Finding One’s Place in the World

An exploration of the ways in which young people inhabit the ideological complexities of a globalised, postmodern world

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Abstract

“Finding One’s Place in the World”

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This study explores the ways in which young people orient themselves as moral/political beings to contemporary contexts. It sets out to understand the nature of these contexts, with a particular focus on the ideological challenges produced by globalisation and postmodernity. In equal measure, it sets out to examine the ways in which young people inhabit this context, drawing on a blend of Activity and Narrative Theory to expose the strategies that they employ to achieve such engagements. As such, it offers contributions which connect together existing literatures from divergent fields in a coherent way, and which place these amongst data reflecting lived experience. The research fundamentally conceptualises its subject matter as concerned with a process of learning (about oneself, and the world in which one inhabits). As such, though it is not concerned directly with the institution of schooling, or the practice of teaching, it contributes broadly to the field of education.

The methodology of the research places equal emphasis on literature and empirical work, generating its key contributions by fostering interplay between the two. It operates by bringing together disparate aspects of theory, and holding these against a lived context, as represented by the perspectives of participants. Empirical data was generated this data through two waves of interview. In the first, sixteen teenage participants were asked in pairs to respond to a series of stimulus images. Follow-up interviews with three sets of these pairs sought responses to initial analysis and commentary on its data. Analysis combined content and critical discourse analysis, examining both what participants’ said of their experience in the world, whilst also interrogating the how those responses were constructed.

Through this exploration, I demonstrate that the partiality, ambiguity and contradiction borne of processes of globalisation and postmodernity contort moral/political being. These trouble our moral impulses, perceptions and usual mechanisms of response. As a result, usual theoretical frameworks that attempt to describe to moral being are often unsatisfactory. In particular, these tensions problematise the sense of moral functioning as a rational response to known experience, and the modernist portrayal of development as the gradual development of the cognitive mechanisms necessary to do this. Rather, I represent moral/political existence (what I call ‘ideological being’) as a more organic and reflexive process, by which individuals must import meaning and subjectivities, in order to ‘anchor’ partial experience in something amenable to evaluation. In doing so, I draw heavily on existing work on socially mediated being (particularly that of Wertsch and Tappan), and demonstrate the useful and cogent ways in which it might be integrated with a broader ‘narrative’ turn in social theory.
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And with unending appreciation to Helen, for all that she does, and all that she has done in supporting me through this process.

Apologies to you all, that this has taken quite so long...

Declaration

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Movement One

Beginnings
Chapter One

An Introduction

Rationale and Context

The genesis of this project lay at the intersection of two distinct aspects of my personal and professional experience. The first was my awareness of a very particular representation of young people in the popular consciousness. It ranged from a sense that they are apathetic and politically disinterested, through to an overt moral panic that portrayed youth as essentially feral. This discourse jarred with the second of the experiential motivators for this research. At its onset, I was employed as a teacher of Sociology, a role necessitating active involvement with young people. Working mainly with A-Level students, it gave me a privileged position: interacting with young people at the cusp of independence, and standing between their essentially private definitions in the home and school, and the broader public world into which they would soon emerge. This experience nurtured an impulse to rail against the deficit portrayal of youth morality. The overwhelming impression formed through my interactions in this context was not a sense of failure in 'moral commitment'. Quite the opposite, here were individuals eager, often urgent, in their attempt to construct a sense of integrity and moral purpose. Perhaps such individuals are more predisposed to study Sociology, or perhaps my inspirational teaching had piqued in them a political awakening not present in their peers. I suspect not, though, and that, in reality, these were just normal every-day kids placed in a context that encouraged talk of their moral and political frustrations.

