirement that parents need to transfer the basic principles of the (moral) law and instil the disposition to behave according to these principles" (Le Sage and De Ruyter, 2008:798).

4.7.2 Seeing Neglect through Neuroscientific Lenses

Alongside the renewed attention to what constituted 'normal' and 'problem' families came a renewed research effort in relation to child neglect. In 1993 18-month-old Paul died as a result of child neglect (Bridge Care Consultancy, 1995). This death, reinforced by the key role neglect played in the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000 (Davies and Ward, 2012),

highlighted the urgency and importance of tackling child neglect. However, it should be noted 'child neglect' was not a single coherent category. In 2000 Scourfield, writing about the rediscovery of child neglect, identified two discourses available to professionals: a physical neglect discourse and an emotional neglect discourse. The physical neglect discourse emphasised the lack of physical care given to children and was identified by the Bridge Care Consultancy Report (1995) as responsible for the death of Paul in Islington. Alongside this was an emotional neglect discourse set out in *Child Protection: Messages from Research* which asserted that cold, highly critical family environments harm children (DoH, 1995). Horwath (2007) reviewed a range of definitions of child neglect in operation finding that neglect operated across six different domains: medical neglect, nutritional neglect, emotional neglect, educational neglect, physical neglect and neglect as a lack of supervision and guidance. This lack of conceptual clarity as to what exactly is meant by 'child neglect' has continued to cause problems for policy makers, researchers and practitioners (e.g. Rose and Meezan, 1993; Zuravin, 1999; Runyan et al, 2005; Kantor and Little, 2003; English et al, 2005; Manly, 2005; Dubowitz et al, 2005; Herrenkohl, 2005; Horwath, 2007; Tang, 2008; Mennen, Kim, Sang and Trickett, 2010).

Definitional confusion aside, in the late 1990s hard scientific medical evidence appeared to be emerging linking child neglect to impaired brain development: "a particularly potent neuroscientific argument" (Featherstone et al, 2014: 1739). Echoing the discovery of physical abuse by radiologists using X-ray technology (Parton, 1985), research findings from medical professionals (neurobiologists) using medical technologies (brain imaging techniques) are claimed to demonstrate the effects of child maltreatment (Twardosz and Lutzker, 2010). There began an intense effort to make this research comprehensible and available to front line children practitioners, an effort begun by Glaser's (2000) review of neurobiology/developmental psychology research but continued by many others (Twardosz and Lutzker, 2010).

Neurobiological research is positioned as demonstrating the scientific truth of psy-complex developmental theory: "much of this research is providing biological explanations for what practitioners have long been describing in psychological, emotional and behavioural terms" (Child Information Gateway, 2009:2). Technical scientific expertise has been used to support what Bruer (1999) has termed 'the myth of the first three years'. This period of a child's life is a recurrent research theme: see for example "the first three years of life are critical to children's later development" (Davies and Ward, 2012: 29), "...the importance of early influences on the development of values and behaviour" (HM Treasury, 2003: 15). Within this discourse the quality of child-adult interaction within this 'sensitive' time frame

determines cognitive development which in turn promotes social mobility, enables children to overcome deprived and impoverished environments and permanently disrupts the cycle of poverty (Allen, 2011; Field, 2010; Gillies, 2014). Child poverty it seems is no longer constructed as primarily relating to a lack of family financial resources (HM Government, 2011).

4.7.3 Neglect, 'Neuromania' and Early Intervention

The findings of neuroscience were increasingly taken up by politicians and policy makers producing something of a cross party consensus. In 2004 Conservative MP Iain Duncan Smith established the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), an organisation describing itself as "an independent think tank established in 2004 to seek effective solutions to the poverty that blights parts of Britain" (CSJ, no date). While New Labour formulated their *Respect Action Plan* (see above), CSJ Reports into *Breakdown Britain* (Social Justice Policy Group 2006) and *Breakthrough Britain* (Social Justice Policy Group 2007) similarly focused on communities "where life is characterised by dependence, addiction, debt and family breakdown" (Social Justice Policy Group 2007: 108). For the CSJ (and New Labour), solutions are behavioural rather than structural – to break through the cycle of deprivation the report recommended strengthening families and intervening early in children's lives (Social Justice Policy Group, 2007; Welshman, 2013).

Neuro-scientific research is deployed to justify early intervention and swift removal of children from their families in order to prevent permanent neurobiological damage (Wastell and White, 2012; Gillies, 2014; Parton, 2014). No longer is the state responsible for eradicating poverty, parents are. In 2008 Iain Duncan Smith and Labour MP Graham Allen published a report specifically on the need to address parenting deficits to prevent intergenerational transmission of the underclass (Allen and Smith 2008). *Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens* connected the decline of the institution of the family, the failure of parenting within particular communities and the importance of the early years to lifelong brain and social development (Allen and Smith, 2008). Frank Field (Labour MP and former director of the Child Poverty Action Group) also asserted the importance of the early 'foundation' years in tackling poverty (Field, 2010). Both reports drew on emerging neuro-scientific knowledge to make their arguments.

The influence of neuroscientific knowledge within child maltreatment is already widespread (Twardosz and Lutzker, 2010; Munro and Musholt, 2014) fuelling the "unholy alliance of early intervention and child protection" (Featherstone et al, 2014:1735). Internet forums

allow professionals and public to access the latest digested findings (e.g. the extensive websites belonging to The Child Information Gateway and The Centre for the Developing Child at Harvard University). Some call this 'neuromania' (Tallis, 2011, Wastell and White, 2012), and headings like "What neuroscience and developmental research tell us" (Centre on the Developing Child, 2011: 4) make it easy to ignore the caveats contained within the research reports themselves. To quote Belsky and de Hann (2011: 410) "...the study of parenting and brain development is not even yet in its infancy; it would be more appropriate to conclude that it is still in the embryonic stage, if not that which precedes conception". Interpretation of the medical imaging evidence is problematic (Hart and Rubia, 2012; Munro and Musholt, 2014). In addition, complex and nuanced research is simplified, smoothed out and repackaged (sometimes incorrectly) to make it accessible to a multi-disciplinary audience (Bruer, 1999; Wastell and White, 2012; White and Wastell, 2013). Metaphors such as 'brain architecture', 'toxic stress' and 'serve and return' imply that extraordinarily complicated structures and processes are in fact simple to understand and analyse (Shonkoff and Bales, 2011, quoted in White and Wastell, 2013). Other critics of the first three years movement take issue with the way in which parenting and child rearing are positioned as solutions to political and structural issues such as poverty and inequality, and the way in which parent-child relationships are constructed in terms of infant cognitive development: "the reconceptualising of love in biological terms" (Macvarish, Lee and Lowe, 2014; 793).

Despite these caveats, new research that can inform practice and make it 'evidence-based' is much in demand. The Family Justice Review (Norgrove, 2011) and the Education Select Committee's Inquiry into the Child Protection System (2013) both placed strong emphasis on the necessity for professionals involved with children to have detailed child development expertise and rapid access to new relevant research. In response to the Norgrove Review (2011), in November 2012 Brown and Ward published an extensive paper detailing the latest child development related research (second edition published in February 2013) (Brown and Ward, 2013). The Safeguarding Children Research Initiative has also closely focused on researching neglect and emotional abuse - factors said to have been overlooked by professionals involved with Victoria Climbié (Davies and Ward, 2012). To combine neglect and emotional abuse is to construct neglect in relation to bad parenting, as can be seen here: "neglect cases almost always have an element of emotional abuse because parents who ignore their children's basic needs for food, warmth and safety are also indicating that they do not understand or care about them" (Davies and Ward, 2012:29).

David Cameron (alumnus of Eton College and Oxford University) stated while leader of the Opposition: "the research shows that while the style of responsible parenting I've spoken about today is more likely to occur in wealthier households, children in poor households who are raised with that style of parenting *do just as well*" (Cameron, 2010a: my emphasis: no page). He repeated this theme when newly elected Prime Minister of Britain, unequivocally relating children's life chances to the emotional tie between child and parent: "the quality of parenting is the single-most important determinant of the life chances of a child." (Cameron, 2010b: no page). The disciplinary message is clear: bad parenting results in cognitively diminished off-spring who become social problems: child neglect produces the victim/villain.

4.8 Conclusion

"...After centuries of debate and practice we have still not achieved any consensus over the issue of childhood" (Jenks, 2005:2).

The forces of late modernity have challenged the concept of the uniform and universal developmental childhood. Late modernity has also produced a crisis in childhood and a crisis in those institutions responsible for producing and policing childhood: family and social work. As a result there is concern that children are not being given the developmental spaces they need to their detriment and the detriment of society. Respondents to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation positioned family breakdown and poor parenting as social evils, conflating fear for young people with fear of young people (Harris, 2009). 66% of respondents to a survey conducted for the Children's Society said that children had a less strong sense of moral values than in the past - only 7% felt that this was stronger than in the past (Layard and Dunn, 2009). While the idea that children are troublesome or that childhood is in crisis is not new (Pearson, 1983; Cunningham, 1995; Wyness, 2012), some argue that children and adolescents are being demonised (Franklin and Petley, 1996; Wyness, 2012); subjected to a widespread public mood that is: "almost a child hatred" (Hendrick, 2007:748).

In this chapter I have shown how globalisation and individualisation have fragmented the normal childhood, and child poverty and social inequality continue to blight children's lives. Identifying the non-normal, i.e. the neglectful childhood, is therefore a more complex task. However, while social workers who are expected to make these judgements have been held up to public opprobrium, psy-complex expertise has flourished, not least due to the added

impetus of neuroscience providing scientific medical evidence to support psychological theory. Whilst tentative and incomplete, neuro-scientific 'findings' are integral to a new discourse around the importance of a particular type of parental behaviour during the early years of a child's life. The absence of such parenting behaviour, i.e. abnormal or neglectful parenting, is constructed using underclass discourses as endangering both the life chances of the child and society. This construction of child neglect makes socio-economic factors invisible and mandates early and where necessary punitive intervention in the lives of children and their families. In the next chapter I will trace the legal and policy landscape of child neglect to identify how the state conceptualises child neglect, the frameworks within which professionals are expected to identify child neglect and the ways in which such frameworks position children, state and parents.

Chapter 5 - Child Neglect: Law and Policy

"...Neglect is fundamentally a legal concept" (Swift, 1995:38).

5.1 Introduction

In England, child neglect is defined within domestic civil and criminal law and international treaties ratified by the UK. Three main bodies of jurisprudence relate to child neglect: the criminal law, which operates to punish deliberate adult wrongdoers; child protection law which aims to protect children from maltreatment and safeguard their welfare; and children's rights law which sets out what children can expect or require from the state. These different aims and definitions give rise to competing understandings of what child neglect is, who can be said to neglect children and under what circumstances. Law understood in a more generic sense (i.e. including policy and regulatory mechanisms) (James and James, 2004) also transmits social norms of behaviour and provides information about what is and is not considered acceptable (Parton, 1991; Hoyano and Keenan, 2010; Action for Children, 2012). Legal definitions of child neglect interact with child protection policy and any analysis of what child neglect means in law must include considerations of the relationships between children, families and the state. Even without formal amendments to statute law, changes in government policy can enormously affect children's lives and the ways in which neglect is understood and experienced. This chapter considers the various legal constructions of child neglect in operation in England at this time and how statute law interacts with the wider policy agenda to determine professional practice in this area.

5.2 Children and the Law

It would be useful to be able to state categorically who can be considered a child and who cannot, but under English law the precise division point between childhood and adulthood is legally blurred. Notionally childhood extends until the age of 18 (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)) but within the Children Act 1989, the main legal instrument in England regulating the position and treatment of children under English law, there is a blurred area between age 16 and age 18. This uncertainty about whether adulthood is reached at 16 or 18 is repeated within English law and between the laws of different British jurisdictions. At present in England 16 year olds can consent to sexual

activity and enter into a contract of marriage with parental consent but may not legally vote, purchase alcohol or tobacco, or be valid parties to particular types of contract. While the age of consent to homosexual sexual activity was recently lowered from 18 to 16 (Sexual Offences Act 2003), the English school leaving age is in the process of rising from 16 to 18 (Education and Skills Act, 2008). In Scotland, a different legal jurisdiction, 16 year olds can marry without parental consent (The Marriage (Scotland) Act, 1977) and voted in the Scottish referendum (The Electoral Commission, 2014).

Legal understandings of childhood are rooted in psy-complex developmental norms (White, 1998; Brophy, Wale and Bates, 1999; Dickens, 2007). Development is an individual attribute, and while there is a presumption of capacity for those over 16 (Mental Capacity Act, 2005) those under 16 can also on occasion exercise adult rights in England. Those aged 15 and younger may consent to (but not necessarily refuse) medical treatment where they can satisfy expert psy-complex opinion that they have sufficient understanding and maturity to make the decision (so-called Gillick competency test) (De Cruz, 1987; Thomas, 2000; White, 1998; Cave, 2014). People younger than 16 may also carry out paid work, although there are a raft of restrictions on employment types, hours and conditions (primarily contained within the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933). Finally, the age of criminal responsibility in England is currently 10 (s34, Crime and Disorder Act 1998) - the lowest in Europe (Lipscombe, 2012; CRAE, 2013).

5.3 The Criminal Model of Child Neglect

The criminal law constructs child neglect as something that blameworthy 'adults' intentionally do to 'children' for whom they have responsibility (under s1 CYPA 1933 the division between 'child' and 'adult' is at age 16). Child neglect is not a specific criminal offence but neglecting a child can, under certain circumstances, be charged as child cruelty. Under s1 CYPA 1933 as amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015 (SCA 2015), where someone aged 16 or over "wilfully" neglects someone under 16 for whom they are responsible, in a manner likely to cause them "unnecessary suffering or injury to health" whether "of a physical or psychological nature" they can be charged with the offence of child cruelty. Child cruelty by way of neglect can be deemed to have occurred when a "parent or other person" legally responsible for the child fails to provide them with "adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodging" CYPA 1933 s1(2)(a). The failure must be wilful - if the responsible 'adult' is unable to provide any of these things themselves then they must "take steps to procure it to be provided". The CYPA 1933 also deems neglect to have occurred

where a child under 3 suffocates to death lying next to a sleeping 'adult' under the influence of drink or prohibited drugs.

Under criminal law, determining whether a neglect-type offence of cruelty has been committed requires analysis of both the actions and the mind of the 'adult'. As with most criminal offences, child cruelty is associated with blameworthy behaviour; the perpetrator must be at fault. Hoyano and Keenan (2010) have argued that courts tend to view the omissions constituting child neglect as less intentional/wilful than deliberate acts of cruelty, and therefore, by definition, less criminal. Campaigners argue that focus on intention ignores the effects of the behaviour on the child, and that the evidence demonstrates that neglect is as harmful as physical or sexual abuse (Action for Children 2012; 2013; Taylor and Hoyano, 2012). The "basic understanding in criminal law that committing an act which kills a child and failing to feed a child who has no other means of obtaining sustenance are qualitatively different" ignores the fact that both courses of action lead to the avoidable death of a child (Hoyano and Keenan, 2010:129). The 'adult' intention required for child cruelty - 'wilfully' - was defined by the House of Lords (now the Supreme Court) in Sheppard [1981] as a deliberate or reckless failure to act in circumstances where the accused recognised action was required. This is a subjective test - Lord Keith of Kinkel, one of the Law Lords who decided the case, held that however obvious the child's plight might appear to the objective observer, "a parent who has genuinely failed to appreciate that his child needs [in this case] medical care, through personal inadequacy or stupidity or both, is not guilty" (Sheppard [1981]: 418).

The criminal law constructs child neglect in relation to an individual and identifiable 'adult', who is responsible for a 'child'. The prosecution must prove that the adult has failed to provide for the child in a way that they either recognise is likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to the child's physical or psychological health, or that the adult did not care whether their omission would cause such suffering or injury. The focus is very much on the adult and the state's role is to ascertain whether or not the adult has satisfied all elements of the criminal offence and thus exposed themselves to sanction. To protect individual citizens from the exercise of arbitrary state power, citizens have a right to a fair trial (Article 6, European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), 1950) with procedural safeguards such as the presumption of innocence and the requirement that the prosecution prove guilt beyond reasonable doubt (Hoyano and Keenan, 2010). The child, as alleged victim, does not have similar rights within the criminal arena, and their best interests are not the concern of the Court (although they may be considered vulnerable witnesses and afforded a measure of support as a result) (Masson, 2006; Hoyano and Keenan, 2010).

The CYPA 1933 was amended by the SCA 2015 following a vigorous campaign led by Action for Children. Prior to the SCA 2015, the House of Lords case of Sheppard [1981] appeared to restrict 'harm' to 'physical harm' (Action for Children, 2013). Child protection definitions of harm are drawn far more widely (Taylor and Hoyano, 2012; Action for Children, 2012; 2013) and campaigners argued that the criminal law should be altered to reflect the definitions within child protection legislation and guidance (Action for Children 2012; 2013). Initially the Coalition Government's response was that in practice the Courts were taking account of non-physical harm (e.g. Beard, 2013) but they later agreed to amend CYPA 1933 "to make it explicit that the offence covers cruelty which causes psychological suffering or injury as well as physical harm" (Home Office, 2014:3). This was achieved in Part 5 SCA 2015. Although campaigners had also argued that the word 'wilful' in the mental element of the crime was archaic, Parliament chose not to change it. This means to be found guilty of child cruelty by way of neglect, the prosecution needs to prove that the accused acted intentionally or recklessly.

5.4 Child Protection

5.4.1 Background

The Children Act 1989 (CA 1989), as amended by the Children Act 2004 (CA 2004) is the key legal instrument in England setting out when and how the state can and/or must intervene in children's lives to prevent them being neglected (Broadhurst et al, 2009; Hoyano and Keenan, 2010; Stafford, Parton, Vincent & Smith, 2012). As set out in chapter 4, the 1970s saw the start of a "growing crisis in child protection" and the disintegration of the established social-work-mediated relationship between child protection and family privacy (Parton, 2014: 19). The deaths of Jasmine Beckford (London Borough of Brent, 1985), Tyra Henry (London Borough of Lambeth, 1987) and Kimberley Carlisle (London Borough of Greenwich, 1985) drew attention to the vulnerability of children within families and the state's failure to provide adequate protection (Parton, 1991; 2014). Feminism and the women's movement highlighted the hidden violence of the private family, Refuge was established in 1971 followed by the Women's Aid Federation in 1974 (Parton, 2014). Conversely, there were concerns about misguided social workers interfering in private families and tearing them apart; Parents Against Injustice (PAIN) was formed in 1985 in response to such concerns to campaign, lobby and provide support and advice to parents

who feel they have been wrongly accused of child abuse (Parton, 2014; PAIN, undated). The vulnerability of 'normal' families to unwarranted and damaging social work intervention appeared to be confirmed by events in Cleveland in 1987 when 121 children were subject to removal from their families and investigation due to fears they were being sexually abused, and social workers found their practices subjected to a further inquiry and a different negative construction in the media, this time relating to overzealous, incompetent and disastrous intervention rather than inaction (Secretary of State for Social Services, 1988).

Thus CA 1989 was enacted by a state positioned as both failing to act to protect vulnerable children and as wrongfully overriding the rights of families to privacy (Parton, 1991; 2014; Howe, 1994). Informed by a range of research commissioned during the 1980s including the Short Report (Social Services Committee 1984) and the Review of Child Care Law (DHSS, 1985) CA 1989 sought to recalibrate the balance between state, parents and children (Parton, 1991; 2014). The principle of partnership was enshrined within this new settlement between state and family, the state's role primarily being to support families to rear children (Parton, 2006; Dickens, 2007; Broadhurst and Holt, 2010). As Parton (2014:23) points out while the state retained the duty and the ability to intervene in families in order to protect children, CA 1989 also gave the state a "broader power to *promote* the care and upbringing of children within their families" (emphasis in original). These different parts of CA 1989 give rise to different constructions of child neglect: the child protection model of child neglect under s31 CA 1989 and the child welfare model of child neglect within s17 CA 1989.

5.4.2 Working Together: Defining Neglect

CA 1989 does not at any point define child neglect. Instead definitions of child maltreatment are contained within accompanying guidance periodically updated by the Secretary of State (the *Working Together* Series: DHSS, 1988; DoH 1991; Department of Health, Home Office and Department for Education and Employment 1999; HM Government; 2006; 2010; 2013). It is these definitions that inform maltreatment categorisation in professional practice. Tracing the development of these definitions illustrates the changing and expanding expositions of child neglect. The 1991 document defines neglect in 53 words as:

"The persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive" (DoH, 1991:48)

In contrast, the 2013 version of the guidance defines neglect using 107 words as:

“ the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.” (HM Government, 2013:86).

This definition was arrived at in the 2006 guidance and carried forward unamended in succeeding guidance. It is worth noting that this is one of the only times under English law when legal personality is acquired before birth, giving rise to the confusing situation that at the same duration of pregnancy one may lawfully abort a ‘foetus’ but neglecting an ‘unborn child’ may lead to child protection procedures. In addition, describing a child as ‘neglected’ as defined within the Guidance does not itself give rise to specific forms of assistance, procedures or interventions. For that to occur, a child must be positioned in one of two different ways under CA 1989: as in need of state support under s17 CA 1989 or, alternatively, as in need of state protection under s31 CA 1989.

5.4.3 The Child Welfare Model of Child Neglect

S17 CA 1989 sets out the model under which Children’s Services and parents work together in partnership to ensure that vulnerable children get the resources, assistance and support they require to reach their potential. S17 CA 1989 defines a class of children as being ‘in need’. Under s17(10) CA 1989 children are in need if, without the provision of local authority services they are “unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development” (s17(10)(a) CA 1989) or their “health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired” (s17(10)(b) CA 1989). Under CA 1989 “‘development’ means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development; and ‘health’ means physical or mental health” (s17(11) CA 1989). In addition, children who are disabled are automatically positioned as in need (s17(10)(c) CA 1989). A child exposed to the types of behaviours suggested in the Working Together definition of child neglect (HM Government 2013) is likely to have met the threshold at which they could be considered in need.

Under s17(1) CA 1989 , a “general duty” is placed on the local authorities “(a) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and (b) so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families”. S17 CA 1989 seeks to ensure that all children have at least the opportunity of achieving a reasonable standard of health and development, and Part III CA 1989 places a range of assistance and services at the disposal of local authorities through which the state can assist families to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. However, this part of CA 1989 was never adequately resourced (Parton, Thorpe and Wattam, 1997; Masson, 2003; Hoyano and Keenan, 2010). For public policy reasons case law has established that local authorities are not under a duty to provide specific services to children they have defined as ‘in need’ and so cannot be required to compensate individual children for failing to provide services for them (Masson, 2006; Brayne and Carr, 2010; Hoyano and Keenan, 2010). Despite this, s17 CA 1989 is extremely important in constructing a relationship between state and family and children in which parents cannot and should not be expected to manage alone, and should receive child rearing assistance from the state where they want it. The state must be invited in – parents can refuse support and assistance offered under s17 CA 1989. In addition, under s17(4)(a) CA 1989 the state should take account of the views of the children concerned when deciding what services would be appropriate for them and their families.

5.4.4 The Child Protection Model of Child Neglect

S17 CA 1989 applies to children positioned as in need but not as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. If the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm because they are not receiving or likely to receive the sort of care that “it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give” them, or alternatively, because they are “beyond parental control” (CA 1989, s31(2)) the state can intervene directly in families without parental consent. ‘Harm’ is defined in s31(9) CA 1989 as physical or non-physical ill-treatment, the impairment of physical or mental health or the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development (including witnessing the ill-treatment of another). In order to intervene, the harm the child has suffered or is likely to suffer must be ‘significant’ but there is no caselaw setting out when harm becomes significant, rather decisions are made on “intuition, using expert evidence and previous experience of other cases which satisfied the threshold test.” (Hoyano and Keenan, 2010:64). The role of expertise, particularly psychocomplex expertise, is therefore an essential part of constructing when a state has the power to intervene in family life (White, 1998).

At the centre of this construction is the notion of what it is reasonable to expect from a parent, and s31 CA 1989 is addressed to those holding a parental role in respect of children. Parents must both provide children with an appropriate level of care, and keep them under an appropriate level of control. As long as this is accomplished the state is not entitled to interfere with parental child-rearing arrangements, however much professionals feel that individual children would benefit from a different environment or a different type or level of care. Even where such parental care or control is lacking, the lack must expose the child to the risk of significant harm before professionals can intervene without parental consent (Hoyano and Keenan, 2010).

Under s47 CA 1989 the state (in practice the local authority) has a duty to investigate if they have reasonable grounds to believe that a child in their area is subject to an Emergency Protection Order, is in Police Protection or is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. If the threshold for intervention has been met, then the state (acting through the local authority) can intervene in the child's life, and if opposed by those with parental responsibility, can seek Court mandated roles in the life of the child (for example through a care or supervision order (s31 CA 1989). Unlike with the criminal law, the intention of the adult is irrelevant. As Hollis J stated: "no person is on trial here, not the parents, nor anyone connected with the family or children" (*Re Cleveland CC v A; Cleveland CC v B [1988] at p598*). Lord Nicholls, a Law Lord, elaborated in a later case: "an absence of a reasonable standard of parental care need not imply that the parents are at fault. It may be for instance that for reasons beyond their control the parents are not able to provide a reasonable standard of care for the child" (*Lancashire CC v A [2000] at p512A*).

Rather than adult guilt or innocence, "the child's welfare shall be the court's paramount consideration" (CA 1989 s1(1)). Children are positioned at the centre of the legal deliberations, and there are a number of considerations that the court must consider in deciding what the child's welfare is (the so-called 'welfare checklist' contained within CA 1989 s1(3)). This list positions the child using developmental discourse: the child's "ascertainable wishes and feelings" must be "considered in the light of his age and understanding" (s1(3)(a) CA 1989). Alongside these wishes and feelings courts must consider what the child's physical, emotional and educational needs are, how the child is likely to respond to changes in circumstances if the court decides to order them and the harm that the child has been or is likely to be exposed to. Courts should also take account of factors such as the age, sex and background and other relevant characteristics of the child and how effectively the parents are able to meet the child's needs. Factual matters

need to be proved using a balance of probabilities test, i.e. that it is more likely that a particular event occurred than that it did not.

So here, as under s17 CA 1989, as indeed within the Working Together definition (HM Government, 2013) a child is constructed as having needs that must be met. White, writing rhetorically posed the question: "having constructed the child as a bundle of needs, who should decide on the nature of these needs?" (1998:277). What children are constructed as 'needing' derives from medical and psychological knowledge (White, 1998; Brophy et al, 1999; Parton, 2006; Dickens, 2007; Burman, 2008), although the elaboration of emotional and psychological needs in Working Together (HM Government, 2013) indicates that psychology is playing an increasing role in the construction of child neglect. Indeed, paediatrics itself as a profession has moved away from solely being concerned with the physical problems of childhood and has become concerned with the emotional, psychological, social and even spiritual development of children (Pawluch, 2003). If there is a dispute children's needs are assessed by experts using expertise "rooted in child development and informed by evidence" (HM Government, 2013: 19). The Family Courts have designated particular professional groups as having the relevant knowledge and training to give expert evidence about what children need and the degree of harm they may suffer if such needs are not met: those groups are not only psychologists, psychiatrists and paediatricians (Brophy et al, 1999) but importantly social workers; Dickens (2007) found the Courts devalued social workers' expertise in comparison to medical and psychological experts, but the President of the Family Division Sir James Munby (2013) has reaffirmed that social workers are experts and must be treated as such.

Under CA 1989 s31(10), the Court can assess whether or not harm is significant by comparing the health and development of the child before it to that of a similar child. This means that in some circumstances a Court may consider that the threshold test has been met giving the state a right to intervene in the way a child is being treated, while another child in a similar position may not be considered to be at risk of suffering significant harm, due to a different comparator child being selected. There are wide regional variations between the numbers of child protection plans registered by local authorities: in England as a whole an average of 52.1 children per 10,000 became the subject of a child protection plan during 2013-2014 (DoE, 2014). However this varied from a rate of 73 per 10,000 in the North East to 41.6 in Outer London. There were even more dramatic differences between individual authorities: Milton Keynes and Richmond Upon Thames registered 9.4 and 22.4 children per 10,000 respectively while at the other end of the spectrum North East Lincolnshire registered 135.9 and Blackpool 136.3 per 10,000 children (DoE, 2014).

Under child protection definitions, to neglect a child is not to fall below some universally applicable standard of parental behaviour, but rather to fall below a standard of care that takes account of the social or cultural norms considered applicable to the child in question. CA 1989 and the accompanying guidance give “an array of directions on the importance of attention to ‘race’, ethnicity, religion, culture, and language” (Brophy, 2008:78). In *Re O* [1992] when determining whether non-attendance at school could be considered to cause significant harm, the judge declared that the comparison had to be made with a child of similar intellectual and social development, not simply an average child. In another case *Munby J*, argued that Courts must take account of “underlying cultural, social [and] religious realities”, continuing: “the court should, I think, be slow to find that parents only recently or comparatively recently arrived from a foreign country – particularly a country where standards and expectations may be more or less different, sometimes very different indeed, from those with which we are familiar – have fallen short of any acceptable standard of parenting if in truth they have done nothing wrong by the standards of their own community” (*Re K; A Local Authority v N & Others*, [2007] at para 26). This incorporates a level of cultural relativism into the law, as the child is constructed not simply as a child but as a socially, culturally and economically embedded being. As a result the precise boundary of good enough parenting in any given situation is far from legally clear.

It is interesting to ask what weight is given to the voice of the child in relation to proceedings under s31 CA 1989; proceedings that could result in the child moving home, moving school and losing family, friend and community networks, possibly permanently. Children will be legally represented and an expert is appointed by the court to be the Children’s Guardian and give an independent opinion on what action if any the court should take. However, children are constructed within developmental models, and these models position children as not necessarily the best judge of what they need. As Thomas points out (2000: 62) “at the centre of our child welfare law, then, is a concept of the best interests of the child as something that can be determined objectively”. Unlike adult litigants, children will always have a professional appointed by a Court to give an expert opinion on what is best for them, even where the child disagrees profoundly with the analysis. Unlike adults, children are kept away from the Court arena and given restricted access to evidence and information that is being used to decide their futures. Both CA 1989 and UNCRC give rise to children’s rights to participate and rights to protection, alongside adults’ duties to ensure that children’s welfare is paramount and duties to listen to the wishes and feelings of the children (Thomas, 2000). These different rights and duties are not easy to reconcile.

5.5 The Children's Rights Model of Child Neglect

"It is rarely disputed that a defining feature of childhood is the lack of competencies needed for acting in one's own interests" (Le Sage and De Ruyter, 2008: 792)

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, formulated by Save the Children to assist refugees after the First World War (Thomas, 2014b) was the progenitor of the current international children's rights instrument the UNCRC. The UNCRC was passed by the UN Assembly in 1989 and ratified by the UK in 1991 and CA 2004 established the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England (OCC) in 2005. Originally established with "the function of promoting awareness of the views and interests of children in England" (s 2(1) CA 2004), the Children and Families Act 2014 (CFA 2014) broadened this remit considerably, amending CA 2014 to state that "the Children's Commissioner's primary function is promoting and protecting the rights of children in England". CFA 2014 also removed the original statutory requirement for the Commissioner to be concerned with the ECM outcomes in respect of all children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being, protection from harm and neglect, education, training and recreation, contribution to society and social and economic well-being. CFA 2014 requires instead that the Commissioner has "particular regard" to the rights of children living away from home or receiving social care and other groups of children the Commissioner considers "at particular risk of having their rights infringed" (s2(4) CA 2004 as amended).

There are questions about whether children can be rights bearers, and, if so, what sort of rights they should be entitled to: rights to protection as members of a vulnerable class, and/or more political rights to participation as equal members of society (Thomas, 2000; Archard, 2009). The UNCRC accords both, and some of the current instability surrounding childhood may be due to positioning children within both developmental and rights discourses: discourses which are to some extent at variance with each other. It is difficult to both see a child as developing (and as such unaware of what it needs and having a right to a childhood), and, at the same time to see them as an equal finished citizen (Cunningham, 1995; Kehily, 2010; Thomas, 2014b). It has been argued that UNCRC constructions of the global child citizen are at odds with the way in which children are positioned as socially, culturally, economically and politically powerless by social sciences discourses (Mayall, 2006; Stainton Rogers, 1992b; James and Prout 1990). Some assert that only the disruption of developmentalism, along with its claim to represent the truth about childhood, would allow children's rights to become a reality (Stainton Rogers, 1992b; Jenks, 2005; Mayall, 2006).

Gilbert, Parton and Skivenes (2011) and Parton (2014) argue that the increasing focus on individual rights has produced a new child-focused orientation of child protection, positioning the child in an independent relationship with the state. While UNCRC does not form domestic law, it is binding on the UK government and requires that: "States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child." (Art 19, UNCRC). Although 'neglect and negligent treatment' are not defined, it could be argued that references to treatment that the child receives while in the care of parents or those in loco parentis indicate Art 19 has a similar meaning to s31 CA 1989. However, unlike s31 CA 1989, Art 19 UNCRC contains no requirement that there must be a likelihood of significant harm before the state is mandated to take action: in fact the stipulation here is that the State must protect children from "all forms" of such treatment. Art 19 requires signatories to go far further than s31 CA 1989 in protecting children from neglect.

Child neglect and neglectful environments can constitute "torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" and under Article 3 ECHR (adopted into English law under the Human Rights Act (HRA), 1998) the state has an absolute duty to prevent anyone being placed in such a situation. Unlike the UNCRC, the HRA 1998 does provide a cause of action in English courts, and case law in 2001 established that by failing to remove children from a home situation of severe neglect and emotional abuse (which the local authority had failed to alleviate for at least 6 years), the state had breached the children's rights under Article 3 ECHR (Munro and Ward, 2008). It is therefore established law that where the state is unequivocally aware that children are living in conditions that amount to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (in practice probably only severe neglect and abuse) it has a duty to protect the children's human rights and the state can be forced to compensate victims where it has failed to do so.

UNCRC potentially places a far greater responsibility on the state not to neglect children than the duty to intervene to protect children in dire situations of which it is aware. The National Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Child Abuse (chaired by Lord Williams of Mostyn, 1996) constructed a definition of child abuse and neglect specifically crafted to reflect UNCRC principles, stating: "Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions, or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospects of safe and healthy development into adulthood" (Mostyn,

1996:2). Here there is recognition that organisations and institutions beyond the family can damage children, and that this damage is not qualitatively or quantitatively different from parental lack of care.

The children's rights framework recognises that state policy can impact upon children to their detriment. The UNCRC gives children a number of rights: social, political and legal; not only to protection from neglect, abuse, exploitation, and discrimination, but also to participation in society and the provision of services by the state, and all of these rights are binding on signatory governments (Alderson, 2008; Reading et al, 2009; Archard, 2009; Parton, 2014). So, for example, the UNCRC guarantees children rights to an adequate standard of living, privacy, freedom of association, respect for their views, education, health care, extra support if disabled, leisure, play and culture. In not upholding and promoting all these rights, the state can be said to be neglecting children. Evidence of such neglect could be measured in terms of the "lack of a comprehensive nationwide strategy" to deal with the maltreatment children are exposed to within the home (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2008:12), inequalities in the provision of health care and education, and failure to provide children with an adequate standard of living. In addition, neglect could be constructed in terms of the denial of children's rights to participate in decisions that affect them - a denial of their civil rights as guaranteed under the Convention.

5.6 Placing the models in context

Child welfare and child protection models represent and reproduce wider policy arguments about the role of the state in family life, which in turn feed back into how child neglect can be conceptualised and understood. Comparative analyses of child protection systems in North America and Europe (Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert et al, 2011; Stafford et al, 2012) indicate that two broadly different approaches to protecting children are operating: a child protection model and a family service model (Gilbert, 1997; Parton, 2014). These models construct the problems differently: child protection systems seek to protect/rescue children from their "degenerate relatives" (Parton, 2014:5) while family service systems conceptualise problems as resulting from a breakdown of relationships caused by social or psychological difficulties which can be repaired with support. There are other key differences between the systems: child protection focused systems tend to be legalistic and adversarial in nature and involve compulsory removal of children, while family service systems tend to be therapeutic, focused on working in partnership with parents and in the main place children under voluntary rather than coercive arrangement (Gilbert, 1997; Parton, 2014). Child protection

focused systems tend to have a high regard for family privacy and seek to protect children within their own homes, while family support systems tend to see child rearing as more of a communal activity and focus on supporting children within their communities (Freymond and Cameron, 2006 cited in Parton, 2014:7). Within a child protection system child neglect is squarely a failure of parenting, while in a family service oriented system, the responsibility of providing for a child is far wider and more diffuse, shared between parents, wider family, communities and state. England has always been considered to have a child protection based system rather than a family service one (Parton, 2014).

CA 1989 was intended to provide a mechanism where parents could provide for their children, calling on the state for support and assistance where necessary (Hoyano and Keenan, 2010). It had been hoped that negotiation, partnership and providing early support for families would mean that there were far fewer occasions where the state had to take action against parents to protect children (Parton, 2006; Hoyano and Keenan, 2010). However, this did not materialise: instead, the passage of the Act saw a marked increase in care proceedings (Broadhurst and Holt, 2010); the number of children annually who were the subject of care orders tripled from 1992-2004 (Beckett, 2007) even before the current explosion in care proceedings that can be ascribed at least in part to the circumstances surrounding the death of Baby Peter Connelly (the so-called 'Baby P effect') (Pemberton, 2013). Without the finances necessary to provide universal services and without the legal ability to compel service provision for particular children, the concept of the child in need became a way of referring to "those in contact with social services" (Axford, 2009:380).

Attempts by the New Labour government to move England towards a more family service orientated model using the ECM framework (Broadhurst, et al, 2009; Hills, Sefton and Stewart, 2009, Parton, 2014) were put to one side in the aftermath of the death of Baby Peter and the economic crisis. The coming to power of the coalition in 2010 saw a retrenchment in the relationship between the state and families; resulting in what Parton (2014) calls an "authoritarian neoliberal" approach (Parton, 2014: 139). This approach positions parental interests in family preservation in opposition to children's needs for state rescue, advocating that those involved in protecting children should only concern themselves with the needs of the child. The long awaited new Working Together Guidance (HM Government, 2013) combined a shift towards "a much more explicit child protection orientation" (Parton, 2014: 133) with a new interventionist and disciplinary approach to families who were perceived to be failing their children – the "nanny state" transforming into a "muscular state" (Parton, 2014: 140). In accordance with the new emphasis on identifying and responding robustly to child neglect (DoE, 2012; Education Committee,

2012; 2013) social workers were warned not to themselves neglect children by allowing their optimism and hopes for parental change to “trump the need to rescue children from chaotic, neglectful and abusive homes” (HM Government, 2013: 132). As stated in the last chapter, this approach appeared to be informed by research findings particularly in relation to brain development in the early years and the importance of psychological and emotional development at key sensitive periods (Education Committee, 2013; Brown and Ward, 2013; Gove, 2012).

Under the coalition government there have been massive cuts to frontline children’s services and to the budgets of households containing children. Apart from flagship programmes such as the Troubled Families Programme which have continued to receive good levels of funding (Donovan, 2013) children’s services have been very badly hit by government decisions in the age of austerity: children and young people’s charities have endured losing almost £405 million of public funding between 2011/12 to 2015/16 (National Children’s Bureau (NCB), 2012). It has been widely recognised that the cuts have had a very detrimental effect on the lives of children (NCB, 2012; UNICEF, 2014; Office for Children’s Commissioner, 2013; Aldridge and MacInnes, 2014). Levels of absolute child poverty are increasing (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014). This is important when one considers the children’s rights models of child neglect set out above under which the state is variously expected to provide services for children in need or alternatively to stand as guarantor of childhood for all children, ensuring that their rights as citizens to protection, to the provision of services and to participate in society are respected. Under this construction government policy that impacts negatively on children as a group could itself be termed child neglect.

5.7 Conclusion

“... The legitimating narratives of developmentalism, ... are so pervasive that they have been incorporated into statute as incontrovertible axioms” (White, 1998: 285)

In this chapter I have set out how different bodies of law construct child neglect in different ways for different purposes. This chapter, together with chapters 3 and 4 shows how the relationships between state, families and children are far from stable, and have undergone tremendous changes over time. This is important because it demonstrates the question ‘what is child neglect’ can be answered in a number of different ways. Depending on what measure is used, a range of different questions may have to be asked about both neglector

and neglectee. However, each of these professional and legal constructions incorporates models drawn from psy-complex knowledge, positioning children as needy and developing. Yet 'normal' development, entrenched within constructions of child neglect, does not necessarily translate into the lives of particular groups of children (e.g. children with disabilities) who remain either 'unseen' (White, 1998; Murphy, 2011) or find themselves positioned as particularly needy (under s17 CA 1989) as a result. Finally, the legal constructions outlined in this chapter are themselves contained within wider discourses about the proper relationship between state, parents and children, discourses carried within government policy and the media, and in a rapidly changing research environment in relation to child neglect. A large number of constructions of child neglect are possible within the law. In the next chapter I intend to explore what the existing research has to say about how lay people make sense of child neglect, and set out the research gap within which my thesis is located.

Chapter 6 - Lay People within the Child Neglect Research Literature

"Any social definition of mistreatment is inadequate if it does not include the general population's perceptions of mistreatment" (Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979: 157).

6.1 Introduction

In previous chapters I have shown how the concept of child neglect developed in conjunction with psy-complex discourse and expertise. The dominant legal and professional discourses relating to children position particular people as experts, giving them the power to 'see', 'diagnose' and 'pronounce on' child neglect, and to 'perform' particular practices constructed as 'child protection'. However, children are constructed within many discourses and 'child neglect' may mean very different things to those trained within the disciplines of, for example, law, neuroscience, pedagogy, social work or sociology. Jenks (2005:31) speaks of the "different kinds of 'knowledge' of mother, teacher, paediatrician, social worker, educational psychologist and juvenile magistrate": knowledges that whilst not necessarily contradictory "do not live suspended in an egalitarian harmony". The public are also concerned for and about children, and common-sense understandings of children and childhood are everywhere in contemporary society (James and James, 2004; Jenks, 2005; Wyness, 2012). This chapter identifies lay voices within the existing child neglect research and explores the ways in which lay knowledge is positioned, elicited, investigated, interpreted and reported within the expert literature.

6.2 Setting the Stage

6.2.1 Scoping Study Literature Review

"There is a wealth of literature from medical, psychological and social work disciplines which debates the nature of neglect" (Scourfield, 2000:369).

My first task was to identify studies focusing on lay constructions of child neglect rather than professional ones. This research interest is itself quite unusual: in the recent "*Messages from Research*" review focusing on child neglect and emotional abuse, only two

lay studies are identified (Davies and Ward, 2012:51), namely Andrews, 1996 and Maiter, Alaggia and Trocme, 2004. I decided upon a systematic approach (Kiteley and Stogdon, 2014), to both chart the extent and nature of previous lay research in this area as this seemed unclear, and to assess the extent to which my own particular area of interest represented a research gap. These aims were listed as reasons to undertake a scoping study by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and I decided to adopt scoping study methodology for my review of the literature (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Levac, Colquhoun and O'Brien, 2010; Stalker and McArthur, 2012; Daudt, van Mossel & Scott, 2013). As the scoping study process should be explicit and transparent (e.g. Arksey and O'Malley, 2005), details of how I carried out my review form Appendix 1.

My review identified a total of 52 research studies containing lay people's constructions of child neglect (some studies producing more than one output). A summary describing the research samples, methods and main findings of each study is found at Appendix 2. This chapter focuses not only on the findings of previous research, but also on the knowledge generation process, the types of questions that researchers have been interested in, the methods used to produce and interpret data, and what questions can and cannot be answered by the existing research as a result. In doing so I examine whether questions, methods, and results, while purporting to be about lay people, are in fact expert driven.

6.2.2 Categorising Lay People within the Literature

When exploring how researchers have positioned 'lay people' or 'the general public' it is important to identify who is being conceptualised as 'lay' and to what end. My literature review indicated that the definition of 'lay' person or the 'general public' is often left unelaborated, as if self-explanatory. However, researchers have categorised different groups of people as lay people. Research on lay perceptions and attitudes has been conducted with the adult resident population of a particular area (e.g. Dhooper, Royse and Wolfe, 1991; Sigler and Johnson, 2004; Schmid and Benbenishty, 2011), a student body (e.g. Roscoe, 1990; Hong and Hong, 1991; Ashton, 2004), particular groups of parents (e.g. Polansky, Ammons and Weathersby, 1983; Maiter, Alaggia and Trocme, 2004; Evans-Campbell, 2008) or any combination of the above (e.g. Ferrari, 2002, sampled parents from different ethnic backgrounds, Shor, 2000, from families within two distinct neighbourhood types). Bensley, Ruggles and Simmons (2004a) and Bensley et al (2004b) recruited 'civilian' adults without further explanation. Opinion poll data must be collected from a representative sample of the relevant population in order to claim to reflect public opinion,

but where public opinion is sought it is unclear whether any distinction is made between lay and expert respondents (e.g. Schmid and Benbenishty, 2011; YouGov/NSPCC, 2012).