My experience with these individuals also offered me a sense of why they might initially seem apathetic to outside observers. Their talk was of frustrated senses of 'what to do' with their pent up commitments, not just in terms of how to author an impact on the world but, more fundamentally, in arriving at a sense of confidence in their stances; that their perspectives were right and coherent. They inhabited complex and contradictory contexts, in which right and wrong were blurred, and in which moral certainty was a rare commodity, in which individual ethics were caught-up amongst the currents and eddies of
macro-politics and economics. In short, the ideological being of these individuals was enmeshed in the social and material conditions of their context.

There is, of course, nothing new to the sense that morality is connected to social reality, nor to the cultural impulse to express anxiety about broader change by situating youth as a cultural ‘rupture’. These senses exist around the discursive invention of ‘the teenager’ (Fowler, 1995; Lewis, 1978; Mintz, 2004), itself a product of a particular economic climate, and the need to carve a new demographic amongst a burgeoning consumer climate. The consequent denigration of youth to the status of folk-devil has become a well-worn facet of sociological analysis (Cohen, 1972; Hall & Jefferson, 1993; Hebdige, 1979). In each of these waves, a scapegoating function does something to render complex macro social changes, and the anxieties they produce, into something manageable concrete; that the kids are out of control.

There are, however, elements of uniqueness to the current context. The conditions within which young people, and those specific individuals with whom I had daily contact, exist are complex. My students talked often of the difficulties of situating themselves in this complicated world, of the complexities of ideological existence raised by modern culture. They articulated an anxiety borne of the necessity to account for oneself not just as an interpersonal and local actor but also as a global one, caught up in the maelstrom of international politics and economics, as well as conventionally moral calls. It is this talk through which my central focus and impetus arose: of a desire to better account for how young people orient themselves to, and exist within, some of the political and moral complications which are precipitated by internal cultural shifts (towards late- or post-modernity), and corresponding external ones (in the process of globalisation).

It is worth pausing, at this point, for brief clarification: my intention here is not to allude to some golden age of morality, something of which the 'kids of today'-type lament itself is guilty. It evokes a mythical time in which a universal commitment to a core of shared values regulated behaviour and maintained harmonious co-existence. The discourse’s ability to propagate a sense of decline (something with which I will begin to take exception below) pivots on this sense of rupture from historical systems of morality – and supports a
solution in the form of a 'back-to-basics' politic that might forge some kind of reconnection. This allusion is entirely flawed; firstly, in its portrayal of historical reality as comprised of universal moral commitment\(^1\), which always facilitated harmony and were in no way oppressive\(^2\). Beyond this, though, is a fallacious telling of the present; a misinterpretation of social changes, and an impulsive assumption that such changes are inherently negative, breeding a misrepresentation of the responses individuals produce.

Here, then, I suggest that various social changes have indeed complicated moral and political being, but resist the urge to cast this shift as a 'decline'. Indeed, I would posit (following Bauman, 1993) that such transformations are both positive and, furthermore, that they stem from two fundamentally necessary pivots. On one hand is a process of conscientisation, in which people have been more aware of (and by extension, more accountable for) the broad ranging ramifications of their individual actions, particularly notable on a global stage. An internal liberalisation in Western society has matched this process: the reduced influence in ‘regulatory institutions’, and ‘traditional value systems’ which moral panics about youth tend to bemoan (see, for instance, notions of a “broken society” in Cameron, 2008). Following Bauman (1993, p. 29), however, I would suggest that such a turn might be represented as a rise in individual autonomy and responsibility, a move to be celebrated in itself. Where, previously, overwhelming authorities might write personal ethics on to the individual, we are now freer than ever to construct our own moral codes as active agents. Further, where the demands generated by our increased moral and political consciousness offer complication, the freedoms offered by a decline in moral absolutisms furnish necessary freedoms to respond.

A substantial proportion of this thesis, and the activity which led to it, is attempts to understand the moral implications of these shifts or, perhaps more accurately, the moral challenges that they pose to the individual. For now, one quotation, offered by Zygmunt Bauman, serves to encapsulate these conditions:

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1 There is plentiful evidence of historical moral conflict which belies this claim
2 a telling against which the socially marginalised single mother, or the imprisoned homosexual might have issue
ours are the times of strongly felt moral ambiguity. These times offer us freedom of choice never before enjoyed, but also cast us into a state of uncertainty never before so agonized
(Bauman, 1993, p. 21)

It my fundamental belief, and the key orienting feature of this thesis, that the young people with whom I was working are best understood against this context, and not amongst an assumption of moral apathy. They are left to forge engagements with the world, and foster senses of integrity, in a context of unprecedented complexity. However, they do so not as agents of decline, but as pioneers of a necessary moral reorientation. Their consequent responses – and what they tell us of the nature, challenge, and process of moral, political and ideological existence in late modern society – is at the heart of this research.

**Questions and Contributions**

My position, then, is that young people are both willing and able to engage in moral and political commitments, and that their representation in popular discourse as immoral and selfish is unfair. The engagements they foster, however, occur against a landscape of unprecedented complexity, and this makes ‘moral being’ intensely complicated. At the core of the contribution to knowledge that I attempt in this thesis, then, is an exploration of the nature of this context and the perceptual and intellectual challenges it poses. It does this in relation to the lived experiences of participants, and the nature of their response in overcoming (or at least mitigating) these challenges.

As such, I structured my initial focus in the research around two central questions:

- To what extent does young people’s talk about global issues reflect some of the conceptual challenges associated with processes such as postmodernity and globalisation? Further, in what ways can their worldviews add to theoretical understandings of contemporary moral existence?

- In producing engagements with this context, on what strategies and processes do participants draw?
The initial process of grounding these concerns in existing theoretical frameworks inevitably involved an engagement with those conventional theoretical approaches that attempt to explain moral development and moral functioning. Through this process, it quickly became apparent that these models – for various reasons explored later in chapter 5 – were insufficient in accommodating the sheer complexities involved in my focus. They offered a relatively poor incorporation of both the complex contexts of moral engagement that it explores, and the sophistication of response of its participants. As such, a second key contribution to knowledge emerged, from the attempt to locate a more cogent and secure theoretical foundation – provoking two further research questions:

- How might a socio-cultural model of morality as ‘mediated action’ (Tappan, 2006; Wertsch, 1993) offer a useful theoretical framing to the first two questions?
- In what ways might the data generated in this research offer refinements, illustrations and challenges to this analytic framework?

The core of this thesis as it constituted through these four key questions is underpinned by two fundamental processes. The first is an attempt to connect lived experience with more abstract thinking on the nature of contemporary moral/ideological being, setting empirical data amongst emerging theoretical frameworks. These frameworks are, however, disparate in the literature. They emerge distinctly from disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, politics and economics, and so on. As such, the second key fundamental process in the thesis is an attempt to connect, draw together and set apart these distinct points of thought, in an attempt to understand better a common predicament. Much of the value of this work is, then, in rendering links explicit and understanding some of the complexities that consequently arise (the logic underpinning this process is detailed further in the methodology chapter, which follows this one).

**Parameters and Scope**

It is important to note, at this early stage, that a tension exists between the capacity of this thesis, and the potential scope of the project it attempts to
contain. Left unchecked, the number and complexity of interconnectivities between theory and experience that it aims to encapsulate could easily escape the confines of what is possible here. As such, it is worth setting out a sense of the ambition to which the writing aspires, and the caveats that I perceive to delineate and contain it. Of course, other important issues of methodological scope and limitation run throughout the work. In the large part, however, I reserve this aspect of discussion for a more lengthy treatment in the next chapter and in the concluding segment of the thesis, primarily focusing here on the substantive concerns that serve to shape the overall direction of the thesis (and the methodology within it).

Most fundamentally, then, I intend this writing to articulate a sense of the perspectives of the young people with whom I have worked: the complexities of their experiences, and the sophistication of their responses. Beyond this, the thesis attempts to explore a working model of ideological functioning that better accounts for the complexities of social and cultural context. Underpinning these outcomes are processes of connectivity, between distinct disciplines, and between theory and experience (the dynamics of which are developed further in the next chapter).