Even where research is conducted to compare 'lay' and 'professional' attitudes, the professions comprising the non-lay category differed between studies. For Rose and her colleagues, 'professionals' were social workers or child welfare workers (Rose and Meezan, 1993; 1995; Rose, 1999a; Rose and Selwyn, 2000). Giovannoni and Becerra's (1979) professional grouping included lawyers, social workers, police and paediatricians. Boehm's (1962) professional group included nurses, doctors, social workers, clergy, lawyers and teachers. Goodvin, Johnson, Hardy, Graef and Chambers (2007) had a 'sentinel' group that included education providers, child care workers and professionals from the fields of mental health, law enforcement and medicine. Action for Children considered primary school teachers, pre-school and nursery staff, health professionals, police officers and social workers to be professionals (Burgess et al, 2012; 2013; 2014). Dubowitz, Klockner, Starr and Black (1998) used a professional group consisting of social workers, child welfare workers, lawyers, physicians, psychologists and 'others'.

This lack of consensus - even amongst child maltreatment researchers - over the boundary between lay and expert has methodological implications. Great care needs to be taken in synthesising results between studies with different constructions of the lay-expert divide. As Pierce and Bozalek (2004) showed, professional groups may construct child maltreatment very differently from each other: in their study the responses of South African police officers were more similar to lay attitudes than to those reported by social workers. The population of the group considered 'lay' may also affect research results: Rose and Meezan (1995) considered that the particular makeup of Boehm's (1962) lay group (business managers, agency board members and legislators) was partly accountable for her research results being contrary to subsequent findings.

6.2.3 Expert Words, Lay Mouths

While the lay-expert divide may be unclear, researchers have acknowledged the importance of ascertaining lay 'attitudes', 'definitions', 'opinions' and 'perceptions'. For some, ascertaining lay views is of political and ethical importance: lay people must participate in defining child maltreatment (e.g. Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979). Others argue that professionals must understand the range of parenting norms made available by cultural diversity in order to avoid stigmatising and oppressing particular communities (e.g. Evans-Campbell, 2008). There has also been research interest in exploring how well lay people

'understand' child neglect, i.e. the extent to which expert definitions of child neglect have been adopted by a lay audience (e.g. Dhooper, Royse and Wolfe, 1991) and in testing the efficacy of new instruments and technologies for use by professionals or researchers, e.g. the *Childhood Level of Living Scale* (Polansky and Williams, 1978; Polansky, Ammons and Weathersby 1983) and the *Community Norms of Child Neglect Scale* (Goodvin et al, 2007). Researchers have wanted to ascertain how well lay people recognise the causes, symptoms and outcomes of child neglect, and how they respond to children who they believe to be neglected (e.g. Korbin, Coulton, Lindstrom-Ufuti and Spilsbury, 2000; Price et al, 2001; Bensley et al, 2004b). This latter type of research seeks to generate knowledge that will facilitate lay people to approach the authorities with their suspicions more readily, thus improving the operation of surveillance-by-proxy.

In the UK children's charities often commission and publish research about lay people, and the NSPCC and Action for Children in particular solicit and make strategic use of public opinion within their campaigning activities (see below). However, the relationship between lay people and children's charities is not straightforward. While these charities do at times relay the public voice to policy makers, their aim is not simply to be conduits for public opinion but rather to influence it. Children's charities disseminate expert discourse about child neglect, expertise that is recognised at state level (e.g. representatives of the NSPCC, Action for Children and The Children's Society gave expert evidence on child neglect before the Education Select Committee in 2012). This expertise is often targeted at lay people. Action for Children's campaign to raise awareness of child neglect in the UK, launched in 2009, is a good illustration of this. Action for Children successfully used both expert and public opinion to campaign for an amendment to CYPA 1933 (Action for Children, 2012). Alongside this campaign to change the criminal law, the charity, having identified a "clear need for public information" on child neglect, initiated a "complementary campaign of public education and awareness in order to change behaviour" (2012:22). Attempts to change public norms using a combination of legal changes and public education mechanisms has had some success in some European countries in relation to banning the corporal punishment of children (Bussmann, 2004; Zolotor and Puzia, 2010). Importantly, although legal change is sought, the aim is not to increase prosecutions but rather "primarily to give parents new guidelines on how to behave towards their children" (Bussmann, 2004:294).

The determination to educate the public rather than engage in public debate is not unique to Action to Children. The NSPCC 'FULL STOP' campaign was launched in 1999 specifically "to unite the public AND the NSPCC behind a new shared vision" about child maltreatment (Grounds, 2004:2, emphasis in original). However, the vision is intended to be an expert

one. In 2012 the NSPCC teamed up with the Frameworks Institute to identify communication strategies with “the demonstrated ability to generate a broader public understanding of the issue of child maltreatment, and, in turn, increase public support for the policies and programs necessary to improve the lives of children” (Kendall-Taylor et al, 2014: 811). As part of this partnership researchers explored the way in which experts and lay people currently construct child maltreatment. The “expert perspective” gained by reviewing “the relevant literature” and interviewing “child maltreatment experts” is described as the “high-level consensus account... [that] constitutes what we call ‘the untranslated core story of child maltreatment’” (Kendall-Taylor et al, 2014:, 811). The public, in contrast, “draw on a complicated set of cultural models - implicit, but shared, understandings and patterns of reasoning” (Ibid: 811). This lay account is deemed deficient and afforded second class status, requiring the corrective of new stories being “delivered in an appropriate dose” in order to “expose” a British public to “new information”. There is to be no exposure of expertise to lay accounts. The NSPCC is primarily interested in communicating an expert voice and agenda.

6.2.4 Approaches to lay research

My literature review shows that the usual method for researching lay definitions of child neglect is quantitative: researchers generated numerical data in response to surveys, polls and vignettes. Some researchers used interviews and focus groups within their research but, as can be seen from Appendix 2, qualitative research projects in this area are few in number. Much of the research relies on the quantitative claim that numerical responses produced by participants accurately reflect underlying attitudes or ways of perceiving child neglect. Numerical data can be aggregated and statistically tested to test for correlations between factors in participants’ lives and participants’ responses. These attitudes or perceptions are theorised as predictable, enduring and generalisable to the wider public given sufficient statistical rigour and the control of confounding variables within the test environment.

Social constructionist epistemology considers such attitudinal or perspective research problematic (see for example the critique of attitude research by Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 32-55). For social constructionists, attitudes and perceptions are not unchanging internal mental states that can be rendered numerically onto rating scales for ease of analysis, rather they are highly context dependent and contingent. Within social constructionist epistemology, when responding to these surveys respondents are not manifesting a pre-existing attitude in relation to child neglect, but rather constructing the

neglected child during the course of their evaluation using available discourses. Harvesting a numerical response to a vignette or a survey does not necessarily serve to illuminate the way in which participant constructions are operating to produce that response, or allow us to explore what child neglect is (even in that moment) to the participant.

Unlike lay constructions, expert and professional constructions of child neglect are elicited using a variety of research methods. The professional literature contains rich explanation deriving from the psy-complex, and there have been many qualitative studies exploring professional constructions of child neglect. Hoskins and White (2010) used interviews to explore constructions of child protection practitioners, and Stone (1998), Horwath (2005; 2007) and Gardner (2008) used a variety of methods to elicit data, including questionnaires/vignettes, in-depth interviews (Stone, 1998 and Gardner, 2008), and focus groups/seminars to assist with "interpreting and establishing meaning" (Horwath, 2007a: 1289). Burgess et al (2012; 2013; 2014) also report using focus groups of professionals in order to "gather more in-depth recognition about prevalence, recognition and response in relation to neglect" (Burgess et al, 2012:5). This is by no means an exhaustive list, and simply serves to illustrate that, although their role in lay research has been limited, qualitative methods have played an important part in analyses of professional constructions of child maltreatment.

6.3 Constructing Lay Research

My review shows that research in this area has largely been concentrated on producing answers to two distinct questions. The first question could be conceptualised as definitional, attitudinal or perceptual - what do lay people 'see' as child neglect? Researchers have sought to map areas of agreement and disagreement about the types of behaviour and environments for children that lay people consider acceptable, unacceptable and/or neglectful/abusive. This research stems from the hypothesis that groups or types of people see child neglect differently from each other in predictable and measurable ways and researchers seek to isolate the variables underlying these differences. The second main question is knowledge based - what do lay people 'know' about child neglect and how do they respond to it? This question explores the penetration of expertise within lay communities and factors that may influence the interaction of lay people and professional systems.

6.3.1 Researching Lay Definitions of Child Neglect

Much of the reviewed research investigates whether lay people 'see' child neglect differently from each other and/or from experts. The most common research tool used to generate data in response to this question was the vignette method. The vignette method is simple. Selected participants are given a short story, statement or vignette which they are usually asked to rate numerically, for example using a Likert scale (e.g. Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979) or a visual analogue scale (e.g. Manning and Cheers, 1995). Participants are selected and assigned membership of an experimental group (sample) according to characteristics that the researcher or the expert literature considers may be salient in neglect perception: race, ethnicity, class, geographic location, neighbourhood type, nationality, age, gender, income, parental education level, education level, personal experience, immigration status, profession or any combination of the above. Scores from each sample are then aggregated and compared to test for statistically significant differences between them, for example lay sample scores can be compared with professional sample scores, black with white, low income households with middle income households, etc. Numerical data also allows direct comparison across studies: results from Giovannoni and Becerra's (1979) seminal study into child maltreatment were statistically compared with an adolescent sample to test for the effects of age (Roscoe, 1990) and with an Indian sample to test for differences caused by nationality (Segal, 1992).

Vignettes create extremely specific scenarios and invite extremely specific responses. To illustrate the process using Rose and Selwyn (2000) - the only reported neglect vignette study carried out in England - participants were recruited into two groups: mothers (the lay sample) and social workers (the professional sample). Each sample were given vignettes such as 'the parents regularly do not feed their 6 year old child for a day' and invited to rate this behaviour on a scale of 1-5: "1 being 'not serious- unlikely to endanger the child's health or wellbeing'; 3 being 'somewhat serious - has the potential to endanger the child's health or wellbeing'; and 5 being 'very serious - will unquestionably endanger the child's health or wellbeing'" (Rose and Selwyn, 2000:185). The responses from each sample to each vignette were then aggregated and statistically analysed to identify areas in which disagreement between the two samples had reached statistically significant proportions. The data was further analysed to try and identify underlying factors or response clusters that appeared to be important to the vignette ratings. These were hypothesised as the basic axes or dimensions of neglect and used to predict how people would respond to similar situations or scenarios (the vignette above was be part of the 'inadequate physical care' dimension). These underlying dimensions were ranked in order of their importance to

the participants. As Appendix 2 shows, Rose and Selwyn (2000) found 5 dimensions of child neglect of which inadequate emotional care was the most important and inadequate physical care was the least important for both lay people and professionals. Results of this level of analysis can also be compared between groups and between studies, and allows inferences to be made about the underlying norms in operation regarding child neglect.

Vignette based research has produced contradictory findings about lay 'attitudes' to child neglect. Where researchers have considered the public as a whole, rather than conducting comparative research into particular sections of it, lay people rate the vignettes in similar ways suggesting that the general public shares a single definition of child neglect: (e.g. Johnson and Siegler, 1995; Siegler and Johnson, 2004; Dhooper et al, 1991; Price et al, 2001). Polat et al (2010: 128) argue that similarities between their findings and vignette research conducted in the US demonstrate the existence of "universally accepted norms" of child neglect. However, this consensus may be a product of the specific vignettes presented and responses sought. Some studies involving vignettes deliberately crafted to be ambiguous generated unexpectedly high levels of agreement among participants (Ringwalt and Caye, 1989; Dubowitz et al, 1998). In contrast, other studies found considerable variation in responses between different vignettes. For example Bensley et al, (2004a) found 95%-100% of respondents agreed that vignettes comprising leaving a baby in the same nappy all day, driving incapacitated through drink or drugs with a child in car, failing to feed a child resulting in physical problems for that child, and leaving a child with a caregiver known to mistreat children were indicative of abuse. However, less than 74% agreed that vignettes about not paying attention to a child's school work or education, expecting a young child to look after a parent, and putting a young child out to play without supervision were indicative of abuse (Bensley et al, 2004a).

Comparative research looking at how neglect is perceived by members of different social groups has produced mixed results. Concerned about the marked over-representation of 'neglected' American-Indian/Alaskan Native children in the US public child welfare system, Evans-Campbell (2008) sought to research whether cultural norms within that social group were in conflict with dominant professional norms. Her American-Indian/Alaskan Native participants were most concerned about vignettes involving physical risk to a child and questionable parental morals and least concerned about factors such as poor housing and cleanliness (circumstances which could be poverty related) or lack of environmental structure (which the researchers identified as potentially cultural). Both these two latter categories can be considered aspects of child neglect. Rhee, Chang and Youn (2003) and Hong and Hong (1991) found that US participants from particular minority communities

(Korean pastors and Chinese immigrants respectively) judged vignettes less severely than their white counterparts. This research has been complemented by qualitative studies. Gray and Cosgrove (1985) and Gopaul-McNicol (1999) interviewed members of different cultural groups asking them to explore ways in which culturally acceptable child rearing practices conflicted with legal and professional norms. Participants in both studies were able to identify areas of behaviour that could be considered culturally appropriate within their communities (particularly in relation to supervision of children) but which would be frowned upon by child care professionals and 'seen' as neglect.

Not all minority groups over-represented within the US child protection system rated vignettes relating to child neglect less seriously than professionals, some rated them more severely than both white lay groups and professional groups. The Hispanic group within Hong and Hong's (1991) research rated vignettes more severely than the white group, and in Rose and Meezan's (1995) study, while all groups rated lapses in supervision and inadequate emotional care as the most serious dimensions of neglect, black and Latino mothers rated the vignettes more severely than white mothers. Giovannoni and Becerra's (1979) study found Hispanic and black respondents rated 94% of the vignettes in study more severely than white and professional respondents, differences which remained when the effects of education and income were controlled, indicating the operation of ethnic differences rather than class ones. Conversely Dubowitz et al's (1998) study found both ethnicity and class effects in ratings of neglect subtypes: lower and middle income African American mothers tended to judge inadequate physical care (cleanliness, untidiness, etc.) as more harmful than middle income white mothers, and middle income groups were more concerned with psychological neglect than lower income groups.

Other studies have found no ethnic or culture related difference in perception. Maiter, Alaggia and Trocme (2004), Polansky, Ammons and Weathersby (1983), Ringwalt and Caye (1989), Ferrari (2002) and Korbin et al (2000) - studies encompassing a variety of methods and instruments - each found very little difference between different racial/cultural/ethnic groups. Polansky, Ammons and Weathersby failed to find any differences between samples of mothers based on race (black/white), geographic location (rural/urban) and income level (working class/middle class), concluding: "...it appears there is such a thing as an American standard of minimal child care that is commonly held and that may be invoked in the definition of child neglect for legal and social work purposes" (1983: 9345). Similarly, having compared urban neighbourhood groups with different child maltreatment profiles containing African Americans, European-Americans, Hispanic-Latinos and Native and Asian Americans Korbin et al (2000) concluded: "the major categories of child maltreatment

identified in the literature... are consistent with categories that emerge from lay or community definitions." (Korbin et al, 2000: 1523-1524).

Efforts have also been made to identify correlations between other social and economic variables and perceptions of child neglect, again with mixed results. Polat et al's (2010) Turkish study found a range of socio-economic factors impacted on lay mothers' perceptions of neglect: low levels of household income, maternal unemployment, paternal occupation and low levels of maternal and paternal education were associated with vignettes being rated less neglectful. In contrast Giovannoni and Becerra (1979) found that potentially abusive or neglectful behaviours were rated less seriously as income levels in their sample rose. Polansky, Ammons and Weathersby, (1983) found black and white working class mothers tended to consider the lack of physical care of children to be most important while black and white middle class mothers emphasised the adequacy of psychological care, a finding to some extent reproduced by Dubowitz et al (1998). Other studies found no effect: Polansky and Williams (1978) conducted a study with an income element finding to their surprise "despite the differences in socio-economic status among these mothers, they are very homogenous in their evaluations of basic elements in childcare" (Polansky and Williams, 1978: 11). More recently, Goodvin et al (2007) determined that once race, age, education and occupation had been controlled for, income appeared to be unrelated to perceptions of maltreatment.

Other variables that have been investigated include education, age, experience of parenting, gender, locality and childhood experiences. Education was identified as negatively correlated to neglect perceptions by several research studies (Ringwalt and Caye (1989), Goodvin et al (2007) and Evans-Campbell (2008)) - the more education the respondent possessed, the less severely they judged neglect related vignettes. Adolescents aged 17-24 rated vignettes significantly more seriously than adults and professionals had done in an earlier study (Roscoe, 1990). Portwood (1998) supported this being a function of age not lack of experience, as in her research parents and non-parents rated the vignettes in similar ways. Ferrari (2002) included an analysis of respondent gender finding that mothers rated parental drug use, educational neglect, emotional mistreatment, failure to provide and lack of supervision more seriously than fathers within their tri-cultural sample. Neither Craft and Staudt (1991) nor Goodvin et al (2007) found substantive differences between a rural and urban sample in relation to perceptions of child neglect and Korbin et al (2000) failed to find substantive differences between neighbourhoods with different child maltreatment profiles.

Vignettes have also been used to test cycles of abuse theories. Portwood (1998) and Bensley et al (2004a) both investigated whether having experienced maltreatment as a child affected maltreatment perceptions as an adult. Bensley et al (2004a) found that experience appeared to sensitise respondents to some forms of abuse/neglect and desensitise them to others. Portwood (1998) found that childhood history did not seem to affect vignette ratings. However, if participants had experienced or performed those behaviours they had rated as abuse/neglect in vignettes, they would redescribe them as not neglectful/abusive when asked by researchers about their own experiences, exposing "a basic inconsistency between participants' perception of the abusiveness of acts they had experienced or performed and the abusiveness of those same acts when incorporated into vignettes" (Portwood, 1998: 450).

Finally, comparative research has been conducted to test the similarity between professional and lay perceptions of child maltreatment. Here again, the results have been contradictory. Giovannoni and Becerra (1979) found that lay people categorised vignettes more seriously than professionals, a finding replicated by a range of studies (e.g. Rose and Meezan, 1993; 1995; Dubowitz et al, 1998; Rose 1999; Pierce and Bozalek, 2004) but not all (e.g. Boehm, 1962 and Segal 1992 in which ratings given by lay people were less serious than at least one group of professionals). Giovannoni and Becerra (1979) also theorised that lay people and professionals were categorising maltreatment, particularly neglect, in different ways. Lay people defined child maltreatment using 5 categories: a broad category of 'failure to provide', 'failure of supervision', 'physical abuse', 'sexual abuse' and 'drugs/sex', but professionals seemed to be using 9 categories namely: 'physical abuse', 'sexual abuse', 'lack of supervision', 'failure to provide', 'emotional maltreatment', 'educational maltreatment', 'parental sexual mores' and 'drugs/alcohol' (vignettes from a final 'fostering delinquency' category were not given to the community sample) (Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979:188). The researchers suggest that, unlike professionals, lay people do not discriminate between emotional and physical mistreatment instead viewing child care responsibilities "more wholistically..." (Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979:187).

While lay people and professionals may agree that the behaviour is harmful or serious, they may not agree about the relative seriousness of different neglect subtypes. Giovannoni and Becerra (1979) found that professionals considered vignettes where physical harm was caused to the child as among the most serious while lay people considered affronts to the "common decency" such as drug use and parental stealing as more serious than physical harm. Other studies (Rose and Meezan, 1993; 1995; Dubowitz et al, 1998; Rose 1999) demonstrated a level of agreement about the ranking order of neglect subtypes within each

research study. Goodvin et al (2007) speculated that ranking order is likely to be affected by vignette specific information, for example as children get older the relative importance of educational neglect and supervision increases and emotional neglect and failure to provide decreases. The emphasis given to different dimensions of child neglect may be country specific; the replication of a US study (Rose, 1999a) in the UK (Rose and Selwyn, 2000) produced interesting results. In the US study professionals and lay people agreed that inadequate parental judgement and exposure to injurious parental behaviours were the most serious and harmful types of child neglect, followed by inadequate emotional care, inadequate physical care and finally sexual orientation of custodian. In the UK study professionals and lay people agreed that inadequate emotional care was the most harmful and serious factor and sexual orientation of custodian was more serious and harmful than inadequate physical care. In explanation the researchers suggest "perhaps this demonstrates the power of the social construction of maltreatment in that both parents and professionals have absorbed this construction of neglect as used in majority culture society" (Rose and Selwyn, 2000:189).

6.3.2 Critiquing Vignettes

To what extent can these studies capture or represent a lay voice within child neglect research? Vignettes are constructed from expert discourse, as a result of expert concerns and in accordance with expert definitions of child neglect. Scenarios are developed in conjunction with professional expertise, local and cultural knowledge, the law, the research literature on child maltreatment and previous vignette studies (e.g. Roscoe, 1990; Segal, 1992; Rose and Meezan, 1995). While some researchers included lay views as part of their vignette development (e.g. Evans-Campbell, 2008), the final scenarios represent those that professionals consider capable or not capable of representing child maltreatment. Lay people have the freedom to rate the scenario they are presented with, but not to alter it or to create different 'lay' scenarios. Lay people were sometimes specifically schooled in professional/expert constructions: Price et al (2001) gave respondents a definition of child abuse and neglect before presenting them with the vignettes, and Maiter et al, one of the few studies to incorporate a focus group method of data collection, used vignettes in advance of the group discussions to "direct these parents thinking to particular issues related to child discipline and maltreatment" (Maiter et al, 2004: 314).

As the vignettes are drawn from psy-complex discourse they produce a highly restrictive interpretation of child neglect. The overwhelming majority relate exclusively to situations involving parental behaviours and omissions, thus constructing child maltreatment as

something that only parents can do to children. There were exceptions to this: Segal (1992) and Pierce and Bozalek (2004) specifically incorporated vignettes stated to include: "societal abuse, or abuses to which children are subjected by society, that are the result of poverty and that are sanctioned and perpetuated by society" (Segal, 1992: 891) but these concentrated on particular issues: child beggary, child labour, child marriage and child prostitution. In addition, where age is not a variable (e.g. Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979; Evans-Campbell, 2008) most vignettes were constructed around younger children: for example Polansky and his colleagues (1978; 1983) ask for responses in relation to a child aged between 4-7, Rose and colleagues (1995; 1999a; 2000) a 6 year old, and Dubowitz et al (1998) an 18 month old child. As Portwood (1998) points out, this is likely to facilitate respondent consensus: she chose to limit the age of the child in her vignettes "based on existing research evidence that there is little consensus in regard to acts involving adolescents" (Portwood, 1998: 441).

The vignette method also has functional drawbacks. Researchers using vignettes must be acutely aware of the time element that is required for participants to complete the study "without getting tired or bored" (Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979: 104). As a result broad conclusions may be drawn from a small number of vignette scenarios: while Giovannoni and Becerra (1979) used 156 scenarios, Dubowitz et al (1998) used 45, Rose (1999a) 26, Polat et al (2010) 15 and Boehm (1962) 6. Where studies are focusing on maltreatment rather than neglect, the number of neglect related vignettes is of course only a proportion of the number of vignettes offered to participants. In addition, as vignette studies collecting solely numerical data do not facilitate exploration of why people are making the decisions they are making, researchers surprised by their results can only speculate why they might have occurred. Goodvin et al (2007) deliberately crafted vignettes that they believed contained borderline scenarios, only to find that at least 94% of participants rated each scenario as representing neglect. The researchers interpreted this as stemming from the respondents recognising the potential for harm contained within all the vignettes. This is an expert construction applied to the data to explain it rather than a lay construction contained within the data itself.

Despite the lack of exploration, the underlying assumption in vignette studies is that people will rate vignettes in the same way because they have similar attitudes to the subject. Shor (2000) demonstrates the limitations of that assumption in his Israeli study. Participants from low income and middle income neighbourhoods first rated vignettes and then explained their rationale for so doing. Both groups rated allowing a child to truant and allowing a child to play in the street in the evening as unacceptable: an apparent consensus

between the groups. However, their reasons for doing so were different. Low income families were primarily concerned about the safety of children left unsupervised in a bad neighbourhood. In contrast middle income families were primarily concerned about the effects of such behaviour on the parent/child relationship and its implications for the child's emotional and educational development. By failing to explore the reasons for rating decisions, vignette research may create a false impression of consensus between groups, when actually the groups are 'seeing' and rating very different things. In addition ratings may be based on important factors not captured within vignette scenarios. Focus group discussions have indicated that fault is an important factor in ascertaining whether neglect is occurring (Maiter et al, 2004; Coope and Theobald, 2006): a construction that is often not accounted for within the scenarios.

It is not always clear that vignette studies into maltreatment are collecting the data they purport to be collecting. While many studies do specifically ask participants about child maltreatment, child abuse and/or child neglect, many do not, asking instead about something that the researchers have decided equates to child neglect or child maltreatment. Participant responses have been elicited in relation to ratings of approval or disapproval of the behaviour (Polansky, Ammons and Weathersby, 1983), severity (Ringwalt and Caye, 1989), the seriousness of the incident "from the standpoint of the welfare of the child" (Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979:24), harm (Dubowitz et al, 1998), acceptability of parental behaviour (Shor, 2000), or a combination of factors such as seriousness and harm (Rose and Meezan, 1995) or seriousness and endangering a child's health and wellbeing (Rose and Selwyn, 2000). Boehm (1962) asked participants to rate both the behaviour and whether intervention was required in the same measure. Responses using these scales are then interpreted and reported as findings pertaining to child neglect and/or child maltreatment.

Obtaining participant views on seriousness, harm to a child, and/or the lack of acceptability of parental behaviour is not necessarily the same thing as obtaining participant views on child neglect. Those factors may be synonymous within the literature and professional constructions, but child neglect is not necessarily constructed in the same way by lay people. Elliott, Tong and Tan's (1997) research in Singapore indicated that behaviours lay people rated as 'always unacceptable' were not necessarily rated as 'always abusive/neglectful'. In determining whether the behaviour is abusive or neglectful participants appeared to be drawing on factors other than the acceptability of the behaviour. This means that caution must be exercised where researchers have used terms they considered to be identical to child maltreatment or child neglect instead of asking participants specifically about child neglect. In addition the vignette method itself may

produce findings that other methods fail to replicate. The inconsistency Portwood (1998) found between the way respondents 'saw' maltreatment when rating vignettes and when interpreting their own experiences for the purposes of a survey was discussed at 6.3.1 above.

Even where researchers have explicitly asked for ratings relating to child maltreatment and/or child neglect, there is still expert interpretation of what the vignette data 'means'. Results are taken and plotted according to underlying axes theorised by experts to be in operation. This was explicit in Korbin et al's (2000) study - in which participant generated instances of child maltreatment were later coded into appropriate expert categories - but also occurs in vignette studies. In the Rose and Selwyn study quoted earlier a scenario about a mother frequently bringing home different men to spend the night was categorised as 'exposure to injurious parental behaviour' as opposed to 'inadequate emotional care', 'inadequate parental judgement', 'sexual orientation of custodian' or 'inadequate physical care' (Rose and Selwyn, 2000:185). These axes are theorised differently across different research projects. Giovannoni and Becerra (1979) began with 13 categories of vignettes: sexual abuse, physical abuse, fostering delinquency, emotional mistreatment, nutritional neglect, medical neglect, supervision, drugs/alcohol, cleanliness, educational neglect, parental sexual mores, clothing and housing. These produced 9 professional axes of maltreatment and 5 lay axes as stated earlier. Goodvin et al (2007) had 4 sub-factors - physical neglect (failure to provide), physical neglect (lack of supervision), emotional maltreatment, and moral/legal/educational maltreatment. Dubowitz et al (1998) plotted responses along a physical care scale and a psychological care scale. Rose and Meezan (1995) theorised four categories of neglect: inadequate physical care, inadequate emotional care, inadequate parental judgement, and sexual orientation of custodian, but in Rose (1999a) a fifth dimension was added (exposure to injurious parental behaviours). This categorisation represents another way in which lay responses are re-presented and disseminated along expert lines.

6.3.3 Researching Lay Knowledge of Child Neglect

"Programs aimed at preventing or ameliorating child maltreatment must have at their very core an understanding of what the populations being served believe the problem is and why it has occurred." Korbin et al (2000: 1525).

The other question research has sought to answer is the level of knowledge lay people have of what experts categorise as child neglect; whether the public considers it a social problem,

and what the public understands of its causes and consequences, how to prevent it and how to respond to neglected children. This research has largely been carried out by survey or poll rather than vignette. Results indicate that in some countries the public is aware of child neglect and of neglected children. In the US Bensley et al (2004b) found that 49% of their Washington sample reported knowing a child they believed was being maltreated. Participants in Ohio, US, were asked by Korbin et al (2000) to generate three behaviours that would be considered child maltreatment. When these responses were categorised by experts, Korbin et al (2000) found that 65% of the responses given would be categorised as neglect, increasing to 84% if combined with the category of inadequate supervision. However, not everyone considers child neglect or even child maltreatment as particularly important in relation to other public concerns. Manning and Cheers (1995) found that in Queensland, Australia the general public felt strongly about child neglect but not as strongly as they did about the physical or sexual abuse of children and Schmid and Benbenishty (2011) found that in Israel the public viewed child maltreatment as a whole less seriously than youth violence or alcohol consumption.

In the UK the public certainly report being aware of child maltreatment. Jutte et al (2014) found that 60% of their UK respondents thought that abuse and neglect were common, although they focused on physical and sexual abuse rather than neglect or emotional abuse. However, neglect is gaining prominence. In the UK Action for Children report that the general public "are increasingly worried about neglect" (Action for Children, 2012: 4). Action for Children's 2011 report into child neglect stated 52% of the public responded that they had been concerned about a child (Burgess et al, 2012), a number that fell (for unexplained reasons) to 25% in 2012 and 2013 (Burgess et al, 2013; 2014). Large numbers of children also report seeing the 'signs' of neglect in their peers (61% of children in 2009 (Action for Children, 2010) and 73% in 2013 (Burgess et al, 2014)). When polled 23% of respondent parents stated that they had been worried about a child not their own being neglected in the summer holidays (Action for Children, 2011).

Quantitative studies have been undertaken into what lay people think are the causes and risk factors for child maltreatment. These studies have presented lay people with factors the expert literature considers important and tested for public recognition and agreement. Korbin et al (2000) asked lay people to rank 13 factors in order of the importance of their contribution to child maltreatment and found lay people agreed with the expert literature that all 13 factors were important. Further analysis showed that lay people consider poverty and family structure to be the most important causal factors in child maltreatment (63.2% of variance), followed by substance abuse and stress (13.8% of variance), lack of

moral values (11.4%), and individual pathology (7.9% of variance). As 'individual pathology' covers a history of childhood abuse and psychological problems, the authors concluded that despite its importance in the literature and public awareness campaigns, the intergenerational transmission of the child maltreatment model did not appear to resonate with lay respondents. In contrast Price et al (2000) found far less agreement with expertise: 40% of lay respondents did not think child abuse could happen in a family like the one in which they grew up, and a further 8% were unsure whether it could. Over half of respondents did not agree with the literature that factors such as child gender, intelligence and temperament, single parent families, low income, history of child abuse and rural residence were risk factors in child maltreatment although a majority of respondents agreed that alcohol was a risk factor (Price et al, 2000). The researchers found a greater awareness of expertise about the long term effects of child abuse: a majority agreed that people who were abused as children were more likely to attempt suicide (73%), drop out of school (74%), abuse substances (77%), abuse their own children when they became parents (83%), to be involved in violence against others (85%), to experience parenting problems with their own children (86%), to have depression (91%) and to have relationship problems (94%) (Price et al, 2000).

6.3.4 Researching Lay Responses to Child Neglect

There has also been a great deal of research interest in how lay people are likely to respond if they have concerns that a child is being neglected. In particular, researchers have been keen to identify factors that facilitate or impede lay people intervening in a neglectful situation and/or reporting the neglectful behaviour to the authorities (surveillance-by-proxy). Membership of social groups has been found to correlate to reporting behaviour. Hong and Hong (1991), Rhee et al (2003), Maiter et al, (2004) and Ashton (2004) found that membership of particular minority groups and immigrant status were associated with a greater reluctance to involve the authorities in family situations. In addition, quite apart from the lay/professional divide, people in different lay occupations may have very different views about the value and desirability of state intervention: Boehm's (1962) lay respondents, consisting of business managers and legislators, were less likely to rate vignettes as requiring intervention than professional groupings that included clergy, nurses and teachers.

The majority of participants who report having been concerned about a child tell researchers that they informed someone about those concerns. Bensley et al (2004b) found 84% of her US respondents who had thought a child was being maltreated reported taking action, most

commonly alerting the authorities or tackling the parents about their behaviour. In surveys conducted for Action for Children, the percentage of people who had shared their concerns with others was lower: over 60% of those who had concerns about a child reported having told someone else, usually initially partners, friends, neighbours and family members (Burgess et al, 2012; 2013; 2014). In contrast 94% of respondents stated that people should become involved if they were concerned about a child (Burgess et al, 2012). Respondents in various studies selected the same barriers as impeding their reporting a neglectful or abusive situation to the authorities: it was none of their business, they feared intervention would cause trouble for the child and/or for themselves, they lacked certainty and/or proof about what was going on and they did not know who best to go to for help (Korbin and Coulton, 1996; Dubowitz et al, 1998; Bensley et al, 2004b; Action for Children, 2009; Burgess et al, 2012; 2013; 2014).

Child neglect may be constructed as particularly complicated to intervene in. Bensley et al (2004b) found that while 95% of respondents were prepared to report child sexual abuse, only 68% of respondents said they were likely to report a 10 year old child they believed was being neglected. Manning and Cheers (1995) found that while participants felt strongly about child neglect (scoring on average 8cm on a 10cm visual analogue), the likelihood that they would notify the authorities about a neglected child scored lower (6cm). The respondents reported that neglect was difficult to identify, that neglect was not necessarily the fault of the parents, and that children were able to adjust to poor living conditions. When dealing with child neglect (unlike with abuse) respondents were more likely to be sympathetically disposed towards the parents and said that they would try and get assistance for the family as a whole rather than just the child (Manning and Cheers, 1995).

Reporting concerns is not of course the only possible form of lay intervention. In Andrews' study (1996) if children were abused or neglected as a result of alcohol or drugs, respondents said they were more likely to contact the authorities than become involved with the family themselves. Conversely, lay interviewees also in the US told Korbin and Coulton (1996) that neighbours were more capable of responding to child maltreatment than the government (79% to 60%). Research in the UK has found a similar consensus: 62% of respondents stating that it is mainly the responsibility of family, friends and neighbours to protect a child at risk living at home with its parents and 35% of people thinking that the main duty to protect such a child lies with social workers, police, teachers and doctors (ComRes, 2009).

Lay participants in the US offered Korbin and Coulton (1996) a range of lay roles, from financially and emotionally supporting the family, emotionally supporting or befriending the child, confronting the offender and involving the wider family or community network in the situation, to remaining vigilant so as to ensure the prompt identification of children needing to be reported to the authorities. There was also widespread agreement (90%) about the types of service that could prevent child maltreatment: mental health services, drug and alcohol services and support services such as food banks, crisis nurseries and similar resources. There was less agreement about the role of government. The dominant theme identified was that the government should stay out of family life and leave child protection to families and community institutions such as the church. In terms of what the government could do, 14% suggested parenting education, 13.2% suggested creating more employment opportunities, and 7.4% suggested changing the law to deal more harshly with child abusers (Korbin and Coulton, 1996).

In the UK the public also report responding to their suspicions about child neglect. A survey of parents found that 13% recounted having provided some level of care for a child they suspected was being neglected, e.g. providing a bed for the night, food and outings (Action for Children, 2011). When surveyed about government action that could prevent child neglect, parents agreed that support services were helpful when things went wrong (Action for Children, 2012). However, parents also reported being confused about what the law on child neglect is, stating that they felt unsupported by the current law in relation to children, that there was no common understanding about the minimum standard of good enough parenting, and that they wanted more information and advice in relation to child neglect (Action for Children, 2012). Polls indicate that there is little common agreement about the age at which a child can be safely left home alone and/or in charge of a younger sibling. The average age at which the public felt children could be left home alone was 12.5, but 16% of the population were happy to leave children alone aged 10 or under, and 12% of the population felt children should not be left alone until aged 15 or more (YouGov, 2011). Similarly, on average the public felt that a child should not be left in charge of a younger sibling until age 14.8 but 10% of respondents were satisfied that a child aged 12 or under could manage this task, while 39% felt a child should not be put in this situation until age 16. 5% of respondents stated that they did not know the answer to either question.

6.3.5 Critiquing Surveys

Once again, one can see the role of expertise in editing lay responses. Survey questions, particularly opinion poll type surveys, are often far wider with fewer possible alternative

responses than those relating to vignette studies. So, for example, in an opinion poll for the NSPCC participants were asked whether child abuse and neglect was a common problem or rare in the UK (65% said common, 28% said rare) (Jutte et al, 2014). Where lay responses do not fit within professional categories they may simply be dismissed from the findings: 7% of the participant responses generated by Korbin et al (2000) could not be coded into one of the expert maltreatment categories. As with vignettes, contradictions and ambiguities within survey responses cannot be properly explored due to a lack of explanatory data from participants. A significant minority (19-28%) of respondents when asked why they did not report their suspicions, having been given a range of possible options, select one of the boxes 'don't know', 'other', 'none of these' (Burgess et al, 2012; 2013; 2014). The difference between the latter two categories is unclear to me and I struggle to identify what was intended by participants making those choices.

Many of the surveys carried out in the UK were commissioned to supplement or highlight particular campaigns and are designed around expert concerns. "Public opinion surveys can be used as a venue for positioning public concerns on the agenda of policy makers, as well as for creating a situation in which the issue at hand becomes highly important" (Schmid and Benbenishty, 2011: 1186). Action for Children (in their campaign to change the criminal law) used survey research stating that the public wanted legal clarity about child neglect (Action for Children, 2012). They have also used opinion poll data in more general campaigning around child neglect to indicate public interest in child welfare, public concern about children and public confusion about child neglect (Burgess et al, 2012; 2013; 2014). Claiming to represent public concerns on a particular issue is to take a powerful political position. The statement that 94% of respondents agreed that people should become involved when they have concerns that a child is being neglected (Burgess et al, 2014) is certainly eye-catching in terms of apparently conveying a mandate for intervention. We cannot however know what the respondents meant without some understanding of how they were constructing 'people', 'involved', 'concerns', 'child' or 'being neglected' for the purposes of their answer. The respondents do not necessarily 'mean' what those designing and interpreting the survey intend.

6.4 Researching Lay Constructions

In amongst this expert discourse about lay people, there is evidence that lay people and experts may have different constructions about child neglect. Participants in research by Elliott, Tong and Tan (1997), when asked about child maltreatment they had witnessed,

reported accounts that would not have met expert criteria, suggesting to the researchers that "public understanding of child maltreatment is broader than officially recognised" (Elliott, Tong and Tan, 1997: 459). Cawson et al (2000) found that while experts considered 15% of respondents in their prevalence study to have experienced intermediate or serious absence of care and 17% intermediate or serious absence of supervision, only 4% of the respondents themselves considered that they had not been well cared for and only 2% thought they had been neglected. The authors write "it raises questions as to what had to happen to them before they could make a judgement of neglect!" (Cawson et al, 2000: 12). In an Action for Children opinion poll (2011) 10% of participants responded 'yes I have' to the question 'have you ever cared for a child (other than your own) in any way in the school holidays because you thought they were being neglected?' (emphasis in the original). In contrast, 14% of respondents stated that they had had a child over for a meal in the school holidays because they were not sure they were being adequately fed at home. This indicates that 4% of respondents did not consider that feeding a child one was unsure was being adequately fed at home was the same thing as caring for a neglected child.

The most persuasive evidence that lay definitions of child neglect may differ in important ways from expert ones comes from qualitative research in which lay people have been afforded an element of definitional power. In Guatemala, qualitative data from lay focus groups was collected and analysed as part of Coope and Theobald's (2006) study into the challenges child neglect poses to child protection practitioners. The researchers found that the "three broad types of neglect commonly identified in the literature: physical, educational/developmental and emotional" (Coope and Theobald: 2006: 528) did not accurately reflect participants' views. A fourth category of "governmental neglect" was required to include governmental failure to protect children legally, to supply appropriate educational and medical resources and to ensure that disabled people were cared for properly. The definition of child neglect constructed during the research project (which involved professionals as well as lay people) was threefold:

- "1. A negative or indifferent attitude of the parent towards the child.
2. Intentional omission of provision of the child's basic needs.
3. The neglect of government to provide the resources necessary to protect the child" (Coope and Theobald, 2006: 528).

This is not a construction of child neglect that could have been arrived at from quantitative research using vignettes drawn from the literature and/or from available expertise.

A recent UK study undertaken by the NSPCC and the Frameworks Institute used semi-structured cultural model interviewing methods to identify the cultural models used by

experts and lay people to construct child maltreatment (Lindland and Kendall-Taylor, 2013; Kendall-Taylor et al, 2014). This new NSPCC research initiative was both conducted at a similar time as my own project and applies qualitative methods of analysis to lay talk about child maltreatment, and I will be discussing its findings in more detail alongside my own. However, in brief, the researchers conclude that the British public are now convinced that child maltreatment is widespread, reprehensible and a serious social problem. In understanding maltreatment the public are said to be drawing on “implicit but shared understandings, assumptions and patterns of reasoning” (Lindland and Kendall-Taylor, 2014:811), shared understandings that seem to differ from those of the expert witnesses interviewed by the researchers. This indicates that there may be a lay construction of child maltreatment. However, as stated above, the researchers position the public as having ‘gaps’ in their understanding that need to be filled by expertise rather than as having competing explanations.

6.5 Conclusion

My scoping study was successful in identifying the professional child neglect literature in which lay definitions of child neglect were presented and in facilitating my analysis of that literature both for process and for content. My review has demonstrated that while there is indeed research purporting to explore how lay people construct child neglect and what child neglect means to lay people, this research has been conducted largely in accordance with expert definitions, privileging expert constructions and using expertise as the unexamined norm. The research has also largely been conducted using quantitative methods rather than qualitative ones which would facilitate a greater exploration of lay data. As a result research findings seem contradictory, lay responses opaque, and the ways in which lay people construct child neglect for the purposes of producing a response to the questions remain elusive. Frequently lay constructions of child neglect are presented as fragments for comparison with what we ‘know’ about child neglect, the expert construction uninterrogated. Where qualitative processes could highlight deep, subtle and complex assessments, quantitative data collection methods smooth them over in the name of generalisability.

The review has also highlighted the research gap within which my project is positioned. I seek to research lay constructions of child neglect qualitatively, and to elicit them embedded within the discourses, explanations, justifications and understandings of which they are part. Rather than try and collect lay views on child neglect numerically and

removed from the discursive reasoning within which the 'attitude' is situated, I want to explore lay constructions in action, asking lay people to talk about child neglect in their own words, to generate their own definitions, and to explore child neglect as a concept. I am interested in whether people consider child neglect to be important and if so why, what child neglect is or is not and why, how it is spoken about and understood by lay people, lay theories about the causes and effects of child neglect and how lay people consider child neglect should be responded to. These are the same questions explored quantitatively (see above), but I wish to elicit and explore them using the talk of lay people rather than the professionally saturated vignettes and poll methods used by others.

Politically researching how lay people construct child neglect is vital: if as Parton (1995) argues, child neglect is a result of a moral/political line being drawn, then professionals should not be afforded ownership of that line and the views of those beyond the child protection sphere must be sought. If indeed child protection is everyone's business then determining what that means should not be restricted to professional elites. Practically, this research may illustrate positions of professional and lay divergence, locate lay constructions within wider discourses, and identify where consensus about child neglect is lacking and needs to be negotiated. In the next chapter I set out how I attempted to operationalise my research, looking at the rationale for my research design and the way in which I gathered and analysed my data.

Chapter 7 - The Research Methods

"The passive following of methodology recipes is not a skill I wish to encourage in would-be researchers who need to learn actively to recognise, confront and make decisions about key research issues for themselves" (Mason, 2002: 4).

7.1 Introduction

In previous chapters I set out the background to this project, explained my relationship to and interest in the subject matter, and my view that researching lay constructions of child neglect has both practical and political importance. Situating this project within a social constructionist epistemology (Burr, 2003), I explored the development of child neglect in England through simple modernity and into late modernity, identifying its conceptual interdependence on the construction of the 'normal' developmental childhood within psychocomplex discourse. I examined the different constructions of childhood and child neglect contained within different bodies of law: criminal, civil and international. Finally I studied previous research purporting to demonstrate lay attitudes, perceptions, understandings and/or definitions of child neglect.

My interest in specifically lay constructions of child neglect presented me with several challenges. I needed to find a method of generating constructions of child neglect from lay people with as little expert interference or 'guidance' as possible. I then needed to find a means which would enable me to interrogate this lay data without turning it into expert discourse, despite my own position as a child protection professional. In this chapter I set out how I collected and analysed my data, reflecting on why I considered these methods best suited to answering my research questions within an appropriate theoretical, ethical and practical framework.

7.2 Finalising the Research Questions

"The type of data we finish up with should be determined primarily by what we are trying to find out, considered against the background of the context, circumstances and practical aspects of the particular research project. ...The 'substantive dog' wags the 'methodological tail', not vice versa" (Punch, 2005: 58).

I began my research with the question: 'how do lay people construct child neglect?' As stated earlier, the existing research had produced contradictory findings about lay knowledge in relation to child neglect. I was interested in exploring lay knowledge of the concept of child neglect, identifying whether lay people constructed child neglect as everybody's business, and if so, what that meant. I generated the following broad questions I wanted my data to respond to:

- How do lay people construct child neglect in talk?
- What discourses do they use when talking about child neglect?
- What subject positions do these constructions make available?
- What actions do these discourses make available?
- Is child neglect constructed as everybody's business?