In maintaining the breadth of ideas developed in the thesis and the cogency of the links between them, it is necessary to limit the scope of their application (and the questions that underpin them) in three distinct ways. The first limitation is in the nature of the participants who were involved in the empirical aspects of the study. Fundamentally, the writing is about the struggle for coherent ideological ‘being’ in complicated and contradictory times, and the status of participants as ‘young people’ was in some ways incidental. Ultimately, the kinds of contexts with which participants engage, and the struggles they confront, are not unique to young people: they are wrapped up in the same dilemmas and uncertainties that we all face in fostering an engagement with the complicated contemporary world. The research should have resonance, then, in terms of understanding moral being in general, but here I resist making explicit claims in this direction for reasons of both scope and of methodological limitation. Rather, I draw conclusions only about the specific experience of young people, as embodied in this particular set of participants. As I set out in the introduction to this thesis, there are both
political and theoretical justifications for this focus. Beyond this, any diversity in the selection of participants was intended to highlight difference and 'open up' issues – rather than to facilitate generalisation (this principle is embedded in firmer epistemological foundations in the next chapter). Thus, whilst the thesis may have broad implications, its claims only to express the perspective of particular (rather than generalised) young people, and to begin to develop a useful analytic framework (rather than a universalised theoretical description).

The second core caveat to scope in the thesis relates to the 'types' of encounter explored. These are all focused on 'global issues', structured around the three overlapping themes of poverty and inequality, environment and conflict and security. As such, themes such as trade inequalities, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Global Warming formed key points of discussion in empirical work. Originally, this focus derived from my prior role as a teacher of the Sociology of Development. However, interrogation of these contexts provoked further justification: in the ways in which these issues embody very particular contradictions and ambiguities unique to the contemporary context. With this in mind, however, it is important to recognise that the moral encounters explored here represent just a fragment of the complex and multi-layered dimensions that comprise the moral universe of the individual. Indeed, such issues may only ever be comparatively peripheral in the moral radar of participants' everyday lives (discussed further from page 75). Whilst I maintain that the challenges explored in this thesis are pervasive, then, I do not intend to imply that individuals in general, nor the young people in this study, carry around these concerns as on-going conscious dilemmas (rather, these may well be drowned out by a plethora of more immediate foci and concern). As such, the thesis is, by my own assertion, focused on a very particular subset of moral engagements. Whilst I hope that some of the observations given here have utility in understanding moral being at the interpersonal, mundane, 'everyday level', for the sake of containment, I make no effort to substantiate this within this particular piece of work (though I return to this sense in the conclusions to the thesis).

The third important caveat to the research is that it is concerned with on the way in which young people 'talk' as a facet of their ideological existence. I would contend that this, in itself, is a rich and interesting remit and one which
(as I explore from page 56) draws both a methodological and theoretical rationale. Equally, though, it is important to recognise that there are distinctions between ‘talk’, ‘thought’ and ‘action’. The relationships between each of these are complex, and understanding the connectivities and disconnects between them is far beyond the scope of a thesis. Here, then, my focus remains with talk, with full recognition that the relationships between what people say, think and do may not be causal (or mono-directional, or even connected). Throughout this caveat, though, I retain the assertion that studying talk, for all that it is a limited facet of the more general phenomenon of ‘moral being’, can offer rich insights. This focus can at least begin to explore some common underpinnings of these aspects of moral experience (justification of this claim is given further treatment from page 56).