Before collecting any data, I had to address preliminary questions, namely:

- Who is a lay person in relation to my enquiries into child neglect, and
- What data collection method would best allow me to explore how lay people construct child neglect?

7.3 Who is a Lay Person for the Purposes of my Project

As my research questions relate to 'lay people', I needed to explore how this project would define 'lay' at the outset. The previous child neglect related lay literature did not give much assistance; different researchers ascribed expertise to different groups of people (see chapter 6). There does not appear to be a definitive list of the characteristics, qualifications or experience separating child protection professionals from lay people. The absence of such a list does not however indicate that there are no distinctions or that the distinctions do not matter within the systems set up to safeguard children from child neglect. To try and establish how 'layness' is currently defined in England, I was interested in mechanisms used by statute law, statutory guidance and formal legal processes to distinguish the lay person from the child protection professional/expert.

Since 2009 LSCBs have been legally required to take reasonable steps to recruit "lay members" to their ranks (Children Act, 2004 as amended) giving lay people a direct role within the child protection system. However, "lay members" are only defined within the Amending Act as people who "appear to the authority to be representative of persons living in the authority's area" (s196, Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009, which amended Part 2 of the Children Act, 2004). This gives no indication of the types of

qualification or experience that might debar an individual from taking up such a role as "lay member" - although presumably the "lay member" could not also be an office holder whose presence on the LSCB was mandated by legislation e.g. The Chief Officer of Police, or the governor/director of any prisons detaining children or secure training centres within the area of the local authority (s13 Children Act, 2004). As a result the eligibility of a person to be a lay member appears to be defined by their non-membership of a particular administrative position rather than by the specific expertise or qualification that they do or do not possess (Parton, personal communication, 2012).

Nor is there a relevant list of qualifications that denotes professional status. Working Together 2013 (HM Government, 2013), which provides statutory guidance in relation to children's safeguarding, is aimed at a wide range of people, stating: "everyone who works with children - including teachers, GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors, early years professionals, youth workers, police, Accident and Emergency staff, paediatricians, voluntary and community workers and social workers - has a responsibility for keeping them safe" (HM Government, 2013: 8). This responsibility includes identifying "the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect" (HM Government, 2013: 12). Similarly people with very different training, qualifications and experience may be appointed lead professionals when conducting assessments of children under the Common Assessment Framework (DofE, 2012). Whilst this is squarely within the discourse of child protection being everybody's business (HM Government, 2013), it is unclear to me whether all members of the listed professions should be considered child protection professionals or experts because they are expected to safeguard children with whom they might come in contact. Working Together (HM Government, 2013) appears to distinguish between "high quality professionals" who are "able to use their expert judgement" and "all professionals" (HM Government, 2013: 8). If professionals consider a child to be "in need" (s17 Children Act 1989) or to be likely to suffer or have suffered significant harm (s31 Children Act 1989) they are directed to refer the matter to the local authority children's social care department in the same way that non-professionals with concerns about children should do so (HM Government, 2013). While child protection may be everybody's business, there is clearly a sub group of professionals considered to have specific expertise in relation to child protection (social workers) and who are expected to take the lead in determining whether statutory protection is required.

To define child protection professionals or experts solely as qualified and practicing children's social workers appeared to me to be too narrow. While social workers are legally required to carry out child protection duties, other professional categories are also considered to have expert knowledge in relation to child neglect. Courts attach weight to

opinion evidence given by experts and the Family Court considers social workers, medics/paediatricians and child psychologists to be experts in cases of child neglect. However, other arenas confer child protection expert status on other groups of professionals. As illustration, the Education Select Committee investigation into the child protection system heard oral evidence from head teachers, an assistant head teacher, a range of academic researchers and representatives of a variety of campaigning groups and charities, conferring expert status on them by doing so (Education Select Committee, 2012; 2013). It seems that the type of expertise or 'knowledge' rendering an individual either a lay person or a child protection professional/expert is context dependent, and the boundary between the two categories is blurred and contested.

I could have defined 'lay person' myself and recruited accordingly, but I felt doing so might close down a potentially interesting area of discussion and analysis about the nature of child neglect expertise. I was also uncomfortable about making such decisions. As Shaw, 2002 points out: by choosing to create and use social categories such as expert and lay person within my research, I would also have "implicitly created assumptions about the characteristics of the respondents and possibly even their knowledge base" (Shaw, 2002:297). As an expert myself, defining who could be properly considered expert was to risk becoming part of the "legitimizing machinery" that privileges expertise and keeps laymen and professionals in their respective places (Berger and Luckman, 1966:105; see also Foucault, 1972; Mills, 2003). Categorisation into particular social groups is not simply a useful tool, it can be a power mechanism (Alvesson, 2002) and 'common sense' discourses may position people in collective social identity categories against their wishes and their interests (Burr, 1998). However, I recognised that I needed to find some mechanism to distinguish between lay and expert participants in order to claim that my data consisted of lay constructions of child neglect.

In my deliberations, I was impressed with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) argument that expertise is something that is known: one cannot easily be an accidental expert or an unwitting professional. Experts know they are experts by acquiring and demonstrating their expertise, and non-expert people know who experts are so that, if necessary, they can call on the right people for assistance (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This is not as simple as it sounds - the use of lay people within healthcare and other scientific arenas has led to debates about the extent to which lay knowledge and expert knowledge remain distinct, or whether in fact lay people become expertised rather than laicised (see for example Popay and Williams, 1996; Hogg and Williamson, 2001; Prior, 2003; Durant, 2008; Henderson, 2010 and for the same debate in a North American context see Charles and DeMaio, 1993;

Kinsella, 2002). These arguments strengthened my view that potential participants could better assess their expert or non-expert status than I. I decided that I would not specify who I considered to be a child protection professional or an expert. My project information leaflet specified that my research was into how 'lay people' construct child neglect (see Appendix 5) and my recruitment pamphlet asked potential participants to rule themselves out of the project if they had had previous professional training in child protection (see Appendix 3). The decision as to what counted as a lay person I decided would lie with each potential participant.

7.4 Choosing a Data Collection Method

I also had to decide how best to facilitate participants to speak about child neglect. Willig (2008a) has argued that both interviews and focus groups are effective methods for generating lay data. I chose to use focus groups rather than interviews to collect data. I was looking for a method that would reduce my 'expert' power within the data collection process as much as possible in order to retain the 'lay' quality of the constructions. An interview is a co-construction of knowledge between interviewer and interviewee, with the interviewer in the driving seat by virtue of their control over the agenda, questions, timeframe, etc. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Focus groups on the other hand can be "undertaken without preconceived questions, focus questions, or guidelines...This can effectively eliminate the researcher's perspective from the resultant data" (Berg, 2001: 115-6).

The increased participant to researcher ratio employed in focus groups is thought to dilute the power and influence of the researcher on the data being collected, and feminist social scientists have long championed focus groups as a more egalitarian research method than individual interviews (Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1984; Wilkinson, 1998; Madriz, 2000; Oleson, 2011). Focus groups encourage interaction between different group members, a synergistic quality argued to produce more naturalistic, dynamic and elaborated data than interviews usually produce (Sussman, Burton, Dent, Stacy and Flay, 1991; Berg, 2001; Wilkinson, 2004; Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook, 2007; Smithson, 2008). "In focus groups, the goal is to let people spark off one another, suggesting dimensions and nuances of the original problem that any one individual might not have thought of. Sometimes a totally different understanding of a problem emerges from the group discussion" (Berg 2001: 115). Unlike individual interviews, focus groups can be encouraged to take control of the agenda and shape the discussion independent of the moderator (Morgan 1997; Berg, 2001; Parker and

Tritter, 2006). Using focus groups to collect data presented a way to argue that despite my own position as expert, my data had retained a lay quality.

These qualities may at least partly explain why focus groups have been widely used by health researchers to collect data from patients and lay people (Lehoux, Poland and Daudelin, 2006; Barbour, 2007). From their beginnings as a market research tool in the 1940s (Puchta, & Potter, 2004; Barbour, 2007), focus groups are now considered "one of the key methods of qualitative exploration in the social sciences" (Krzyzanowski 2008:162). From the 1990s onwards focus groups have also been increasingly used for political purposes, particularly by New Labour, for such "experiments in democracy" (Featherstone, 2006: 297) were thought to provide a means of accessing public opinion on important political issues (Parker and Tritter, 2006; Wilkinson, 2004). As a result of this history, I thought potential participants might be familiar with the use of focus group discussions to explore lay views on political or policy related topics such as child neglect.

7.5 Selecting Participants

Having decided to use focus groups, I considered who I wished to recruit to participate in the research. I made an early practical decision to recruit people living in England. The English legal system (which I trained in, and definitions from which form part of this thesis) also applies to Wales, but I felt it would be useful to recruit within a single legal, geographical and political system to avoid discourses that might relate to nationhood and independence. Some focus group researchers strongly advise recruiting a sample that both allows for systematic comparisons to be made between the individual focus groups and reflects "the diversity within the group or population under study" (Barbour 2007, pp. 58). As the 'population under study' in this project was potentially anyone living in England who would not define themselves as a child protection professional, any attempt to capture its diversity was doomed to failure. In any event, comparisons between individual focus groups are not uncontroversial: focus group data is extremely sensitive to context and great care must be taken in generalising findings to different environments or situations (Wilkinson, 1998; Breen 2006). I chose not to target any specific groups of people to participate.

Focus groups can be conducted using participants who are known to each other or who are strangers (Parker and Tritter 2006; Barbour, 2007, Krueger and Casey, 2009). Some researchers argue that the ability of focus groups to tap into those everyday social processes that shape our constructions - discussions, arguments, debates, disagreements -

is maximised by studying pre-existing groups rather than engineering specific groups for the research (Lewis, 1992; Wilkinson, 1998; Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2001; Davidson, Kitzinger and Hunt, 2006). In researching media messages and HIV Kitzinger elected to work with pre-existing groups, "clusters of people who already know each other through living, working or socialising together", because these are the very groups of people who might choose to discuss the research issues in day to day life (Kitzinger 1994:105). Pre-existing groups are "one of the social contexts within which ideas are formed and decisions made" (Kitzinger 1994:105). This is not to claim that focus group conversations reproduce conversations that would occur elsewhere - the focus group conversation is context specific. However, those "natural clusterings" (Kitzinger 1994:106) - families, work colleagues, friends, neighbours, shared interest groups - are the types of groupings within society where lay conversations around child neglect may be expected to take place. I also thought that using pre-existing groups would further empower the focus group to take control of the discussion rather than relying on me, the expert stranger, to warm up the group and set the agenda. I therefore decided to recruit pre-existing groups of people who did not identify as child protection professionals to participate in this project.

Although I did not target any specific groups of participants, I did choose to exclude particular groups of people from the project. I limited participation to those aged 18 or over. My decision not to recruit children was a difficult one. I wanted to respect children's UNCRC guaranteed rights to participate in decisions and policies that affect them (Art. 12 UNCRC; Thomas, 2000; Alderson, 2008), and the construction of child neglect has enormous relevance to children. Recent years have seen a shift towards expanding children's participation in decision making (Thomas, 2007) and there has also been a greater willingness to find ways of involving children directly in child maltreatment research. The NSPCC research into the prevalence of child maltreatment in the UK illustrates this point: while Cawson et al (2000) elected to collect retrospective data from young adults rather than using child participants, when updating the research Radford et al (2011) collected data directly from children and their parents/ guardians/ carers.

It is worth noting that Radford et al (2011) - unpublished at the time this project was planned - found ways of responding to the particular ethical challenges posed by interviewing children about child maltreatment that would not have been available to me. Radford et al (2011) collected data using computer-assisted self-interviewing ensuring that participant confidentiality was maintained. In a group situation there is always a risk that participant confidentiality will be breached by other participants (Stafford and Smith, 2009; Barbour, 2007). Breaches of confidentiality could be extremely serious for a child,

potentially compromising their school environment, or alienating them from their peer group. Radford et al (2011) also followed a strict format of questions; in contrast my decision to allow the focus groups to control the discussion would limit my ability to determine how difficult or sensitive topics were raised. There were also practical considerations relating to the limitations of a single researcher PhD project, such as the fact that obtaining informed consent/ assent from both children and their parents would inevitably have time costs. Finally, I was concerned that a child might say something in a focus group that would lead to my having to contemplate child protection action against the wishes of the child. Overall, I felt I could not ethically justify conducting this research with children at this stage of my research career. I hope to take up this challenge in future research.

I discouraged people who had been accused of neglecting their children or who had themselves experienced child neglect from participating in the focus group discussions, although I did not prohibit them from doing so. This decision had ethical and methodological elements. Methodologically, I was trying to recruit lay participants. In my experience as a family solicitor, people who have had formal social services intervention in their lives are likely to be strongly engaged with professional discourses and professional constructions of neglectful behaviour. As a result, whilst they remain 'lay' people, their constructions of child neglect may be saturated with 'professional' conceptualisations and constructions: a process De Swann termed "proto-professionalisation" (De Swaan, 1990:14). Ethically this group of people's experience of child neglect discourses is likely to have resulted in a legacy of strong and perhaps painful feelings in relation to the events. Asking such people to take part in a focus group (with or without others in the same position) risked the ensuing discussion becoming highly personal and emotional. This, combined with my identities as researcher, former social worker and former family solicitor could make the focus group experience acutely painful for the participants and for me. I was very mindful of Sykes' research into the stigma mothers experience when accused of neglect, and her reflection that for her participants "the costs associated with denying their competence as mothers is often too much to bear" (Sykes, 2011: 455). My information leaflet (Appendix 5) urges people who may find it difficult or painful to talk about child neglect to consider carefully whether they wish to participate, and I emphasised the point with my recruiters that I was specifically not looking for people to 'tell their stories'. This limited my opportunity to hear from people who had been positioned as or positioned themselves as neglectful or neglected, people who clearly have an important part to play in exploring how child neglect is constructed. This is an avenue that should be taken up in the future.

7.6 Recruitment

In 2011 I drafted the project materials intending them to be the prime means of recruiting lay adults to the project. These documents comprised a project pamphlet (Appendix 3), covering letter (Appendix 4), information leaflet (Appendix 5), consent form (Appendix 6) and research monitoring form (Appendix 7) to be given out as a pack. I also designed a research poster for display to attract potential participants (Appendix 8). The materials were designed to be informative enough to allow people to decide not only whether or not they wished to take part but also whether they considered they were eligible to do so (a decision I wished people to take for themselves as stated above). Potential participants were invited to contact me for further information. In addition, following advice from the University Ethics Committee, I drafted a focus group protocol although, for reasons stated earlier, I was extremely anxious not to lead the group discussions if this could be avoided (see Appendix 9). Piloting the materials and protocol with a group of friends and neighbours led to me simplifying some of the project literature, and confirmed me in my opinion that I did not need a set of detailed prompts to assist people to discuss child neglect. Ethical approval for the project was obtained in early 2012, and participant recruitment began immediately afterwards.

Recruitment was undertaken throughout 2012 using convenience sampling. Throughout 2010-2012 I had been discussing my project and chosen data collection method widely subject to ethical approval. As a result, people within my personal network had offered their services as recruiters for me, in turn speaking to those within their personal networks to gauge interest in participating in the research. Once I had ethical approval I was able to discuss the project fully with the recruiters together with the project materials (bundled together into project packs). If the recruiters were aware of people who might wish to participate in a discussion, I left the project packs for them to disseminate, with a view to potential participants contacting me for further information. Some potential participants did contact me for an extensive discussion about my research. However in other cases, the recruiter acted as my research manager, disseminating the materials, discussing the research with potential participants, and even on occasion providing a discussion venue and refreshments. In both cases, the recruitment process relied upon informed and interested people using the project materials to recruit their friends, colleagues, and/or neighbours to take part. Once participants had stated that they considered themselves suitable for and interested in participating in the project, they became core members of potential focus groups and were then invited to recruit other participants from within their own networks to the group.

I thought very carefully about the fact that my recruitment procedure meant I might not personally talk to each potential participant individually in advance of the focus group discussion to ensure that they fully understood my research and that they were not being coerced into attending against their will. Insisting each potential participant spoke to me directly seemed intrusive, unnecessary and to demonstrate a lack of confidence in the integrity of my recruiters. Not every research task has to be completed by the researcher alone: Krueger and King (1998) champion the use of appropriately trained and equipped community members within focus group research, and placing elements of the research process in the hands of community 'volunteers' is a recognised part of participatory research approaches. I know all my recruiters well and trust their judgment, integrity and expertise. In turn my recruiters knew a great deal about the project and the potential participants, and either directed queries to me directly or acted as intermediary in respect of queries that they could not answer themselves. The knowledge that not everyone approached by the recruiters decided that they had the time or desire to attend helped confirm me in my opinion that the process was working effectively and ethically (see for example the email at Appendix 10 produced with kind consent of the author).

Interestingly, despite my initial belief that expertise was something people would know they had (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), the most frequent issue raised by potential participants related to whether they could participate or whether I would consider them a child protection professional or to have had professional training. This boundary was constructed as complex and blurred, and some people really struggled to identify whether or not their level of expertise was sufficient to render them a child protection professional. GP Practice nurses, health visitors, teachers, nurses and midwives all found themselves negotiating definitions of themselves that positioned them as both lay person and expert. In accordance with my research design I refused to answer those questions for people. I made the decision that if people were unsure whether or not they were child protection professionals then they would be thanked for their time and interest but not recruited. That way all my data was from people who had positively identified themselves as lay people for the purposes of my research.

My decision to invite people to decide for themselves whether or not they had undergone professional child development training or whether they were child protection professionals had a threefold advantage. Firstly, I did not need to comb through the backgrounds of potential participants to see if at any stage they might have crossed some arbitrary line drawn by me which could render them ineligible for participation. Secondly, I was not

imposing my version of relevant child protection expertise on potential participants - that was left open to each potential participant's interpretation. Thirdly, by positioning themselves as 'lay people' in order to take part in my research, it would be less likely that participants would later claim or be afforded institutional status - a privileged position within the discussion due to membership of an expert group (Thornborrow, 2002). Everyone within the group would be there because they had each decided that they were lay people, with no specialised knowledge or expertise in child protection.

In total I recruited 46 participants to take part in my research. I held 10 focus groups with between three and six participants in each group. Recruitment and data collection took place in 2012, alongside each other. As recruitment progressed I was given details about potential group members (including their connection to the recruiter) and kept up to date with how matters were progressing.

There is no agreement about what size focus groups should be. Breen (2006) suggests 4-6 participants, Cronin (2008) and Greenbaum (2000) stipulate the groups should be larger (6-10 and 7-10 respectively), while Krueger and Casey (2009) contend that a good focus group can have 4-12 people. Barbour (2007) suggests that the optimum size of the focus group depends on the purpose of the group: in her view social scientists should keep group numbers below 8, and a good discussion can be had between 3 or 4 participants. Practically (for reasons of recruitment, venue, facilitation, recording and transcription) small groups are easier to manage; however, I also wanted to have enough participants to offset my power as a researcher. I therefore decided to recruit between 4 and 7 participants for each group. In practice, one group contained only 3 participants due to a last minute cancellation, and I found the conversation flowed just as successfully as in larger groups.

7.7 The Focus Groups

"...let the researcher, the participants and the ethics committee beware that the only ethical assurance that can be given to focus group participants is that there are few ethical assurances" (Tolich, 2009: 99).

Ethical questions needed to be addressed with a "principled sensitivity to the rights of others" (Bulmer, 2008: 146). Ethical considerations were at the forefront of my deliberations in planning this project, and ethical principles were adhered to throughout the research process (Homan, 1991; Bulmer, 2008). As I was recruiting groups of participants

who knew each other prior to the research and whose relationships would continue after it, it was extremely important that I did not damage or disrupt those existing bonds. The research professions share a common ethical core (Homan, 1991) and I consulted a range of ethical guidance produced by different research and professional bodies (e.g. The University of Huddersfield, 2004; 2011; the Economic and Social Research Council, 2010; the British Psychological Society, 2009; 2010; the Social Research Association, 2003; the British Sociological Association, 2002).

Once a group of four or more interested participants had been recruited, we identified a convenient date, time and venue for the discussion. Venues were selected to ensure that the groups took place in locations that were familiar and accessible to the participants and included a community centre, the back room of a pub, an office, a church hall, and various private houses belonging to group members or recruiters. Immediately prior to the discussion I spoke to the participants about the project and about my role as Ph.D. researcher, went through the consent form (Appendix 6) and satisfied myself that each person had had the opportunity to read through the pre-circulated research materials and was giving informed consent to the research.

I was particularly careful to explain my duty of confidentiality to the participants stating clearly that if I became aware of circumstances involving a risk of harm to someone I reserved the right to breach confidentiality. Although I was trying to minimise my professional expertise within the discussions, I am a professional and under such circumstances, I would feel ethically obliged to notify the proper authorities (as mandated by the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct, 2009 for example). This point also formed part of the pre-circulated research information and was set out in the consent form. This eventuality did not arise. I also reminded participants of their continuing right to withdraw some or all of their data at any time should they wish to do so. I then invited the groups to reach agreement about how they wished to deal with issues of confidentiality amongst themselves.

Respecting confidentiality in a group situation is far more complicated than within a one-to-one interview (Tolich, 2009). In an individual interview a participant can choose to 'delete' something they have said confident that it will not be mentioned in the research or divulged by the researcher, but in a focus group situation others in the group will have heard the statement and harm to the speaker may result (Tolich, 2009). In addition, while the researcher may guarantee what Tolich (2004:101) terms "external confidentiality" (that they will not deliberately identify the participant at any stage), "internal confidentiality"

(breached where participants become known to insiders or connected persons due to some unforeseen detail in the report) is beyond the researcher's control. My use of recruiters made 'internal confidentiality' (Tolich, 2004) a particular concern as recruiters have a great deal of 'insider' information which could be used to identify individuals. To avoid this, I have not included a thumbnail sketch of each group but rather a global view of the participant pool (see below and Appendix 11), so making it more difficult to identify individual participants within my data. I have also chosen not to append transcripts to this thesis.

There is a danger within focus group research that as participants do not owe each other enforceable duties of confidentiality they may repeat information from the group to a non-participant (Tolich, 2009; Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). I was also concerned about the effect of my research on non-participants. Participants potentially had other people in common, people who might be adversely affected by information divulged during a discussion that they were not party to and might never find out about. In talking about child neglect, participants used anecdotes from their families, friends and acquaintances and not all the information was complimentary. That is part of everyday communication and would be impossible to suppress, but ethical considerations require that I take great care that these others cannot identify themselves or others within anything that I write. Finally, the very nature of a focus group discussion is that it can develop in unanticipated directions; directions that participants have neither been informed about nor consented to in advance (Tolich, 2009).

Aware of these possible dangers, I tried to make the participants equally aware of them. My first task was to facilitate the groups to discuss whether or not they thought they should be free to refer to or disclose information gained within the focus group outside it. This was not about my duty of confidentiality to participants but about their agreement with each other – I wanted participants to negotiate a form of group contract establishing the ground rules of the discussion. Different groups came to different decisions, but most groups agreed that what was said within the focus group setting would remain confidential. These agreements were of course not enforceable, but they did give each group the opportunity to talk through and understand the issues, make a group decision about internal confidentiality, and to take ownership of that decision. Of course there were still risks that participants could regret or potentially suffer harm from something that they had said, but those risks are present in everyday interaction. I was impressed by Rhodes' (2005) argument that save in a few clear examples of participant vulnerability, researchers should avoid a paternalistic attitude towards their participants, an attitude exemplified by the

“presumption is that their [participants’] ability to appreciate and assess risks is inadequate and that the judgment of benefits and burdens by others should override theirs” (Rhodes, 2005: 13).

As stated earlier I had decided to moderate the discussions. Effective focus group moderation is widely explored within the focus group literature, and is often described very prescriptively (Barbour, 2007; Hopkins, 2007). The practices of a select few researchers in the field have become codified into focus group dogma (Hopkins, 2007). Much of the literature is concerned with tips and techniques about how best to manage the groups: from preparing protocols and props to generate discussion, to people management skills such as keeping participants on track, ensuring everyone has an equal say, and creating rapport (e.g. Morgan, 1997; Krueger, 1998; Greenbaum, 2000; Puchta and Potter, 2004; Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook, 2006; Krueger and Casey, 2009). My groups would be run differently from the ways detailed in the literature for methodological and ethical reasons. Methodologically I needed to try and avoid imposing a professional straitjacket upon lay freedom of movement. Ethically, in addition to the issues around confidentiality referred to above, I needed to do what I could to ensure that the dynamics of pre-existing relationships were not disrupted by something that happened within the focus group itself (Hofmeyer and Scott, 2008).

As moderator I determined to do as little as possible to direct the discussion (Fern, 2001; Parker and Tritter, 2006). My research information explained that I was researching how lay people talk about child neglect, deliberately not restricting the potential arena for discussion. I chose not to use vignettes or elaborate focus group protocols but rather to allow the groups as much latitude as possible to develop their own themes and constructions. The pilot discussion had been conducted without the use of a formal protocol and the free-flowing and self-stimulating discussion had confirmed me in my determination to allow discursive space for the participants to develop the discussions in their own way. I wrote nothing down during the discussions as the pilot made me aware that participants saw my note taking as a sign of my interest in a particular section of talk, and as a cue to elaborate further in particular directions. I also decided to leave it entirely up to individuals to decide what part they wished to play in the discussion, deciding not to call on people to speak or to try and silence dominant or talkative members. Existing power relationships and power differentials between participants may make people unwilling to speak in the presence of others (Hofmeyer and Scott, 2008) and I had no desire to make participants uncomfortable or disturb the ways in which the group regulated itself outside the research environment.

Once participants had agreed on the level of confidentiality they wished group members to apply to the discussion, I showed them the two small digital voice recorders that I would be using for data recording and I explained what I would be doing with the data in terms of transcription and storage. Once everyone was happy to begin, the recorders were turned on. I began each group by asking participants in turn to complete the sentence "my name is... and when I hear the words 'child neglect' I think of.....". Then, participants were invited to discuss how they would respond to an alien who asked them as a group what child neglect was. How the discussion progressed from there varied between the groups and was largely determined by them. The discussions continued until there was a clear place to stop or until time ran out, at which point the recorders were turned off and as a group we discussed how the discussion had gone and picked up any final issues. At the end of each group session, I reminded participants of their continuing right to withdraw from the research, the agreement that the group had reached in relation to confidentiality amongst themselves and invited participants to complete the ethnic monitoring form if they wished to do so (many had completed it in advance of the session). Neither participants nor recruiters were paid for their efforts.

7.8 Group Composition

I used the research monitoring form (see Appendix 7) to provide a record of the make up of my participant pool (see Appendix 11). A criticism of recruiting using convenience sampling is that it produces homogenous rather than heterogeneous groups of participants (Sturgis, 2008). To examine the extent to which this applied to my data, I requested limited socio-ethnic details relating to the age, gender, occupation and ethnic identity of my participants after the focus groups had ended. I also enquired as to whether participants were parents, guardians or carers. Although the form was voluntary, in the event, everyone completed it. The ethnicity section of the form generated considerable discussion indicating that participants were not entirely comfortable with ethnic labelling even where given a free choice to identify themselves as they wished. Of the 46 participants, 34 declared themselves to be white British, English or Scottish and 12 declared their ethnic origin to be other than white British.

My research recruited largely women: 38 participants described themselves as female, 8 as male, a factor worth bearing in mind considering research demonstrating the gendered nature of constructions about child neglect (e.g. Swift, 1995; Turney, 2000; Turney and

Tanner, 2001; Scourfield, 2003; Featherstone 2004; 2006; Daniel and Taylor, 2006). Participants were recruited from a wide age range: the youngest participant was 18 and the oldest was 90. One focus group was composed of 18 year olds - like Cawson et al (2000) in the absence of child participants I was pleased to be able to collect data from those who had recently been children. Participants also came from a variety of rural and urban locations in the North, South East and South West of England. 24 participants said that they were or had been parents, guardians or carers, while 22 had not (although many of those spoke of having played a role in children's lives as relations, god parents, baby sitters, teachers, etc.). The parents/carers and guardians within my research were all female (except one) which was unfortunate as gender is relevant to child neglect and fathers, male carers and male guardians may have different ways of constructing the concept.

Finally, I collected data on people's current occupations to check that my recruitment method was screening out people I would consider to be unequivocally expert. No participants stated they were children's social workers, psychologists, paediatricians, child protection police officers or legally recognised child protection specialists (see Appendix 11 for full details). As can be seen some participants were teachers and others discussed working or assisting in schools in a paid or voluntary capacity either currently or in the past. Interestingly, those with roles within the education system did not consider themselves to be child protection experts, or to have been trained in child protection - something which I found surprising. All those currently employed as teachers were within the same focus group thus ensuring that people within that group considered themselves to have the same level of non-expert training and experience.

7.9 My Effect on the Discussions

It is important to consider how I affected the data being collected and how the participants constructed my presence in the groups (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999; Parker, 2005). The participants knew that I was an ESRC funded Ph.D. researcher, a former family law solicitor, and that I was a qualified social worker currently engaged in social work education. However, in the preliminary discussions I made it clear that I did not think there were any 'right' answers, that the discussion was not a test, and that I was there to learn because I myself was confused about the subject. I informed the participants from the start that I wanted to remain separate from the discussion because I wanted them to talk to each other. Despite this, I was very much a presence in the discussion and found myself

appealed to on points that participants knew I had expertise about - the most usual being "what does the law say about?". Where the answer was a quickly given technical fact, I tended to respond to keep the conversation flowing. Where I was being asked to ratify an opinion or a judgment, I tried to reflect it back at the group to avoid performing my expertise. I had thought that my position as a social worker might lead to participants being reticent about discussing social work, but the data does not bear this out.

As I had gained entry to each group through personal contacts, I think I was treated with less formality and suspicion than if I had sought access to participants through professional networks. This may have influenced the tone and manner of the discussions. In addition, I was a 'guest' to both the group and to the venue, which perhaps made people more determined to 'host' me, to make the group a success and to 'help me out'. Having said that, the focus groups all stimulated lively discussion among participants, many of whom presented strong opinions not only on what child neglect was, but also on what should be done to prevent it. In closing remarks after the discussions many participants said that they thought that child neglect was a vitally important but neglected topic and that they were very pleased to have had the opportunity to discuss it. There seemed to be general agreement that the groups had been interesting, educational and enjoyable.

7.10 Transcription

I transcribed my data myself, as soon after each focus group as practicable using name generation software to select participant pseudonyms. It was important for me to listen and re-listen to the discussions carefully to prevent me imposing my own 'expert' understandings upon the data, and ensure, as far as possible, that I was analysing what was actually being said rather than perhaps what I thought I had heard or expected to hear (Bailey, 2008; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Transcription is not a transparent process but an interpretative pursuit (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Tilley, 2003; Bird, 2005) in which data is re-presented according to choices made by the transcriber, and it is important to make those choices transparent (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). I transcribed all my data rather than just analytically interesting sections to ensure that each audible word said by participants and the context in which it was said remained available to me throughout analysis.

Originally I had intended to transcribe the data using my own simplification of the Jefferson notation developed for Conversation Analysis (see Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Hutchby and

Wooffitt, 2008). However, my analysis did not require this level of detail and it made the transcripts cluttered and difficult to work with. I decided instead to strip all elements of the talk which were superfluous to my analysis from the transcripts (Edwards, 1993; O'Connell and Kowal, 1999; Clarke and Kitzinger, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2006), and added punctuation to assist comprehension and make the documents easier to work with. The resulting transcripts are an accurate account of all the semantic content of the participants' talk reproduced in a way that is "true' to [their] original nature" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:88). It is extracts from these 'cleaned up' transcripts that appear in my thesis.

7.11 *Selecting an Analytical Procedure*

"There are those who seek to be Foucault scholars. That is their privilege. I advocate a relation to his work that is looser, more inventive and more empirical" (Rose, 1999: 4-5).

I chose a Foucauldian approach to analyse my data as I felt that this was consistent with the theoretical orientation of the project. I also hoped that a Foucauldian approach would assist me to adopt a sceptical approach to my own expertise, and to render the familiar unfamiliar: "recognising strangeness in all social arrangements is an important part of using Foucault's methods" (Kendall and Wickham, 1999:8). While Foucault himself did not create a blueprint for analysis and spoke rather of his theory being used as a "toolkit" (Foucault, 1980b: 145), others have developed Foucauldian analytical procedures (see, for example Parker, 1992; Kendall and Wickham, 1999; Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2008 and Willig 2008a; 2008b).

My decision to use Willig's (2008a; 2008b) analytical framework emerged from discussions during supervision and at my yearly progress review meeting. Her procedure is comprised of six stages:

1. Identify the ways in which discursive objects are constructed;
2. Locate these constructions within wider discourses;
3. Examine the action orientation of the construction in the context within which it is used;
4. Explore the subject positions made available by the discourse;
5. Identify the relationship between discourse and practice;
6. Explore the relationship between discourse and subjectivity. (Willig, 2008a; 2008b).

I found Willig's (2008a; 2008b) method of analysis relatively simple to follow, elegant and capable of directing analytical focus onto the issues engaged by my research questions. While she herself argues that "these six stages do not constitute a full analysis in the Foucauldian sense" due to the lack of engagement with genealogy (the historical development of discourses over time) (Willig, 2008a: 115) I did not consider this to be a limitation. All my data was collected in 2012 and so would not allow a historical analysis of the development of lay constructions around child neglect.

7.12 Conducting the Analysis

"A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 82).

My analysis was conducted from the transcripts rather than from the original recordings, and involved a repeated reading of the transcripts. Using Willig's (2008a; 2008b) template, my initial step was to identify each time child neglect was constructed within my data. This did not significantly reduce the amount of data but highlighted that different aspects of 'child neglect' were being constructed in similar ways across the Groups. To explore this further, I decided a rich thematic description of the entire data set would be useful. I categorised the constructions of child neglect into themes suggested by the data itself rather than using an expert coding frame. This was indicated because firstly, I was working with lay participants whose views on child neglect are not well known, and secondly, induction data-driven analysis provides a way of further diluting (although of course not negating) my power as a researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

When talking about child neglect, participants in all the Groups tended to do so in one of six main themes:

1. constructions focusing on the causes of child neglect,
2. constructions focusing on the outcomes of child neglect,
3. constructions focusing on the definition of child neglect,
4. constructions focusing on neglected children,
5. constructions that focused on the responsibility for child neglect, and
6. constructions about responding to child neglect.

These themes were similar within all the Groups and covered the majority of my data set. I was keen not to remove my data from its context situation within the transcripts, so

coding took place using highlighter pens and index cards allowing for intra- and inter-Group cross referencing. I then subdivided the main themes into more discrete themes. A diagram of this process in respect to the 'definition of child neglect' category is found at Appendix 12. In brief, this category included everything that followed a participant saying 'child neglect is', 'child neglect means', etc. This data appeared to be made up of three sub-categories of participant constructions which I labelled as 'subjective', 'unclear' and 'unmet needs'. The 'subjective' category was not further divided: when participants spoke about child neglect being subjective, that was the definitional issue - it was subjective. However, when they spoke of it being unclear or confusing or complicated, or undefinable, participants often went on to explore a lack of clarity in relation to the boundary between abuse and neglect (categorised as 'abuse or neglect') and the issue of how to decide what child neglect should be in the face of competing claims of how to bring up children (categorised as 'whose definition'). Similarly when participants defined neglect in relation to 'unmet needs' they usually listed the needs during the discussion, identifying them as different types of need. I then categorised those needs into 'physical needs', 'emotional needs', 'training needs' and 'supervisory needs'. Instances of each type of construction were listed by page location within the data set.

As an expert, I may have imposed expert frames upon lay knowledge during categorisation, but I tried very hard not to do so. I tried to focus on the words and concepts used by the participants to try and understand their constructions about child neglect, what elements of the range of possible constructions they considered important and why, rather than imposing my own assumptions. Some of the categories were refined as time went on (for example, an initial category of 'self-expression needs' became part of the broader 'emotional needs' category later in the analysis). Thematic categorisation allowed me to explore what different Groups had constructed on different aspects of child neglect and the explanations accompanying the constructions. It also made the data more manageable.

Once each construction of child neglect had been thematically classified, I proceeded to the second point in Willig's (2008a; 2008b) framework: to explore the differences between the different constructions, locate the constructions within discrete discourses and examine how the discourses within the data interacted with wider discourses and other texts (e.g. government policies, media stories, etc.). At this point some of the connections and disjunctions between the categories became clearer: for example the category of 'neglected children' and the sub-category of 'unmet need' were both constructed within developmental discourse. In contrast the category of 'whose definition' was largely located within post

modern and multicultural discourses of relativism. It seemed to me that lay people drew on a wide range of discourses in constructing child neglect, including:

- developmental discourses scientifically mapping children's needs and the negative outcomes of child neglect,
- legal discourses around rights, blame and responsibility,
- discourses of parenting and mothering producing the normal and abnormal childhood and the normal and abnormal family,
- discourses protecting family privacy and autonomy,
- discourses of the role of the state in family and community life,
- discourses relating to multiculturalism, integration, assimilation, community cohesion and community fragmentation,
- discourses producing understandings of social inequality and stereotypical class behaviours,
- regressive and progressive discourses.

Most of these discourses operated together to produce a psy-complex approved 'common sense' version of the developmental childhood. This childhood was constructed as taking place within the normal family under the watchful eye of a supportive community. In this childhood normal parents (particularly mothers) are responsible for using particular knowledge and techniques to produce normal adults. I recognised this to be the dominant psy-complex discourse circulated by the media, campaigners and recycled by the community itself. These discourses and the connections between them were mapped onto the original categories.

I decided to explore the action orientation of the constructions together with the formation of subjectivities (Willig's (2008a; 2008b) third and sixth element of analysis) so moved on to her fourth element of analysis - identifying the subject positions made available by different constructions. This process had already started during categorisation and was perhaps the area in which I intruded my own interpretations most onto my data. I aimed to identify what participants saw in particular children that allowed them to be positioned as neglected and in particular adults, bodies or organisations that allowed them to be positioned as neglectful. My interpretation was most in evidence in respect of the Escaping Child construction. No participant used the word 'escaping' to describe a neglected child, but this seemed to me to be at the heart of the construction within the Groups; it was not simply that a child was unsupervised, to me it seemed that the child was positioned as slipping away from the confinements and restrictions imposed by the adult world.

I brought together constructions about neglected children, unmet need and the effects of child neglect to analyse the subject position of the neglected child. As participants constructed the neglected child in relation to the non-neglected or 'normal' child it was possible to analyse how children as a social group were positioned by participants, not simply neglected children. Analysis of this data forms the bulk of chapter 8, the first findings chapter. This was also the point at which the subject positions of the normal parent, the abnormal parent, the child protection professional and the lay person began to take shape. Drawing from categories relating to the causes of child neglect and responsibility for child neglect this part of the analysis process produced the subject positions of the Overwhelmed Parent, the Clueless Parent, the Underinvested Parent and the Unsuitable Parent. It also produced the 'subject position' of the neglectful or supportive community and the neglectful or supportive state. These constructions of the neglector are located in chapter 9, the second findings chapter.

The fifth element of analysis was to identify the practices mandated or prohibited by the constructions of child neglect. The subject positions themselves mandated ways of being in the world - a normal parent cannot behave like an abnormal parent for any period of time without explanation and vice versa - the subject position and the practice go hand in hand. This element of analysis highlighted the category relating to how participants responded to child neglect. Discourses of family privacy, family primacy, and constructions of paedophilic grooming and social services' ineptitude (the latter amplified by continual news stories about social work failure) seemed to prohibit lay involvement in the lives of children they are concerned about. Multiculturalism fragments the developmental childhood leaving 'normality' and 'abnormality' unclear. This part of the analysis forms much of chapter 10, the third findings chapter.

As stated earlier, I analysed the action orientation of participants' child neglect constructions together with the relationship between discourse and subjectivities (Willig's third and sixth analytical stages (2008a; 2008b)). Participants subjectively positioned themselves as both normal (in that they understood very clearly what children need and were or would be able to provide it) and as non-judgemental (they had drawn the line for themselves but recognised others would draw it differently). The construction of emotional needs alongside physical needs allowed participants to demonstrate that they were not blaming poor people for their poverty but rather neglectful parents for their parenting. The subjective experience of concern for children, support for normal parents, horror, disgust and anger at the situation some children are forced to grow up in (whether constructed as the fault of state or parents), helplessness in the grip of wider social forces, and confusion

about the appropriate response to neglected children are all features of the normal concerned citizen in society.

I then needed to decide how to present the data. I was aware that despite my efforts to prevent my expertise influencing the focus group discussions, I could not do so during data analysis. By using qualitative methods for data analysis I reinterpreted my data through an expert lens. I cannot discount my influence on the findings, I can only acknowledge it. I wanted to do what I could to privilege lay voices in the findings chapters. Initially I decided to present my data using chapters relating to the main Foucauldian themes: disciplinary power, knowledge/power, gaze and resistance. I hoped that within those headings I could allow the words of participants to speak for themselves with very little commentary from me. This was unsuccessful. While the chapters allowed a large amount of data to be presented unedited (reducing my influence as researcher), they privileged expert categorisation of the data and my analysis perhaps became lost in the presentation.

I reviewed the situation and decided to present my findings as they appear below as this reflects participant constructions about child neglect. For participants in all Groups there appeared to be three main areas of enquiry: firstly, who could be considered to be a neglected child and why; secondly, who or what could be considered to be neglectful and what would cause this; and finally, what precisely constitutes child neglect in England today and how should society, particularly lay society, respond to child neglect. These three areas correspond to my findings chapters. I have tried to privilege lay voices within those chapters, but do not think that I have conveyed the extent to which the constructions were Group constructions produced by the Groups within a group context. This represents a further distortion of the lay voices: not only do I, an expert, select what data to present, but to some extent I clean it up, excise it from its surroundings, and present it largely as discrete statements ascribed to named participants, chosen to exemplify particular points. The context of the construction: the murmurs of approval or disapproval, the laughter, the repetition of words, the false starts and hesitations, the finishing of other participant's sentences, the corrections and clarifications, the many different sounds and voices weaving through the data as a whole are to a large extent cut away. I recognise that in practice I, as expert, choose to privilege particular lay voices by affording them space and status within this analysis.

7.13 Conclusion

This chapter sets out how I collected, transcribed and analysed my data. In it I have explored my choices in relation to recruiting participants and using focus group discussions to collect data, and examined my negotiation of the ethical considerations involved in working with recruiters and pre-existing friendship groups. I reflect further on some of these choices in the thesis conclusion. My data collection methods were very effective and resulted in a large amount of talk to transcribe and analyse. In transcribing the data myself I think I gained a familiarity with the data set as a whole that I might otherwise have lost. Willig's (2008a, 2008b) framework for Foucauldian analysis enabled me to address my research questions by channelling my thoughts and data down theoretically congruent avenues. Wilkinson argues that focus group research is susceptible to theoretical confusion; noting there is "a great deal of slippage between essentialist and social constructionist frameworks" (Wilkinson, 1998:123). As discussed, I was less successful in countering the possible effects of my expertise in the data analysis and write up stage of the research, although I tried to ensure that my interpretations and choices were data driven, both in relation to the findings themselves and to the presentation of my findings. The next three chapters of my thesis set out those findings in full, detailing how lay participants within my research constructed the neglected, the neglector and child neglect.

Chapter 8 - Constructing the Neglected

8.1 Introduction

Pam: ...because you're storing stuff up and that aren't you?... (Group 4)

Previous chapters detailed the way in which psy-complex discourse produces the concept of child neglect within the child protection system and professional practice. It is important to understand what, if anything, child neglect means for lay people. In particular, I am interested in exploring the basis of lay judgements that children are being neglected, and whether those judgements are constructed from psy-complex expertise or using other considerations and discourses. In this first findings chapter I explore the way in which participants in my research separate child neglect from child abuse, and neglected children from non-neglected children. This chapter focuses on participants' constructions around the child, the knowledge used by lay people about child neglect and the way in which this knowledge positions both neglected and non-neglected children in relation to the adult world.

8.2 Separating Child Abuse from Child Neglect

Claire: I think part of the problem with child neglect is that it gets confused with child abuse... Because for me they are different.

Anna: is it?

Mark: it's different but they can overlap can't they?

Kirsty: mmmm, I think they can overlap. (Group 6)

Participants found the distinction between child abuse and child neglect a discursive muddle that was difficult to disentangle. Child abuse and child neglect were positioned as a child maltreatment binary, as two qualitatively different poles of child maltreatment, which means that in some important way child neglect both is and is not child abuse. We can see this difficulty in Group 8:

Chloe: When I think of child neglect I do think of really horrible abuse.