As is becoming apparent in the previous paragraphs, it should also be noted that the thesis and its underlying activities is based on an intentionally loose definition of 'morality'. Thus the operational definition here is one that incorporates abstract engagements, talk and hypothesis as activities which have 'moral dimensions'. Such breadth is, in part, a methodological contrivance, albeit with one theoretical justification (exploration of both the empirical problems of studying morality, and the notional rationale of my approach, are given from page 61). It should be noted, though, that this might be legitimately viewed as problematic for some, who could easily contend that action, and actual impacts are prerequisites to the constitutions of 'morality'. For sake of clarity in relation to this point, I offer here a conceptual shift: from a strict notion of ‘moral functioning’, to the looser senses of ‘ideological being’ and ‘ideological becoming’. As originally proposed by the Soviet thinker Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, pp. 342–344), these notions refer to processes by which individuals learn to exist in a world of pre-existing ideas, and to autonomously navigate their discursive milieu. Whilst this is not the same as 'morality' in a hard, action-dominated, definition, I contend that such a process – and the inevitable 'position taking' it implies – has strong moralistic flavours and implications for the broader and specific instances of morality.

Before moving too far from the general parameters of this thesis, it is perhaps relevant to attend also to its location as a thesis submitted to a School of Education. What follows here is not a piece of action research – nor does it set
out with a substantive focus on pedagogy, curriculum or provision. However, I would contend that the work remains appropriate to its disciplinary home, based on two key features. Firstly, its focus is concerned with processes that are fundamentally about learning: about selves, about the world, about the connections that exist between the two and the strategies by which the individual might engage in all of this. Secondly, the thesis approaches this focus from the perspective of an interested practitioner, one whose interest in the first place is inseparable from his classroom experiences, and whose understandings and interpretations are framed as such.

I would argue, then, that this work belongs in the field of education. Schools, classrooms and teachers will all feature in its exploration, but I seek not to reify them here. Whilst they are important in the educative experience of learners, they are by no means the sole custodians of that process. Rather, they exist alongside a plethora of other institutions and individuals all of whom contribute to the child’s education as it is lived. Similarly, I have taken from this research, and its writing, some deeper and profound understandings about the sophistication of young people, and the worlds that they inhabit – and I present these in this written account. I offer some tentative gestures in relation to pedagogic implication in the concluding section of the thesis, however this is not its primary concern. To push such an impulse too strongly would be to attempt to reclaim education as the privileged remit of formal schooling, and to do a disservice to those informal negotiations by which young people learn to be in and of the world.

**Thesis Structure**

In major respects, the nature of the logics this thesis attempts to contain guides its structure. These have necessarily shaped it in ways that do not follow the structural conventions that one might expected of PhD writing. In recognition of this, it may aid the reader at this point – for sake of both clarity of purpose and navigability – to establish briefly the rationale for these deviations, and to review the alternative structure that they will encounter here. This structure is borne of a core dynamic in the research. As established previously, this thesis, and the activities that surround it, has been driven by intent to foster interplay between disparate aspects of theory – and between these abstract frameworks
and concrete experience. Such an approach does not sit easily in the structural conventions of a thesis, which tends to render its internal components (notably, of 'literature' and 'data') too separately for my purposes here. This is not to say, of course, that I have dispensed with these facets: they remain fundamentally central to the research. A fuller treatment of this dynamic is given in the next chapter, but for now, it serves to establish that they exist as strands that run throughout the entire thesis, rather than being confined to their own discrete chapters.

The segmenting of the thesis is into three broad ‘movements’, each of which asserts a different momentum to the overall writing. As such, it shifts from the establishing of foundations, through a movement of problematisation and in to one of reconstruction. Each movement is comprised of a series of chapters that represent a distinct contribution to its overall direction. In turn, I use the term ‘section’ to refer to the subdivisions within each chapter.