Angela: I think more of, as opposed to child abuse, more of a general lack of care and a child who's being left alone really rather than actual abuse. (Group 8)

Note the opposition in Angela's construction, that neglect is not actual abuse but something qualitatively different. This latter construction perhaps ties in with the construction for

several participants that the difference between the two concepts was that neglect was less serious than child abuse:

Mel: I think of neglect as less serious. (Group 4)

Kas: It depends on the seriousness when it crosses the line into abuse from neglect. (Group 10)

Not all participants constructed the distinction between abuse and neglect as relating to degree of seriousness. Some participants constructed the binary in relation to adult intention:

Kell: ...for somebody to neglect somebody doesn't mean a wilful horrid thing. (Group 1)

Claire: I think sometimes neglect is un-deliberate whereas I think abuse quite often can be, well is deliberate... (Group 6)

*Aisha: I think people know when you're abusing somebody, but neglect is, like I said...
Jo: it could happen without knowing. (Group 10)*

Finally, some constructed neglect as relating to omission and abuse to commission (the construction adopted by legal and professional discourses):

Paul: I think neglect is when something isn't done and abuse is where something is done. (Group 2)

It seemed to me that the legal or expert splitting of child maltreatment into child abuse and child neglect was confusing for lay people. Where participants were unclear about the divide between the two, they constructed different divisions, each of which served to minimise the importance of child neglect in relation to child abuse. Participants variously constructed child abuse as more intentional, harmful, serious and blameworthy than child neglect. This lay construction is similar to the way the criminal legal system tends to respond to child neglect (see Hoyano and Keenan, 2010), despite a concerted effort spearheaded by children's charities to alert public, professionals and policy makers to the extreme seriousness and harmfulness of neglect as a form of child maltreatment (e.g. Gardner, 2008; Burgess et al, 2012; 2013; 2014; Brandon et al, 2013; Action for Children, 2014). The construction of child neglect as somehow less important or less bad than child abuse may relate to the different histories of the two concepts. As I discussed in previous chapters, the medical discoveries of the 1960s produced a child abuse discourse emphasising urgency, classlessness, damage and blame. This late modern understanding of child abuse appears to have successfully positioned itself at the centre of the concept of

child maltreatment. Child neglect is left to occupy the periphery, constructed as that which is not abuse, and therefore not in need of the same urgent response from society.

8.3 Child Neglect is the Failure of Proper Developmental Childhood

Sue: when I think of neglect that is the first thing I think of: not providing a child with what it needs.

Zoe: because that incorporates the emotional, like emotionally what it needs, physically what it needs

Mel: and healthy development to become

Zoe: yeah

Mel: its own person

Zoe: exactly (Group 4).

In order to construct the neglected child, all Groups constructed the 'normal' child using developmental discourse. For my participants, the 'normal childhood' within which developmental needs must be met was the commonsense conceptualisation of childhood (as asserted by Jenks, 2005; Mayall, 2006 and Wyness, 2012). This normal developmental childhood was then used as comparator for the neglected child and the neglectful childhood. In accordance with dominant developmental norms, each group constructed childhood as a vulnerable and distinct period of life where formation and preparation for adulthood took place. Overwhelmingly participants constructed neglected children as not being provided with what they needed:

Sue: my way of defining [child neglect] is not providing a child with what it needs to develop fully (Group 4)

Kirsty: ...the word 'needs' was the first word that came into my mind... (Group 6)

As Woodhead (1990/1997) points out, constructions of children in relation to their 'needs' conceal a range of assumptions about what is desirable and good for children to have. While participants spoke of what children need, they constructed these needs in relation to what society needs. Society needs pro-social, docile, useful adults. As I explored earlier, the disciplinary institutions of childhood operate in order to produce the 'normal adult'; the developmental model operating to ensure that children are provided with what they 'need' in order to become docile and productive adults (Rose, 1985; 1999; Burman, 2008). Within this discourse what children 'need' becomes synonymous with the disciplinary mechanisms that produce pro-social adults. Child neglect represents the failure to apply these disciplinary mechanisms during childhood, constructed as the failure to provide the child with what s/he 'needs'.

For participants, the failure to meet children's needs had the potential to produce a whole host of individual and social problems:

Cory: unhappy children who grow into unhappy adults (Group 3)

Maddy: I suppose there are sort of immediate consequences in terms of the health of the children being ill or injured or whatever, but then there are long-term consequences as well (Group 3).

Problems listed by the Groups as resulting from neglect included developmental delay, cognitive deficits, teenaged and adult criminal behaviour (e.g. prostitution, gang membership, the London riots), delinquency, low educational attainment, relationship problems, bad or ineffective parenting, isolation, low self-esteem, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, vulnerability to peer pressure, anti-social behaviour, acting out, self-harm, mental illness, homelessness, and suicide. The effects of child neglect were therefore constructed not only as a catastrophe for the individual concerned, but also a problem for the wider society who would have to bear the lifelong cost of managing this damaged individual appropriately:

Ros: the problem is its society's problem... Neglected children come up again and again in terms of causing trouble... (Group 1)

Laura: ...erm... I'm going to make a real broadbrush statement here but I imagine it's the child, the children who are neglected who are the ones who are graffiti-ing the walls, who are the ones who are causing social problems. (Group 6)

This link between neglect and delinquency, so powerful throughout the development of modern childhood (Parton, 1985; Ferguson, 2004), was very much a feature of the group discussions.

For participants this construction worked both ways: child neglect produced damaged adulthood and abnormal adults were positioned as probably having experienced some childhood problem that could explain their abnormality. However, participants did not construct this causal relationship as absolute. Several participants argued that some neglected children became 'normal' adults (drawing on the psychological concept of resilience to explain this). Other participants asserted that child neglect was not the sole producer of abnormal or damaged adults:

Eva: ...we're talking about the outcome, ...if they turn out to be dysfunctional in some way then obviously they must have had something wrong in the past. But then if you think about how many people in adulthood or at university have depression and commit suicide and all those types of things, we can't automatically say they must've been neglected, or

there was something wrong there. Because there's just, there's just so many factors that play a part. (Group 7)

For most participants however neglect provided a route (perhaps even the route) to a sub-optimum adulthood at best and at worst a troubled and/or troubling one. This dysfunctional adulthood was considered highly likely to include neglectful parenthood. Neglect was constructed as perpetuating itself through the generations, a familial legacy of malfunction handed down from parents to children. I discuss this aspect of child neglect further in the next chapter.

8.4 Constructing Children's Needs

When I think of neglect that is the first thing I think of: not providing a child with what it needs (Group 4)

For participants the neglected child was first and foremost a child who was not having his/her needs met appropriately or satisfactorily (a definition similar to that within child welfare and child protection legislation). This being the case it is important to identify what needs participants considered children to have which, if unmet, would allow children to be seen as neglected. These needs were negotiated between the participants, often in concert and there was agreement within the groups as to the types of needs that related to child neglect. These needs were often listed by the participants as being within separate categories:

Ruth: ...the child's needs were not being met both physically and emotionally. (Group 3)

Morag: ...it's not just the physical needs you had to look after, you have to look after their emotional needs and everything else that goes with it. (Group 9)

Emma: that's my big bugbear lack of supervision. (Group 2)

Ros: ...what a growing child needs whether it's in terms of nutrition or hygiene or discipline or love or anything else, umm or stimulation... (Group 1)

Eva: ...that's neglect as well, because you're never teaching them boundaries, you are never teaching them morals, and respect. (Group 7)

The focus groups produced similar accounts between the groups of children's needs. These needs were constructed as clustered around four distinct axes: physical needs, emotional needs, training needs (my term for teaching children the rules of society, saying no, enforcing boundaries) and supervisory needs. Within my data, as I shall demonstrate, the

different clusters relied on different discourses, and each produced different constructions of the neglected child.

8.4.1 Physical Needs

Maddy: there's like physical needs like food, clothes, warmth

Ruth: water

Maddy: water, you know

Cora: being kept clean

Maddy: being kept clean, warm

Cora: and healthy, yeah, medical needs getting seen to

Ruth: that's really important (Group 3)

Morag: you have to do your utmost to make sure that child has food, is kept clean, his welfare is looked after, everything that it physically needs to sustain life is your responsibility until that child is old enough to look after itself. (Group 9)

Participants tended to classify physical needs as those needs not unique to childhood including appropriate nutrition, hygiene, clothes, warmth, water, shelter, medical and dental attention, and being kept healthy. Although these needs do not end when childhood does, adults are expected to find ways of meeting their own needs through work, state support, etc. However, in accordance with the developmental model, children are positioned as incapable of meeting their own needs in the ways that adults are expected to, instead remaining dependent on adults to meet their physical needs while they as children accomplish the task of growing up:

Hamid: ...a basic human can look after themselves, a child can't look after themselves. (Group 5)

8.4.2 Emotional Needs

Pam: ...you need to be able to physically provide and emotionally provide.

Sue: I think there is a MASSIVE MASSIVE gap between them two (Group 4).

Cara: ...children have certain needs for physical things but also for affection and love (Group 3)

Participants constructed children as having emotional needs. These needs were frequently spoken of in relation to physical needs and included the need for love, stimulation, attention, time, affection, touch, self-expression, play, peer relationships, the need to be facilitated to develop in age appropriate ways (neither held back too long in childhood nor forced forward too soon to adulthood) and the need to experience age appropriate levels of freedom. Within this category the child's need for love, time and attention from an adult is

seen as being overwhelmingly important, positioned by some as equally if not more important than the physical needs they are often compared to.

Eliz: To be loved by their parents, I think that's the most, more important than anything. (Group 2)

Talib: ...when I think of child neglect I think of someone that's not loved...(Group 5)

Me: ...what do children need?

Pam: Love. (Group 4)

8.4.3 Training Needs

Raja: there's certain, there are certain values that go from generation to generation you know there's manners, [respect]

Jo: [learned behaviours] (Group 10)

Lola:...it is just this sense that there's no responsibility, just you know let them do it their own way, they don't learn anything in the sense of what they can do and what's acceptable and appropriate. (Group 7)

Kas: it's the way you actually make them understand...you know like morals and about people (Group 10)

Participants also constructed childhood as a time when adult society needed to discipline children into the ways of society. This category, which I have labelled 'training needs' includes the need for education, the transmission of society's rules, values and morals and the fostering of self-regulation such as self-discipline and the ability to delay gratification. Training needs must be met to ensure that children can conform within society, adhere to boundaries, defer to legitimate authority, resist illegitimate authority and maintain acceptable standards of behaviour. Meeting training needs has as its object the production not of the knowledgeable child necessarily but rather the well-trained one, it is about socialisation, it is disciplinary and its object is to ensure that children are rendered fit for society:

Kas: ...I think that sort of like made him into the person he is. Just by teaching him you know 'you're a bigger man', walking away and not retaliating to something like that (Group 10).

Lola: I'd say [it is neglect] definitely because it's neglecting to provide them with the necessary boundaries and it's neglecting to make them fit in with society. (Group 7)

8.4.4 Supervisory Needs

Peter: ...somebody where there is no adult overseeing or close presence of an adult as there perhaps should be. (Group 2)

Participants also constructed children as having supervisory needs. Adult supervision was seen as necessary both to protect children from dangerous environments and people but also to provide a level of adult oversight to ensure that all was well. Adults were expected to know what children were 'up to' and supervise all aspects of children's lives - real and virtual. Even within a physically safe environment adults still needed to closely monitor children's behaviour to ensure that they were not becoming involved in dangerous activities:

Peter: ...that's how paedo how paedophiles get hold of children isn't it because they get them through the computer which isn't being monitored by an adult. (Group 2)

Kell: ...and you see children find a refuge on the Internet

Sheila: yes they do

Kell: and if they're not getting their care

Sheila: yes the Internet friends

Kell: yes and then of course you can get up to all sorts of mischief there are people who lock into you and make mischief for you. (Group 1)

8.5 Constructing the Neglected Child

Having identified what needs participants constructed children as having, I then explored the relationship between not meeting those needs and child neglect. For participants, each need cluster, if unmet, was associated with a different model of the neglected child. For ease of reference I have labelled the child whose physical needs are not being appropriately met the 'Deprived Child', the child whose emotional needs are not being appropriately met the 'Unloved Child', the child whose training needs are not being properly met the 'Uncontrolled Child', and the child who is not being adequately supervised the 'Escaping Child'. Where a child can be positioned as deprived, unloved, escaping or uncontrolled, or as any combination of those categories, participants spoke of 'seeing' them as potentially neglected. A child who could not be brought within one of those categories was unlikely to be positioned as neglected by the Groups.

8.5.1 The Deprived Child

Emma: ...You think of, of a child sort of dirty, smelling unpleasant and hasn't had a decent meal in a while: that is the most obvious form of neglect to me. (Group 2)

Ruth: ...they were always dirty and they, they smelt quite a lot of the time, and they frequently had ill fitting clothes I remember they, she never used to wear socks inside her shoes and you used to see blisters because her shoes were always so tight. (Group 3)

Kirsty: ...And they're dirty. And they come in and they say 'oh I haven't had I haven't had any breakfast this morning and I'm hungry'... (Group 6)

Each group constructed the Deprived Child in similar terms. Deprived children were positioned as the type of child most commonly thought of in relation to child neglect and as the type of neglected child most likely to arouse professional concern. This type of construction is the classic symbol of the neglected child with its focus on dirt, smell and disorder (Ferguson, 2004). It is a construction drawing on discourses relating to medical hygiene. Often participants did not specify the harm that resulted from this manifestation of neglect, perhaps viewing elaboration as unnecessary. At times harm was constructed with the neglect: so, for example Ruth (see above) talks about blisters, elsewhere Ros (Group 1) talks about Rickets resulting from a failure to meet children's nutritional needs. This harm was often but not always constructed using medical discourse; social effects were also apparent. Most obviously those effects related to the reactions of others: such children evoked pity and revulsion in those around them. To continue with Ruth and Kirsty's extracts above, for Kirsty (and her group) the Deprived Child evoked shock and sadness:

Kirsty: And you think 'oh, bless 'em'...

Laura: God!

Kirsty: and I think it's so sad. And I think that's child neglect. (Group 6)

Ruth on the other hand recalls a very different response to the Deprived Child:

Ruth: ..they were always teased mercilessly. (Group 3)

For Ruth the ill-effects of child neglect extended beyond the immediate physical/medical effects on the children's bodies.

The Groups repeatedly constructed children as needing food, cleanliness, clothing and shelter, but neglect was not solely constructed from an absence or insufficiency of these things. Child neglect could also result from an inappropriate response to a child's physical needs. This is discussed most frequently in relation to nutrition. Children were positioned as Deprived not just from a lack of food, but also from being inappropriately fed. The "stuffed" children who were "absolutely obese" (Group 1) and the "overweight offspring" of Group 2 were not seen as Uncontrolled using discourses of discipline and (self-)regulation. Rather they were positioned within medical discourses of obesity - children's health was being endangered by their being fed/allowed to eat too much, or too much of the wrong

things and thereby this fell into the Deprived category. Childhood obesity was not just constructed as causing difficulties during childhood, but also as a problem for the future: fat children become unhealthy adults, placing their future health and wellbeing at risk:

Emma: ...and the result stays with the child all through its adult life. (Group 2).

8.5.2 The Unloved Child

Participants often constructed the Unloved Child in contrast to the Deprived Child. While, as I discuss in the next chapter, the Deprived Child was constructed as having an association with poverty and class, the Unloved Child was specifically constructed as a classless alternative:

Zoe: I think emotional neglect can come from any family, I don't think it matters about the background ... (Group 4)

Claire: ...you can be the richest person in the world and still neglect your child, you know they could have everything that money can buy and be totally neglected. (Group 6)

As stated above, emotional needs were constructed as including first and foremost the need for love:

Lucy: feeling loved and cared for. (Group 1)

Aban: ...show love and affection and reduce neglect. (Group 5)

There was one sole dissenter from the proposition that children who do not receive love are neglected:

Paul: I can well imagine children being brought up by some relations let's say an uncle and aunt you know because their parents themselves have died or whatever, now if that uncle and aunt are erm don't actually love the child but are carrying out responsibilities without actual love I can a) imagine that and b) I don't think that you can say that's neglect...(Group 2)

The Group concurred, although stating that "actual love" was greatly to be preferred. Paul's observation exposed the complexity of the discursive construction of 'love'. Love was an adult disposition towards the child, an emotion, but it was also performative. If you have "actual love" for a child, then that means you must do certain things for him/her. Feeling love was not enough if it did not result in particular loving actions towards the child. Love was therefore constructed as necessarily active: a combination of disposition and loving actions which directed at meeting the child's developmental needs.

Ruth: ..I remember either hearing or reading about a study ...they had two groups of very young babies and one just had their physical needs met so they were always clean, they were always fed, they always had water but nobody ever picked them up or gave them any eye contact, and then this other group got all their physical needs met but they also got picked up and cuddled and lots of affection, and the first group, a number of the group died because they had a failure to thrive and I think that highlighted at the time that children need just as much to be attended to emotionally and with physical touch as well as just like clothes and food and warmth. (Group 3)

Eliz: ...when they are two years old they already have that thing with their mother or father and they cling to either one or the other because they are frightened. (Group 2).

Pam: ...when they're in intensive care if they're premature they have to get, to do skin to skin to like bond with the child. (Group 4)

In contrast to the medical hygiene discourse within which the Deprived Child is positioned, participants used psychological discourse to construct the Unloved Child. As the extracts above demonstrate, several groups referred directly to expert theory and practice in asserting the importance of proximity, eye-contact, loving touch and the development of infant attachment for normal infant development.

For participants, children needed to experience 'love' throughout childhood. However the manifestation of the loving disposition was constructed as changing as children got older – in addition to finding expression in physical proximity and frequent touch, love involved adults spending time with older children, interacting with them, stimulating them, paying attention to them and taking an interest in their lives:

Jen: ...showing interest [which is all part of] the love...

Eliz: [interest yes]

Jen: interested enough to help with homework, 'what did you do today?', to be there when needed. (Group 2)

Ros: ...The worst thing you can do to a child is ignore them which is what a neglected child is. (Group 1)

Mark: Surely it's just about being interested in them...

Claire: [I think that's true, I think that's a lot of it].

Mark: [there's that interest in them] and in how they are getting on...

Kirsty: yes listening to them.

Mark: what they need, are they getting it. (Group 6)

Failing to meet a child's emotional needs was constructed as causing lasting psychological consequences.

Angela: I think of it more, in terms of the like the psychological effects it would have. (Group 8)

Zoe: *emotional neglect can cause*
Sue: *more damage*
Zoe: *Way way more damage (Group 4)*

Specific failings were paired with their consequences for the child, the adult and/or society. Children who are ignored and not given attention were positioned as liable to act out to get adult attention:

Ros:... They feel they're not important, they'll do whatever it takes to get attention. (Group 1)

Aban: ... They just they just want someone to listen to them whereas they're not getting that at home so they're thinking "oh if we go mess about then we might get some sort of attention at least" (Group 5).

Children who feel unloved were constructed as likely to fulfil their psychological need to 'belong' in anti-social ways:

Ros: ...they say [the gang] becomes like a family because they don't have a family that is looking out for them, so this, it is protection it gives they gives them status, it gives them a belonging (Group 1).

Sarah: ...and of course if they are ignored at home and the parents aren't around, I think that is where they start finding a gang who can make them feel belonging to something (Group 2).

Children who do not learn about loving relationships through experience were seen as less able to love others leading to a lifetime of damaged and damaging relationships and the perpetuation of neglect down the generations:

Sheila: ...as a result of neglect the children who are going inwards in themselves, that's very bad too because then they become peculiar in some ways and they divorce themselves from life (Group 1)

Pam: like it's always long-term like when you're in relationships you don't really like show affection because you weren't shown affection by your parents, it's like a big circle (Group 4)

Finally children who do not interact with adults may experience cognitive developmental deficits:

Rebecca: ..it's got left in the cot as a baby for quite a bit of the day or a playpen or other circumstances like that and because it's not getting that emotional attachment with a parent...it's causing backwards delay (Group 8)

All groups agreed that the Unloved Child would be likely to exhibit impaired behavioural and psychological functioning, and that these impairments were potentially both catastrophic and permanent.

8.5.3 The Uncontrolled Child

Lola: ...like it lump it we've all got to fit in with society, and if some people just don't know how, they've never had 'no', they've never been told they can't do something. (Group 7)

While children were constructed as needing love, time, attention and nurturing in order to develop properly, participants also constructed them as needing adult discipline. For participants the absence of discipline would result in a child who was unregulated, unable or unwilling to conform to the way society works. This dysregulation is not constructed in quite the same way as the psychological and cognitive difficulties the Unloved Child is at risk of developing; the deficits demonstrated by the Uncontrolled Child are rather constructed as behavioural and moral.

Laura: the neglected children... must be the ones who are creating a more difficult environment for the rest of us to live in possibly because they know no better. (Group 6)

Kas... you could tell that he's used to kicking off...(Group 10)

Participants agreed children needed to learn to respect laws, regulations, social values and morality; they need to be taught how to behave. Children who have not been taught the values of society were said to behave in anti-social ways, following their own ideas about what is good for they themselves rather than trying to work for the good of all.

There are clear ways in which children are expected to behave, particularly when in the presence of adult authority. Take for example this from Morag:

Morag:...to me that child is neglected because she's rude, she's got no discipline, she doesn't have a set bedtime...and she doesn't get chastised, and she's allowed to talk to grown-ups however she likes... (Group 9)

Morag constructs a child who does not know her 'place' and is not being disciplined to behave in a way that is considered to be appropriate and acceptable for children. This is not an Unloved Child necessarily, but rather a child who is not being subjected to appropriate authority, who is, in effect, behaving like an adult rather than a child. This failure to teach children how to behave is seen as impacting on society not just by producing unruly children who will be rejected by their peers and encounter difficulties at school as a result, but by failing to produce docile and useful adults. Over and over again,

children who have not been appropriately disciplined were constructed as adults who are incapable of exercising self-restraint, or who, having not been taught the values of society, choose to circumvent them by behaving in anti-social and even criminal ways:

Vic: ...I think they don't conform to society as those of us who have perhaps not been neglected and have grown up thinking that laws are a good thing, and it's a good thing to be able to get on with your neighbour and that there are certain boundaries you don't cross... (Group 1)

Morag:... People are not going to like her wherever she goes, people are going to say "oh she's horrible". (Group 9)

A child will be seen as neglected if he/she appears able to flout social rules with impunity sometimes even where such behaviour has an alternative medical explanation:

Morag:...a lot of kids get labelled as being ADHD and they're not ADHD, it's because of learned behaviour in the home, and not just learned behaviour but behaviour being allowed to be displayed and not chastised and not shown the right way (Group 9).

Participants agreed that children need adults to impose regulation and boundaries on behaviour interpreted as childhood defiance of social norms.

8.5.4 The Escaping Child

Mark: if school finishes at four and Johnny gets home at six, and it's never occurred to them where Johnny has been for those two hours every day, well that's neglect (Group 6)

Participants constructed a fourth category of neglected child which I have termed the Escaping Child. Either deliberately or otherwise, the Escaping Child was positioned as evading appropriate adult oversight and supervision:

Eva...the little kids you see playing out a little bit too late at night... (Group 7)

Sophie:...leaving them alone in the house...(Group 8)

What constituted the Escaping Child was the most contested category within the groups. All agreed that children needed supervision, but beyond that broad construction there was a great deal of disagreement as to exactly what this entailed. The age at which children could be left at home alone was particularly problematic as illustrated by the following extracts:

Aisha: ...if the kids are sleeping they kind of think 'let's not wake them up' and you know it's only going to be... I wouldn't risk leaving them at home awake

Kas: not even asleep

Raja: no I think they put them to sleep

Kas: but that doesn't make any difference to me. You can't justify that. That is neglect (Group 10)

Mark: it's a grey area, how far is okay to go away, and is it okay, what age is it okay if they are operating a mobile phone, is it okay if they're in separate rooms and have both got a phone, you know one of them is going to phone if something happens to the other, is that what age is that okay what age isn't it?

Claire: I don't think it's okay to leave your kids with a mobile phone.

Mark: But if they're upstairs? I mean is it okay in the same house? Next-door? How about in the garage?... (Group 6)

This mirrors the lack of consensus on the issue found by a recent opinion poll (YouGov, 2011).

Children seen in public spaces late at night or during the school day (when the observer felt they should be elsewhere) were also positioned as Escaping. However, the Escaping Child was not limited to those who were physically unsupervised through being home or out alone at an inappropriate age. The category extended to those situations where adults were physically present but for some reason not paying proper attention. Similarly children inappropriately engaging in adult activities such as watching adult video games without adult awareness were constructed as Escaping (where they did so with adult awareness they were constructed as Uncontrolled rather than Escaping). A frequent construction was children Escaping to virtual worlds online where adults could not follow or patrol their activities.

The consequences of supervisory neglect were constructed in two ways. Harm could result from dangers inherent within the environment and improperly guarded against:

Raja: ...she's got one of these really shiny you know fabric satiny dresses on and it was an electric fire and it caught and mum had popped out and she burned to death (Group 10)

Harm could also result from the malevolence of other adults positioned as preying on Escaping Children (the paedophile, the abductor, or another type of criminal):

Kam: And it just takes that one incident to sort of...

Megan: That's it, one thing, just one person to come into their life... (Group 9)

Participants constructed children as vulnerable, and as a result positioned adults keeping close watch over all aspects of children's lives as necessary and normal. The Escaping Child category therefore normalises adult surveillance over children, mandating their continual subjugation to adult disciplinary gaze.

8.6 Neglect or Neglects?

The Deprived, Unloved, Uncontrolled and Escaping categories overlap in places, and participants were more likely to construct children as neglected if they fell within more than one of them. However, the existence of different categories indicates that different constructions of potential harm from neglect were in operation for the participants. The Deprived Child is constructed within a medical/hygienist framework and this type of neglect is associated with damage to the physical organism (the body and the brain, as opposed to the mind). The Unloved Child category is constructed using psychological discourse and those within it are positioned as at risk of emotional damage. The Uncontrolled Child is constructed within a functionalist framework with such children positioned as growing up not so much at risk of psychological harm but in opposition to the good order of society. The Escaping Child is slightly different: while many different types of harm may befall an unsupervised child (participants constructed physical, medical, psychological and criminal consequences), this category seems to provide a very powerful disciplinary framework for adults in general: it is wrong and bad to let children escape adult gaze as doing so places them at risk.

In outline, these lay constructions appear similar to expert and professional understandings of what children need. Both participants and policy makers construct the needs of childhood in relation to the production of the pro-social adult. While speaking of child neglect, participants seemed to be constructing child neglects. They are not alone in this: as stated in chapter 6 and Appendix 2, previous quantitative research into lay 'attitudes' has argued that the data demonstrates the operation of different neglect domains. The expert literature also divides child neglect into needs based categories. However, there is disagreement about what those categories are. The NSPCC webpage for example extracts Cooper's (1985) sevenfold definition of children's needs (basic physical care, affection, security, stimulation and innate potential, guidance and control, responsibility, and independence) which produces four types of neglect: physical, emotional, educational and medical. Horwath's (2007) review of child neglect literature and legislation produced six categories of neglect: medical, nutritional, physical, emotional, educational and lack of supervision and guidance. Conceptualising neglect as a unitary phenomenon may be problematic: the concept seems to be made up of disparate elements, more appropriately 'neglects' than 'neglect'.

8.7 Discourses

The three main discourses within which participants spoke of neglected children are all psy-complex discourses: medicine, functionalism from sociology and (particularly) developmental psychology. Most obviously participants drew heavily on the principles of attachment theory associated with Bowlby and his associates (Bowlby, 1951; Rudolph Schaffer, 2004), and although they did not refer to it by name, the hypothesis of the internal working model (the idea that primary relationships form a template for later ones) was evident within constructions of the difficulties Unloved Children have in forming successful and loving relationships throughout life. However, my analysis of the data showed that this was far from being the sole psy-complex theory in operation. Some participants drew on ideas associated with the Freudian unconscious and the potency and latency of psychological problems caused in childhood (Freud, 1905; 1920):

Pam: ... because you're storing stuff up and that aren't you? As it can develop long-term, like it's always long-term...(Group 4)

In addition, it could be argued that the late modern manifestation of the Apollonian construction of the child, innately programmed for self-actualisation and worthy of love, attention and support is inseparable from therapeutic and humanist notions rooted in psychology (Rogers, 1951; Maslow, 1943; 1970):

Laura: ... Children should be loved and cared for and nurtured and...

Anna: valued.

Laura: and valued.

Kirsty: they're so precious. (Group 6)

The 'commonsense' or 'natural' theory that most participants seemed to rely on to construct child neglect is behaviourism. Children were constructed above all as learning; where they are neglected they will not learn what they should during a normal childhood:

Ruth: ... this child has learnt that nobody will come when he cries and so he stops crying... (Group 3)

Zoe: .. you're just going to learn it through like what you're used, what you're used to seeing (Group 4)

Operant conditioning (associated with Skinner, 1953) states that all behaviour is learned through the mechanisms of reinforcement and/or punishment. Thus any behaviour of children can be attributed to the adults responsible for them. Social Learning Theory

(associated with Bandura, 1977) states that learning is heavily influenced by the behaviour of important role models.

Finally, there are powerful elements of functionalist discourse at work here - value orientations and moral patterning must be laid down early and cannot later easily be altered (Parsons, 1951). The child is positioned as the blank slate upon which experience, particularly early experience, leaves an indelible mark:

Morag: children learn by example... (Group 9)

This learning by example takes place constantly, not simply when adults will it. So an inverse scrutiny is in operation. Not only must the adult world watch the child at all times, but the adult world is also under constant disciplinary surveillance from children who are positioned as eternally watching and absorbing adult behaviour, reproducing aspects of it at will:

Morag: ..and also what the children are seeing at a young age. I mean I've seen it myself with, with kids and grandkids speaking of the parent and going like that (mimics smoking) (Group 9)

This means that adult actions cannot be hidden and private; they are always at risk of exposure and censure through the learned behaviour of the child.

8.8 Expert Discourse, Lay Mouths

It is worth considering whether there are differences between lay and expert constructions of children and what they need. Lindland and Kendall-Taylor (2013) and Kendall-Taylor et al (2014), whose qualitative research into expert and lay cultural models of maltreatment was conducted within the same time frame as this project, argue that there are important differences between lay models of child neglect and expert ones. According to the authors lay people view the consequences of child neglect far more narrowly than experts, having only "a very limited sense of [maltreatment's] broader *social* impacts" (Kendall-Taylor et al, 2014:816; emphasis in the original). I did not find this to be the case. As I have shown throughout this chapter the participants spoke of child neglect causing the same type of behavioural, psychological and social dysfunction as the expert literature (see for example Hildyard and Wolfe, 2002; Meadows et al, 2011; Davies and Ward, 2012). In particular, experts and Groups were united in associating child neglect with "potentially highly

damaging and long-term effects” (Davies and Ward, 2012:31), including cognitive deficits (Erikson, Egeland and Pianta, 1989; Gowen, 1993; Meadows et al, 2011), low educational achievement (Perez and Widom, 1994; Davies and Ward, 2012), attachment problems (Crittenden and Ainsworth, 1989; Hildyard and Wolfe, 2002; Davies and Ward, 2012), internalising and externalising behaviours (Dubowitz, Papas, Black and Starr, 2002) and as capable of impacting negatively on relationships throughout childhood and adulthood (Fang and Corso, 2007). Similarly, participants and experts described neglect in adolescence as associated with problems with physical and mental health, risk-taking behaviour, lower educational achievements, and increased anti-social and criminal behaviour (Stein et al, 2009; Davies and Ward, 2012).

Lindland and Kendall-Taylor (2013) also argued: “members of the public lack a way of connecting *acts* of maltreatment to the *effects* of maltreatment” (no page; emphasis in original), because they lack the brain-based “*developmental lens*” (Kendall-Taylor et al, 2014: 815, emphasis in the original) experts use to think about the effects of maltreatment on child development. I found the constructions my participants made of the relationships between neglectful acts and their effects on the developing child were coherent and meaningful. While my participants did not use the language of brain architecture to describe the effects of neglect, they did use the language of psychological developmental models that brain based research is claimed by some to confirm (Child Information Gateway, 2009; Twardosz and Lutzker, 2010).

Lindland and Kendall-Taylor (2013; 2014) also found that the public used normalisation models to explain the intergenerational transfer of child abuse and not child neglect. In contrast, my participants did use normalisation models when talking about neglect:

Maddy: so if someone's been brought up to be neglected then they'll think that that's, that's normal, that's how you bring up the children. (Group 3)

Hamid: so the child grows up and it's been neglected it will be kind of conditioned to see it as all right, just the natural way of life so he'll treat, they'll treat their kids the same as that...(Group 5)

However, as discussed earlier, participants also drew on developmental models such as attachment to demonstrate the way in which particular types of neglect (particularly emotional neglect) can produce enduring psychological and cognitive deficits, deficits which make it more likely that neglected children will, as parents in turn, be less able to love their own children. This model, as well as the learned behaviour model was seen as responsible for neglected children going on to develop ineffective or unacceptable parenting styles.

8.9 Positioning Children

Sophie: ...children need to be children don't they? (Group 8)

Anna: Children need to be children. (Group 6)

Participants constructed children as immature and not adult, and childhood as a time where children required protection from adult concerns. Children were positioned as neglected where they were given adult tasks too early (for example due to parental choice or parental disability) and so rendered unable to engage in developmentally appropriate tasks and peer relationships (Groups 1, 2, 6, 8 and 10 all discussed this issue).

Kirsty: ... I just, I do feel sorry for him. He doesn't get to go out to play. He doesn't get to go to friends' houses. Because he just has to HELP. (Group 6)

Sophie: ...just not to worry about things and do what other children can do. (Group 8)

Sheila: they can't go home and have natural lives, they have to care for parents or whoever, ... I think that they have also been deprived of parts of their childhood (Group 1)

This idea of childhood being a protected time of play and discovery echoes stage theories of development, most notably Piaget's (1954) theory of discovery learning. Conversely, participants argued that children could also be neglected by being kept away from adult society for too long. Preventing children receiving appropriate exposure to the adult world risked producing permanently childlike adults unable to navigate the world 'out there' successfully:

Skye:...she struggled to live in an adult world because she was never allowed to confront actually dangerous situations when she was a teenager and now she can't cope with them very well (Group 7).

Alternatively, such protection could produce adults lacking the maturity and judgement to operate safely within the adult freedoms attained on legal majority:

Fern: ... As soon as she got to university she just went absolutely wild, drink, drugs, sex whatever she could get hold of, do that she hadn't been allowed to do or even experience, she just went totally off the rails. (Group 7)

Participants constructed the transition between childhood and adulthood in terms of increasing independence and increasing conflict with authority figures:

Sheila: Teenagers and their parents, there is this sort of thing, you know you've got to be difficult haven't you. (Group 1)

Alice: I don't know, in a couple of years if I tell him to dewax his ears, if he don't want to he ain't going to do it (Group 7)

Adolescence is also associated with increasing levels of judgement and responsibility:

Lola: do you think it's different for different ages though? Because at the moment we are talking about a 12-year-old whereas I think it's different if you see a 15 or 16-year-old lad, you think maybe they've made more of a choice, they are left to be more independent. (Group 7)

As stated in previous chapters, where developmental models of childhood are in operation, children are constructed, by definition, as not adult: instead they are unfinished, unequal and lacking in adult knowledge and autonomy (Jenks, 2005; Mayall, 2006; Wyness, 2012). Adolescence is seen as a time of conflict because the line between childhood and adulthood is less clear, therefore children's views are granted some level of legitimacy (but not complete adult recognition) due to the proximity of adolescents to adulthood. The 'normal' childhood should ensure that the lessening of adult authority over the child is replaced by a sense of adult responsibility within the child - the interiorisation of the disciplinary gaze:

Kas: And I didn't need to tell him to apologise. He'd rung the school and he'd gone in the next day to apologise (Group 10).

The psychological literature also constructs identity experimentation and familial conflict as a normal part of adolescent development if the transition from child to adult is to be accomplished successfully (e.g. Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Kroger, Martinussen and Marcia, 2010).

My analysis indicates that conflict between children and adults is not confined to adolescents. However, the conflict between adults and younger children is simply not recognised, the will of children discursively rendered meaningless. Importantly, this means that for participants child neglect is not about how children feel. Participants constructed children as incapable of recognising accurately what they need or what is best for them, so their immature feelings can be discounted. Indeed feeling or claiming to be neglected was constructed as part of normal childhood:

*Aban: everyone in this room I think has as a child has felt neglected once.
Hamid: but then it's us as children thinking that, so we're not actually being neglected. (Group 5)*

*Morag: They were always telling me that they felt neglected (laughs)...
Abra: Yes! That's my son! (Group 9)*

Raja: ... and you know what, you do the best with what you've got for as long as you can and they'll still say that you neglected them! (Group 10)

Similarly, the fact that a child is happy does not mean that he/she is not being neglected. Unlike child abuse (which perhaps focuses on sad, hurt, confused, and/or frightened children), the Escaping Child, the Uncontrolled Child and the loved but Deprived Child can be constructed as happy. The knowledge that they are neglected is with the observing adult. Children were positioned as possibly unaware that they were in neglectful situations when they were, either because they have no knowledge of any alternative with which to compare their own situations, or because the neglectful situation, particularly in relation to the Escaping Child or the Uncontrolled Child, is one that the child has engineered and wishes to continue:

Mark: but just because THEY want to be plonked in front of the telly doesn't mean that is in their best interests does it... (Group 6)

Alice:... There are certain things that absolutely – that is neglectful: smoking – don't let your child do it; having sex underage – don't let your child do it; getting drunk and taking drugs – don't let your child do it, don't say it's okay: obviously it isn't...(Group 7).

Authority resides in adults by virtue of their adulthood. Adults impose adult authority over children, and children are expected to submit to that authority, as illustrated in the following exchange:

Aban: but what if the child doesn't like that food?

Hamid: for what reason?

Aban: he just doesn't like it.

Taliq: then you force him to eat the food.

Hamid: he just has to eat the food.

(laughter) (Group 5)

Adults are generally positioned as more knowledgeable than children, a fact that some participants recognised in relation to themselves - when they were children they saw things that happened to them differently from the way in which they see those things as adults:

Aban: like a child won't understand what's happening... so you might see that as neglect but as you get older you see it as something else.

Waheed: yeah when you get wiser. (Group 5)

The sole dissenter to this was Ruth in Group 3 who observed that the way in which 'society' (note the conflation of adulthood with society) sees children, mandates the exercise of adult power over them:

Ruth: I think that's part of society's attitude towards children, in my opinion I think often we continually tell children what to do, what to think... because we see children as being somehow incompetent and needing to be moulded and shaped by adults, rather than as people who need help in growing. (Group 3)

Participants positioned neglected children as not developing normally, excluding them still more as a group from being listened to in relation to determining their own needs.

It is noteworthy that participants spoke of children in relation to their needs rather than their rights. As stated in chapter 5, the UNCRC declares children to have protection and welfare rights as well as participation rights (UNCRC; Thomas, 2007). Certainly the way in which participants constructed children as having developmental needs that must be met would be in accordance with welfare and protection rights, what Thomas describes as interest rights "based on membership of a *community who share needs and interests*" (Thomas, 2014b: 160; emphasis in original). However, this construction militates against participation rights "linked with membership of a *community of rational autonomous individuals*" (Thomas, 2014b: 160; emphasis in original). Children, particularly younger children, may not be considered competent to exercise those rights. Developing children were not constructed as rational autonomous individuals by participants.

Developmental models of childhood need to be negotiated by those concerned with the empowerment of children and children's rights agendas (Thomas, 2007; 2011). The UNCRC has stated that children have the right to participate in important decisions that affect their lives (UNCRC Article 12; Alderson, 2008; Archard, 2009), and defining child neglect - determining what behaviours and environments are acceptable or unacceptable for children - must be of tremendous importance to children. Article 12 UNCRC gives all children the status of "at least in part, autonomous self-determining agents" (Archard, 2009: 46). However this construction of children was only found within my data in relation to children approaching adulthood. Participants constructed younger children in "essentially paternalist" ways, positioned "as in need of protection by those more able and better placed to make decisions for them" (Archard, 2009: 46). While older children may assert their right to consultation and participation, the right that younger children seemed to have within my data was the right to a developmental childhood and the right to be protected (found within Article 3 UNCRC and child protection frameworks).

8.10 The Media

Mark: ... I mean how many thousands and thousands and thousands of kids go on holiday every year with no problems whatsoever and one, one makes the media and all of a [sudden everyone's panicking]

Anna: [we are all paranoid, yeah] (Group 6)

Participants in all groups spoke about the media coverage of child maltreatment. However the stories they drew on in the Groups only appeared to relate to the categories of the Escaping Child (stories such as the abductions of April Jones and Madeleine McCann) and the Deprived Child (stories such as Baby P). The stories were not constructed as useful in raising public awareness about child neglect. News stories about Escaping Children tended not to position them as neglected (although some of the participants did), they were used more by participants to justify or critique the 'need' for close oversight of children's behaviour:

Morag: Even when something like what's happened to that little girl in Wales [April Jones], something like that is highlighted...

Kam: they still don't seem to notice.

Morag: you still see children out by themselves. (Group 9)

Claire: yes I wonder how many parents go abroad now and actually leave their children in a hotel room and walk around the corner

Kirsty: [absolutely no chance] my kids are with me 24/7 (Group 6)

I would argue that this type of media story functions to discipline parents and carers into closely watching over children, rather than establishing what is or is not neglect, an issue I shall be looking at in the next chapter.

The opposing story line, containing stories of child maltreatment and campaigns by the children's charities to raise awareness of the plight of maltreated children, had a quite different effect. Participants used these stories as shorthand for children who had been treated in particularly heinous ways, the story of Baby Peter Connelly ('Baby P') and the NSPCC 'child in a cot' campaign being most frequently alluded to. For participants the accounts and the campaigns were harrowing and memorable (several participants repeated the words from the child in a cot advert during the discussions). However, participants considered the stories to be extreme. It is unsurprising perhaps that stories where children have died as a result of abuse and neglect receive more media coverage than less harrowing manifestations of neglect, and as Brandon et al (2013) found in their analysis of serious case reviews, in such cases abuse and neglect are often both in evidence. It is also perhaps unsurprising that in an attempt to raise public awareness and to raise funds, child

maltreatment campaigners use extreme cases to attract attention. However, for many within the Groups, this spotlight was problematic.

Some participants, constructing neglect as either less serious or less intentional than child abuse (as discussed above), positioned cases that were clearly extremely serious or involved the infliction of deliberate harm as child abuse rather than child neglect. Where it was accepted that the accounts were capable of portraying neglect, other participants felt that the depictions had resulted in a narrowing of the neglect category to only the most appalling and extreme actions. This would of course be to the detriment of children who were experiencing less appalling levels of neglect but would now not be recognised or responded to as neglected:

Mel: isn't that the problem that a lot of people see neglect as such a severe thing. It's an extreme thing...

Sue: [it's almost like abuse]

Mel: [when you think child neglect] it's like NSPCC and those adverts you see on TV and stuff... (Group 4)

Eva: you know those adverts of the images of the severe child neglect and it's the, the children who suffer neglect who maybe don't suffer so much that anybody would notice so they're never, so they just get ignored. (Group 7)

8.11 Seeing Neglect

Sarah:... with neglect how, what signs do you see, it it's, by its nature it's so hidden and difficult... (Group 2)

Lola: I mean you can spot a bruise, you can spot a child that's severely malnourished but to actually be able to, to see the hurt inside a child is I think a very different thing (Group 7)

There was a paradox within my data. While neglect was constructed as hidden, difficult to identify and almost impossible to evidence (particularly emotional neglect) participants reported not infrequently encountering children they were concerned about and whom they would characterise as Deprived, Unloved, Uncontrolled or Escaping. Other research supports the construction that the public considers neglect to be pervasive (e.g. Action for Children, 2011; Kendall-Taylor et al, 2014). Prevalence studies also support this account, Radford et al (2011) finding that of those aged 18-24, 16% had experienced neglect at some point in their lifetime and 9% had experienced what professionals termed "severe neglect". However, while this appears to indicate consensus between lay people and

experts, the neglect seen by participants is not necessarily that which would engage the attention of experts, as Mark acknowledges:

Mark: I would imagine that that happens all the time. ...And there's nothing a social worker is going to do about it because there are so many of them. (Group 6)

Media stories perhaps emphasise the difference between the types of neglect experts are positioned as interested in and what participants see and are concerned about on a daily basis. When one compares the case of Baby P to a child behaving badly in a supermarket or a child sent to boarding school, the difference is obvious. However, it is worth remembering that participants particularly associated the Unloved Child with enduring and intergenerational psychological damage. The children positioned as most likely to end up as damaged and damaging adults are also those constructed as least likely to be 'seen' as neglected by professionals.

8.12 Conclusion

In conclusion, participants in all groups defined child neglect in relation to the failure to provide some aspect of the developmental childhood. Participants positioned psy-complex discourses of psychology, sociology and medicine as common sense or truth in relation to the needs children are constructed as having, how those needs should be met and the consequences for children and society of not meeting those needs. In my view as an expert, the difference between lay knowledge and expert knowledge related to detail rather than substance or structure. If the different psy-complex discourses relating to children and childhood are themselves converging (Thomas, 2014a) this may increasingly mean that children can only be positioned within and understood through one overarching discourse: that of child development. Although it is unclear how children view themselves, adults, experts and lay people, seem to construct children in very similar ways, perhaps indicating an episteme of children and childhood, as defined in chapter 2 (Foucault, 1970). I return to this point in the conclusion.

Participants also expressed concerns that large numbers of children within their communities were not having their developmental needs appropriately met. Current legal and professional frameworks were positioned as failing to identify and assist all the children whose needs were not being met, due to the threshold at which expert concern is elicited being too high. Most participants argued that the media had a clear role to play in

publicising child neglect, but media focus on extreme cases (both in terms of reporting and campaigning) hampered public understanding of the width of the child neglect category.

Developmental discourse positions children as relatively powerless and adults as relatively powerful. Childhood was expressly constructed as disciplinary, with children who fail to conform to society's rules potentially positioned as neglected. For participants child neglect is a problem because it impacts upon children's futures, their subjective experience of their current situations being less important. However, for participants, child neglect is not solely about children's unmet needs, but rather involves complex constructions of the various positions of child, adults and society. In the next chapter I will analyse the ways in which constructions about the role and behaviour of adults in children's lives make it more or less possible for children to be seen as neglected.

Chapter 9 - Constructing the Neglector

9.1 Introduction

A child with unmet physical, emotional, training and supervisory needs was not necessarily constructed as a neglected child. For participants, seeing a child as Deprived, Unloved, Uncontrolled or Escaping was to begin a process that could result in a child being positioned as neglected. The next stage in the process was to try and construct an explanation for why the needs of that child were not being met. This involved identifying which adult was responsible for meeting the child's needs (overwhelmingly a maternal figure), and assessing the quality of their relationship with the child, the extent to which they were aware of the child's needs, their ability to meet the child's needs, the reasons for their not meeting the child's needs and their culpability for failing to do so.

Where a parent could be constructed as neglectful, the unmet needs of the child were more likely to be constructed as child neglect than if no one could be positioned as behaving abnormally or neglectfully. I will show how particular types of parental behaviour and family circumstances gave rise to different concerns in relation to child neglect for participants and these different constructions dictated different responses. Finally I will explore the ways in which communities and the state were positioned in relation to the children within them and how participants constructed their role in preventing child neglect.

9.2 Identifying the Neglector: Parental Responsibility

Mel: ...it's not doing what you should be doing as a parent. (Group 4)

For participants, a child whose developmental needs were not being met was potentially neglected. Constructing the child as actually neglected required the construction of a neglectful adult responsible for meeting those needs and failing to do so. For all the Groups parents were positioned as primarily responsible for meeting all their children's needs and neglect was constructed as the failure of parenting:

Ros: ..where the very basics of parenting has not been provided. (Group 1)

Me:but who needs to meet those needs?

Cora: ...whoever is responsible for the child, whether it's parents or foster parents or whoever is responsible for them. (Group 3)

Once a child is seen as Deprived, Unloved, Uncontrolled or Escaping, the focus moves from the child to the parent in order to judge why they are failing to perform their normal parental role and whether or not they are neglectful:

Laura: ...the first port of call is with the parent... (Group 6)

Eva: I think "do their parents know where they are first of all and secondly are they condoning it?" (Group 7)

9.2.1 The Normal Family

Anna: [Neglect is] Families not looking after their children (Group 6)

Lucy: well we're all assuming there are two parents but so often it's a single parent isn't it. (Group 1)

Kas: as a working mum... I think I've had a lot of support and help from my family (Group 10)

Participants positioned normal childhood and parenting as taking place within families. The normal family was constructed in similar ways throughout the Groups as the stable heterosexual two parent family unit. The traditional family structures and traditional models of family life were evoked over and over again as protecting children from neglect. Two parent families were constructed as providing a level of financial security for the family and ensuring appropriate role models from each gender:

Lucy: ...A single parent has greater difficulty I would assume in discipline and all the rest of it and even in just earning enough money to cope to pay for it to pay the bills and everything. (Group 1)

Pam: I think it would be a lot harder for a single-parent to try and fulfil both parts... (Group 4)

Waheed: ...some people might not, not have a father and that may lead to them to feel they, that they've been neglected, so they might not feel as loved as much. (Group 5)

Traditional practices of 'family life' were also constructed as important by different Groups. Family mealtimes promote family interaction, allow children to feel loved and cared for and provide an environment in which children can be taught and rehearse manners, values and appropriate behaviour. Collective family activities enhance parent-child bonding. Family rules relating to computer or television use, set bed times and shared household chores

teach children about boundaries, working together, postponing gratification, and running a household effectively:

Ros: ... she was the only person in her class where they regularly had family meals where they all sat down around a table. Her friends were amazed when they came over to Sunday lunch or whatever and they were all sat and they were made to have conversations and help to clear the table and all of that...(Group 1)

Mark: but that's surely up to parents to say 'now look you have had your hour in front of the telly now it's time to do, do something together' (Group 6)

Vic: ...the right thing to say is 'no you've had long enough [playing computer games], talk to me instead let's just talk about the day' (Group 1)

All these activities operate as mechanisms bringing children within the parental disciplinary gaze so essential for the process of normalising pro-social behaviour. Participants constructed normal family life as threatened by factors like maternal employment, changing technology and a reduction in family interaction to the detriment of children:

Ros:... even where you have got a normal family unit and whatever people seem to just come and go and get something out of the freezer and bung it in the microwave and go to their room do whatever it is they do there doesn't seem to be that sense that there are people looking out for you and interested in your day. (Group 1)

Emma: It was fixed and I think that the fact that it's now ... Completely up to the child to decide when it wants to go to bed is TERRIBLE, it can't be in the interests of the child. (Group 2)

Participants strongly associated parental break-up with situations in which a child's needs might not be met. Acrimonious separation, the withdrawal of one parent from the child's life and reconstituted families were all seen as giving rise to situations in which children could be neglected:

Emma:... if the divorce is a protracted and unpleasant one then the child will get virtually no attention from either parent really (Group 2)

Fern: yeah and then you get stepfamilies as well

Eva: yeah because that causes all sorts of problems doesn't it? (Group 7)

Morag: a lot of neglect as well is caused by absent parents. You know like for whatever reason, if they split up and they don't have contact with their children to me that is a form of neglect. (Group 9)

For participants, parental oversight of and involvement in their children's lives was protective against child neglect, and where this oversight was provided by a couple

committed to each other and to child rearing, the outcomes would be most likely to be satisfactory:

Lucy: See if you had a single parent, I mean just the one then obviously, what are you learning? I mean it's unbalanced (Group 1)

This is not to say (a point made emphatically by several participants) that single parents were more neglectful of their children, simply that ensuring children's needs were met was easier within the traditional nuclear family:

Alice: ... it's not about who parents it's about good parenting, it's about doing the right thing and bringing your child up without neglect. (Group 7)

Participants constructed the therapeutic family model (Rose, 1999; Hendrick 2007) as the preferred environment for normal child rearing. Children living in non-nuclear and non-traditional families were positioned as more vulnerable to neglect than children in 'normal' families.

9.2.2 Parenting and Gender

Pam: ...I think it's neglect like an emotional way. If your kid has had a really bad day at school and all they wanted to do is see their mum and talk about it but they've got this au pair who might be nice but it's not their mum... (Group 4)

Laura: ... we are not educating mums to be mums (Group 6).

Although most groups used the gender neutral term "parents" at least some of the time, the data shows that participants considered mothers primarily responsible for meeting and failing to meet the needs of their children. This may be due to the fact that all parents in my focus groups currently with children under 18 were female, but may also reflect wider social discourses in relation to responsibility for caring for children. Several groups acknowledged that mothers were primarily held responsible for neglect; some participants seeing this expectation as resulting from the natural and biological bond between mothers and children, others experiencing it as an onerous social obligation:

Morag: ...when you give birth to a child, that child is then your responsibility for the rest of its natural life, for the rest of your natural life. (Group 9).

*Claire:...[but why is it all on the mums?] You know why is it all on the mums? That's what frustrates the hell out of me. Why is it all on the mums for instance?
Laura:....because that's where society is. (Group 6).*

Despite this use of parenting language, participants seemed to construct the normal family with gendered and non-interchangeable parental roles. The role of fathers was elaborated by participants largely in relation to male role model and financial provider. When the groups discussed fathers it was usually in terms of their absence from the lives of children:

Sam: ...people divorce and the father will move on, say the mother has custody of the children and the father demands contact but surely his responsibility should be there all the time not just one day a week (Group 1)

Cora: .. her partner left her while she was pregnant and they already have one child, she was pregnant with their second child and he left, he was having an affair and he left with the other woman...(Group 3)

Within these constructions fathers were positioned as a family resource improperly absent to the detriment of their children. Featherstone (2013) argues that this discourse, by positioning all fathers as resident birth fathers, able and willing to be involved in their children's upbringing, ignores the complexity of fragmented family relationships and the dangers some men pose to other family members.

When incidents of neglect were discussed, it was predominantly in terms of women not looking after their children appropriately:

Raja: well that, the example I gave earlier of the mums used to leave their kids at home and asleep and this was from quite a young age (Group 10)

Emma: ... you hear of someone who, a mother who has been in and out of prison a lot and every time she gives birth to another child the state removes it immediately. Because the state does not consider that the mother would be able

Eliz: to be a good mother

Emma: to bring it up (Group 2).

Most participants seemed to consider it the mother's role to carry out most of the day to day child-rearing and to be primarily available for her children, a construction that remains in place despite the wide-scale entry of women into the workforce.

The gendering of child neglect which Morag views as natural and Claire rails against is found in the professional literature (e.g. Turney, 2000; Penn and Gough, 2002; D'Cruz, 2002; Featherstone, 2004; 2006; 2013; Daniel and Taylor, 2006; Horwath, 2007; Scourfield, 2003). In 2013, 91% of the 1.9 million lone parents with dependent children were women (ONS, 2013). People accused of neglecting children are usually failing mothers (Swift, 1995; Scourfield, 2000). Turney (2000) identifies the naturalisation of the connections between women, caring, femininity and motherhood. This child rearing role played by

women is also a necessary part of therapeutic familialism: what Rose (1999) describes as “the mundane tasks of mothering” being reconstructed as “emanations of a natural and essential state of love” (Rose, 1999:161). Use of the gender neutral language of parenting and parental responsibility may obscure entrenched and continuing gender inequalities in relation to child rearing (Featherstone, 2004; 2006; 2013; Daniel et al, 2005).

9.2.3 Normal Parenting

Ruth: I can't imagine choosing anything over my children.

Abby: no, you just can't get your head round it. (Group 3)

The Groups constructed normal parenting as having both a dispositional aspect and a practical aspect. For all participants normal parents are expected to have an extremely powerful emotional commitment to prioritising their children’s interests above their own needs and desires. This is recognised by mothers like Ruth and Abby (above) and non mothers like Vic (below):

Vic: I don't think I would have wanted the constant pressure of having to put the child first. (Group 1)

For participants, parents spending time with children - engaging with them, taking an interest in them, watching over them, meeting their needs, and worrying about them - was important evidence of this normal emotional parent-child connection. To wish not to be with your children, to wish to be ‘not a parent’ was constructed as abnormal. Yet all parents spoke of taking time away from children either for recreation, employment or further study. This behaviour was normalised either because it was in the child’s best interests (and therefore part of good parenting) or by the operation of the subjective manifestation of guilt:

Claire: and yet I spend most of my time feeling incredibly guilty I don't spend enough of my time with my kids [laughs]...

Laura: yes, yes

Anna: but you lot are always with your kids, you know every time you possibly can be with your kids, you're always out there with them.

Claire: mmm yes, but it doesn't stop me feeling guilty when I'm not.

*Mark: that's because you're a good mum. Good mums are supposed to feel guilty(!)
(Group 6)*

Kas: ... even so, I still feel guilty.

Jo: that's the word: GUILT.

Kas: I still feel guilty that I have so much to do or I've had too much to do to spend enough time with her. (Group 10)

Skye:... I mean that was a really big problem that I had which eventually made me ill in that with one child I went back to work after eight weeks. (Group 7)

In this way participant mothers positioned themselves and were positioned as 'normal' and highly attuned to the needs of their children. Guilt is part of the disciplinary mechanism that ensures 'normal' mothers put the interests of their children before their own, and choose to spend their time and energy on parenting rather than other activities. It ensures that mothers continue to experience internal pressure to do more than they have done or are doing (Rose, 1999).

For participants, this parental disposition is needed to drive parental action: the 'active love' discussed in the previous chapter. It was the role of parents first and foremost to behave as parents, to train, nurture, supervise and socialise children, keeping them out of harm's way and teaching them to observe legal and moral values. In addition, there was a strong role model aspect – participants expected parents to model pro-social behaviour for children and lead by example:

Kam: it's about role models. (Group 9)

Raja: but isn't that the parents' job, where there is poverty isn't it part of their job however much you are struggling but you say "you get education, there's always a way out and the way out is you know you've got to learn". I think that's neglect if they're not pushing their children to learn (Group 10)

Abra: because kids are learning you know what's going on in the family and what the parents are doing, they learn so quickly (Group 9)

For participants, parenting skills derived from knowledge about children's needs and how best to meet them. This expertise constructed the 'normal' parent-child relationship, and was primarily drawn from child development discourse accessed from expert and lay sources (including one's own experience of being parented).

Participants constructed normal parents as more knowledgeable about their child's needs than anyone else. As Group 7 pointed out, children are different and not all parents operate in the same way. It was clear from my data that the precise mechanics of good parenting were contested. Parent participants positioned themselves as inundated with competing expertise on a range of parenting issues and asserted their right to follow whichever school of thought they considered best for their children:

Skye: ... you can't tell a parent to medicate their child regardless of whether the doctor says that would be the best thing to do or not, because at the end of the day I'm legally responsible for my children so I have to make those decisions (Group 7).

Ruth: but then they're all those things like you know 'you make a rod for your own back'...

Cora: [I was just going to say that].

Ruth: [like you'll spoil the child]. I did see a great T-shirt which was, it was something about, it was on parenting and it said something like "my rod, my back". (Group 3)

Parental freedom to choose a parenting style was not unqualified. Child-rearing choices and their results were scrutinised by others, and participants spoke of their awareness of their behaviour with their child and their child's behaviour being watched and judged, and possibly misconstrued by others:

Laura:...but she's the very worried mother-in-law that thinks [whispers] 'oh no, they shouldn't be doing that they shouldn't'... (Group 6)

Raja: I used to walk away from her. I'd say "okay then see you later". And as soon as I turned the corner and she couldn't see me that girl was up and running after me. But if somebody would have looked at that they'd have said ["she is being abused"]

Aisha: [she's being neglected] (Group 10)

Troubled or troubling children were constructed by participants as products of bad parenting:

Abra: ... And she always said to us you know "this is your fault. It's mother's fault who brought the kids like that". (Group 9)

Alice: ...if your child [...] was a completely dysfunctional teenager now (laughter) but then you'd have to start asking questions about what, where have I gone wrong [what have I done]. (Group 7)

This third party surveillance of the behaviour of parents and children was experienced by the mothers within my research as extensive and critical. Parenting is watched, closely, by others, to ensure that parents are doing their parental duty. This disciplinary gaze is internalised by parents who then keep a close watch on their own behaviour to ensure that they are behaving like normal parents, and cannot be positioned as neglectful.

9.3 Constructing the Neglectful Parent

Vic: No parent likes to be told that they're neglecting their children. (Group 1)

For participants positioning a parent as neglectful was pejorative and capable of giving great offence. This is the disciplinary category in operation. Not neglecting your child is the hallmark of normal parenting:

Kirsty: ...I automatically think about my own children and hope that I never feel as though I'm neglecting them. (Group 6)

Morag: ...I would not for one minute think any of my kids were neglected. (Group 9)

As stated earlier, 'normal' parents do all they can to meet children's needs and feel guilty that they are not doing more. To call a parent neglectful is to position them as abnormal and worthy of censure. This positioning will be particularly resisted and resented by those who believe that they are not behaving neglectfully:

Heather: ..you could say to them oh you know he's neglected because he's underfed and he's all this lot and they'll turn round and 'no he isn't. No he isn't. Why'd you say that my child's skinny? He innt skinny, he does eat, he's just picky...(Group 8)

For some mothers within the Groups, even thinking of neglected children was experienced as incomprehensible and painful:

Kirsty: actually it fills me with a horror of all those poor children that are neglected I get quite emotional with the thought of it. (Group 6)

Morag: ...it's horrible to see it and it really really hurts me... (Group 9)

Ruth: I don't know how you do that.

Abby: no, you just can't get your head round it. (Group 3)

Participants judged the neglectfulness of parental behaviours against the construction of the 'normal' parent: seeking to explain their abnormal behaviour. My analysis indicates that in doing so participants positioned parents' behaviour within one of four broad explanatory models. I have termed these models the Overburdened Parent, the Clueless Parent, the Underinvested Parent and the Unsuitable Parent. These categories had an enormous influence over both whether participants positioned a child as neglected, and to what would be considered an appropriate response to the situation.

9.4 The Overburdened Parent

Sarah: If someone is living on their own with children and they have to go to work, to tell that person that they are neglecting their child because they spend periods outside the home earning money for their children so that the household can go on, to say that is child neglect is simply cruelty and I think would give that person offence

Peter: be cruel to the parent.

Sarah: yes, and I think be offensive to the parent (Group 2)

Overburdened Parents were not necessarily constructed as neglectful by participants despite the fact that they fail to meet their children's needs. Overburdened Parents were constructed as seeking to put their children first and as possessing the necessary skills and understanding of the parental role to parent appropriately. They are first and foremost constructed as normal parents. However, due to circumstances beyond their control Overburdened Parents are unable to meet some of their children's needs. Importantly, these are appropriately disciplined parents – they have the required normal parental disposition, knowledge and skills - however, they simply cannot parent as they would wish to for a period of time. The Groups constructed economic necessity, temporary factors impacting on parenting (such as post natal depression) and family breakdown as potentially rendering a good parent temporarily unable to meet their children's needs. We see this construction in Group 3, where a man walks out on his partner leaving her in sub-standard accommodation, destitute, with young children and pregnant:

Cora: ...there was nothing she could do about it, if she could if she could have done something about it she would have, so although it looked, you know, it looked as if her children were being neglected it actually, she wasn't neglecting them. (Group 3)

In Cora's example, the children's physical needs were not being adequately met (probably explaining why it "looked" as if neglect was taking place). However, the parent with whom the children are living was not positioned as neglecting them.

Most groups constructed poverty as potentially compromising the ability for parents to meet their children's physical needs making it more likely that a child could be positioned as Deprived (although Group 5 argued that state benefits provided sufficient resources for all parents to give children what they needed). The necessity of (maternal) employment was similarly positioned as potentially producing Unloved children, particularly in that it took time and energy away from parenting. The conflict between the need to work and the need to have time and energy to fulfil the parental role properly was an issue for all groups. However, as can be seen in the following exchanges, even where the children's needs were

not being met, it was difficult to position the Overburdened Parent as neglectful or the child as neglected:

Eva: You are saying you felt really bad dropping your son off but you needed to work in order to pay for him to have food and a roof over his head. (Group 7)

Kell: I knew she was struggling financially, both she and her husband, and she was working.....I did feel sorry for you know...

Lucy: oh of course.

Kell: and it could have been called...

Lucy: yes.

Kell: but it wasn't.

Sheila: no but it was in that way. It wasn't his mother's fault but no child likes to be left...

Kell: [oh I know I know]...

Sheila: [to be the last]. (Group 1)

This demonstrates the operation of some form of assessment of culpability within the construction of child neglect. Participants were unwilling to blame families for their economic circumstances. If a parent is not at fault, then it is unfair to label their behaviour as neglect.

Kas: ...how could you class that as neglect when it's due to poverty? (Group 10)

Ruth: ... you can say "well you have a choice, you could choose not neglect your child" but if you don't have the resources... then it's not a meaningful choice (Group 3)

To come within this category, the Overburdened Parent must be seen as faultless. This is not easy to accomplish. It should be remembered that the disposition of the normal parent is to put the needs of their children above all else. Where those needs are unmet and the parent is presenting as Overburdened, their choices may be scrutinised to ensure that they are in fact evidencing the appropriate disposition. Take the Group 1 extract above, where a child is constantly picked up late from school by parents due to their work demands. If the parents were positioned as choosing to prioritise work over the needs of their child they could be seen as Underinvested. If instead the late pick-up related to a lack of time-management skills then perhaps the parent could be positioned as Clueless. Sheila and Kell's disagreement over whether this constituted neglect may stem from their constructing the wider circumstances differently.

The scrutiny of parental choices was particularly intense in relation to Deprived Children where Overburdened Parents argue that they cannot meet the children's physical needs due to a lack of economic resources. This economically Overburdened Parent/Deprived Child combination is by definition only available to poor people and/or large families. Where the parent appears to participants to be making foolish or selfish choices, this disqualifies their

Overburdened status, moving them instead into the Underinvested, Clueless or even Unsuitable Parent categories:

Hamid: ...And children who aren't like getting food, you need to question the parents like "look, where's that money actually going?" (Group 1)

Ruth: ...the thing that I find sort of slightly strange is that some people can say that they don't have enough money for food and yet they smoke. (Group 3)

Even the choice to have a child one is unable to provide for may be considered foolish or selfish:

Sue: I think when you're bringing a child into the world you need to know that you have everything, like you're stable enough provide for it and have things like a home. (Group 4)

Where a parent is positioned within the Overburdened Parent category participants were more likely to respond sympathetically and practically. This category of parent is in need of assistance rather than censure. I shall be discussing this in more detail in the next chapter, but participants were prepared to help a 'normal' parent through a temporary bad patch where they felt this was necessary and would be welcomed. However, it is a very unstable category, and those within it are under close surveillance, open at any point to being constructed as neglectful. The duty of the Overburdened Parent is to find a way back to normal parent status as quickly as possible.

Lindland and Kendall-Taylor (2013) also found their participants associated neglect with poverty, describing a category of unintentional neglect said to arise when parents lacked the financial resources to care for their children adequately. The Overburdened Category constructed by my participants is more complex than this, and may allow parents to escape being positioned as neglectful altogether, rather than being seen as neglectful albeit unintentionally. However, for my participants poverty alone does not avoid categorisation as neglectful – poor parents must also demonstrate that they are 'normal' parents doing all that they can to meet their children's needs. My participants constructed complex space between parental failure to meet a child's needs and being neglectful. In addition, this category was not reserved for those Overburdened by the effects of poverty. For my participants non-economic factors (such as familial break up or post natal depression) seen as capable of temporarily derailing a normal parent may also inhibit the failure to meet a child's needs being seen as neglectful.

9.5 The Clueless Parent

Sarah:...if you're talking about parental responsibilities and how you define them, there may be people who simply do not know what their responsibilities are, they never learned, they're clueless, they mean well but... (Group 2)

Kell: there are many people who just have no idea. (Group 1)

For participants Clueless Parents have the necessary disposition to bring up their child (they want what is best for their children and seek to put their needs first), but lack the knowledge and skills to parent 'normally'. Love is not sufficient to accomplish parenting in a satisfactory way:

Ros:...too much love without any common sense, any boundaries, or any anything else is a form of neglecting your parental duties. (Group 1)

It is a vital part of this construction that the parent is trying to do their best for the child: if they appear not to care then they are likely to be positioned as Unsuitable. This category is reserved for parents who do not know what children need to develop normally and/or how to meet those needs appropriately. They do not understand the disciplinary mechanisms entrenched within normal family life such as having family meals, setting limits on computer and television time, sharing chores, overseeing homework, liaising with the school to ensure educational achievement, allocating pocket money, enforcing house rules, interacting with children and expressing support and interest, and being a role model for children. Clueless Parents do not understand how to accomplish the parental role. This is not a conscious choice to parent differently (discussed in the next chapter) but rather constructed as a complete lack of understanding of what parenting involves.

Importantly the failure within this category is to do with learned behaviour rather than emotional inability to connect with the child. We see this construction in Group 2 in relation to parents overfeeding their children:

Emma:...[and they think that] they're being kind and the result is disastrous. (Group 2)

Ros: ... it doesn't occur to them... (Group 1)

Overwhelmingly Clueless Parents were positioned as having been themselves badly parented. In the absence of adequate parenting role models from their own childhoods and/or formal education about child development and parenting skills at school this parent has not acquired the knowledge necessary to parent successfully.

Ros: I think quite a lot of neglect these days, the impression I get, it's from ignorance and not having a good role model then where people are in a parental role and they were poorly parented themselves, they actually don't know the basics... (Group 1)

Zoe: Because if I had a kid now I don't think, I haven't learnt anything from school or anything on how to raise a child (Group 5)

For participants the remedy is providing parenting classes in school or in the community to ensure that parenting norms and techniques are acquired by those who are or who may be expected to parent the next generation. This would allow the further circulation of psychocomplex knowledge and expertise. It would also have a disciplinary effect: if parents have been taught how to parent appropriately and are not doing so, then this makes their behaviour appear to result from choice, a disposition that would bring the parent within the Underinvested or Unsuitable categories. Parenting classes are discussed further in the next chapter.

While some Clueless parents may come within Lindland and Kendall-Taylor's (2013) "unintentional neglect" category discussed above, participants constructed neglect relating to Clueless Parenting far more widely than that which is poverty related. While the Clueless Parent's neglect is unintentional, the neglect stems not from economic circumstances but rather from a lack of relevant knowledge and expertise. So, for example, parents on a low income might be positioned as Clueless because they lack the knowledge and skills to shop and cook in the most economical way possible or manage a restricted household budget effectively:

Ros: ...I watched a programme on malnutrition in children and it was very much about this idea that parents who live on takeaway food feed their children takeaway food, as soon as they're on solids they're giving them chicken balti or whatever it is because that's what they eat. And they don't cook anything. And one of the things they loved was takeaway pizzas and someone said 'well actually you could cook a pizza it would be much cheaper and it would be kind of fun' (Group 1)

The resulting insufficiency of money may look like poverty but in fact, for my participants, is related to a lack of parenting knowledge and skills.

9.6 The Underinvested Parent

Ruth: I suppose it is when the child is significantly less important than those around them... (Group 3)

Underinvested Parents were positioned as either unwilling or lacking the emotional resources to prioritise their children's needs. This is the mirror construction of the Clueless Parent, and primarily produces the Unloved Child, although it may coexist with other models of neglected children as well.

This category of neglectful behaviour is for those who have the appropriate skills to parent and understand the parental role, but for some reason are not psychologically engaged in it. Underinvested Parents lack the necessary disposition to put their children first or to perform their parental duties:

Kam: ... she didn't breastfeed her child because she is very fashion conscious (Group 9).

Mark: it's a copout isn't it? 'Hope you're enjoying your PlayStation 58' and then park you in front of the telly and that's you sorted for the day (Group 6).

Ruth: cigarettes cost an awful lot of money over the year, and if you choose, I suppose that's the point I was making at the beginning, if something else is significantly more important than your child, for some people it seems like smoking (Group 3).

Within this category, participants constructed children's physical needs as met, but Underinvested Parents lacked the emotional commitment towards their children that was an essential component of normal parenting.

The most common construction of Underinvested parenting related to wealthy parents who lacked the time or the inclination to parent their children themselves:

Claire: she's a stay at home mum and theoretically she should have more time, and yet you know they're not interested, they'd rather be reading the newspaper, playing tennis with their friends or you know. (Group 6)

Jo: ...people from that sort of background abandon their children all over the place with au pairs and nannies and all sorts of other things. (Group 10)

Sheila: there are some wealthy parents... Who think more of their life actually and their activities... And forget about the child. (Group 1)

There was a class dimension to this. Poorer parents who did not wish to parent their children had limited resources with which to employ others to parent in their place. As a result, poor children were more likely to be seen as Deprived, Uncontrolled and/or Escaping

as well as Unloved, and poor parents were vulnerable to being positioned as Unsuitable rather than Underinvested Parents. In contrast wealthy parents were positioned as able to purchase alternative parenting for their children, delegating their responsibility for child-rearing to others.

There was a great deal of debate within the Groups on the extent to which parents can delegate their responsibility to meet their children's needs to others (nannies, au pairs, day care, nurseries, boarding schools, summer camps, etc.) while still positioning themselves as normal and not neglectful. The idea of the childhoods of the elite being in some way essentially neglectful was controversial:

Sue: ...if someone said "what's child neglect?" I'd never think oh au pairs, boarding school, things like that.

Pam: you just don't think of posh kids. (Group 4)

For some participants the intention behind the delegation rather than the delegation itself was important. Where parents were emotionally committed to their children and wanted the best for them and so bought in high quality professional care, delegating parenting was not necessarily constructed as Underinvested. The same levels of delegated parenting entered into in order to avoid parenting your child would however be constructed as Underinvested and so neglectful:

Sue: ...I thought that it's their way of giving their kids what it is they think their kids need. (Group 4)

Mark ...for parents who genuinely don't really want to have contact with their kids on a day-to-day basis [boarding school is] almost very easy isn't it. (Group 6)

However, for several participants it was clear that all delegated parenting was essentially neglectful, and worthy of censure because it negatively impacted upon parental bonding and parental oversight:

Sue: you can't form a mother and father relationship if you're not seeing them for a week. (Group 4)

For some the role of the parents in their children's lives was positioned as not interchangeable with other adults:

Zoe: ...[at boarding school]...you don't see your parents...and your teachers are supposed to be almost a parental role but they can't really fulfil that. (Group 4)

Morag:...I think that's a form of neglect as well, leaving someone else to bring up your child and discipline your child. (Group 9)

Absent parents who have chosen not to play a role in the lives of their children were also positioned as Underinvested. The physical and, more importantly for the Groups, the emotional absence of one parent was seen as potentially damaging, with a risk of causing psychological problems for the child, and potentially financial problems for the abandoned family (as stated above). Where one parent is not committed to the success of children, that Underinvested Parent may cause the other normal parent to become Overburdened and fail to meet the child's needs as a result. In this situation the absent parent could be positioned as Underinvested and neglectful while the parent with whom the child is living would not be seen as neglecting them. This occurred with Cora in Group 3 extracted earlier: while the mother left destitute and pregnant was positioned as Overburdened and not neglectful, the partner who abandoned his family was positioned as neglectful:

Cora: ...but he had a job, a good job, a good income and could afford to do something about it and didn't [and that's neglectful]. (Group 3)

As with the Clueless Parent there is an intergenerational aspect to this type of neglector - those who were Unloved Children are positioned as more likely to develop into Underinvested or Unsuitable Parents. However, while Clueless Parents can acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, Underinvested Parents were positioned by participants as missing something constructed as unteachable, natural and necessary - an emotional bond with their child. Without this bond participants argued Underinvested Parents are unlikely to be recognise or respond appropriately to the emotional needs of their children, which could result in pervasive and longstanding psychological damage. The Underinvested Parent was constructed as unlikely to attract the attention of professionals precisely because the damage they inflict is primarily psychological. However, this type of parenting was considered to be selfish, abnormal and worthy of censure:

Vic: the child is an adjunct. (Group 1).

Laura: why bother having children? What's the point? (Group 6).

Lindland and Kendall-Taylor (2013) found similar constructions to the Underinvested Parent within their research. Their participants subscribed to a Social Class Stereotype within which "Upper-class parents" are seen to be "caught up in money, work and material pursuits, devoting more time to themselves than to their children" which was "recognised" by their participants as neglect (Lindland and Kendall-Taylor, 2013: no page). Lindland and Kendall-Taylor (2013: no page) also found a similar classless neglect related construction - the Selfish Parent model - in which "some parents are more concerned about their own wants and needs than those of their children".

Underinvestment is constructed as highly abnormal, particularly in relation to women:

Claire: And for me that's almost worse than the woman who can't feed her child. (Group 6).

The normal mother is disciplined to prize her maternal bond with and feelings for her child above all else (Swift, 1995; Rose, 1999; Turney, 2000; Ferguson, 2004; Jenks, 2005). As Fawcett et al (2004: 26) argue, "whilst ideals about being a good mother certainly remain very strong, they are clearly invested in by mothers rather than being merely imposed upon them".

9.7 The Unsuitable Parent

Finally, participants constructed the category of the Unsuitable parent. Unsuitable Parents do not succeed at any aspect of parenting: they lack the normal parental disposition of putting the child first, they do not provide satisfactory role models for the next generation and they ignore the tasks required by normal disciplined parenting. This category contains two slightly different constructions: parents who deliberately choose not to meet their children's needs (which I have termed Criminal Parenting) and parent who are incapable of understanding or meeting their children's needs (which I have termed Disqualified Parenting).

9.7.1 Criminal Parenting

Ruth: I think there can be things like wilful neglect as part of cruelty towards the child, sort of on purpose. (Group 3).

For participants the Criminal Parent construction is one in which parents know that their behaviour is failing to meet the child's needs and are able to behave differently, but choose not to. The difference between Criminal Parents and Clueless Parents is that Clueless Parents lack the knowledge and skills to understand or carry out their parental duties or to recognise the effects of their behaviour on their children. Criminal Parents know about or intend the effects of their behaviour. In addition, within this construction there has to be an element of choice in the matter. The difference between the Overburdened Parent and the Criminal Parent is that Overburdened Parents would choose to meet their children's needs if they could but Criminal Parents choose not to meet their children's needs:

Cora: so is it they don't have the money, they don't have time you know they don't have those kinds of resources or is it that they could do it but [they're not doing it].

Ruth: [choosing not to]. (Group 3)

Vic: Malice aforethought (Group 1)

Sophie: the person who does it intentionally is definitely worse... (Group 8)

Criminal Parents are by definition Underinvested; no normal parent with the correct disposition towards their child could possibly behave in such a way. However, unlike Underinvested Parenting which is associated with producing Unloved Children, for participants Criminal Parenting produces children who may be Deprived, Uncontrolled and Escaping as well.

Participants constructed the parent who deliberately denies a child something they know they need, when they are able to provide it should they choose to do so, as unequivocally at fault, unnatural and worthy of extreme censure. As stated in the previous chapter, for many this very choice, knowledge and deliberateness of parental actions meant that the boundaries of the neglect category were exceeded and the Criminal Parent was positioned as abusive rather than neglectful.

9.7.2 Disqualified Parenting

Sue: my grandma says she has watched Jeremy Kyle and she said that they were pondlife..You know she's like "they're so ignorant, they are so ignorant about how to raise their kids" ... (Group 4)

Laura: the poorest can't afford to feed them, but they actually don't want to spend any time with them either. (Group 6)

Participants constructed a second type of Unsuitable parent which I have termed the Disqualified Parent. Disqualified Parents, unlike Criminal Parents were not necessarily choosing to neglect their children, they were simply not equipped to be parents. This was not necessarily a fault based construction and included people with learning disabilities who were seen as cognitively unable to grasp how to parent children and those with severe mental illnesses which prevented them from recognising and/or meeting children's needs over a prolonged period. The Disqualified Parent category also encompassed those who were constructed as being deviant role models for their children due to their criminal lifestyles (see above) or their teaching their children anti-social values:

Angela: on the news ...she was the leader of like a cult and they were talking about that they were pleased that soldiers were getting killed...but they had like children as small as

like 3 and 4 holding signs up that just had the most, really horrible things on them, about people's race and you know their sexuality and things like that and teaching children to be that, you know, to discriminate at that age...(Group 8).

The most common expression of the Disqualified Parent was constructed in terms of underclass discourses. Disqualified Parents were seen as having perhaps chosen to have children for ulterior motives (e.g. to get access to accommodation and benefits) but who were uninterested in child-rearing, were not meeting their children's needs or concerned to try and do so as in the extracts heading this subsection. Part of the construction is the positioning of society as helpless in the face of the Disqualified Parent choosing to continue to reproduce:

Rebecca: ...but they can still go and have children, there's nothing stopping them. (Group 8)

Claire: ...my mother always used to say 'you have to have a dog licence, you should have a licence to have kids as well'. (Group 6)

Morag: .. before somebody has a child there should be some, you have to have a licence to have a dog in this country, anybody can have a child. (Group 9)

Claire: ...God dare I say it, you see these mums who are constantly pregnant, because they have half a dozen children, and they, they seem to be the poor families who send their children to school in dirty clothes and dirty faces and you know, don't feed them breakfast but they're having more and more children it's just, just unbelievable. (Group 6)

Sam: ... she not only gets money she gets a good council flat, everything, so what is, there's no incentive for her to change but she's bringing into the world a lot of problem children (Group 1)

The Disqualified Parent is the manifestation of underclass discourse associated with child neglect that I discussed in previous chapters: the account of feckless, irresponsible, incapable, deviant parents, producing delinquent children who will go on to be neglectful parents in their own right: the class of the undeserving poor perpetuating itself into the future (Social Justice Policy Group, 2006; 2007; Allen and Smith 2008; Welshman, 2013). The Unsuitable Parent category is similar to Lindland and Kendall-Taylor's (2013) Social Class Stereotype model of child maltreatment; a model they argue is rooted in constructions of the innate traits of a group of people. Participants positioned Unsuitable parents as uncaring about or oblivious to the damage their behaviour inflicts upon their children or on society; abnormal behaviour demonstrating both the Disqualified Parents' lack of social values and their dangerous imperviousness to disciplinary power. Participants responded to accounts of Unsuitable Parenting, particularly deliberate Unsuitable Parenting, with incomprehension, disgust, and extreme censure.

9.8 Positioning Neglector and Neglected

Sheila: ..if they had love in that situation which so often a child does although it's given, you know it's left to do its own thing and that, then I don't think, I wouldn't class that as neglect. (Group 1)

As said previously, children whose needs were not being met were not synonymous with neglected children. In particular, where there was felt to be an appropriate emotional bond between parent and child, participants were prepared to tolerate a certain level of unmet need in other categories. The Overburdened Parent and the Clueless Parent both attracted a sympathetic response because they are constructed as having the normal parental disposition towards their child: they are doing the best they can. 'Normal' parental disposition is constructed through psy-complex developmental discourse and is therefore related to constructions of the environment the child needs to best develop into a docile and useful adult. As stated earlier, the normal parental disposition requires parents to do all they can to meet their children's developmental needs and prohibit them from neglecting their children. This weight given to parental disposition and behaviour in constructing child neglect was shared by professionals and can lead to children's needs being eclipsed and their not being 'seen' or responded to as neglected by professionals (Dingwall et al, 1995; Bridge Child Care Consultancy, 1995; Barker and Hodes, 2007).

While participants focused on the negative effects for parents of being positioned as neglectful, my analysis suggests that these effects are also present for those who could bring themselves within the category of the neglected. To neglect a child was positioned as abnormal but to be neglected was also to be positioned as abnormal, to be missing or to have missed some vitally important part of childhood that was responsible for making you a normal adult. To claim the category of neglected child was to position your parents as abnormal and in the case of Underinvested or Unsuitable Parents, morally if not legally culpable. It was also to take up a subject position associated with a range of far reaching and sometimes hidden psychological and behavioural evils including a predisposition to relationship and inter-personal dysfunction and to neglectful parenting. To avoid this positioning, the neglected child would have to position themselves as resilient to the neglect, assert their normality despite their neglectful upbringing and to discipline themselves into becoming a useful and docile member of society.

Participants were extremely reluctant to position themselves as neglected, even when they reported having had experiences they had constructed as neglectful elsewhere in the

discussion. On several occasions participants carefully distanced themselves from a neglectful interpretation being placed on the events or people being spoken about:

Pam: ...like my mum, I wouldn't say, ever say she neglected me, but... (Group 4)

Aban: ...I felt like I was, not neglected, but it was my need, and I wanted, wanted it to be met. (Group 5)

Ruth: Simon's dad, he used to walk home from school by himself from age 5 and he had to cross two main roads because his mum had to work and she was a single parent but I don't know whether you would class that as neglect, it's scary but probably not neglect, but he'd never thought that that was a problem (Group 3)

This ties in with other research indicating that people were reluctant to position themselves as maltreated (Portwood, 1998) and even people undergoing what professionals categorised as severe deprivation did not necessarily consider themselves to have been neglected (Cawson et al, 2000). As expert knowledge in relation to the consequences of maltreatment is circulated, it may be that fewer people are prepared to identify themselves or those they love as neglected.

9.9 Constructing Neglectful Communities

Morag: ...it takes a whole village to raise a child. (Group 9)

As stated above, parents were primarily constructed as responsible for child neglect. However, non-parents and communities were also constructed as capable of neglecting children. Participants spoke of child neglect in relation to the failure of a community to intervene in families within which it is evident children are being maltreated and harmed:

Vic:..we tend to feel that the wider society has neglected what's going on in that family. (Group 1)

Angela: ...it's not just the parents it is other people who either choose not to see it or just don't have the time to notice. (Group 8)

Alice: ...[If] I'm aware of a child suffering that would be me neglecting them, because I'm not dealing with a negative issue that I have noticed. (Group 7)

Previous research has also indicated lay people construct communities as having an important role to play in keeping children safe (ComRes, 2009; YouGov/NSPCC 2012; Jutte et al, 2014).

There was also a wider construction of the late modern society that is neglecting the needs of children. Parenting was constructed as a complex and difficult task, one which members of the wider community had a responsibility to support and assist with. For several Groups, particularly those with older participants, community support for parenting had been eroded by late modern life.

Laura: ...we're fumbling our way through it, yes you take advice off friends, but you don't take as much advice off family because there's not the community there and they aren't as close, and you think of where we are today when many people have moved around and we don't really live close to friends or family anymore and you think about these children and you're just muddling through and often there's not the help and support there (Group 6).

Emma:... people are not so close as you were saying to their neighbours any more so they don't say to the chap next door 'have you seen what's going on at number 11?' You know. It doesn't get reported along the line. Whereas everybody in every house used to know each other in the past and therefore there would have been gossip about it very fast (Group 2).

Vic: ... the church was behind a lot of the youth groups that grew up. But if you lose the help of the parents, the volunteers...then you lose the church's main way of putting effort into an area. (Group 1)

Late modern life was associated with an atomisation of community. Several Groups evoked childhoods in communities where adults and children all knew each other and participated in children's lives:

Ros:...but I think one of the biggest changes that has happened in our lifetime really is like you were saying there were lots of youth clubs, there was a lot of community involvement and awareness of children, there was a sense of community, and a sense that everybody kept an eye out for children and would be able to talk to parents ...and all that's broken down now. (Group 1)

Claire: ...you know if you've got concerns and worries then who do you speak to.

Anna: in the good old days you'd talk to, in your mum's day

Mark: you'd talk to their, you'd talk to your mum or their mum because you'd know people in the community (Group 6)

For Groups 1, 2 and 6 community life in their childhoods was constructed as creating a safe space for children, allowing them freedom in which to play and explore without adult oversight. This was contrasted with the need for modern parents to be constantly aware of the location of their children

Sarah: ...I think it is much more difficult now because of cars and traffic has made such a difference to the way people can behave (Group 2).

Kirsty: and you can't let the kids outside to play [that's the thing. They never used]

Claire: [you certainly can't let them] out of your sight.(Group 6)

Traffic, a reduction in child friendly spaces and predatory people were all constructed as having changed the way in which parents could parent. The community, as in the space that is not school or home, was constructed as threatening for children, as requiring careful parental policing and oversight. In place of keeping an eye out for children within the community, there was at times a less inclusive positioning of children as in competition with adults for scarce recreational resources, with parents receiving complaints about the noise their children were making, and adults being irritated by children's games in communal areas or concerned about groups of children gathered together on streets and in parks. Children were sometimes positioned in terms of causing difficulty in common areas and needing to be controlled and corralled, rather than as shared users of public space. This particular construction perhaps echoes what Hendrick (2007) described as the increasing intolerance of adults towards children as a class of people within society:

Sophie: ... because of the noise that children create when they're running around from here there and everywhere, the people below them used to complain so the little boy used to spend a lot of his time in his bedroom (Group 8).

Vic:...there are a lot of families with young children who do use the gardens much to the annoyance of everybody else who hasn't got children who wants a quiet life and those kids are screaming (Group 1).

Emma: children who are allowed by the parent who is accompanying them to run in supermarkets, are also an absolute pain. (Group 2)

This sense of community was also seen as having been badly undermined by social mobility as people moved away from family and friends for employment reasons, never fully integrating into the new community or interacting with fellow community members. The tensions constructed as resulting from immigration and multiculturalism will be explored in the next chapter but female employment was constructed as leading to social fragmentation: women who would once have spoken to each other and looked out for children no longer had the time to build communities:

Rebecca: I mean I live on a street with maybe 100 terraced houses on you know 50 on each side and I probably know one family out of that because I work full time, I don't even know how many kids live on my street. (Group 8)

Ros:...I live in a block of flats and I heard a child wailing endlessly [laughs] and got very irritated with it, for all I know it had very bad teething or colic or anything else but it might have been abused I really don't know. I don't even know which flat it came from. (Group 1)

This fragmentation was seen by several Groups as leading to the isolation of parents who could not rely on family or community for a parenting support structure:

Laura: I then start to think about how, how difficult it is these days because we haven't got the community, because we haven't got our parents, because it's so difficult. (Group 6)

Such support might be sufficient to prevent the normal parent becoming Overburdened, and might assist the Clueless Parent by providing an arena to share support, advice, knowledge, parenting strategies and to role model parenting skills. In addition, the fragmentation of community was seen as reducing intergenerational social contact between children and older people outside the arenas of school and home life, and of curtailing the opportunity for children to develop social skills and a sense of community responsibility through interacting with those who share the living environment. Where community was intact and cohesive then children could spend much time playing outside, away from the internet and getting fresh air and exercise. In addition where there is a sense of community, there is an environment in which child neglect could be more easily identified in its earliest stages:

Claire: you know I genuinely do think we've lost an awful lot by not being able to just, you know, go outside and play outside, share a cup of tea with your neighbours... and I think as they get to know each other more they help with problems. You can also identify people who are struggling, people going through bad times. (Group 6).

While community was often spoken of in terms of fragmentation, participants also identified community building efforts undertaken on the initiative of committed individuals, sometimes attracting a level of state support:

Laura: and they're literally just closing the road and everybody, and all the kids can play and meet their neighbours (Group 6)

Vic: a friend of mine runs a project ... it's a cafe that the adults give their time to and they run it as a cafe that kids can come in and have coffee and soft drinks and chat to each other. It's their club, it's a clubhouse for them. (Group 1)

It was also clear that members of several of the Groups provided important support and practical assistance to others. Despite this, there was a general feeling amongst some Groups that the community was no longer what it was, nor what it could be. This wish to harness the inherent power in local communities in support of all the residents and the need to build social capital for children and families echoes the findings of the Report into the place of children in the Big Society (Fisher and Gruescu, 2011).