**Movement One: Beginnings**

This opening section of the thesis serves a broadly introductory purpose. Its intent is to furnish the reader with the understandings and context they require in order to engage with the substance of the thesis that will follow. In this, chapter one of the thesis, my focus has been with contextualising the thesis in terms of its underpinnings, whether professional (to me as a teacher), or political (its broader socio-cultural context), and in relation to practical matters of research question, scope and structure. In chapter two, which follows, the exploration receives a more philosophical and methodological bent. Here, I detail the logics of the project in a more thorough and interrogative way: exploring the ways in which theoretical components have been ‘interacted’ with one another, and with the empirical work. The chapter also gives context to the data included in the thesis, exploring the conventional ‘meat’ of methodology sections in terms of the philosophical and practical processes that surrounded data generation and analysis, and the tensions implicit to those processes.

It is necessary to deal with methodology at this early stage (where, conventionally, literature would be first used to ‘situate’ the research) in order to give the reader a fuller sense of the processes by which the rest of the
writing (including the treatment of literature which follows) has been produced. It should be noted, though, that there are inherent costs to this decision. Notably, the process of methodological exploration is abstracted from the underpinning context from which it derives. I have attempted, in this opening section, to give the reader enough of a sense of rationale to overcome this problem. However, for this reason, the interplay between theoretical understandings and methodological design, remain a theme for exploration throughout the thesis.

Movement Two: Problematisation

The movements and chapters that follow effectively function to ‘execute’ and then review the methodological processes and logics established in this opening section. As established in the next chapter, interplay of literature and data forms a leitmotif around which these movements proceed. The second movement of the thesis is entitled ‘Problematisation’. Drawing on the assertions posited at the onset of this chapter, here I attempt to encapsulate a sense of the ways in which the contemporary context presents ideological complications for both the individual actor, and for the theories that already attempt to explain the moral functioning. Within this movement, chapter three confronts the particular demands that are posed by existence in a globalised world, and the perceptual, cognitive and emotive challenges that complicate how individuals respond to those demands. Chapter four shifts the exploration to corresponding shifts within Western capitalist societies, to what is variously referred to as ‘postmodernity’ or ‘late-modernity’. Here, I situate the individual in a second layer of complication, stemming from an oversupply of meaning, and undersupply of certainty, tied to increased plurality and declining absolutes.

Throughout these two chapters, I suggest that the net result of these processes situates the individual in an uneasy mismatch of moral ‘supply and demand’, and attempt to contextualise some of what participants say in the associated empirical work amongst this complexity. In chapter five, I shift the focus over to those theoretical approaches that have conventionally attempted to explain ‘moral functioning’ and ‘moral developing’. Here, I suggest that that these approaches are inherently flawed, and that the complications outlined in the previous two chapters resonate within these flaws. In short, this chapter posits
a necessity to reframe frameworks around ideological being, and begins to set out a number of contentions on the theoretical accommodations that must be made in order to do so properly.

**Movement Three: Reconstruction**

Having established the challenges that the contemporary context poses both to the individual, and to the theories which attempt to understand them, the next segment of the thesis attempts to synthesise a sense of ‘ways forward’. On one hand, it offers a drawing together of a number of emerging theoretical trends (notably, a post-Vygotskian emphasis on ‘mediated action’, and a narrative-turn in social theory), with the suggestion that these are more able to encapsulate the contextual complications outlined in movement two, and thus useful in appreciating ideological becoming. Through this process, I draw on participants’ data both for illustrative purposes, and to appreciate more fully the sophistication by which they respond to the challenges that context presents to them.

This theoretical reconstruction emerges over a number of chapters. It begins in **chapter six** with an account of an emergent set of theories that cast morality as a socially mediated activity: at once a product of individual agency, and social context and meaning, and caught up not just in rationality and deliberation but also in impulse and subjectivity. Drawing particularly on the work of Tappan (2006) and Wertsch (1993), together with their key precursors (notably Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981, 1987), I suggest that this approach provides a more robust and sensitive framework through which to appreciate ‘ideological being’ in situ. I posit that it offers a useful reply to some of the necessary theoretical concessions outlined at the close of the previous movement, and consequently proves a more useful analytic framework in general, and in the specific context of the contextual challenges of globalisation and post-modernity. Drawing on this socially mediated framework for leverage, this movement therefore begins to explore the sophistication inherent to some of the ways in which participants in the study respond to the uncertainties and contradictions in their experience.