Not all participants had this view of communities as having disintegrated. Group 7 questioned whether communities ever really had been the integrated and cohesive units they were claimed to be, positioning this as a comforting myth. Group 2 also suggested that the hands off parenting style adopted in the post war years where children were trusted to roam unsupervised might be due to an exhausted nation trying to recover from a

terrible war and having little time to watch over children as a result. However, for most Groups community was overwhelmingly constructed from discourses of decay and fragmentation rather than cohesion, despite the empirical evidence suggesting that the adult community in Britain today does support and assist parents with child rearing (Holland et al, 2011). Lindland and Kendall-Taylor (2013) also found participants within their study positioned community decay and the decline of community involvement in children's lives as responsible for child maltreatment.

9.10 Constructing the Neglectful State

Ruth: because I always think that, people, if people don't have the resources to make a real and meaningful choice then that's almost like neglect of the person from the state... (Group 3)

All the Groups constructed the state as having a responsibility to support families. State policies were positioned as impacting on families and increasing levels of child neglect. There were two constructions of this. For some participants state policies in relation to family life made it more likely that parents would become Overburdened or that Clueless, Underinvested or Unsuitable parents would be produced. More rarely participants described state policy as impacting directly on children:

Sheila: ...I also think of children who are carers and I think they are neglected too by the state. I don't think they are getting enough help. (Group 1)

The most common construction of the state responsibility to families related to poverty. While all the Groups constructed poverty as damaging to children and to family life, participants constructed the relationship between state, families, children and poverty in one of three ways. Firstly, poverty arose from feckless parenting:

Hamid:.. in this country it shouldn't be like that because the state benefit system is there for a reason. If you've got children you declare that you've got children to the government, the government are there to help you. So no child should be not be being able to afford food. And children who aren't like getting food, you need to question the parents like "look, where's that money actually going?" (Group 5)

Secondly, poverty resulted at least in part from government policies and impaired the ability of parents to parent:

Maddy: ..the greater the pressures are on people, and on families, and on people with children the more likely neglect is and the numbers of children who do experience neglect increase so in the context of austerity and cuts being made not just to benefits but to

services that must increase the pressures that parents experience and will make it more likely that children are neglected. (Group 3)

Thirdly, poverty was a structural factor produced by government policy that negatively impacted upon the health and wellbeing of groups of children:

Lola:... you know when they did the athletics competition they did at ours and they brought all the students in from the sort of better areas, and every single time you looked over there were three kids from three different schools and ours was always this scrawniest kid at every single photo. (Group 7)

Here the effects of poverty on the bodies of poor children can be seen by comparing groups of children from different socio-economic classes. It is difficult to position this as some kind of individual failure of parenting, rather children of a particular social class are being affected as a group.

Group 10 constructed state policy as forcing families to live in poverty so appalling that no parent could reasonably be expected to meet their children's needs under such circumstances. Rather than the bodies of groups of children, here poverty is seen as operating on the priorities of groups of parents:

Jo: ...in certain communities I think people's priorities just become different, and change and it's difficult for adults then to make choices that prioritise their kids. (Group 10)

Kas: do you heat the house or do you feed the kids? (Group 10)

This is not solely the construction of the Overburdened Parent, but also of the Government as unreasonable, literally underinvested in the lives of certain children who, as children, are least able to exercise choice and change their circumstances. This construction is the closest that participants came to positioning the government as directly neglecting children:

Jo: you know the government have got a plan to get rid of child poverty by 2020 and it's a target they just know they won't hit.

Raja: it's atrocious isn't it?

Jo: it is atrocious and public policy is making sure that it stays like that. (Group 10)

Kas: ...you know sort of like the rundown council houses not like, not up to, not clean, not up to standard and children are living in there so would you class that as neglect of parents or would you class that as neglect of the government? (Group 10)

More commonly, poverty and the 'cuts' in services were constructed as likely to turn struggling normal parents into Overburdened ones, whose coping strategies become overwhelmed by the removal of fragile but vital support systems:

Kam: At the moment it's just getting so difficult with funding being cut back and what's happening with childcare and stuff especially linked to community centres. (Group 9)

For several Groups planning and infrastructure decisions had negatively impacted on children and families:

Ros: ...for whatever reason it was the whatever the government or the local authority wanted to do, they cleared them, ...they moved those houses, those people out, and the amount of depression amongst women in particular just shot through the roof because suddenly they were removed from their community. (Group 1)

Laura: we've lost a lot of our community, we're losing parks and places. (Group 6)

From a children's rights perspective the state has an obligation to meet the needs of children, and not to enact policy that negatively impacts upon them as a class (Mostyn, 1996). Several groups positioned the state as doing exactly that. However, the Groups found it difficult to describe government actions in the language of child neglect, instead they used state policy and practice as a way of not positioning desperate parents as neglectful.

Kam: ...I don't think it's directly neglect but with all the provisions, with everything being cut back I wonder how that's going to affect any care of children in the community. (Group 9)

State policy was also constructed by participants as contributing to the production of Clueless, Underinvested and Unsuitable Parents. The failure to educate children in the basic knowledge and skills required to parent the next generation was seen by several Groups as not interrupting the cycle of Clueless Parenting:

Sheila:... They were taught not only cookery, how to cook. They were taught childcare. They were taught nutrition. Domestic science. All that they were taught. Until the government in power decided 'no it's not good enough'. (Group 1)

Heather: I think if you're going to be taught sexual education then in conjunction with that they should also put in parenting skills... (Group 8)

By promising accommodation to women with children, and by providing benefits for families the state was also constructed as encouraging particularly young women to have children they do not want, cannot afford and lack the skills to parent as a means to secure independence from their own families, accommodation and financial assistance from the state:

Sam: I wonder if they make it too easy and provide too much money for young girls. (Group 1)

*Mark: ...[we know] two or three girls that got accommodation because they got pregnant.
(Group 6)*

9.11 Conclusion

In the previous chapter participants constructed the potentially neglected child in relation to discourses of unmet need. In this chapter the primary consideration in relation to parental behaviour was the extent to which parents could be positioned as behaving normally or abnormally. The 'normal' relationship between parents (particularly mothers) and children is constructed using psy-complex discourses – and for participants the normal family was constructed as would be expected from therapeutic familialism. Where participants constructed parents as doing their best to meet their children's needs but overwhelmed by wider structural issues (e.g. employment or poverty), they were extremely reluctant to construct that behaviour as neglectful. Where however participants constructed parents as not meeting their children's needs through choice, this was positioned as particularly abnormal and heinous. Parents are disciplined into normal parenting, and choosing not to meet your child's needs is positioned as abnormal and unnatural (particularly for women) exposing the parent to normalising judgement and censure. While parents were constructed as primarily responsible for meeting their children's needs, the state and the community were also positioned as bearing some responsibility for producing conditions that would support or undermine parental efforts to raise the next generation.

Participants constructed wider forces associated with late modernity as causing the breakdown of family structures, families and the atomisation of communities. This chapter and the previous one are rooted in psy-complex discourses about the normal family and the necessary developmental childhood (the modern view). However, the 'normal' developmental childhood was challenged by child rearing environments embedded in other cultures which in turn disrupted notions of abnormal parenting and abnormal childhood. The confusion, fragmentation and uncertainty within public discourses about the type of childhood our young citizens should be provided with and the role of lay people within it will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 10 - Drawing the Line: Constructing Child Neglect

Hamid: everybody's line's going to be different (Group 5)

10.1 Introduction

In previous chapters I explored how participants sought to establish where 'the line' is between what is normal and what is neglectful in relation to children. Chapter 8 focused on the line between needs and unmet needs in order to construct the potentially neglected child. Chapter 9 looked at the line between the normal and the abnormal parent in order to identify the potential neglector, in the context of non-neglectful parenting being positioned as a social good entrenched within community life and the subject of state obligation. Where children are seen as neglected, this is to position them as failed, not only by the neglector, but by the wider society to the potential detriment of both. In this chapter I explore how participants position themselves as responding to child neglect and identify discourses mandating particular responses and preventing others. I then go on to explore the challenges participants face in constructing the concept of the 'normal' and therefore the 'abnormal' childhood in late modernity. Finally I examine the ways in which participants construct producing consensus within society about child neglect as not only necessary to reduce confusion about what children are entitled to from adults, but also as a means to reduce child neglect itself.

10.2 Responding to Child Neglect

10.2.1 Meeting Children's Needs Directly

Ros: it does sort of feel a bit to me as if adults have withdrawn. (Group 1)

The consensus within the groups was that child neglect was important and that it was everyone's business to try and stop it from happening. However, the form that intervention could take was different for those with children under 18 and those without. Participants who did not have their own children were clearly aware of children within their communities and able to produce many instances in which they had observed or heard children behaving

in ways that could be constructed as Deprived, Unloved, Uncontrolled or Escaping. Some even positioned themselves as actively engaged in watching out for children:

Mark: ...as you walk down the street you are on the lookout for things that you could intervene in, all the time, well I am anyway. (Group 6)

However, this surveillance did not translate into active relationships with the children in their communities:

Jo: ...My, my dealings with children are really really rare. (Group 10)

Sarah: I was trying to think about circumstances where I might come across neglected children day-to-day. (Group 2)

Vic: quite a lot of us know each other and we do keep an eye out for what's going on, not so much for the children now, it's more for the

Kell: old people.

Vic: the elderly. The children seem to get lost in the mix. (Group 1)

This lack of involvement was constructed in relation to late modern discourses of social mobility and community fragmentation discussed earlier. Participants also positioned fears about paedophilia and increasing child protection surveillance as operating to inhibit the involvement of lay people, particularly men, in the lives of children not their own:

Morag:... I can remember one time when we were at a park and a boy had fallen over and my dad went and picked him up and he was talking to him "hey are you okay" and the mum coming running over screaming at my dad saying "dirty old man, leave my son alone"... (Group 9)

Emma: but then you have to think twice about it nowadays in case somebody says you're trying to molest it. (Group 2)

Sam: but that hasn't authority made it so difficult, if you want to work with children then you have to be vetted...you can't just go along and say 'I'll help', oh no, you've got to fill in forms. (Group 1)

Few were prepared to interact with children when to do so could cause them to be viewed with suspicion. To continue Morag's account from above:

Morag:the look on my dad's face, he was absolutely mortified, really really hurt and upset, and I remember him going home and telling my mum and saying "you know I can't believe it, I'm never going to help a child again, I can't believe it"...(Group 9)

Participants with children constructed themselves as having different options, as they could amalgamate meeting the needs of others' children with meeting the needs of their own children. This type of assistance was largely taking the child to activities, feeding the child, collecting the child from school, helping with homework, etc. Importantly, these activities

could take place under the guise of 'one more won't hurt' - participants did not report challenging Overburdened Parents about their behaviour:

Kell: ... I said "would it help if I picked your child as well and you could come and pick him up from my home?" and in fact that's what happened. (Group 1)

Laura: yeah. ... maybe I could do something to help that child that is within the boundaries of what I could do with my own child and I could then let them tag along (Group 6)

This practical assistance was reserved for Overburdened Parents:

Kell: ... and I knew she was struggling financially both she and her husband and she was working... (Group 1)

Laura: ..I think I would have to respect the parents about why they are in this situation and why little Johnny is not getting, is being neglected... (Group 6)

This is the type of response to potentially neglected children reported in the Action for Children (2011) poll; parents informally assisting to meet the needs of peers and friends of their own children. Holland et al's (2011) research review found that there is a great deal of informal childcare within communities, and my findings seem to support the idea that parents do provide support and take responsibility for other people's children, particularly where they position those parents as normal and/or Overburdened rather than neglectful. However, the ability of the wider public to meet children's needs informally in the way participants reported that they had done in the past was constructed as very much reduced:

Mark: we used to have one woman in the village ... who used to do the swimming run every Sunday morning... and it was a regular thing, you went to Sarah Thomas' house if you wanted to go swimming. And she'd take the big car or the little car

Laura: [oh how lovely]

Anna: [depending on] how many brats turned up

Mark: EXACTLY... (Group 6)

Kirsty: a lady who used to dog walk... she used to have three border collies and if you wanted to go to the park for a walk with her dogs, well you had to, you had to ask your mum and dad or whoever was looking after you first and then you'd have to be at her house for 4:30 (Group 6)

Where participants positioned themselves as unable or unwilling to: "plug a gap because parents might be having a bit of a blip or something" (Anna, Group 6) they needed to decide whether or not to intervene in the situation in some other way. Participants positioned themselves as being forced to choose between 'do something' or 'do nothing'. 'Doing something' was constructed as alerting the authorities in some way, drawing the family to the attention of expertise (surveillance-by-proxy) (replicating Andrews, 1996).

The default position for all participants was to 'do nothing'. For participants to 'do something' they overwhelmingly positioned themselves as needing to be satisfied that what they were witnessing had crossed a line of some sort. Identifying this line or lines, was positioned as complex, onerous, contested and dangerous.

Before embarking on exploring 'the line' it is worth pointing out that where children were considered to be in immediate physical danger, there was little dispute over the correct thing to do. Participants constructed scenarios where infants or young children were alone in unsafe conditions (infants in flats or trapped in hot cars) and in obvious distress as requiring assistance and it being the responsibility of any and all adults to ensure that this was received:

Paul: ...if let us say I'm living in my street and I find a child who is crying then there is some sort of responsibility on my part to do something with regard to that child, if they are crying a long time and no one is looking after them and so forth... (Group 2).

However the response would not be immediate; for Paul the child would be "crying a long time" and for Ruth the infant would be trapped in a hot car:

Ruth: for a long time, I wouldn't do it immediately because for all I know they could have popped into a shop and I know you're not meant to leave your children at all but, I think I'd hang around for a bit and I wouldn't necessarily say anything to the person unless it was say a really hot day but I would hang around and wait... (Group 3)

The situation would resolve itself by the return of the responsible adult or the deterioration of the child's situation:

Ruth: ...and then if they hadn't come back in a while or I saw anything that I was thinking "right something needs to be done for the child in distress" then I would ring the police or an ambulance or something because that would be an emergency. (Group 3)

In all cases attracting an urgent response, the child in question was constructed as young and in distress. However, there were numerous accounts within the Groups of participants being extremely concerned about children and doing nothing:

Abby: I see a lot of very small children around where we live playing out on the streets on their own...sort of three-year-olds and up. (Group 3)

Maddy:...there's a family at the top of my street and they left their little boy out in a pram for about three hours just sat outside the house, and I class that as neglect obviously. (Group 3)

Zoe: [about a child seen in an unsuitable environment with a drunk parent] .. I still didn't say anything so.... I don't know when you do. (Group 4)

10.2.2 'Doing Nothing': The Principle of Non-Intervention

Zoe: because you can't really tell another parent how to parent. (Group 4)

For participants the default position in relation to children they were concerned about was to do nothing, despite current campaigns urging the public to alert appropriate expertise if they are worried about a child and outlining ways in which they can do so (see for example the NSPCC and Action for Children websites). Participants spoke of the practical difficulties of identifying an unknown child to the authorities, of a lack of knowledge of the reporting process, evidential uncertainties, and of fears that in alerting the authorities to the situation they will make matters worse not only for the child but also for themselves (responses similar to those collected by Bensley et al, 2004b; Burgess et al, 2012; 2013; 2014). However, these points, important though they were, seemed to me to be peripheral to more complicated issues relating to the primacy and privacy of family as a child rearing environment, a lack of trust in authority to respond appropriately to the situation, and a concern that due to the fragmentation of what is considered 'normal' into 'normals' there is no longer consensus about what constitutes the abnormal or neglectful situation.

Participants from all groups considered the family arena to be a private one in which outsiders should not interfere unless interference was absolutely justified:

Fern:there's this nature element of it,...and there's just some things that you cannot interfere with. (Group 7)

Laura:I would probably give the parent the benefit of the doubt and go [inhales deeply] I'm sure they know what they're doing. (Group 6)

Intervention was also constructed as something that would be contested and resisted by the parents concerned, with a powerful construction that what goes on inside families is none of anyone else's concern:

Ros: No, most of them would probably take the point that it's none of your business. (Group 1)

Morag: Aye, I know, because then you're interfering aren't you and "it's nothing to do with you". (Group 9)

Heather: ...you think oooooohhhh if it is behind closed doors does it have anything to do with you. (Group 8)

Taliq: It's not like it's your business or anything. (Group 5)

Emma: well there is there is a policy against being a busybody and poking your nose into other people's lives nowadays very strongly. (Group 1)

For some participants intervening would make them feel subjectively at fault and uncomfortable:

Mel: ...I'd feel really nosy. I'd feel like one of those women, like people drew the curtains and like calling the police. (Group 4)

Abby: there's always that fear isn't there of how people are going to react or if you've overreacted to something and stuff..

Ruth: yeah, and not wanting to seem judgemental. (Group 3)

The distinction between interfering and intervening was constructed as a complex and highly contested one, and participants did not wish to be positioned on the wrong side of that line.

As stated earlier, the private family is a vital mechanism in liberal discourse allowing for the appropriate rearing of children free from state scrutiny and state regulation (Parton, 1985; 1991; 2006). The liberal construction of the family is of a private space which provides the best available location for child rearing. Third party intervention in that space violates family privacy. The public is disciplined to give parents the privacy and latitude to bring up children properly (their child-rearing dictated by the disciplinary mechanisms of 'moralisation' and 'normalisation' (Rose, 1999)) and to support them in doing so. Participants constructed intervention as so serious an invasion of family privacy that there would need to be an overwhelmingly abnormal situation to justify it:

Hamid: you'd have to be 100% positive. (Group 5)

Elizabeth: I'd be quite sure to start off with that it was being neglected. (Group 2)

Abby: and if the children get taken away, that's like, that can destroy a family can't it, so you wouldn't want to... (Group 3)

10.2.3 'Doing Something': Constructing Social Services Involvement

In deciding whether to 'do something', participants also considered what 'doing something' would entail. Some participants wanted the opportunity to talk their concerns through with a neighbour (see below), teacher or health visitor before contacting social services formally, but the Groups seemed to consider social services involvement in the life of the family as the almost inevitable end result of 'doing something'. The way in which participants

constructed social services made it less likely that they would choose to do something about a child who they were concerned about.

Social services were not positioned by participants as an organisation that would or could assist parents to bring up their children. First and foremost they were seen as an investigatory body with draconian powers to separate children from abnormal parents. The involvement of social services was seen as provoking both fear and shame for families:

Ruth: but then I think [long pause] social services have got such a, those two words can strike a lot of fear into people, can't they? (Group 3)

Sheila:... the word social services drives the parents away. (Group 1)

Several participants reported that they or those known to them had been the subject of potential or actual social services interest as a result of having taken children to hospital after accidents.:

Kell: ...So off I went to A&E and one of the questions was of course you know about social services

Pause, sympathetic murmurs

Kell: I thought oh my God! What's my daughter going to say? (Group 2)

Claire: but the hospital automatically phoned the social worker and my friend Jasmine was utterly mortified that she'd had this social worker call to investigate why. (Group 6)

Kam: ... we just got the biggest scare ever because the hospital said that "if this happens again you know we'll get social services in". (Laughs) oh my word the way we looked after that child after that. (Group 9)

Hospital staff were positioned as having to follow inflexible child protection procedures even against their own medical judgement:

Addy: ...they'd taken her to A&E and mum had like taken the child's knickers with her to show like how much the bleeding had been and they said "no no you mustn't show us that, because you know what will happen if you, sort of, if you, say things like that, no you mustn't, you mustn't say that or we'll have to ring social services"... (Group 3)

Social services did not have a role to play in 'normal' parenting, so to refer someone to social services was to position them as abnormal, risking them feeling isolated and judged by neighbours:

Zoe: ..people who are really struggling with their baby might not know where to turn and then they feel like everybody's watching them, they are going to feel attacked by their neighbours and not know what to do.(Group 4)

Participants drew on media accounts constructing social services as overreacting or underreacting to concerns about children, so destroying 'normal' families or abandoning children to serious harm and death:

Lucy: ...you'll read of different cases where social workers have visited two or three times and yet the child is very badly neglected and it's missed. (Group 1)

Jen: I do believe that quite often it happens, you know swoop and grab. (Group 2)

Sue: ... that whole baby P case brought up loads of stuff about social workers and them not doing their job properly. (Group 4)

Participants were concerned about the recruitment, training and support of social workers, the unmanageable size of social worker caseloads, and the lack of resources allocated to social work:

Kell: they've all got very good marks.

Sheila: it's more like 'we'll make friends with the children' you know they don't they don't have enough training or experience in my opinion. (Group 1)

Sheila: I know that social services have a bad name but their workload is TREMENDOUS. (Group 1)

Abby: and they've got far too many children, they've got far too many cases on their workload. (Group 3)

Heather: I think there should be enough funding for enough social workers for children not to fall through nets, and there should be enough qualified people to you know check. (Group 8)

Reporting a situation to social services was not to attract the attention of a benevolent organisation, but rather to place oneself and the child about whom one was concerned at the mercy of a dysfunctional institution:

Sheila: ... someone did actually phone social services several times because the child really was being neglected and was actually losing himself, young child...and in the end she was warned by social services that they would have her up in court for causing trouble... (Group 1)

The response from social services was constructed as taking no action or removing children from their families. Neither option was a desirable outcome: participants in all groups argued that the family should be preserved wherever possible:

Jen: ...I mean I think to take the child away from its parents should be a last resort. (Group 2)

Sheila: I think taking children away from parents must be a very last resort. (Group 1)

Aban: and I think all childs should be with their family. That's what I personally think. (Group 5)

The removal of children by social services was constructed as potentially transferring children from one unsuitable environment to another:

Pam: I honestly kind of think there's a massive stigma towards it so people won't go to the authorities because they think of all these foster homes and therefore won't do anything. (Group 4)

Maddy:..you don't know where they are going to end up do you. (Group 3)

Participants, unlike “the cheerleaders for removal” seemed both reluctant to separate children’s interests from those of their family and to appreciate “the importance of recognising secondary or system abuse” (Featherstone et al, 2014: 1736-1737). No participant constructed social services as playing an important role in helping families stay together. That role was seen as performed by other service providers within the community or state sector. For participants the social work role was not to safeguard and support the welfare of children within their families but rather to investigate what was occurring inside families and determine whether or not the children should be removed.

My participants shared similar constructions of children’s developmental needs and normal and abnormal parenting to child protection professionals. However, the participants positioned themselves as having different views from child protection professionals both of the point at which children’s unmet needs or adults’ abnormal parenting became child neglect and of how best to respond to neglected children. For lay people, experts were only interested in children whose level of unmet needs and abnormal parenting was so detrimental to their wellbeing that it potentially warranted their immediate removal from their families. This level of concern was positioned as the expert or official construction of child neglect. Professionals were positioned as only seeing children as neglected if they clearly required specific protective measures to be taken on their behalf.

Participants positioned themselves as members of the public as responsible for doing something when children were being neglected. As ‘doing something’ is constructed as involving social services, and there is no point contacting social services if the situation is not seen as serious enough to warrant their attention, this child protection related construction of child neglect is to all intents and purposes where the line is currently drawn for lay people as well. Below that threshold participants would be concerned, and even subjectively position the child as neglected, but there would not be the construction that a line had been crossed indicating that something should be done, the line discursively

mandating some kind of intervention. This means currently, the meaning of child neglect is restricted to situations that would be seen as requiring child protection professionals to take action on behalf of the child.

Participants were unhappy with this. The Groups were very focused on the welfare of children arguing that large numbers of children whose developmental needs were not being met were of no interest to the experts or the state. Overburdened Parents with Deprived Children were constructed as more likely to attract state attention than Underinvested Parents with Unloved Children, although the latter were of more concern to participants. Finally, when the expert intervention threshold had been met, the state response was constructed as itself potentially damaging. Participants drew on psy-complex discourses to advocate for a different line from that currently in place, a line that elicits an earlier supportive response from child protection professionals, communities and the state to assist children to have their needs met within their families and their communities. This is not a clash of expertise, but rather relates to moral and political choices about what children within England are entitled to, and how best to provide them with it.

10.3 Constructing 'Normal' in Late Modernity

Abby: everyone has their own view of what's acceptable. (Group 3)

As I have argued, neglect is largely seen in terms of children whose needs are not being met as a consequence of abnormal parenting. Participants were all extraordinarily clear what they individually considered to be normal or abnormal parenting. However, within each group participants asserted their own norms in personal terms, aware that people had different views of what was or was not abnormal:

Mark: [and it's very] subjective as well depending on who's thinking...(Group 6)

Abra: everybody has their own opinion you know, my mum's opinion and my opinion is completely different. (Group 9)

So, for example, while all 'normal' parents agree that children should be supervised, there is a level of acceptable disagreement about what age children can be left at home alone.

In order to consider some level of formal intervention, participants sought to align their own personal views with some wider consensus about what was normal. For several participants there was a need to seek a second opinion to construct what was happening:

Paul: ...I wouldn't like to do something unilaterally I would like to find out whether my judgement is agreed with by other people... (Group 2)

Zoe: I think it's as well that because nobody else is saying it you go along with it and you kind of think "oh it's nothing". (Group 4)

Burgess et al (2012; 2013; 2014) found that respondents often talked things through with others before alerting professional services.

There appeared to be three different considerations with regard to normality: 'do I think this is normal?' (what participants described as their 'subjective' opinion), 'is this normal within society?', and finally, 'is this abnormal enough to warrant the intervention of social services, with all the negative consequences such intervention may bring with it?'. Participants were most comfortable discussing their subjective constructions of neglect, frequently using qualifiers such as "for me", "to me", "I think", "personally" when talking about potentially neglected children or neglectful behaviour. To express an individual view of normal, or to position oneself somewhere along the range of normal, does not involve a claim to draw the line between normal and child neglect or behalf of society or social services. While participants argued that social services line constructed the neglect category far too narrowly, they were unsure whether social consensus existed around any other definition of the normal and neglectful childhood.

Participants spoke of ways in which their subjective constructions of normal were contested by the views and behaviour of others, arguing the lack of a clear consensus operated to the potential detriment of children and parents:

Kam: ...I've often told her, often questioned her, I've often warned her, but she's brought her children up the way she has, she's never had any mishaps. (Group 9)

Abra: ... So I said "no mum I'd rather this way, I heard, I've seen and we should bring up our child like this" you know. And she said "no not this way". (Group 9)

10.4 Normality and Diversity: Diverse Normals?

Paul: as I said first of all you've got to define what neglect is then once you've defined it if there is neglect then it's black and white I think

Sarah: you're never going to agree; the point is you're never going to agree. (Group 2)

Participants reported that there was no consensus within society as to what constituted child neglect. They located this lack of consensus as stemming from competing understandings of childhood and children. Childhood was seen as in flux, and as having changed enormously for example in relation to children's schooling and children's employment:

Eva: ...if you stuck your children, your boys up the chimney now, you'd be in serious trouble but that's what a lot of kids used to do. (Group 7)

Emma: in the mines, and in the cotton mills, they did jobs that require small people.

Jen: little fingers, yes.

Sarah: little fingers sharp eyes [laughs]. (Group 2)

At times participants adopted a progressive modernist discourse to position childhood as improving, and to argue that improved knowledge of what children need has led to improvements in the structure and experience of childhood:

Lola: I don't think we disagree with [children being employed as chimney sweeps] being mildly inappropriate these days (!) (Group 7)

Paul:... I think by publicising them then people have realised that what they have been doing in the past is not acceptable and you get reform. (Group 2)

For some participants, as our understanding of what children need improves, we should expect to see changes in the concept of child neglect. This view was echoed by Daniel (2005:13) who argued that a broadening and mutating of child neglect may be "inevitable" as we come to know more about children and their needs. There was also a regressive discourse at work. As stated in the previous chapter, structural factors associated with late modernity – the collapse of the nuclear family, the collapse of communities, the retreat of children from public spaces, the decline of the role of community institutions such as the church in children's lives, the concern about paedophiles and technological advances - were all seen as altering childhood to the detriment of children. Again, this view finds support in campaigns about preserving childhood such as those spearheaded by the Children's Society and Layard and Dunn (2009), and the campaign to "halt the Death of Childhood" launched by the Daily Telegraph (2006).

There was also a third construction. Most groups constructed racial, social, cultural and/or religious communities as having their own specific norms and values in relation to child rearing and that one could not legitimately state that one set of norms was better than another. Most Groups at some point spoke of the wide variety of child rearing practices and childhoods considered normal across the globe. England was constructed as a place of great cultural, ethnic and religious diversity (participants listed Seventh-day Adventists, Gypsies/Travellers, Jews, Filipinos, Westerners, Christian Scientists, Anglicans, Jehovah's Witnesses, Greeks, African Caribbeans, Somalians, Arabs, Muslims, Pakistanis, Moonies, Amish children, and children in 'cults'). As a result of this diversity, participants constructed children as living multiple 'childhoods' in close proximity to one another, rather than a single 'childhood'. This multiplicity of childhoods produced competing definitions of the 'normal childhood'.

Until now, I have spoken of child neglect in relation to a single version of the 'normal' childhood within a 'normal' family that is structured to produce a useful docile adult member of society. Within this construction, child neglect occurs when a child's developmental needs are not met due to the failure of the abnormal parent to fulfil their natural and necessary parental role. While lines needed to be negotiated along the continuum between the normal and neglectful, the entire continuum appeared to be situated within psy-complex discourses.

Different religious and cultural versions of childhood challenge the concept of the 'normal childhood'. Each Group at some point discussed the absence of a universally agreed way for children in England to be treated at this time; the absence of consensus about what a 'normal childhood' is:

Eva: .. if we don't have those cultural norms then we wouldn't have what we expect, what we know to be, well what WE know to be the way that we would bring people up. (Group 7)

Kell: then of course you come up against the problem of.. 'cultural differences'. (Group 1)

This was not about one community valuing their children less, or one community being more neglectful of children:

Waheed: ...you don't get one culture where there is child neglect and one where there isn't. (Group 5)

Each community believes that their method of child rearing is appropriate for children. The issue is whether there is a hierarchy of child-rearing practices. Many participants questioned the right of any community to impose their norms and values onto another.

This conflict was most frequently (but by no means exclusively) constructed in relation to the treatment of adolescent girls within different communities in England. Participants used comparisons of the cultural expectations of traditional Muslim and non-Muslim adolescent girls to illustrate the complexities inherent in constructing definitions of child neglect.

Norms for 'Muslim' girls were constructed as involving a retreat from inter-gender socialising and teenaged experimentation with the adult world, and a conservative stance in respect of dress and behaviour. In direct contrast norms for 'white non-Muslim' girls involved a permissive stance in relation to dress and behaviour, an acceptance of the importance of adolescent experimentation as part of growing up and an emphasis on the importance of education and peer relationships over the home environment. Participants posed the question as to whether either of those forms of adolescent girlhood, both of which are lived and experienced by a large number of girls in England today, could be considered neglectful. It is important to note that this is a question directed at different cultures not at individuals within them:

Rebecca: I think of Muslim girls who don't have the opportunity to do what English girls have, and you know they're not allowed to talk with boys, mix with boys or they have to stay at home and cook and clean and do whatever, and then at 16 they're off and married... I think they're slightly neglected in that they don't have the social way of life that we do

Sophie: but traditional Muslim mothers will think that Western mothers are neglectful, they end up going to work and like yes, they probably say that of our culture... (Group 8)

Zoe: I think culture is quite a lot to do with it, but then whose neglect would that be? Are they neglecting their freedom, like neglect because kids should be allowed to do what they want, or are our parents neglecting us? (Group 4)

Participants were very wary of appearing to position a whole culture as neglectful. Thus, as above there was frequently a rehearsal of the anticipated defence ('I say this about them, but they would say this about me'). People accomplishing child rearing within a non-dominant cultural framework could not uncritically be categorized as neglecting those children. Within my data parents are constructed as failing to meet their children's developmental needs because they are Overburdened, Clueless, Underinvested or Unsuitable. Parents who lovingly and skilfully parent in accordance with different cultural norms believing themselves to be acting in the best interests of their children cannot be positioned within the abnormal parent framework. They are behaving normally.

To construct child neglect the Groups were engaged in "social negotiation between different values and beliefs, different social norms and professional knowledges and perspectives about children, child development and parenting" (Parton, Thorpe and Wattam, 1997:67).

Childhood and therefore child neglect was spoken of in terms of assimilation, integration and multiculturalism. Dingwall et al (1995: 82) used the term "cultural relativism" to describe the intellectual position that all cultural parenting norms are equally valid and that "members of one culture have no right to criticise members of another by importing their own standards of judgement" (Dingwall et al, 1995: 82). Multicultural discourse is the discourse of cultural equality, tolerance, mutual respect and non-judgementalism; within its repertoire norms "cannot be derived from one culture alone but through an open and equal dialogue between them" (Parekh, 2006:13). Such an open and equal dialogue is perhaps not as easy as it sounds. Engaging in such a discussion opens one up to being positioned as insensitive, imperialistic, intolerant and racist. The following passage demonstrates the difficulties some participants had even in defining who they were speaking about in terms they found acceptable:

Zoe: well, this is a proper, proper stereotype, but at my old school when we were meeting the Muslim girls who were going there, I got the impression that they were very sort of reined in by their families they kept them quite under wraps, and not necessarily let out to do stuff, meet guys and stuff like that whereas white, I suppose Western girls were allowed out as much as we want, not that they're not Western, I hate doing this because I oh my god (general laughter) just white girls who are young and whose parents are not Muslim is what I mean.

Pam: Us.

Zoe: just us, just us girls. (Group 4)

For other participants society's refusal to privilege one normative childhood over another neglected children's rights. This was the sole occasion in which a rights framework was used, and it was specifically reserved for adolescent girls who were positioned as oppressed by imported religious or cultural norms. Participants in Group 1 argued that the legal principle of equality before the law required all children within a state to be granted the same rights and opportunities as each other. By allowing particular social or cultural groups to exempt their children from the rights and activities of childhood enjoyed by other children, Group 1 argued the state was failing children from particular ethnic or religious backgrounds due to well-intentioned but misguided political correctness. For Group 1 competition is between those norms constructed as practised by the settled population and those that they constructed as imported by an immigrant population and enforced upon their (often unwilling) children. For Group 1 the settled population had the right to enforce its own ideas of what childhood should be within its borders. Child neglect should be defined according to the things:

Kell: that WE decide harm a child

Sheila: our country yes...

Vic: because that's where they're coming to. (Group 1)

It is important to note that Group 1 does not assert the superiority of one version of childhood over another, instead relying on the discourse of assimilation, and the obligation of the newcomer/guest to abide by the rules and conform themselves to the norms of the host society they are joining.

10.5 Constructing the Role of the School

Fern: it goes back to who is responsible for their welfare isn't it.

Alice: because we've had situations in school where "why haven't you noticed XY and Z" haven't we? (Group 7)

The 'normal' family is not the sole modern disciplinary institution for producing useful and docile adults. If families and community institutions are positioned as fracturing and fragmenting, schools could potentially assume more of the responsibility for producing normal childhood. Schools were positioned as providing protection from child neglect through surveillance of children:

Ros:...school teachers I think are very much trained aren't they to be alert to it. (Group 1)

Angela: [teachers] should KNOW the child as well so they should know if there is anything wrong with the child because they're obviously well the adult, apart from the parents, who know the child the best. (Group 8)

Home schooled children avoid this educational gaze, and they are positioned as more vulnerable as a result:

Rebecca: they're more at risk to be neglected because there's no professionals to look out for them. (Group 8)

Participants argued that attending school affords children an opportunity to observe and even take part in activities denied them at home and ensures that children's developmental needs at some level are met even if only for limited periods. However, it is not the role of the school to take over from parents. For participants the school took second place to parents in terms of authority and responsibility for children, and parents trying to blame schools for failing to meet the training or supervisory needs of their children were seen as failing in their responsibilities (Clueless, Underinvested or Unsuitable):

Emma: in the media nowadays there are an awful lot of parents who are being blamed for how their children are behaving and their failure in correcting their children's behaviour and they seem to think it's totally the responsibility of schools(!) (Group 2)

Lola: we had a student who went out for her birthday and drank vodka and ended up face down in a gutter and the parents rang the school and said "this is your fault. You did not tell her the dangers of alcohol". They would accept no responsibility, there was no sense that they didn't know where their daughter was, the fact that they didn't know that their daughter had bought vodka or the fact that it was hours before she was found. (Group 7)

Schools were constructed as important disseminators of child development knowledge and expertise both to parents of pupils and within the community. Parents did not always accept or appreciate this knowledge:

Lola: ...you ring home and when you'd say you know you're concerned about [their children's] behaviour, you're concerned about [their children's] effort and they'll go "oh I know" (laughter) which I mean doesn't really help. (Group 7)

Sheila: ... they took offence the parents at being made aware of that... (Group 1)

Jen: [the school was trying to enforce a healthy school lunch anti-obesity agenda] but the parents went out and bought crisps and chips and fed them through the bars. (Group 2)

Several groups discussed the question of whether schools should provide food for children who were not being adequately fed at home. The desirability or otherwise of this depended not on the perceived unmet needs of the child but rather on the construction of the parent. Where the parent was constructed as Overburdened, the Groups considered the school providing assistance to make up a nutritional deficit a very good idea:

Mark: if a kid doesn't get breakfast and the school has cereal bars as a backup once in a blue moon then that's a brilliant idea. (Group 6)

However, where there was perceived to be an element of parental choice in not feeding the child (the abnormal parent) the school plugging the gaps was seen as an inappropriate response:

Laura: ...but the rich parent who is neglecting their child there should be no reason why they get a free school meal. (Group 6)

10.6 Constructing the Role of the Law

Sarah: I've got very little clue of how the law defines child neglect. (Group 2)

Kell:... we all know what abuse is but neglect is difficult so I did look it up in the dictionary... (Group 1)

Participants did not refer to current legal definitions of child neglect. Although the laws of any given society function as general norms of behaviour delineating what is or is not

acceptable within society (Parton, 1991; Hoyano and Keenan, 2010), participants were not drawing on legal discourses to define child neglect. Participants in Group 6 spoke of having conducted legal research when trying to establish at what age a child could be left unsupervised and discovering that such a law did not exist. Not one participant expressed themselves to be unable to define child neglect due to their lack of legal expertise. Kell's resort to a dictionary definition (see above) indicates that for her neglect is a lay concept not a legal one.

In fact, participants' common sense definitions did reflect all of the legal constructions on offer:

Mark: I think anything that affects the ability of someone to prosper. (Group 6)

Ros: ...Where the very basics of parenting has not been provided. (Group 1)

Chloe: When I think of child neglect I do think of really horrible abuse. (Group 8)

Mark has adopted a wide welfarist/children's rights model, Ros has encapsulated the definition in use within child protection and Chloe has stated something of the criminal law (aside from the technical use of the word 'abuse'). Similarly participants used legal principles in talking about child neglect: principles such as children's rights, parents' rights, reasonableness, non-discrimination, intention/wilfulness, child protection, crime and punishment and equality before the law. Certainly the Groups expected the law to be able to decide the issue of neglect if called upon to do so. When participants found themselves trying to adjudicate between competing constructions of neglect, several groups asked what 'the law' said or stated that 'the law' should be the final arbiter of what constituted child neglect in this country:

Paul: ... the law has to make them, has to make determinations which some people won't like but that's, that's the law. If you're within that legal system then you have to take account of it... (Group 2)

'The law' was not therefore positioned as the first recourse in defining child neglect but rather the last resort, an institution able to demand compliance when norms were not clear.

This would be in accordance with the Foucauldian idea of "juridico-discursive" power (Foucault, 1978:82) expanded by Lynch (2011). Disciplinary power relies on hierarchical observation, examination and normative judgement using norms drawn from knowledge about production of the docile and useful adult (Foucault, 1979). In the absence of such common and available behavioural norms, arguably disciplinary power cannot operate effectively to govern behaviour and there would have to be an appeal to 'the law' to

determine what was or was not child neglect. The law is positioned as operating in a uniform and all-encompassing binary manner, determining what can be said and done or not said and done, operating through mechanisms of rule, taboo and censorship, demanding complete obedience from compliant subjects.

10.7 Drawing the Line: Reconstructing Normal

Alice: that's what I mean by what is neglect? ... What one person may think of is neglect for that family for another is perfectly normal. (Group 7)

Participants were not confused about where they personally drew the line in cases of child neglect, but they were unclear about where the lines were drawn within society. This reflects Action for Children (2012) findings that a sizeable majority of the public agreed that there was no common understanding of what 'good enough' parenting is. My data indicates that participants did not just think that the point at which parenting slips from normal to abnormal is unclear, but they felt that there was a lack of consensus about what was a 'normal' childhood. There is a consensus about the extreme abnormal, where parents seek to and succeed in grievously damaging their children, the stories that tend to be rehearsed in news stories and campaigns by children's charities. However, the 'normal' childhood was constructed as fragmenting. This is the 'childhood in crisis' discourse - without a 'normal' childhood, children will not develop into 'normal' adults:

*Claire: ...I hate to say it but it scares me to think that I'm going to be looked after by the population [of kids that aren't valued]...
Anna: [by this generation]. (Group 6)*

Morag: it's like a missing generation isn't it, a whole generation that is not being provided for in a proper way. (Group 9)

For most participants what was required was the (re)establishment of consensus about what child neglect is. The reassertion or redefinition of 'normal childhood' will strengthen the operation of disciplinary power. Parents contravening a widely held consensus about child rearing norms can more easily be positioned as abnormal and subjected to sanction. Creating consensus was framed within two discourses: an expert led approach and a democratic approach.

10.7.1 The Expert Approach

Sue: I think it's something that people need be made more aware of. (Group 3)

Most participants spoke of reaching consensus about child neglect within expert led approaches. When participants spoke of "awareness raising", "parenting classes" and more training on neglect for a wider range of people, there was a necessary construction that child neglect was not a contested category but an expert one. Raising awareness requires some definition of what one is raising awareness about, educating people about parenting requires some agreed curriculum of what parenting entails, and training wider groups of professionals to recognise child neglect requires trainers to recognise it themselves. Within this construction the expert definition of child neglect constitutes knowledge; what is suggested is an increase in mechanisms through which to disseminate expert norms into the wider society.

Vic:...Parenting classes before you become a parent. (Group 1)

Alice: ...public awareness campaigns do work, they don't work for everybody but I'm fairly sure that the majority of people will eat more fruit and veg over the course of the year than they would have done otherwise. (Group 9)

In addition to educating the public, participants argued that a way of tackling child neglect was through giving more financial and expert based help to parents:

Laura: ..actually bringing up a child, helping to understand what a two-year-old needed, helping you understand how to provide those needs and provide the best environment, nobody helps you with. (Group 6)

Morag: when a child reaches the age of three it can then get some [childcare] provision free of charge from the state. I think that should be a lot younger than three because between one and three is a really difficult time. (Group 9)

Maddy: [the state should ensure] everyone has an income sufficient to their needs and also access to other types of resources. (Group 3)

Alongside the construction that more helping professionals should be involved with family life, came the construction that those who come into contact with children should be trained to watch closely to ensure that child-rearing norms are being followed effectively. An increase in disciplinary surveillance is embedded in discourses of providing more help to families:

Heather: ...and just call in say every week, do you know just to KEEP AN EYE... (Group 8)

Sue: [on how best to prevent child neglect] home visits for the kid. That's not damaging anyone, no one should be pissed off about that. It's just somebody who's got a better knowledge of kids to like look at how the kid is doing and if they're healthy or not. (Group 4)

Hamid: ...who's going to be there to check every house to make sure every single child is all right? (Group 5)

Lindland and Kendall-Taylor (2013) also found that participants thought that parenting classes, increasing awareness and vigilance on the part of those spending time with children would reduce child maltreatment. The authors also found strong support for measures to address poverty, increasing penalties for child maltreatment and the rapid removal of maltreated children by the state. For my Groups, poverty reduction was not uppermost when they constructed a response to neglect, perhaps reflecting the difficulty of positioning the Overburdened parent as neglectful. When participants spoke about tackling child neglect (as opposed to say meeting the needs of all children in England) easing the financial situation of poor families was often seen as secondary to assisting people within those families to parent appropriately. While several Groups did suggest increasing penalties for particular types of child neglect, removing children from their families was only considered appropriate for extreme cases of neglect and always as a last resort. Overwhelmingly participants argued that the focus should be on assisting families to remain together.

10.7.2 Challenging Expertise

Alice:But when psychologists can't agree (laughter) and social workers can't agree and teachers can't agree you know and the government can't agree.

Lola: and who has the right to say "this is my definition"? (Group 7)

No participants were in favour of the state taking over what are currently seen as parental duties. It was the job of parents to decide how to bring up their children. The state's role was constructed as to facilitate, encourage, provide information, and oversee the treatment of children. If a child needed protection due to severe parental failure, then, and only then, could the state appropriate the exercise of parental choices and duties. The Groups largely relied on the mechanisms of disciplinary power to ensure parents met the developmental needs of their children, and child neglect was constructed in accordance with psy-complex discourses.

Not all participants agreed that further dissemination and greater penetration of expertise would result in fewer children being neglected. Participants within Group 5 argued that

there was already enough being done to alert people about child neglect, and that however much more was done, some people would continue to neglect children.

Hamid: it can't be reduced any more I don't think. Think of all the adverts on TV, what else can we do, they literally throw it into people's faces what else can they do? (Group 5).

Lindland and Kendall-Taylor (2013) describe this as the fatalism model within their research.

For other participants, particularly in Groups 7 and 10 there was a suspicion of expertise itself. Expertise was seen as allied to power, and operating through power rather than because it was the expression of some form of universal truth:

Jo:..well the people in power are the people who make judgements about what [child neglect] is. (Group 10)

Eva: I think that's the thing, there is no real "expert" in my opinion when it comes to child neglect. (Group 7)

Group 7 positioned expertise itself as fragmented and wrong - a construction unique to this Group and perhaps reflecting the fact that participants, as school employees, had a greater proximity to and familiarity with child related expertise:

Eva: I think we've got to be really careful though because I know we can consider ourselves to be well rounded and knowing a lot now, but back in the 1940s when "cold parenting" in inverted commas was the cause of autism...(Group 7)

This Group also positioned parents within a hybrid: lay parents are both 'not expert' in relation to children as a group, but 'expert' in relation to their own children and so capable of contesting external expertise:

Alice: ...parents don't take kindly to experts swanning in and telling them about their children whether its schoolteachers or whether it's anybody else. So there's a real real resistance. It's all right us saying about the experts telling us how to do it in teaching us how to, or making laws or whatever it is, but, the actuality of it is "you don't tell me how to raise my child". (Group 7)

Skye: ... if I act neglectfully then there will be consequences but you can't take away my right to decide whether or not my child is immunised or whether or not I go with herbal medicine surely? (Group 7)

Fern: ... I would take great offence at being told how to bring up my child, and I do take great offence. (Group 7)

This position was one taken by 7% of parents within Action for Children's (2012) research. This is the construction of the private family as shielded from the state and state mandated

agencies. Within the liberal state, this family model must remain permeable to normalisation and moralisation.

10.7.3 The Democratic Approach

The more democratic discourse took the position that determining what is acceptable for children is not solely a matter for experts. Participants taking this approach spoke of public discussion rather than public education and of people making up their minds as a collective process rather than simply receiving expert wisdom. This is not to say that experts are excluded, but simply that expertise is not the sole arbiter of what is considered child neglect. This position was clearly expressed by Paul in suggesting how the state could respond to child neglect:

Paul: I think promote discussion, ...I think it's much more likely to occur through newspapers or through the media generally, so that cases are highlighted and people can then say what they think about those cases, people will take up their different positions and thereby the general mass of people have the opportunity of considering their position (Group 2)

Here expertise does not possess normative power, and “the general mass of people” can give it whatever weight they consider appropriate. This reflects Parton’s (1995) point that neglect is a political and moral issue rather than one solely relating to expertise. The way in which child neglect is defined and responded to is seen as a political matter for argument and debate, and a moral issue with regard to delineating and performing the rights and duties owed to children. This is a lay driven consensus rather than an expert driven one.

10.7.4 The Current Approach

Interestingly, although participants spoke about the need for public education or public debate, in 2012 when my data was collected there were already a variety of public discussions taking place. The Education Select Committee was holding Parliamentary hearings as part of their inquiry into the child protection system, and identified child neglect as one of their main areas of focus. The NSPCC had re-committed itself to seven ‘priority areas’ of which neglect was one. Action for Children was campaigning for a change in the criminal law relating to child neglect, together with a “complementary campaign of public education and awareness in order to change behaviour” (2012:22). Child neglect was being positioned as an important topic in several arenas, and efforts were being made to harness public support and public opinion behind some form of ‘action’.

The Expert Approach to establishing child neglect norms is that favoured by Action for Children and the NSPCC, both of whom seek to disseminate expertise into legal and lay forums. We see this explicitly with the Action for Children campaign referred to above and the alliance of the NSPCC with Frameworks to provide a means of more effective communication of expert discourse to the public. Indeed “*explaining* critical aspects of the issue constitutes the next frontier of efforts to use communications to address issues of child maltreatment in the United Kingdom” (Kendall-Taylor et al, 2014:811; emphasis in original). Child protection expertise was also considered most relevant to advising the Education Select Committee on the subject of neglect, Graham Stuart M.P. (chair) “we [committee members] will be lay people at the end as we were at the beginning, but hopefully better informed” (Education Committee, uncorrected transcript, 2011). In this invitation for professional expertise to inform and influence (ostensibly lay) instruments of government, we can see the Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge in operation. Power requires knowledge for its exercise, and knowledge engenders power (Foucault, 1980a).

10.8 Conclusion

Participants reported seeing children whose needs were unmet and who they positioned as neglected in many different situations. For the most part, these children did not elicit any form of action from the observer other than subjective anxiety and anger. Many explanations were given for this, including a lack of knowledge about who to contact, but intervening was constructed as making the situation worse, wrongfully interfering in family privacy and exposing parents and children to unwarranted state intrusion. Intervention was above all constructed as alerting expertise (surveillance-by-proxy) and mandating the involvement of social services. Social services in turn were constructed as an institution of child removal, rather than as a provider of family support services. In order to be prepared to involve authority, the Groups needed to be sure that what they were seeing was truly abnormal and mandated such interference. Thus lay constructions of child neglect were enmeshed in considerations of whether intervention thresholds thought to be used by child protection professionals were met. This was considered highly unsatisfactory by all the Groups.

Participants sought public consensus around a definition of child neglect and how best to respond to it in order to meet the needs of children, parents and society. Such a consensus

would provide a level of safety and certainty for children and parents, lay people and professionals about what each was to expect and to receive. Currently participants constructed norms about child neglect as being fragmented, the normal disintegrated into normals and therefore failing to provide certainty, clarity or guidance to children or those interested in their welfare and well-being. Without such clarity, the line between what is normal or abnormal, acceptable or unacceptable, child neglect or not child neglect becomes left to individuals to draw, and by default, the line is drawn in accordance with child protection intervention thresholds.

As a response, participants in all groups identified the need to teach parenting and/or the need to create or facilitate some form of public consensus about what constitutes child neglect. These seem to be two halves of the same disciplinary coin. In teaching parenting we discipline subjects into accepting childhood norms and minimum standards and expectations of how parental obligations should be fulfilled. Public discussion ensures that parenting norms are etched into public consciousness so that everyone, including children, has an understanding of what is unacceptable behaviour towards a child. What was less clear is how such norms should be arrived at. Some call for experts to educate the public about child development (a very modern solution). Others seek a wider discussion about the place of children in society and how children should be treated (making the political and moral choices explicitly political and moral). Very rarely however did participants expect the state to mandate a normal childhood, telling parents how they must parent, or the ways in which they must meet children's needs. The state as parent was positioned as incapable of parenting children as effectively as the normal family could.

Chapter 11 - Constructing the Line

Paul: The situation of children is fundamentally important to a society... (Group 2)

My final thesis chapter revisits the aims and findings of this research project and explores implications for theory, research and practice. I also reflect on what I have learned about the research process and research practice before identifying avenues of potential for research in this area.

11.1 Revisiting the Aims of the Research

From the beginning I was interested in lay constructions of child neglect. There is a tradition of using social constructionist research paradigms to analyse professional, legal and expert constructions of child neglect (e.g. Scourfield, 2000; Swift, 1995; Casey, 2013; Piper, 2013; Parton, 1985; 1991; 1995; 2006; 2014) and I wished to apply the same type of analysis to lay constructions. I situated my research within the democratising discourse tradition (discussed in chapter 2.4) which ascribes lay knowledge the same legitimacy as professional knowledge. I wanted to bring lay knowledge to a research area dominated by professional expertise but within which lay people are expected to play important roles in preventing, recognising and reporting neglect.

I wanted to provide a research environment in which lay people were free to construct child neglect without expert guidance (see chapter 6). In an effort to minimise my expert influence on the data, I chose to collect data using focus groups made up of participants with pre-existing relationships, took care not to lead the discussions or set the agenda and refused to define what was meant by 'child protection professional' or 'child protection expertise' (see chapter 7). Minimising the effects of my expertise during the data analysis and write up process was more difficult. While I did all that I could to ensure my analysis was data driven and by providing a large amount of data illustrating my findings in the thesis itself, these were choices that I made and I cannot separate those choices from my expertise. Although I have tried extremely hard to avoid putting my expert voice into the mouths of lay participants, this work must be considered a co-construction between me and my participants and my findings must be seen in that context.

11.2 Revisiting Key Findings

Eva ... we've just basically said that the entirety of life could be deemed child neglect, whether you've got too much, too little, not enough, you know

Lola: the wrong kind

Eva: the wrong kind, everything is under there somewhere... (Group 7)

Participants constructed child neglect as a complicated category, the boundaries of which were unclear. For participants whether or not a child was seen as neglected seemed to depend on two judgements being made: are the child's developmental needs being met and if not, why not. Participants seemed to consider child neglect to be important because they associated failure to meet the developmental needs of children with producing long term negative repercussions for the child and society. Participants presented these needs as different types, which I termed physical needs, emotional needs, training needs and supervisory needs. Where these needs were not being appropriately met, participants seemed to see children as Deprived, Unloved, Uncontrolled or Escaping.

All the Groups asserted that parents are responsible for meeting their children's needs during 'normal' parenting. Normal parents were seen as having a particular disposition towards their child, together with the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure the child's developmental needs are met. Normal parenting can be compromised by structural factors such as poverty or individual factors such as relationship breakdown. It appeared that if a parent was constructed as normal, they could not be positioned as behaving neglectfully, rather they were seen as Overburdened. If however a parent was seen to be lacking any element of normal parenthood then it seemed participants could position them as neglectful. Just as there are categories of children whose needs are unmet, so there are categories of parent who are failing to meet those needs, and in my analysis participants constructed three distinct groups of neglectful parents: Clueless Parents, Underinvested Parents and Unsuitable Parents. This construction also fed back into constructions of the child: where a child with unmet needs is paired with a parent positioned as behaving neglectfully, participants seemed more likely to position the child as neglected.

While participants seemed to construct the categories of neglect in very similar ways across the Groups, they were less clear about the category line separating an unmet need from child neglect or inadequate parental behaviour from neglectful parenting. Participants appeared to expect a minor degree of individual variation in where that line was drawn, but seemed to feel that public consensus over how children should be treated had been undermined both by the fragmentation of the nuclear family and the challenge posed by multiculturalism to 'normal' childhood. For participants, this lack of consensus meant that children were reaching adulthood without having had the appropriate childhoods to prepare

them for it, to the detriment of the neglected individual and longer term to the detriment of society.

11.2.1 Lay Constructions of Child Neglect and the Psy-Complex

Sophie: children need to be children don't they?

Heather: I agree. They do need a childhood...(Group 8)

I began this project anticipating that lay participants might construct child neglect differently from the ways in which I, as an expert, defined it. To my surprise, my participants used very similar constructions to those of experts. Childhood was constructed within psy-complex models as a developmental space that precedes and is separate from adulthood, within which children are treated in particular ways with the aim of producing a particular kind of adult. For participants, ensuring children's developmental needs are met is in society's interests as the formation of future adults affects society. That construction appeared to drive the positioning of child neglect not as a private matter but as everybody's business. For participants normal parents accomplish child rearing on behalf of society, and as a result they are entitled to be facilitated and supported and rewarded for this role by other members of the community and by the state.

This idea of the developmental childhood as a collection of processes practised on those at the start of the life course by adults in order to produce particular kinds of adults was unchallenged. While participants and cultures might disagree about the precise nature of children's physical, emotional, training and supervisory needs, the basic construction of the needy developing child seemed to be universal. Everyone appeared to accept that childhood produced the adult, and different types of childhood produced different types of adult: children develop and learn according to specific principles. This raises the question as to whether it is possible to construct child neglect other than through developmental discourse, or whether this is a "stark impossibility" at this time (Foucault, 1970: xv). The psy-complex seems to be the only way in which child neglect could be understood by participants (and indeed by experts): the episteme currently encompassing all the discourses, institutions and practices relating to child neglect.

11.2.2 Lay People and Expertise

In Chapter 6 I suggested that vignette and quantitative research into child neglect risked putting expert words into lay mouths. From my data it would appear those words are already there. Lay participants seemed to be familiar with psy-complex expertise in relation to child development and to draw on it freely and effectively. Whilst I am aware that my

own expertise may colour my analysis of this factor, it appeared to me that lay people seemed to be constructing child neglect using a looser and less technical version of psy-complex knowledge than experts. My participants did not produce neuro-scientific accounts of brain architecture to discuss the effects of child neglect, but they did construct childhood needs using psy-complex child development models which the neuro-scientific accounts are claimed to support (see Chapter 4 and 8).

11.2.3 Child Neglect and Gender

Mel: you don't have a monopoly of your mummy. (Group 4)

The role of gender in child neglect was rarely tackled explicitly by participants and great care needs to be taken with my findings as overwhelmingly parents participating in the discussions were mothers. However, it seemed to me that while participants often spoke within apparently genderless 'parenting' discourse, the term 'parent' was largely synonymous with 'mother'. It has been argued that conflating parenting with mothering obscures the gender related complexities and power relationships within child rearing for both adults and children (Featherstone, 2004; 2006; Daniel et al, 2005). Where mothers were mentioned specifically, they were overwhelmingly positioned as primarily responsible for child rearing and meeting their children's needs.

This requirement for women to care for children did not seem to be constructed in the same way for fathers. Participants did consider the paternal role as important: normal fathers were expected to provide gender appropriate role models, be present in their children's lives and provide economic support for the family. In contrast abnormal fathers neglected children by being absent from their lives and/or failing to provide these things, particularly the role model aspect (Underinvested/Unsuitable). Domestic violence was not raised by any Group in relation to child neglect although squandering the household finances and competing with the mother-child relationship were. This gendered difference in construction was not just within the family. Men outside the family were positioned by participants as potentially predatory and untrustworthy in relation to children, a construction that did not apply to women outside the family. It was acknowledged within several Groups that men involving themselves in the lives of children to whom they were unrelated would potentially attract suspicion. This separation between the optimistic positioning of men within the home and the pessimistic positioning of male strangers reflects the literature (Scourfield and Drakeford, 2002; Featherstone, 2004; 2006; 2013).

Participants largely spoke of the gender neutral child, except in one highly specific circumstance. Time and again, participants illustrated the complexities in defining child

neglect in diverse late modern England using the very different cultural norms in operation regulating the behaviour of adolescent girls. As stated in chapter 4, influences from feminism and late modernity continue to challenge the positioning of women as responsible for home and child rearing (the therapeutic familialism detailed in chapter 3). Women are now expected to be wage earners (Featherstone, 2004; 2006). Despite this, participants recognised that not all within late modern England consider this construction of the role of women within society to be acceptable or a social good:

Sophie: Like traditional Muslim mothers will think that like Western mothers are neglectful, they end up going to work and like yeah, they'd probably say that of our culture. (Group 8)

For the participants, tensions between the different ideas about how adolescent girls should be educated, socialise, dress and behave reflect very different cultural norms in operation about the place of females in society. These differences were not discussed in relation to male childhoods. Using developmental discourse, each culture has a clear model of what girls 'need' to become 'normal women'; however, what 'normal women' are (or should aspire to) was positioned by participants as contested.

11.2.4 Lay Constructions and Legal Constructions

Paul: The law has to make determinations which some people won't like, but that's the law. If you're within that legal system then you have to take account of it otherwise you'll be dealt with by the law. (Group 2)

Although positioning themselves as unaware of the law in relation to child neglect the Groups nevertheless constructed child neglect in ways that seemed similar to the legal definitions set out in chapter 5. Participants positioned parents as particularly abnormal and blameworthy if they deliberately chose to harm their children by not meeting their needs. Intention is an important element of the criminal offence of child cruelty and may determine whether or not neglectful behaviour attracts state sanction. Participants also constructed children within a rights framework, although these rights were located within protectionist frameworks rather than participatory ones: the right to protection from harm, the right to have their needs met and the right to a childhood. Protection rights fit easily within developmental models of childhood and child neglect.

Most frequently participants seemed to construct child neglect in similar ways to CA 1989 and the Working Together guidance (HM Government, 2013). Like CA 1989, participants constructed parents as responsible for bringing up their children affording them a great deal of latitude within which to do this. Like CA 1989 participants constructed child neglect as relating to parental failure to care for or control their children adequately, although where CA 1989 constructs what would reasonably be required of a parent, participants constructed

a normal parent. Like Working Together (HM Government, 2013), participants constructed neglect in relation to failing to meet physical or psychological needs, and failure to meet these needs was associated with harm to a child's health or development. As in CA 1989, participants saw neglect as capable of adversely affecting physical, emotional, intellectual, social and behavioural development. Finally, like CA 1989, participants constructed the state as having particular responsibilities in respect of children whose needs were not being met whether or not they were also constructed as neglected children. There were differences though. While CA 1989 requires the focus to be on the needs of the child and not the parent, it seemed that participants struggled to construct a child as neglected if a parent was constructed as Overwhelmed: the category of unmet need was not synonymous with child neglect. For participants, their main opposition to legal and expert practice under CA 1989 was constructed around the state's response to children whose needs were not being met. It seemed that each Group felt that current thresholds for responding to a child's unmet needs were unsatisfactory, as was the response that such children could hope to receive. I think that these questions are political and moral ones rather than questions of expertise.

11.2.5 Intervening in Child Neglect: Establishing a line

Mark: but that wouldn't be picked up as [neglect or abuse would it]

Kirsty: [lack of social skills]

Mark: it wouldn't be picked up

Laura: it might actually be at school though,

Claire: [through their friends I suppose]

Laura: [there are so many opportunities] children are given at school...

Mark: but NOT as NEGLECT

While participants constructed children's needs and child neglect in broadly similar ways, they were troubled by the lack of consensus about where unmet needs became child neglect. Participants reported that the needs of a large number of children were going unmet in society, children who were perhaps being neglected. Participants positioned themselves as both concerned about these children and powerless to effect change. As stated in chapter 10, direct intervention in children's lives by individual unrelated adults was complicated. However communities were seen as failing to collectively care for children as they had in the past:

Ros: you've got a lot of very individual people who are dropped into society into areas of big cities where they don't have anybody necessarily and where the streets are quite dangerous because of traffic let alone anybody else who might be around and so a lot of that sort of caring for children has disappeared. (Group 1)

Participants felt unable or unwilling to use informal avenues to assist a neglected child. Without this option, participants constructed themselves as having to choose between doing

something or doing nothing. Doing something was constructed as alerting social services, action that in turn was constructed as likely to lead to the family enduring a social services investigation and no action being taken, or alternatively, social services would remove the child from the family. Social services investigation and the removal of children from their families were both constructed as unwelcome and themselves damaging. Participants had to construct the removal of the child as a positive improvement in the child's situation to justify any intervention in the child's life. This means that in deciding whether or not to intervene in child neglect participants were responding to what they believed child protection professionals would need to be convinced of before they took action. If participants did not construct the situation as being serious enough to warrant the use of draconian state removal powers, then other than subjectively, it was not neglect; the children would not be seen as neglected (as Mark argued above).

This is a contested area: "there is disagreement both in academic writing and in real life about the proper boundary between the authority of parents and the power of the state to intervene" (Thomas, 2000: 55). For participants that line is a child protection one. To compound this participants based their views on what would be serious enough for the state to remove children largely on stories in the media, which, as has already been stated, focus on extreme cases and take a very critical view of the competence of social workers. However, participants did not construct this line as being in the right place. What participants were seeking was a different response that they could utilise that worked with families using a vocabulary of support rather than intervention: as Featherstone et al (2014) point out, the very word 'intervention' implies doing something to families rather with them. Participants wanted to be able to find ways of ensuring the needs of children were met long before the failure to meet those needs had reached the point at which removal of the child was required. This is the moral and political issue, the choice of at what point we as a society decide to respond to the children in our midst who are not getting what they want, need or deserve from society, and the way in which we go about responding. We do not have to wait for a significant harm threshold to be crossed, we can choose to do something long before that, or we can choose not to. The choice is ours to make based on what we think is right and necessary. The political dimension to such considerations was recognised by Peter:

Peter: ... I think a lot of it is party political as well, and I can see that in the discussion here you know the people whose politics is probably on the right of centre come up with a different view about the involvement of the state than people who you know are more on the left... (Group 2).

11.3 Revisiting Foucault

Kas: it depends who's judging it, who's judging the word neglect

Jo: well the people in power are the people who make judgements about what that is

Kas: [doctors teachers social workers]

Aisha: [social workers]

Jo: [they're the professional people] yeah. I think. (Group 10)

My relationship with Foucauldian ideas throughout the Ph.D. process has been an intense and fraught one, and in the end I used only those tools of his that I considered useful and discarded the rest. Looking back, I recognise the enormous contribution Foucault has made first to my conceptualisation and then to my analysis of child neglect. Methodologically my use of Foucault made me take a particular approach to knowledge (including my own), viewing it always in relationship to power, as part of wider discursive structures and as saturated in history. As a professional I have been trained within the discourses of the psy-complex, and it would have been easy to slip into an analysis of what my participants said to me based on what was 'right' or 'best' for children. Taking a Foucauldian position reminds me that this is not the point, the aim is to explore, to test, even to transgress against the regime of truth that surrounds children in today's society (Hollinger, 1994).

Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary power, discourse, power/knowledge and resistance outlined in chapter 2 are found throughout this thesis. The concept of the normal family as a disciplinary institution for the production of docile useful adults through the operation of the normal childhood is central. In my view participants constructed child neglect as a deviation from normal family life, a deviation manifesting in the presentation of the child, but emanating from the abnormal parent. Thus in Foucauldian terms, neglect is an intergenerational failure of disciplinary power, abnormal parenting behaviour handed down from parents to children.

Psy-complex knowledge, and in particular knowledge deriving from developmental psychology, produces the normal and natural childhood, in which the child's 'needs' and society's 'needs' are discursively conflated. Psy-complex knowledge also produces the abnormal or neglectful childhood in which to fail as a parent is not only to neglect a child but also to neglect a duty owed to society. Psy-complex knowledge about normal parenting and the normal childhood was positioned as common sense by the lay participants. As stated in chapters 3 and 4 the liberal state relies on the private family to voluntarily assume child-rearing responsibilities, and affords them private space within which to do this. Over and over again, participants spoke of the need to support families and family life, the right for parents to make choices that they considered best for their children, the importance of not interfering with families, the primacy of biological family within the life of every child. Despite the fragmentation associated with late modernity, that discourse remains intact.

As would be expected (Foucault, 1978), resistance is also present within the data. Discourses of other childhoods from other times challenge the 'normality' of today's truth. Multiculturalism provides other models of 'normal' family life. These childhoods cannot easily be classified as normal or neglectful, seeming to me to remain in some way unassimilated, outside normalising judgement. Families operating within different normative structures capture each other in a critical gaze; the science endorsed universal childhood said to require a particular family and educational structure and which depends on psy-complex knowledge and techniques is disrupted by multiculturalism. Cultural childhoods trouble normalisation, and troubled participants, who were uncertain how normalising judgement would operate within our plural and diverse society.

In this climate of diversity comes a new focus on biological mechanisms: the cognitive sciences are producing new universalising knowledge seeking to determine the scientific supremacy of specific developmental models of childhood. However, the very diversity of child rearing environments exposes the political nature of decisions about how we 'do' childhood at this time and in this country. Where the institution of family can no longer be counted on to provide the correct child rearing environment, the other disciplinary institution of childhood - the school - is required to make up for the deficit. Thus we have calls for parenting classes in schools to try to discipline common norms about parenting into the next generation, just as we require schools to provide citizenship education (DoE, 2013) and promote "fundamental British values" (DoE, 2014a). The decision as to what should properly be considered a 'fundamental British value' is a political and a moral one, not a matter for expertise. The same is true of deciding what should be considered child neglect.

The increasing interest in child neglect and particularly the first three years movement described in chapter 4 has coincided with cuts to state, community and voluntary services supporting children and families. State policies such as the housing benefit cap, benefit sanctions and the 'bedroom tax' have all adversely affected children in low income families (Reed, 2013; Johnston, 2015; Lupton, 2014; Robinson, Bragg and Colwell, 2014). Constructions of child neglect focusing on parent-child relationships and parental failure may remove focus from structural issues, drawing attention away from constructions that the state has a duty not to enact measures that neglect children. My participants were concerned by poverty and the lack of support for parents. However, it seemed that for most, neglect remained something done to children by parents not by states. This echoes the view expressed by Noyes of the NSPCC when giving expert evidence to the Education Committee: "at the heart of neglect [...] is a lack or loss of empathy between the parent and child" (Education Committee, 2013:20).

11.4 Recommendations for theory, policy and practice

"...at a societal level neglect would be better understood if there were some open discussion concerning what is acceptable and what is not" (Davies and Ward, 2012:21).

Me: so who is responsible for stopping neglect?

[Laughter]

Abby: anybody really

Cora: we all are

Abby: yeah

Cora: aren't we?

Ruth: we all are, mmm, well I think I agree with that sentiment, not sure how that works in practice...(Group 3)

All Groups except Group 5 positioned the state as needing to find a mechanism through which to build a new consensus about what children are entitled to and from whom. As older community institutions were positioned as fragmenting and failing, it seemed participants felt the need to forge new understandings and institutions to take their place. Participants suggested consensus could be achieved through a public education campaign (the government's "5 A DAY" was suggested by one Group as a template), or through a media-led public discussion, or through revitalised and properly funded community institutions; as long as the public was involved and public agreement was reached on what child neglect is. Several Groups also advocated parenting education in schools to ensure the next generation were provided with the necessary tools to parent properly.

Public discussion and public education are different. Public education and public awareness campaigns proceed on the basis that experts 'know' what child neglect is and how it must be avoided, and seek to inform the public. Public discussion on the other hand involves dialogue between lay and expert, allowing ventilation of issues outside the realm of expertise such as what children and parents have a right to receive from society, what society has a right to expect from parents and children, and how these at times competing expectations and rights can be put into practice. Although this was not mentioned by participants, perhaps because developmental discourse excludes them from the political sphere, I would argue from a social justice and children's rights standpoint that children must be enabled to participate meaningfully as fellow citizens in reaching any new consensus on child neglect. New ways in which to facilitate children's participation need to be sought (Thomas, 2007).

11.4.1 Changing the Subject Positions

Zoe: because you can't really tell another parent how to parent. (Group 4)

In my view, the current child neglect discourses impede lay people who are not family members both from recognising that children's needs are not being met and from responding to those needs. For parents, to be positioned as neglectful was to be positioned as abnormal. Struggling parents may not come forward for assistance if in doing so they risk being positioned so negatively. Normal parents are also positioned as knowing what is best for their developing children, making it more difficult for lay people to engage with them about or intervene informally on behalf of children they are concerned about. Finally, positioning normal families as private spheres outside state scrutiny may inhibit lay people reporting concerns to the authorities unless the child's situation was seen as severe enough to warrant potential removal. State intervention was constructed as resulting in poor outcomes for child and family (and possibly the referrer).

For participants, positioning a parent as neglectful was seen as positioning them as a bad parent, a subject position any parent is likely to resist. This is the discursive background that child protection practitioners need to negotiate. My participants constructed the boundaries of child neglect as contested and confusing, but there was no doubt that they considered positioning someone as neglectful would be extremely unwelcome to them, and potentially unfair. These very strong views are perhaps a reminder to professionals working with families that repertoire of child neglect may inhibit genuine partnership working with parents under s17 CA 1989 and make parents less prepared to accept help on the basis that they are neglecting their children. In addition, children may not present themselves as needing services if to do so they must position their parent/s as neglectful when they instead position their parent/s as struggling and overwhelmed.

There remains a question for me about the usefulness of the neglect category. It does not equate to children's needs not being met, as children may have unmet needs without being positioned as neglected. It does not equate to children being harmed, as some children are unharmed despite being positioned as neglected, and other children are harmed by actions that would not be characterised as neglect (for example being ostracised by peers or disproportionately adversely affected by the effects of legislation). It does not relate to children's subjective experience. The omissions classified as neglect by participants attach to clusters of very different types of unmet need - physical needs and training needs for example have little in common with each other. There are different rationales required to position omissions as neglect, from the Clueless, to the Underinvested, to the Unsuitable. The boundaries of the category are constructed as subjective and yet to neglect a child is not to behave 'normally'. The complexity of child neglect as constructed by participants renders it unhelpful as an analysis of what professionals are observing and constructing within the family relationships. For social workers, it is extremely important to be precise

about what is meant by child neglect, explaining carefully to those so positioned what need/s is/are apparently not being met and why the practitioner believes this may be happening. Unless the situation is such that criminal sanctions for child cruelty could be contemplated, the use of the neglect category could be a hindrance to working with families.

11.4.2 Rethinking and Reframing State Involvement with Families

Sheila: let's change the name of social services

Kell: you can start with that, let's start with that (Group 1)

Participants referred to social services rather than other available titles such as Social Care Services or Children's Services. CA 2004 effectively dismantled social services, placing in their stead new Children's Services Departments comprising children's social care, education and health. Yet for participants, social services remained the institution that responded to child neglect. This indicates a name change may not be sufficient to positively alter the widespread negative perception of those conducting social work with children. Participants positioned social services in a problematic way. Social services and social workers were not constructed as having a role to play outside the remit of child protection (a view which reflects current Coalition government policy (Featherstone et al, 2014)). Perhaps if more emphasis was placed on the local authorities' duty to support children in need within their families whether or not they are thought to be neglected, this would shift the intervention 'line' in the public mind away from child protection thresholds. Participants wanted the state to refocus on supporting families, a position also taken by some experts (e.g. Featherstone et al, 2014). In addition, social services, the media and charities could potentially do more to demystify social work, by perhaps identifying the sorts of behaviour that might be of concern to experts and what experts were likely to do about it, instead of focusing on social work failure and representations of extreme maltreatment. This could improve the willingness of lay people to report children they were concerned about to the authorities at an earlier stage, strengthening the operation of surveillance-by-proxy and potentially ensuring that children's needs will be adequately met in future.

11.4.3 Re-engaging Communities

Ros: ...Now the only thing that we can come up with that either the charities or the government should take that place but actually it's a real shame I think that community responsibility has disappeared somewhat.

Sheila: That I think the communities have to deal with. I don't think the government can do that.

Vic: How do we get people to do it though?

Ros: How do we do it?

Sheila: One at a time... (Group 1)

Ultimately though, especially within the present political and economic climate, reporting neglected children to social services cannot be the only answer to child neglect. Currently local authorities lack the resources and personnel to cope with the numbers of children prevalence studies indicate experience neglect at some point in their lives. Different moral and political choices might require an extensive investment in universal community resources to support families and children. It is also important in my opinion, as argued by Fisher and Gruescu (2011), to produce social capital for children and empower the community to care for and watch over the children within it, and for children to have better opportunities to contribute to and participate meaningfully in society. Although discursively parents are constructed as primarily responsible for meeting their children's needs, others can and, I would argue must, assist them to do so.

11.5 Reflecting on my Research: Looking Backwards

"The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it?" (Foucault, 1988: 9).

As I reach the end of this project, it is important to reflect on what I have learned. Of course I have learned a great deal about available legal, expert, lay and policy constructions of child neglect, from my participants and from the literature. I have also learned a great deal about conducting ethical research. Using focus groups to collect data on a potentially sensitive topic like child neglect was challenging, and my decision to use pre-existing groups imposed particular ethical considerations. My participants would remain in relationship after I had collected my data, and I needed to make every effort to ensure that my research did not disrupt those relationships. I felt that in these circumstances my ethical responsibility extended beyond the research participants to include non-group members known and identifiable to the participants, who might be discussed without their knowledge and consent.

I was aware of the tension between my wish (particularly as a fledgling researcher) to maintain close control of the discussions to ensure they did not become ethically complicated and the needs of my research design to allow my lay participants the widest possible latitude in constructing child neglect. I questioned whether I had the necessary expertise to facilitate the Groups – I have chaired Group discussions in the past but never in the role of researcher and I thought a great deal about how I would manage a group in the

event of painful or compromising participant disclosure. I read a great deal about facilitating focus groups and accessed appropriate training but this continued to be a concern for me. In time I decided to facilitate the groups myself. I felt that ethically if there were decisions to be made about potential intervention in the discussion then I needed to make them and act on them rather than delegate that responsibility to someone else. In addition, contrary to most focus group facilitation, I did not want to control the discussion or the participants, but simply to be present during it. Training and experience did not equip facilitators for the sort of role I wanted to take within the Groups.

Although I obtained formal ethical approval during 2011-2012, ethics was an on-going process throughout the project, a cultivation of Bulmer's (2008: 146) "principled sensitivity" towards my research, my participants, my referrers, my university, my supervisors, my colleagues and my funders. Reflexivity was an essential part of that attitude, through which I tried to acknowledge the choices that could be made, and the implications of my decisions for others and for my research. Supervision provided a vital forum for the discussion and scrutiny of ideas, plans and proposals, a space to pause and reflect, and an avenue for receiving valuable feedback, advice and encouragement.

Reflexivity and supervision together fostered the development of researcher-related emotional intelligence, deepening my understanding of myself as researcher and of others with whom I was working. I positioned participants as responsible adults who were capable of interacting with people they knew in a focus group environment discussion. I chose to trust that my recruiters were not coercing participants into attending the groups. I wanted to avoid patronising my participants by assuming they needed protection from their own informed choices. I also recognised that due to the pre-existing relationships between Group members the Groups were better placed to recognise potential problems and protect group members than I was. To ensure that these protective mechanisms (free choice and group relationships) could operate effectively I did not call upon people to speak or try and intervene in the discussion. Participants were free to speak or remain silent, and of course to remove their data once they had spoken (although of course the other participants would have heard what was said). That this was a real option was demonstrated by the fact that one participant chose to remove a comment from my data.

As I have been writing this I have been very aware of the many voices of my participants and the trust that is placed in me, as researcher, in rendering those many voices in those many conversations into one piece of research. As stated earlier I am aware of how much of the discussions cannot be accurately reproduced: the laughter, the confusion, the anger, the empathy, the sense of shared concern, the engagement with the problem of child neglect. These were people who defined themselves as lay people. Child neglect need not

have been a concern of theirs. Yet it was their concern. Child neglect was constructed as important, everybody's business. For the most part, people wanted to find a way forward, together, as society. That creative energy, that willingness to try and grapple with the complexity of child neglect, is a valuable social resource and should not be underestimated, ignored or squandered.

11.6 Reflecting on my Research: Looking Forwards

"Nearly 25 years ago, the world made a promise to children: that we would do everything in our power to protect and promote their rights to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential" (UNICEF, 2014a: no page).

As a society, fulfilling that promise is 'everybody's business'. It is important that vehicles are found to meaningfully involve lay people in public discussions about what all children within society should be entitled to and so where the boundaries of child neglect should be located. I hope this thesis makes a contribution to such an effort by demonstrating that some lay people demonstrate both knowledge about child development and willingness to play a role in defining, preventing and responding to child neglect and to children in general. I hope that with the failure of the concept of the Big Society we find new ways of engaging lay people, adults and children, in the lives of their communities.

As I come to the end of my project, I am acutely aware of the voices that are missing from this thesis. The most obvious are the voices of children, and research into how children themselves construct child neglect is hugely important in any attempt to determine what things we, as society, say they must receive. In addition, it is important to involve those often overlooked in relation to models of developmental childhood such as disabled children and child carers. While children were absent as a matter of research design, the absence of fathers occurred by default, and research into paternal constructions of child neglect in late modern England is vital to allow a fuller unpicking of the category of neglect. Parents whose children have been the subject of social services involvement due to concerns relating to child neglect and those children themselves no doubt have much to teach us about being positioned on the wrong side of lines drawn by society and the state. Finally, further research can help us to identify the diversity of childhoods within our society. With a better understanding of the commonalities of childhoods as well as the differences, perhaps an informed political consensus about what children should receive in today's society and how they should receive it (i.e. what is and is not child neglect), can be more readily agreed. In the final analysis, child neglect is everybody's business because "any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members – the last,

the least, the littlest" (Mahoney, 1998, extracted in Davies and Ward, 2012:11). We are all responsible for drawing the line.

Me: what is the problem with child neglect? Why should we not be allowing it?

Laura: because it's wrong... (Group 6)

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(set out in accordance with the APA 6th citation and reference style)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Literature Review Methodology

There is no clearly acknowledged method of conducting a scoping study (Davis, Drey and Gould, 2009; Levac et al, 2010; Daudt et al, 2013). However, researchers do agree about the need for searches and data extraction to be explicit. (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al, 2010). The purpose of this appendix is to make explicit the approach I took towards the literature and the questions posed during the search process. Scoping studies have become increasingly common ways of approaching the literature on particular topics, providing a useful method to examine what research activity has been undertaken on particular topics and identify what gaps there may be in the existing literature (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Stalker and McArthur, 2012). Daudt et al (2013) used scoping methodology to identify the (lack of) lay voices within professional literature in relation to colorectal cancer. Although this paper was published only after I had conducted much of my study, it reinforced my view that this method of reviewing the literature was an appropriate way to find and highlight lay voices within research into child neglect.

The review question:

I wished to identify primary research studies purporting to have elicited some aspect of the meaning or construction of child neglect from lay people themselves. I therefore began with the question "what primary research has been conducted into the way lay people define or construct child neglect from the point of view of the lay person?". Later, as part of the iterative refinement of the question, I decided to include studies whose primary focus was in investigating lay people's views and constructions about the appropriate response to child neglect. I made this decision on the basis that research into what lay people were saying with regard to responding to child neglect must be related to constructions of the concept itself, and therefore such research could assist with analysing the way lay people construct child neglect. My primary focus however remained to identify and analyse research relating to lay definitions of child neglect.

Initial decisions:

Early searches identified a research tradition into lay understandings of child maltreatment stretching back to the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. Boehm, 1962; Polansky and Williams, 1978; Giovannoni and Beccera, 1979). I therefore took the decision not to limit my searches by time. I also decided that I would need to look more broadly at the literature than simply

peer reviewed journals as, particularly in the UK, research conducted and published by children's charities was extraordinarily important but was not always peer reviewed. In addition, for the sake of expediency, I limited my search to publications written in English.

Search Strategy:

My search strategy was necessarily wide. I searched using the electronic Summon search engine, Google scholar and relevant individual databases (Web of Knowledge, CINAHL, Sociological Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, Social Care Online, PsychINFO, and Scopus). To identify the relevant literature, I used combinations of the following search terms: "child neglect", "neglected children", "child maltreatment", "child abuse", "safeguard*"; "public", "lay", "non-prof*", "non prof*", "communit*", "group*", "defin*", "construct*", "know*", "categori*", "understand*", "view*", "attitude*", "perce*", "descri*", "talk*", and "respon*". I decided against searching for parenting related terms directly because I did not wish to conflate or confuse parenting and neglect in my search strategy, even where within the research studies reviewed it was clear that for some authors research written up as referring to child neglect was actually conducted into aspects of acceptable or unacceptable parenting.

Refining results:

I got a very large number of results, the vast majority of which did not relate to my question. This illustrated my difficulty in identifying search terms that would be wide enough to identify the studies I was seeking but exclude the far greater volume of medical, psychological, legal, or child protection research into particular aspects of child maltreatment. Despite the frequently cited 'neglect of neglect' I found that there was no shortage of expert literature to comb through. I decided at this stage that the lay voice was not the same as the service user voice. Research has been conducted into aspects of the service user experience, but I considered this group of people to have been particularly affected by "proto-professionalisation" (De Swaan, 1990:14) and could as a result be more likely to deploy an expert voice about child neglect rather than a lay one.

I combed through my results using titles, abstracts and, where necessary, by acquiring and reading the articles themselves. Most articles could be weeded out at this stage either because lay people were not asked for their views and/or because the research study focused on child physical or sexual abuse and excluded neglect. Where lay views appeared to have been sought on neglect (either alone or as part of child maltreatment), the research study was included in the review. Where the research was primarily focused on a different aspect of child neglect but included lay definitions of child neglect they were included (e.g. Cawson et al (2000) is primarily a prevalence study about child maltreatment but contains

data about what participants have said about child neglect, so it is included). Once an article was included in the review, all items in its reference list were also checked as to relevance to the research question.

Charting the data:

The next stage of the study was to chart important features of the data for comparison and summary (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al, 2010). I created an Excel chart that allowed me to collate and compare the following elements of each research study: authors, date of study, location of study, sample composition, sample size, sampling method, research question, research method, research instrumentation, type of research analysis and findings. Several of the research papers were published using the same data, so further papers were removed to avoid data duplication. It was quickly apparent that of the primary research studies claiming to investigate lay perceptions of child neglect most were conducted in the US and only one (Rose and Selwyn, 2000) was conducted in the UK. Thus, my strategy had not captured data about how British lay people constructed child neglect.

I believed that this data existed. I was aware through my general research related reading that the opinion of the British public about aspects of child neglect has been elicited through opinion polls commissioned by Action for Children and by the NSPCC often as a precursor to or as part of a campaign in relation to child maltreatment. This data was often combined with other data and found within larger reports or specific issue campaigns. I was unsure whether or not to include this type of data, as it is often narrowly drawn, collected for political uses and is not subject to peer oversight or review. Opinion polls can play a strategic role in shaping public policy: "public opinion surveys can be used as a venue for positioning public concerns on the agenda of policy makers, as well as for creating a situation in which the issue at hand becomes highly important" (Schmid and Benbenishty, 2011: 1186). Of course, the fact that such poll results tend to form the subject of a press briefing rather than being presented as a primary research study does not invalidate it. Opinion poll data could be presented and published as primary research: for example Schmid and Benbenishty (2011) use an opinion poll as the basis of their primary study into public opinion towards child maltreatment in Israel. However, these poll results have not been written up as independent primary studies, and where they appear it is either as part of a wider report into child neglect (e.g. Burgess et al, 2011; 2013) or to comprise the evidence behind campaigning or awareness raising activities (e.g. Action for Children, 2012).

As the data from those polls conducted in the UK and commissioned by British children's charities purports to represent the views of the British people about aspects of child neglect, I took the decision to include the results of those polls I could find and that appeared to be

relevant. This meant searching through press releases and reports on the websites of NSPCC, CAFCASS, Barnardos, the Local Government Association and Action for Children, and searching through the archives of YouGov and ComRes. This type of data appears to have been commissioned by the charities largely since 2009, and Action for Children in particular has commissioned a series of opinion polls on aspects of child neglect as a means to measure progress.

Data analysis and presentation:

Having extracted the main aspects of the data into an Excel format, analysis could then take place. I combed through the data looking for themes, similarities, research traditions, differences, and in particular, looking closely at the effect that the research environment (researcher, method, data collection and data analysis) would have on what could be said by any participant. Similarities were identified in relation to research paradigms, the reasons given for the research being conducted, the types of research question asked, the types of research methods considered to be appropriate for researching lay people, the design, type and use of research instruments from project to project, and the way in which what lay people 'said' was interpreted and presented in relation to child neglect. All these factors helped to enshrine the voice of the expert within the research, expertise playing the central role in directing and interpreting lay voices within the literature. With a few notable exceptions, while the research was about how lay people understand child neglect, there was a lack of freedom for lay people to propose and have accepted constructions of child neglect that differed from expert constructions. Appendix 2 sets out the research findings in chart form, including references, sample, research method and findings. Chapter 6 sets out my analysis of the child neglect research landscape within which lay people are positioned by expertise, seeking to explore the ways in which lay constructions are largely missing from the research literature into child neglect.

[References cited in Reference List above]

APPENDIX 2

Studies exploring aspects of lay people's definitions of child neglect

[References cited in Reference List above]

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Boehm, 1962	US study – questionnaire neglect related survey of 1400 community leadership groups, community policy makers and agency board members.	6 maltreatment vignettes drawn from literature and case records Rated: 1) no outside help needed, 2) family encouraged to seek help of community agency (no intervention) or 3) community agency involved whatever parents' wishes (intervention).	Professionals = nurses, doctors, social workers, clergy, lawyers, teachers. Lay people = business managers, agency board members and legislators. Lay people more likely to judge incidents as less in need of coercive intervention than professional group.
Polansky and Williams, 1978	US study - Comparing 58 urban white middle class and 57 urban white working class mothers.	Childhood Level of Living Scale. Respondents rate parenting along Likert scale of approval to disapproval: 1 very bad/report, 2 very bad, 3 bad, 4 doesn't matter, 5 good and 6 excellent	Substantial agreement about parenting practices between mothers and professional values contained within the CLLS.

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979	US study – stratified probability sampling from census data: 1065 white, black, Hispanic and other respondents aged 17-60 in Los Angeles Metropolitan area.	156 vignettes covering 13 categories (sexual abuse, physical abuse, fostering delinquency, emotional maltreatment, nutritional neglect, medical neglect, supervision, drugs/alcohol, cleanliness, educational neglect, parental sexual mores, clothing, housing) rated 1-9 according to severity. Variables: age of child, occupation of parents, and consequence for child.	Perceived seriousness of mistreatment and seriousness of consequences of mistreatment paramount in judgements. 5 lay categories of maltreatment: failure to provide, supervision, physical abuse, sexual abuse and a kind of drugs/sex category (fostering delinquency vignettes were not included). Professionals had 9 categories in operation. Substantial agreement between black/Hispanic group: rated 94% of vignettes and all categories more seriously than white group. Substantive uniformity over most and least serious categories between professionals and lay people (although lay people rated them more severely). Lay people more concerned than professionals about things “less directly related to the physical well-being of children and more of an affront to the “common decency”.’ (Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979: 200).
Polansky, Ammons and Weathersby, 1983	US study - 431 mothers recruited allowing 2x2x2 sample design looking at ethnicity, urbanity and socioeconomic status.	Childhood Level of Living Scale. Parenting rated along Lickert scale: 1 very bad/report, 2 very bad, 3 bad, 4 doesn't matter, 5 good and 6 excellent	Mothers’ judgements agreed substantially with those used in designing CLL Scale despite different samples tested. “It appears there is such a thing as an American standard of minimal child care that is commonly held and that may be invoked in the definition of child neglect for legal and social work purposes" p.9345.
Gray and Cosgrove, 1985	US study, interviews with members of 6 minority groups recruited from staff of minority projects.	Interview exploring areas of child rearing in minority cultures that may be misunderstood by dominant culture: what types of harm cultural practices expose child to and what cultural factors explain context of practice.	Participants felt there were aspects of different cultures that could lead to parental behaviours being misconstrued by child protection professionals e.g. adaptations to poverty, supervision norms and culture of overprotectiveness towards children.