The next two chapters of the thesis continue to explore refinements to this perspective, as they exist already in the literature, and in relation to the data
on which the thesis draws. Chapter seven therefore attempts to better express how the socially mediated approach situates the individual and, in particular, the ways in which it reconciles notions of agency with an emphasis on cultural context. This process is continued in reference to chapter eight, with a particular focus on how this construct frames notions of accountability and responsibility. Here, I extend Tappan’s claim that such notions can be expressed in relation to the authorial nature of the individual, and hence the ‘authority’ they assert over their activity. To this, I add the notion of ‘authenticity’, in relation to the ways in which authorial activity must be reconciled with broader constructs of self.

In chapter nine of the reconstructive movement, I turn my attention to a growing paradigm in social science that emphasises the notion of narrative. Having briefly reviewed this perspective, I suggest that its contributions can be useful in the context of the theoretical project evolving in this thesis. I therefore argue that there are key features of ‘doing’ moral and ideological being which are inherently ‘storied’, and hence that narrativisation is a crucial mechanism in this process. Returning to the contextual focus of the thesis, I suggest that the specific features of the engagement within globalisation and postmodernity serve to amplify this association: particularly that a context of ‘missing information’ necessitates the production of broader narratives in order to render sense into experience. I attempt demonstrate that there are compatibilities between narrative conceptualisation of human consciousness, and my early treatment of ideological being as socially mediated action. Here, I emphasise the role of existing narrative in furnishing the individuals with meanings that might be appropriated in rendering sense into partial experience, and the process of narrativisation as a structure through which disparate meanings might be cogently held together. Finally, I attempt to demonstrate the analytic potentials of this turn to narrative, in providing a mechanism through which to unpick the workings of participants’ engagements.

Having completed a reconstructive process, chapter ten offers a concluding turn to the thesis, offering a sense of summary and synthesis of key findings. As such, it attempts to draw together the key contributions in relation both to the intended aims set out in this opening chapter, and its broader connections to
existing theory. It also recognises some of the recurrent tensions that surface throughout the research and the writing. Finally, it also offers a tentative sense of the implications of these contributions, on two levels. On the first, I consider the pedagogic significance of the broader thesis, examining how the assertions on the nature of contemporary contexts, and its understanding of who individuals orient to this, has significance for the ways we teach, and provide curriculum for, global citizenship. On the second level, I consider the implications of the thesis for future research, highlighting some of the key questions that this particular research leaves unanswered, and some of the more specific directions in my continuing academic career.
Chapter Two

Methodology

Introduction

As I established in the previous chapter, the ideas presented in this thesis are the product of two distinct methodological strands, and of a conscious attempt to engineer communication and interplay between them. On one hand, the production of this thesis emerged from a process of engagement with literatures, of an interconnection (and hence theoretical synthesis) of ideas. On the other, the work was a fundamentally empirical endeavour that drew on data drawn from a series of interviews, and attempted to understand ‘ideological existence’ from the perspectives of young people. Throughout, then, the key energy driving the research, and its contribution to knowledge, is a two-fold process of interconnectivity. The process aimed to demonstrate the compatibilities between distinct conceptual frameworks, and the usefulness of their conjunction. In equal measure, in it I intended to bring together these distinct points of abstract focus and set them in the context of concrete lived experience.