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Ringwalt and Caye, 1989	US study – convenience sample of 471 residents of rural county in North Carolina.	27 vignettes "illustrative of the grey area between what clearly is and is not neglect" rated for severity - 1 (not at all serious) to 5 (very serious)	Public's perception of severity of child neglect is associated with sex, occupation and race: women, white collar workers and black respondents more likely to rate vignettes as severe than men, blue collar workers and whites. Education was inversely correlated to severity ratings. Age, income and child rearing experience did not affect neglect perception.
Roscoe, 1990	US study – 204 students aged 17-21 enrolled in introductory college courses who had not had primary care of young children.	65 vignettes from Giovannoni and Becerra rated 1-9 for severity from perspective of child's welfare and compared with Giovannoni and Becerra (1978)	Ratings are similar to adults but more severe on 52 of 65 items. More critical of physical and sexual abuse scenarios than neglect.
Hong and Hong, 1991	US study of 150 university students, 50 whites, 50 hispanics and 50 immigrant born Chinese.	12 vignettes of parental conduct rated from 1=no abuse/neglect, 7 = v serious abuse/neglect. Response: A nothing needs to be done, B encourage family to get professional help, C notify CPS.	Core of similarities between all three groups. Chinese group judge cases less severely than whites. Hispanics judge cases more severely than whites. Chinese group more unwilling to involve CPS and more likely to do nothing.
Craft and Staudt, 1991	US study comparing 40 rural and 36 urban lay people selected systematically from the phone book, with 25 child protection workers.	Lay people given definition of neglect and then vignette asked to rate not likely to report, somewhat likely to report, very likely to report. CPS workers rated substantiation likelihood.	Considerable agreement over what should be reported as neglect by rural and urban communities. Not same level of agreement among professionals on what would be substantiated in both communities. Community's values and norms not influencing decision making.

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Dhooper, Royse and Wolfe, 1991	US study - 742 randomly selected adults.	Survey phone interviews involving 40 questions including vignettes.	Lack of knowledge amongst respondents about the law. Good intuitive understanding of behaviours constituting child abuse/neglect. Reasonably well informed about characteristics of abused children and child abusers.
Segal, 1992	India questionnaire study - social workers, human service professionals and lay people in 3 cities. Group members assisted with recruitment. 133 questionnaires returned.	Vignettes from Giovannoni and Becerra (1978) adapted for local conditions and rated 1-9 for severity from perspective of child's welfare. Results compared with US Giovannoni and Becerra 1978	All abuse serious: selling child to brothel most serious (8.41 overall) while living conditions least serious (5.72) Social worker and lay groups similar, health service professionals rated vignettes as worse. Differences between lay groups. Neglect not as serious as physical abuse. Substantial differences between rank order of 12 types of abuse. Giovannoni and Becerra respondents more interested in physical care: Indian ratings more concerned with vignettes around parental morality.
Manning and Cheers, 1995	Australian study – semi structured interviews cross-sectional random sample, adults, in 60 non-Aboriginal living groups, group members interviewed together.	Child abuse and neglect defined for sample. Asked about strength of feeling and notification. Visual analogues used to collect data.	Felt less strongly about neglect (8.06) and emotional abuse (7.69) compared to sexual abuse (9.56) and physical abuse (9.08). Notification of neglect 6.00 and emotional abuse 5.17: difficult to identify, not always parents fault and children adjust, sympathy for parents. Inhibitors for notifying all abuse = doubt about whether situation was abuse and fear of retaliation against the child. Almost 50% did not want to interfere with privacy of family and 40% with parent's right to raise children their own way.

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Rose and Meezan, 1995	US study of 131 mothers from day centres (43 Hispanic, 49 white and 39 African American) and 123 child welfare workers.	66 vignettes rated for seriousness and harm using Likert scale 1-5: 1 not serious will not harm child; 3 serious may harm a child; 5 very serious will harm a child	4 factors in operation: inadequate physical care, inadequate emotional care, inadequate parental judgement, sexual orientation of custodian. Lapses in parental judgement (supervision etc) and emotional care rated highly by all mothers. Significant disagreements around physical care and sexual orientation of parents. Hispanics and African Americans very similar - rated them above mid point, white mothers rated below. Mothers rated all categories more seriously than workers.
Johnson and Sigler, 1995	US study –community survey using randomly stratified sample of 120 adults.	Questions in relation to different types of maltreatment: rated in relation to abusiveness of act and criminality of act.	There were high levels of endorsement for some of the neglect scenarios: trying to lock up child, not feeding child enough, not giving adequate clothing. Less for not allowing child out of house. Public wanted some level of criminalisation for the acts.
Korbin and Coulton, 1996	US study – residents of neighbourhoods with different child maltreatment profiles.	In depth interviews asking residents about the comparative role of neighbours and government in preventing child maltreatment	In all neighbourhoods neighbours were seen to be better than government at preventing child maltreatment. Reporting child maltreatment most common role for neighbours, helping one another second most common.
Elliott, Tong and Tan, 1997	Singapore study - stratified random sample of 401 Singaporean residents in public high rise accommodation.	Rate acceptability of action (always, sometimes, never) and whether action is abuse/neglect of 18 vignettes. Asked if had come across any cases of child abuse/neglect – elicited stories categorised by professional.	Rank of child maltreatment: most serious is sexual abuse, then physical abuse then physical neglect then emotional abuse/neglect. Circumstances less relevant in serious cases than in less serious ones. Non-acceptability of actions is not synonymous with ratings of abuse/neglect. Respondents' self-generated stories of abuse/neglect when rated would not always have met official criteria suggesting "that public understanding of child maltreatment is broader than officially recognised" p459.

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Dubowitz, Klockner, Starr and Black, 1998	US study – professionals and lay people (54 lower income African Americans, 55 middle income African Americans and 56 middle income white females).	45 vignette Adequacy of Care - rate conditions as harmful or not harmful to hypothetical toddler. Vignettes chosen to explore grey zone.	Substantial agreement among lay groups re neglectful situations involving young kids. Professionals less concerned with physical neglect than lay people. Lay - African Americans more concerned about physical neglect than white. Psychological neglect more important to middle income groups than either professional or low income group. Professional standards may be lower than community standards.
Portwood 1998	US study - 323 adults. Groups = mental health professionals, lawyers, doctors, teachers, parents and non-parents.	Anonymous written questionnaire. 21 factors rated in relation to importance in abuse/neglect then vignettes for whether abuse/neglect.	People rated acts as abusive when contained within vignettes but not when they had come across them as victim or perpetrator. Parenting experience and self-identification as victim or survivor of abuse/neglect had minimal effect on abuse assessments. Professional experience meant acts less likely to be seen as abuse.
Rose, 1999a	US study - 91 African American mothers attending a support centre and 70 child welfare workers.	Vignettes refined from earlier Rose and Meezan (1995) study rated for seriousness and harm.	Groups agreed on the ranking order of different types of neglect: inadequate physical care, inadequate emotional care, inadequate parental judgement, sexual orientation of custodian and exposure to injurious parental behaviour. Black groups thought inadequate physical care, sexual orientation of custodian and exposure to injurious behaviours was more serious and harmful than professionals.
Gopaul-McNicol, 1999	Caribbean study - 50 people from different Caribbean countries selected according to who had time for the interview.	Interview exploring whether cultural differences substantially add to definition of maltreatment, neglect or abuse.	In relation to neglect – cultural norms around appropriate levels of supervision were reported as potentially causing misunderstandings due to US child protection attitudes being increasingly adopted as ‘the norm’ by professionals. " Clearly ethnocultural perspective" (p84).

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Shor, 2000	Israeli study – 110 parents with child under 18 randomly selected, 57 in low income and 53 in middle income neighbourhoods.	Vignettes of abuse/neglect: respondents asked to judge acceptability of child's behaviour, harmfulness of parental response and to explain reasoning.	Beliefs regarding appropriate child rearing practices and rationales for child rearing judgements differed between income groups. Apparent consensus may not be due to agreement over child rearing beliefs: kids of 6-7 playing in street and truanting rated as unacceptable by both groups, but low income parents to do with risk and middle income parents to do with child's developmental needs.
Korbin, Coulton, Lindstrom-Ufuti and Spilsbury, 2000	US study - 400 parents randomly selected from 20 neighbourhoods with different child maltreatment profiles.	Participants asked to name 3 things they would consider child abuse/neglect (coded post interview) and rate 13 items in relation to contribution to abuse/neglect from 1 (contributes nothing) to 10 (contributes a lot).	Basic congruence about definitions of child maltreatment between neighbourhood groups: physical abuse (82%), neglect (65%), inadequate supervision (46%), emotional/verbal maltreatment (43%), sexual abuse (12%), parents' misbehaviour (7%). Neglect and inadequate supervision combined was 84%. 7% of responses uncategorised. All items on list considered to contribute to child maltreatment. 4 factors: poverty and family structure, substance abuse and stress, lack of moral values and individual pathology.
Rose and Selwyn, 2000	English study - 42 mothers with young children from support groups and 26 NSPCC city social workers.	Vignettes rated using Likert scale from 1-5 according to seriousness and likelihood of endangering the child's health or wellbeing.	Professionals rated all aspects of neglect less severely than lay people. Ranking order same between lay and professionals: inadequate emotional care, exposure to injurious parental behaviour, inadequate parental judgement, sexual orientation of custodian, inadequate physical care.
Cawson, Wattam, Brooker and Kelly, 2000	UK study – random probability sample of 2,869 18-24 year olds.	Interview based study of prevalence of child maltreatment in UK. Respondents asked about behaviours experienced before age 16 and view of behaviours. Reported behaviours categorised post hoc by experts.	Most respondents felt that all children should be given a healthy diet and taken seriously when they said they were ill. There was less consensus about the importance of a clean home and the levels of freedom children had. According to professionals 15% of respondents had suffered intermediate or serious absence of care and 17% had experienced intermediate or serious absence of supervision. 4% of sample thought they had not been well cared for and 2% of the sample considered that they had been neglected.

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Price, Islam, Gruhler, Dove, Knowles and Stults, 2001	US study - 745 adults randomly selected to participate in phone survey.	14 item multicomponent questionnaire – public given definition of abuse/neglect and then asked to rate vignettes and other factors associated with child maltreatment.	<p>Most respondents rated vignettes as experts would (although only 63% of people said sending child to school regularly with dirty clothes was maltreatment).</p> <p>Lack of knowledge about characteristics of children, households or adults related to maltreatment (e.g. 40% said abuse could not happen in household like the one they grew up in).</p> <p>Optimism about intervention: 65% said abusers could be helped, 10% said could not be and 25% not sure.</p> <p>Greater knowledge around long term consequences of maltreatment especially relationship problems and depression (94% and 91% respectively agreed these were long term outcomes of childhood abuse or neglect).</p>
Ferrari, 2002	US study - 150 parents of Hispanic, African American and European descent.	Respondents completed childhood trauma questionnaire, conflict tactics scale, familism scale, machismo scale, valuing children scale and rated vignettes for severity.	<p>Minor ethnic differences found in vignette ratings - parents promoting delinquency rated more seriously by African American parents than Hispanics.</p> <p>Gender differences were found – mothers rated parental drug use, educational neglect, emotional mistreatment, failure to provide and lack of supervision more severely than fathers.</p> <p>No effect of childhood history on vignette ratings.</p>
Rhee, Chang and Youn, 2003	US study - 87 Korean pastors.	Vignettes rating severity of child maltreatment (1-no abuse/ neglect to 7-very serious abuse/ neglect) and course of action - do nothing, advise family to get professional help, report to CPS	<p>83% of respondents believed US child welfare laws conflicted with Korean and Christian parenting practices to some extent.</p> <p>Unwillingness to report families suspected of abuse.</p> <p>Reliance on pastoral counselling for abusive or neglectful families.</p>

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Sigler and Johnson, 2004	US study - longitudinal cross sectional study using a random stratified sample of 408 adults.	Questions in relation to different types of maltreatment: rated in relation to abusiveness of act and criminality of act.	General public has 'a clear relatively broad definition of child abuse'. Data supports a 'more aggressive public response to the control of child abuse' p 81.
Ashton, 2004	US study - 276 participants (potential entry social work students).	Respondent choices to vignettes: do nothing, encourage family to seek professional help (not report) or report to CPS (report)	Ethnicity and immigrant status affects reporting: Whites most likely to report, Asians least likely and Latinos, Black Caribbeans and Black Americans somewhere in between. Respondents born in US more likely to report than those born outside US. Age, gender, parenthood, mother's education, father's education and college major had no effect on reporting.
Maiter, Alaggia and Trocme, 2004	Canadian study - 29 South Asian parents immigrated within last 12 years and caring for children aged 12 or younger.	Vignettes - "questionable parenting" rated on Likert-type 6 point scale: appropriate to large extent to inappropriate to large extent. Then focus group discussion.	Group largely conformed to North American definitions around child maltreatment. Less likely than other populations to call authorities if see families struggling with abuse.
Pierce and Bozalek, 2004	South African study - 181 residents of Cape Town in 4 groups: social workers, human service workers, lay persons and child protection police.	62 vignettes rated on scale of 1-9 for increasing seriousness	Sex abuse rated as most serious, child labour as least serious. Non-physical maltreatment ranks lower than physical maltreatment (but the neglect category straddles the two). Lay people tended evaluate things more seriously than social workers - "likely they were basing their responses on knowledge of child maltreatment gained from the media" (p829) There was little difference between ratings from lay people and the police.
Bensley et al, 2004a	US study - random digit dialled phone survey of 504 people.	Respondents asked is behaviour abuse or neglect (yes, maybe, sometimes, no)? Then, have you experienced behaviour?	Respondents able to identify neglectful behaviours for which high level of social consensus. No consensus however on getting child dental care when it is needed. Experience appeared to desensitise people to some types of behaviour and over sensitised them to others

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Bensley, et al, 2004b	US study - random digit dialled phone survey of 504 people.	Asked about hypothetical maltreatment of 10 year old -	95% very likely to report child abuse, 68% child neglect and 40% emotional abuse. 50% of respondents knew a child believed abused and 84% of those people took some action. Barriers: fear of retaliation, of making child's situation worse, not wanting to invade family privacy. 90% thought mental health/ alcohol/drug treatment, support services (food banks, crisis nurseries) and parenting classes would help prevent abuse.
Coope and Theobald, 2006	Guatemalan study involving key stakeholders, professionals, voluntary workers and children (overall numbers of each group unclear).	Multi-layered project involving vignettes, interviews and focus groups: Interviews with 23 key stakeholders/professionals, focus group discussions with 60 participants (professionals, voluntary workers and children) and group consensus method with 10 key informants.	3-fold definition of child neglect:- 1) negative/indifferent attitude of parent towards child; 2) intentional omission of provision of child's basic needs; and 3) neglect of government to provide resources necessary to protect child. This 'governmental' neglect was not found within literature but was "added to reflect the views of the participants" (p528). Neglect was constructed as a deliberately wrongful act rather than arising from poverty (p532)
Goodvin, Johnson, Hardy, Graef and Chambers, 2007	US study - 3,809 respondents. 407 sentinels; 3,402 non-sentinels. Rural urban random phone sampling.	This project was carried out to develop and test the Community Norms of Child Neglect Scale, a 21 item measure.	Responses clustered in 4 sub-factors - physical neglect (failure to provide), physical neglect (lack of supervision), emotional maltreatment, and moral/legal/educational maltreatment. At least 94% of participants thought each scenario represented neglect. Minor differences between rural and urban responses to supervision and sentinel/non-sentinel responses to failure to thrive but similarities outweigh differences.

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Evans-Campbell, 2008	US study - cross sectional survey of 101 American Indian parents.	56 vignettes with potentially neglectful scenarios scored 1=not at all serious, will probably not harm child, 3 = somewhat serious may be harmful to child 5= very serious is v likely to harm child	69% of vignettes scored 4 - 5. Age of child significantly affected ratings. 10 subcategories ordered from most to least serious: parental substance abuse, sexual mores of parents, fostering delinquency, medical neglect, supervision, nutrition, emotional neglect, cleanliness, providing material necessities, and providing adequate structure. Material necessities may relate to poverty, and adequate structure to culture of parental letting children learn by own experience, interpreted as non-interference.
Haj-Yahia and Attar-Schwartz, 2008	Israeli study - 225 Palestinian teachers in Israel.	Scales and vignettes to test awareness of reporting regulations, attitudes towards reporting child abuse/ neglect and willingness to report.	More prepared to report to CPS than police. For neglect, willingness to report increases if participants think reporting is effective, if they are more aware of the signs of neglect and if they put neglect down to parental feelings towards the child rather than socio-economic conditions.
ICM poll for Action for Children, 2009 (Samuel, 2009; Burgess et al, 2012)	UK study – ICM poll of 1038 adults (nationally representative sample).	Questions about how well the public understand neglect and barriers to reporting suspicions about neglected children.	Public confusion and misunderstanding about child neglect. 25% of those surveyed reported had been worried about a child but 38% of those worried did not tell anyone about their concerns. Barriers: 16% afraid of repercussions/trouble; 15% said none of their business; 11% would tell a neighbour, relative or friend; 15% said lack of proof inhibited action; 23% said lacked information about who to tell. 11% would talk to neighbour relative or friend first.
ComRes/ Local Government Association, 2009	UK study - ComRes survey of 1005 adults representative of all British adults	Questions about who is primarily responsible for protecting children living at home with their parents	62% of people think responsibility of friends family and neighbours to protect child at risk living at home with parents. 35% think doctors, teachers and social workers have most responsibility.
Polat, Tasar, Ozkan, Yeltekin, et al, 2010	Turkish study - 513 mothers of kids aged 0-5 followed in well-child clinic	15 scenarios: rated from 4=neglect, 3=may be neglect, 2=not neglect 1=not sure.	Mothers responded as experts would and as expected to 80% of scenarios "confirming that these mothers perceived the neglect phenomenon according to universally accepted norms" (p128) Education levels important - lower education levels associated with lower neglect perceptions.

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Action for Children, 2010	UK study – ICM poll of 3,000 children aged 8-12.	Asked about whether they had seen particular 'signs' and behaviours with their peer group.	61% seen signs of neglect. On average seen signs on 3 people but 13% seen signs nine times this year. Signs such as friendless children (34%), children wearing ill-fitting or smelly clothes (25%), unwashed/dirty children (19%) or children who might not be getting meals at home (7%)
Schmid and Benbenishty, 2011	Israeli study - 812 people (representative sample of country).	Survey of attitudes measured along a numerical scale re child maltreatment as a social problem and responding to child maltreatment.	Child maltreatment viewed as less serious than youth violence and alcohol consumption. Public split over how to best deal with maltreating parents - punish or support. Half participants agreed very strongly or strongly with statement that doctors and social workers handle cases well.
Action for Children, 2011	UK study - survey by YouGov of 2000 British parents (representative of parents in Britain with child under 18)	Survey questions relating to public awareness of, concern about and response to neglect in the summer holidays.	26% say children more likely to be neglected in summer hols; 23% worried their children's friends being neglected during summer hols, 14% have fed a child during holidays as worried not getting fed at home, 9% had child to sleep over in holidays as not sure being looked after at home, 10% taken child on outing in holidays as unsure being looked after properly; 10% cared for child in school holidays as thought they were being neglected. 13% at some point cared for child they thought was being neglected.
YouGov, 2011	UK study – survey of 2339 British adults (nationally representative sample).	Attitudes towards supervision: leaving children on their own and/or in charge of younger sibling.	Left alone: youngest age is 7 (1%), oldest age is 18 or over (1%), average age is 12.5 (5% don't know). In charge: 2% say 10, 8% say 18 plus, average age is 14.8 (5% don't know).

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Burgess, Daniel, Scott, Mulley Derbyshire and Downey, 2012	UK study – poll of 2062 adults (nationally representative sample).	Part of ongoing series of polls commissioned by Action for Children to test public opinion in relation to awareness of and responses to child neglect.	52% of public said they have worried about the welfare/safety of a child. 94% said public should become involved if concerned about a neglected child. 62% of those worried about a child had told someone (usually partners/family). People did not tell someone because had no proof (21%), frightened of repercussions (12%), not sure it was neglect (18%), know the family (10%), none of my business (7%), not as bad as things on TV (8%). 23% of this group responded: 'other', 'don't know' and 'none of these'. 37% said they did not have enough information about who to contact.
Action for Children, 2012	UK study – poll of 1092 adults by YouGov representative of parents in England and Wales with children under age 18.	Poll to explore how parents felt about the law relating to child neglect.	67% felt that the law on parenting is confusing. 72% agree that there is no common understanding of what 'good enough' parenting is. 49% agree that the law does not support parents in boundary setting. 42% feel the law blames them whatever they do. What parents felt would help them meet responsibilities to children: a clear law (66%), more information/advice (66%), support services (70%), nothing – it is up to parents to decide how to parent (7%).




Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
YouGov/NSPCC, 2012	UK study – poll of 2327 UK adults (nationally representative sample).	Post Saville opinion poll to look at the effects of abuse stories in the media, public optimism or pessimism about child abuse being tackled and attitudes to responding to child abuse.	<p>40% thought about general neglect of children more due to media stories. In 10 years time abuse will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased (25%) mainly because of increasing family poverty, parental drug/alcohol and mental health problems, sexualisation of young people and online pornography, violent culture, a breakdown of moral values, families and communities (listed by at least 50%) - decreased (20%) due to more media coverage, increasing public awareness and awareness of risks to children, action from organisations to protect children, it being easier for children to speak up and people being more willing to take action (listed by at least 50%). <p>34% of respondents said there would be no change in 10 years and 22% were not sure.</p> <p>71% say do more to prevent child abuse, 1% say do less, 16% say about right, 11% unsure.</p> <p>Preventing abuse primarily responsibility of parents 77%, friends, neighbours and families of abusive parents 70%, schools 65%, local government 64%, central government 49% and local communities and neighbourhoods 49%.</p> <p>Main responses: encouraging kids to disclose 74%, promoting ways to get help if worried about a child 63%, educating children about abuse 61%, more support for victims 59% and encouraging adults to take responsibility for reporting abuse 59%.</p> <p>The one thing respondents would do if worried about a child was: contact police 39%, NSPCC helpline 15%, Childline 7%, social services 19%, friends and family of child 5%, child's school 3%, something else 2%, nothing 3%, not sure 9%.</p>

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Lindland and Kendall-Taylor, 2013; Kendall-Taylor, Lindland, O'Neil and Stanley, 2014	UK study – 23 expert interviews and 20 lay interviews. Lay participants chosen to be representative of the public.	In depth interviews to identify cultural models in use by respondents in relation to child maltreatment.	Experts: child maltreatment = interactions between child and adult resulting in significant harm to the child. 4 types of maltreatment: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. All common but neglect most prevalent and gets least attention from public and policymakers. Maltreatment difficult to define/measure. Understanding context within which maltreatment takes place critical to dealing with it. Maltreated children more likely to maltreat their children due to cognitive deficits from maltreatment. Maltreatment has huge effect on child development and negative impacts for individuals and society. Public: children need protection and maltreatment is everywhere. When think of neglect tends to be nutritional and hygienic neglect. Maltreatment made up of harm done to child, intention of adult, intensity, frequency and duration. When talking about causes people drew on community decay and stereotypes about social class to explain parental behaviours. They also use models relating to a lack of resources and selfish parenting. Consequences: problems with trust, self-confidence and social skills, both passing these issues through the generations and more likely to become criminals. The researchers found a disconnect between acts of maltreatment and the effects of maltreatment – participants lack understanding of the way in which experts link the two.
Burgess, Daniel, Scott, Mulley and Dobbin 2013	UK study – YouGov poll of 3,263 adults (nationally representative sample).	Part of ongoing series of polls commissioned by Action for Children to test public opinion in relation to awareness of and responses to child neglect.	94% agreed people should become involved if concerned child being neglected. 25% said they have felt worried about a child in their area, of these 67% have told someone (35% told friends and family). People did not tell someone because: had no proof (34%), frightened of repercussions (15%), not sure it was neglect (14%), know the family (7%), none of my business (6%), not as bad as things on TV (3%), didn't think what was happening was against the law (3%). 19% of these respondents fell into the 'other', 'don't know' and 'none of these' category. 44% said they did not have enough information about who to contact.

Reference	Sample Population	Method	Results
Burgess, Daniel, Scott, Dobbin, Mulley and Whitfield, 2014	UK study – survey of 1,970 adults (nationally representative sample) and 1,582 children aged 8-16 from general public.	Part of ongoing series of polls commissioned by Action for Children. Adults surveyed about concerns about neglect and responses to it. Children surveyed as to what they had witnessed amongst their peers.	Adults - 25% adults felt very or quite worried about the safety of a child living in their area. 94% said people should get involved if a child is neglected. Of those worried about child about 65% told someone else - usually family friend, partner or neighbour (55%). 35% did not tell anyone. People did not tell someone because had no proof (29%), frightened of repercussions (15%), not sure it was neglect (6%), know the family (6%), none of my business (8%), not as bad as things on TV (6%), didn't think what was happening was against the law (2%). 28% of these respondents fell into the 'other', 'don't know' and 'none of these' category. If approached 49% would advise a friend to get professional advice, just under 33% suggesting social services. 45% said wanted more info about who to contact for help. Children - 73% of children had known a child or children who had shown signs of child neglect (late or missing from school (44%), no friends (37%), mum and dad don't know where they are or what they are doing a lot of the time (33%), wears ill-fitting old or smelly clothes (26%), looks unwashed or is often dirty (26%) might say to you that they don't get meals at home (9%), none of these (27%)). 30% stated have been worried about whether a child is being looked after properly.
Jutte, Bentley, Miller and Jetha, 2014	UK study - survey of 3,057 UK adults (nationally representative sample).	Adults surveyed about awareness of/attitudes towards maltreatment and views on responsibility for preventing it.	3 in 5 think abuse/neglect is common: tend to focus on physical and sexual abuse and physical neglect – less aware of emotional neglect/abuse. Parents (72%) and society (70%) held responsible for tackling neglect/abuse although 53% think government has some responsibility. Don't know why abuse/neglect happens or solutions. 75% think nothing can be done about abuse/neglect.

APPENDIX 3

Project Pamphlet

<p>Be part of a PhD project exploring</p> <h3>What is Child Neglect?</h3>  <p>A PhD Research Project by Sasha Williams</p> <p>sasha.williams@hud.ac.uk</p> <p>http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/staff/U1067714.php</p>  	<h3>Why is this research important?</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Child protection is 'everybody's business' not just the business of child protection professionals <h3>But what does 'child neglect' mean to non-professionals?</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The voices of people who are not child protection professionals have been largely ignored in discussions and research about child neglect <h3>This research will:</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Inform discussions around the Big Society and non-professional responses to child neglect.➤ Help child protection professionals to better understand and work in partnership with non-professionals➤ Give non-professionals a voice in defining what child neglect is and how it should be responded to
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Get involved...

Are you:

- Over 18?
- With **NO** previous professional training in child protection?
- Willing to talk about what you think child neglect is with small groups of people you know?

If so, please get in touch:
sasha.williams@hud.ac.uk

What will happen?

- ✓ Small groups of people who know each other will meet and discuss child neglect for about an hour and a half
- ✓ I will facilitate the groups and record the discussion
- ✓ I will analyse the discussion to explore how non-professionals understand and talk about child neglect

Please get in touch...

My contact details:

Email: sasha.williams@hud.ac.uk

Phone: 07510 674574

**Address: Human and Health Research Building
Huddersfield University
Queensgate
Huddersfield, West Yorks HD1 3DH**



Project funded by Economic and Social Research Council PhD studentship.

Thank you for your interest and for reading this leaflet. To hear more and/or to get involved, please contact me.

APPENDIX 4

Project Covering Letter



DATE

Dear

Re: Child Neglect Research Project

Thank you for your interest in my PhD project.

As you are aware, I am recruiting small groups of people (between four and seven people) who all already know each other and who are willing to talk in a group together about child neglect. So for example a group of friends, workmates, sporting colleagues, or people who are members of existing groups would be ideal. I do not intend for people to talk about their own experiences, but if you find child neglect a difficult subject for personal reasons please think very carefully about participating in this research project.

I am enclosing some information about the project for you to consider. Please feel free to share this information and talk to other people who might like to be involved. If anyone you know is interested in participating, please ask them to contact me by email or telephone. I can then give them any further information they might want and talk things through with them.

Once we have enough people to run a group, I will be in touch with everyone to discuss when and where the group should take place. This can be at a place of your choosing, perhaps somewhere familiar to the group members.

I am afraid that I cannot pay people for their time in participating in this research. I can offer an interesting and lively discussion around the issue of child neglect and the chance to be heard on an issue that is largely dominated by professional voices and understandings.

Once again, thank you for contacting me. If you have any further questions, or would like to talk through the information I am sending you, please do not hesitate to contact me again.




With all best wishes,

Sasha Williams

Encs: Project pamphlet, Information leaflet, Consent Form, Research Monitoring Form

APPENDIX 5

Information Form

<p style="text-align: center;">Child Neglect Research Project</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p style="text-align: center;">A Ph.D. Research Project by Sasha Williams</p> <p style="text-align: center;">sasha.williams@hud.ac.uk</p> <p style="text-align: center;">http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/staff/U1067714.php</p> <p style="text-align: center;">INFORMATION LEAFLET</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> </p>	<p>■ What is the project about?</p> <p>Child protection is increasingly seen as everybody's business. However the voices of people who are not child protection professionals ("lay people") have been largely ignored in discussions about what is or is not child neglect. This research will explore how lay people understand and talk about child neglect.</p> <p>■ Who am I?</p> <p>I am a Ph.D. researcher at the University of Huddersfield and am also involved in teaching social work students.</p> <p>■ What will happen on the day?</p> <p>If you decide that you want to take part then you will be asked to take part in a recorded group discussion lasting about 1 ½ hours on the subject of child neglect. I will facilitate the discussion. We will have the discussion in a place that is acceptable to everyone in the group. Each group will consist of between 4 and 7 people already known to one other. At the end of the session you will be invited to complete a 'Research Monitoring Form' giving very brief details about yourself.</p> <p>■ Can I withdraw?</p> <p>YES. You can leave the discussion at any point and right up until the submission of my thesis you can ask for your data to be withdrawn.</p> <p>■ Is what I say confidential?</p> <p>YES. Everything you say is confidential UNLESS you say something that indicates to me that another person may be currently at risk of harm.</p> <p>■ Will I be identifiable?</p> <p>NO. I may use your exact words but I will not use your name or anything that would allow others to know who you are.</p>
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■ What will happen to the recording?

I will write down exactly what everyone in the group says in a separate document. That document will not contain people's names or any identifying details. The original recording and all documents that identify participants (e.g. signed consent forms) will be kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed after six years.

■ Benefits/harms of taking part?

There are no direct benefits to you of taking part. I hope that you will find the conversation interesting and enjoyable. There should be no harm to you from taking part either. If you think that you would find the subject of child neglect a difficult or painful one for any reason then please consider carefully whether or not you want to take part.

■ What will happen to the results?

The results will form part of my Ph.D. and will be published in journals, online and at conferences. You will not be identifiable. You will be offered access to the published results if you take part.

■ Complaints

If you have any complaints about the research, please contact my supervisor Dr Sue Peckover: email s.peckover@hud.ac.uk or tel: 01484 473131

■ What happens next?

If you agree to take part then I will be contacting you again in order to arrange for the group discussion to take place. It may be useful for us to meet in advance of any research session so that I can answer any questions you may have. Such a preliminary discussion would not be recorded or used within my research.

Useful Names/ Numbers:

Sasha Williams' contact details:

Email: sasha.williams@hud.ac.uk

Phone: 07510 674574

Address: Human and Health Research Building
Huddersfield University
Queensgate
Huddersfield, West Yorks HD1 3DH

PhD main supervisor: Dr Sue Peckover:
sue.peckover@hud.ac.uk / 01484 473131

Project funded by Economic and Social Research Council PhD studentship.

Helplines:

The Samaritans: 08457909090 or (<http://www.samaritans.org/>)

The National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC) runs a helpline on 08000853330 (<http://www.napac.org.uk/>)

If you are concerned about a child please contact the NSPCC helpline on 08088005000 (http://www.nspcc.org.uk/help-and-advice/worried-about-a-child/are-you-worried-hub_wdh72939.html) or 999 in an emergency.

Thank you for your interest and for reading this leaflet. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

APPENDIX 6

Consent Form

This research project is funded under an ESRC studentship award



Child Neglect Research Project CONSENT FORM

NAME:	PLEASE INITIAL BOX
1. I have read the information leaflet titled "Child Neglect Research Project" and have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and about the study.	
2. I know that I do not have to take part in the research and I can withdraw from it at any time without any consequences. I acknowledge that once the group discussion has been transcribed and anonymised it may be difficult for the researcher to withdraw my individual data.	
3. I know that I do not have to say anything in the focus group if I do not wish to do so.	
4. I give permission for the focus group to be recorded.	
5. I give permission for anything I say in the focus group to be anonymously quoted in reports, articles, conferences or publications arising from this research.	
6. I agree to the recording of the original focus group discussion and any paperwork identifying me being stored securely for 6 years.	
7. I understand that everything I say will be confidential unless I say anything indicating that another person is currently at risk of harm.	
8. I have been informed that after the group discussion I will be invited to complete a 'Research Monitoring Form'. I understand that I do not have to complete the form if I do not wish to do so. If I do	

choose to complete the form I understand that what I write will be used to show the overall mix of participants within the research study and agree to my answers being used in this way.	
---	--

8. I agree to take part in the study by Sasha Williams on child neglect.	
--	--

9. I have been given the opportunity to discuss this consent form before signing it.	
--	--

NAME OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER SASHA WILLIAMS

DATE:

APPENDIX 7

Research Monitoring Form

This research project is funded under an ESRC studentship award



Child Neglect Research Project

RESEARCH MONITORING FORM

The information within this form is being collected to show the overall mix of participants who have taken part in the research project. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO COMPLETE THIS FORM IF YOU WOULD PREFER NOT TO.** Completed forms will be stored securely and finally destroyed along with other project data.

How would YOU describe.....

...your ethnic background?

...your gender?

...your occupation (this can include paid/unpaid/voluntary/etc.)?

How old are you?

Are you a parent/ carer / guardian?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form and for taking part in the research.

APPENDIX 8

Project Poster

What is Child Neglect?



Child protection is everybody's business?

Are you:

- Over 18 years old?
- **Unqualified / untrained** in child protection?
- Willing to talk about child neglect with a small group of people you already know?

If so... I would really like to hear from you!

I am a Ph.D. researcher at the University of Huddersfield. I am interested in how people who are not child protection professionals understand child neglect. I am looking for participants willing to talk about child neglect in small groups of people they already know for about an hour and a half. For further information and a chat about my research please get in touch with me, Sasha Williams, at:

sasha.williams@hud.ac.uk or on 07510 674574

This project is funded under the ESRC Ph.D. studentship scheme

APPENDIX 9

Focus Group Protocol

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL:

MEET AND GREET

Thanks for having me

Housekeeping – fire drills, etc.

Free to leave discussion/withdraw

Under no pressure to say anything especially anything do not want to say

Has everyone read information sheet?

Any questions?

Has everyone read consent forms

Any questions

Everyone happy to go ahead?

Collect consent forms

GROUND RULES:

Establishing ground rules for group session:

CONFIDENTIALITY

Set out what my understanding of confidentiality is (nothing that is said in the room will be repeated by me in a way that will identify the group or any individual within it).

What is said within the room will only be used by me for the purposes of my research

I may be forced to breach confidentiality as explained in consent form

Ask the group to come up with their own agreement of how to deal with information given within the group after it was over in the light of on-going relationships between group members.

Formalise agreement between group members and make sure everyone is signed up to it.

RESPECT FOR OTHER PARTICIPANTS (not shouting over people, listening carefully, not being rude or upsetting or bullying, giving people space to take part in the way that they would wish, accepting a plurality of views, etc.)

No right answers

Everyone OK to start recording?

START RECORDING

Say name and when I hear the words 'child neglect' I think.....

Imagine an alien appeared before you and said "what is child neglect?" What do you think you might say?

Is child neglect something that concerns you?

How many children do you think are neglected in Britain?

Is it important that children are not neglected? Why?

Does child neglect need to have bad outcomes for the neglected children?

Why do you think some children might be neglected?

Do you think that child neglect means the same thing to everyone

Does child neglect need to be intentional?

Are there any children or groups of children you think are particularly at risk of neglect

Do you think race, class, culture is an issue in child neglect?

How might you respond to a child you thought was being neglected?

How do you think society should respond to child neglect?

DEBRIEF:

Recording stopped now

How does everyone think it went?

Matters arising

Availability of counseling

Confidentiality agreements

Voluntary research monitoring form (explain purpose and invite completion)

Check have contact email address

Thank you and goodbye

APPENDIX 10

Refusal Letter used with Consent

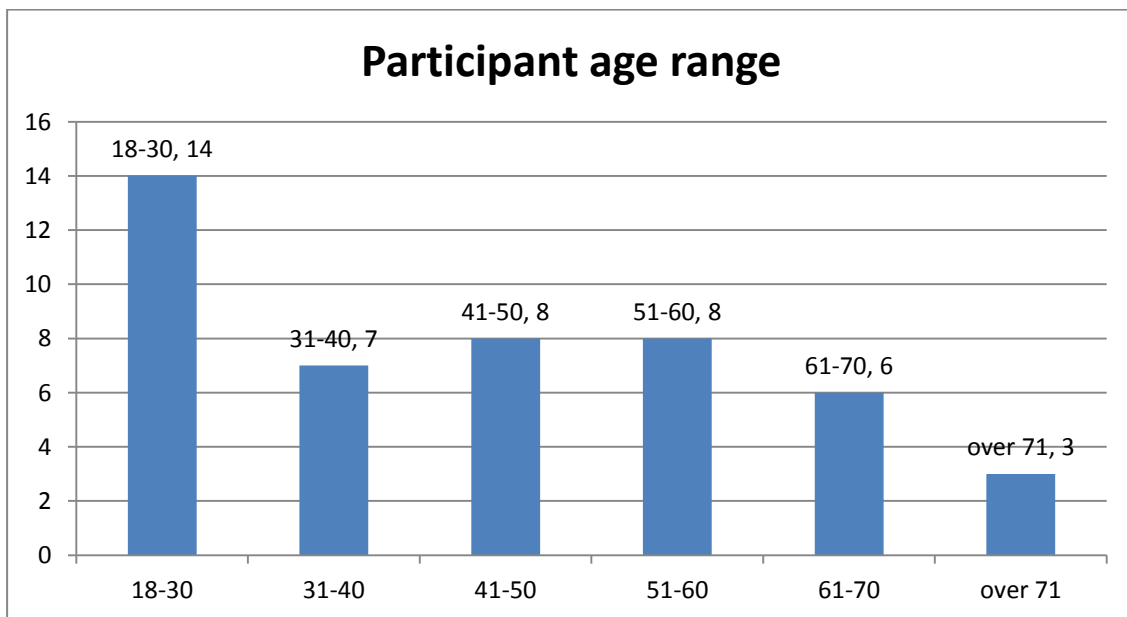
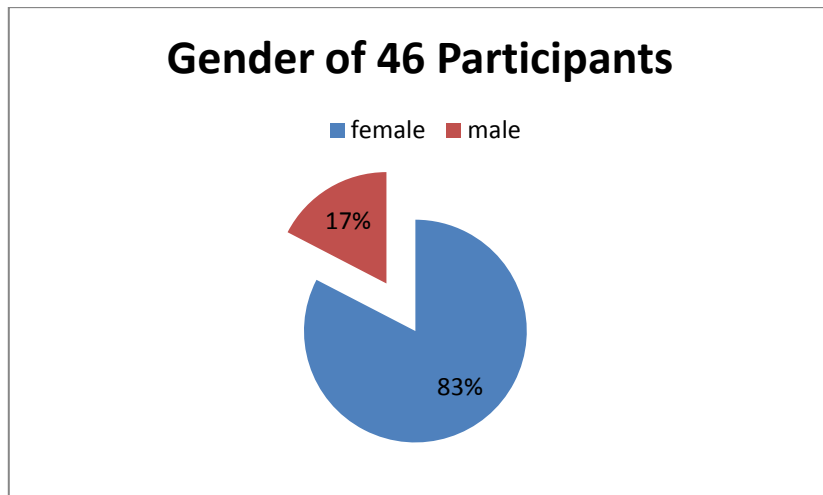
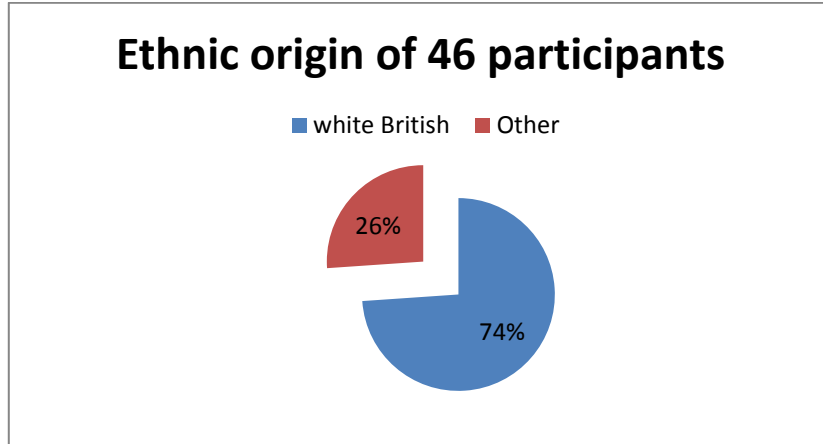
This is the text of an email received by a recruiter from a potential participant explaining their reasons for declining to take part in the project.

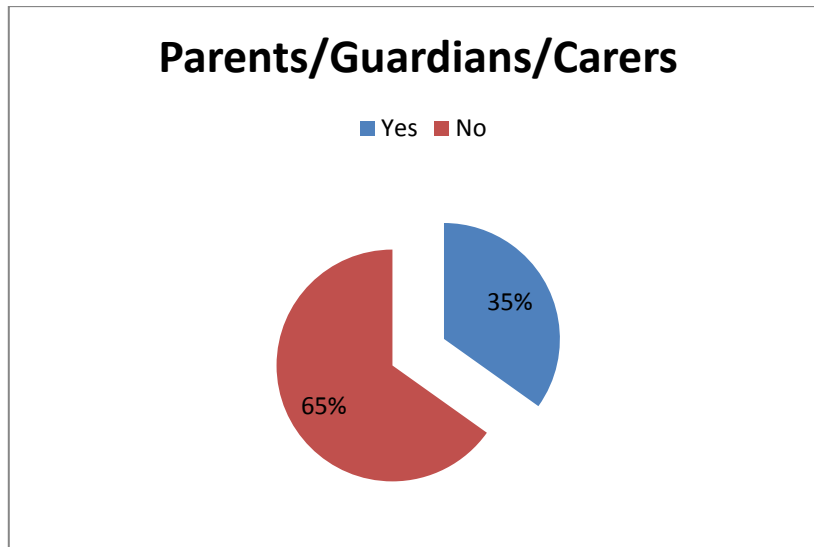
I've given this a bit of thought today - and feel quite guilty about declining because the reason for doing so is that it really doesn't interest me as a subject and I haven't given it any thought and haven't got any strong views on it to share. I doubt I would feel offended in any way - so it isn't because I'm afraid of it raising issues I can't handle. But clearly I haven't got children of my own - as importantly nor do I have much contact with nor any desire to have any involvement with other people's children. I appreciate that, quite apart from any less obvious impact on each individual child affected, outcomes of child neglect can often affect wider society - so we all ought to be concerned about it - but there is a limit to how many concerns we can individually become involved with, and this isn't one I want to grapple with. If I have an interest it is in dealing with the cause of the problem - that is how as society we stop people having children that they cannot or will not take care of properly - rather than allowing the problem to occur and then seeking solutions to the symptoms.

So if you need a body to make up the numbers then I would show up, but not with any great enthusiasm. Perhaps we can talk further tomorrow about it?

APPENDIX 11

Information about Participants





Current Occupations of Participants as listed (alphabetical):

Arts manager and teacher

Baker

Bar worker

Business development officer

Care worker for disabled/ learning disabilities

Communications manager (full-time)

Exam officer

Full time mother

Full time operations manager

Full time paid

Legal Assistant

Legal Secretary (2 participants listed this as their occupation)

Paid administrator

Part time barmaid

Part time McDonalds

PA

PhD student

Product management

Retired (10 participants stated this and gave no further details)

Retired teacher

Sales manager

Self-employed

Student (5 participants stated this and gave no further details)

Student/ part time barmaid

Teacher

Teacher (paid)

Teacher (secondary)

Teacher/mother/carer

Teaching assistant/housewife

Translator

University student

Waitress

APPENDIX 12

Diagram of definition of child neglect

[Numbers denote page numbers in transcript data set where participants' constructions are located]