Given this context, the methodology of this research is as much related to its engagement with literature and theory as it is with its data, and the substance of this chapter will reflect this balance. In its first section, I familiarise the reader with the processes of data generation and analysis which I followed. I then move on to account for the more abstract underpinning ‘principles’ which have shaped the inquiry – beginning with its theoretical and epistemological commitments. Here, I explore the logics through which interactions between its various components of literature and data have been realised. The particular relationship I have constructed between literature and data raises a number of philosophical tensions. In this section, I confront some of these, and the ways in which I have situated the study in response to them. The political and ethical principles of the research also receive space in this section of the chapter. In exploring these aspects at this point, alongside more epistemological concerns, I intend to reflect the relative significance of these influences. I suggest, here, that given the political foundations of the research (and its broadly moral
orientations) these have shaped methodology in ways comparable to commitments that are more theoretical. In the final section of the chapter, I return again to the procedure, in order to offer some initial discussions inherent to it (and which continues throughout the thesis) in the particular context of the study’s focus and theoretical orientations.

**Procedural Aspects**

Before offering any sense of the abstract philosophical and ethical framings of the research, it is first necessary to orient the reader to the actual procedures and strategies I employed within it. Here, then, I provide brief overviews of the process which governed engagement with literature, and through which participants were selected and empirical data generated. Finally, I provide a sense of the analytic process to which the resultant data (within which I also include literature as data) was subjected.

**Literature-Led Processes**

As previously indicated, engagement with literature in this research was an active part of its generative processes. In executing this engagement, I have intended to fulfil the traditional functions of a literature review: establishing and mapping the conventions, tensions and frameworks that exist already within the field. Beyond this, however, is a slightly more sophisticated ambition. Conventionally, the literature review fulfils a ‘backgrounding’ function: situating the research and contextualising its subsequent contribution to knowledge. Here, however, the syntheses of ideas that emerge from engagement with literature are themselves a central component of that contribution. Two distinguishing features underpin this:

- Rather than ‘mapping’ a field, the thesis attempts to begin to trouble the boundaries that exist within and between fields. They take, for instance, psychological frameworks on ‘moral functioning’ and situate them in a material and social context (created through globalisation and postmodernity) that is established through literatures on economics, sociology and cultural studies.
Rather than 'laying the ground' for later empirical work, I attempt to actively ensure that the data generated as part of this study is active in this theoretical discussion. The rationale, here, is not only to explore a series of 'big ideas' at the level of individual experience, but also to foster the inverse process: examining the ways in which these experiences challenge and nuance the theoretical telling of broader social conditions.

Methodologies already exist surrounding the literature-led production of new knowledge and understanding: the most notable being those of systematic review (Cooper, 1998) and meta-analysis (Glass, 1976). In the context of this study, however, both have proven unsatisfactory. The notion of an integrated and coherent field predicates both approaches, albeit one populated with distinct data sets and findings that can be combined in order to synthesise a more ‘valid’ and reliable set of propositions. Such a stance is too paradigmatic for my purposes here. It invests too heavily in the notion that ‘the field’ exists as an unproblematic and logically consistent construct, with a right to claim expertise on its subject focus.

The literature review process that underpinned this work was, then, one that intentionally set out to trouble boundaries between fields. Where Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses seek internal synthesis (comparisons of methodologies, datasets, and findings of studies within a field), the focus here was something of an external synthesis. Thus, it aimed at the production of meaning and understanding through the combination and contradiction of ideas and proposals amongst fields that nevertheless share a focus on particular domains of human being. Prompt questions initiated the process, provoked through the initial motivations of the project. These fundamentally focused on 'what people do and experience' in 'context', and these two distinct points (the individual, and the context) became primary organising principles for the literature review. A concern with the nature of globalisation and postmodernity, and the conditions they produce, were heavily emphasised. This required engagement with literatures originating from economics, sociology and politics. In parallel was an immediate concern with the individual and their connections to these contexts: the nature of citizenship, and with psychological understandings of moral development and functioning. The interplay of this parallel focus on macro, meso and micro scales of existence led
to one layer of generation of new understandings. It also sparked new strands and subcategories of literature-based investigation. For instance, as the analytic principles evolved, narrative became increasingly important, and with it an exploration of broader resonances in the connection between story and morality.

**Empirical Data**

I conducted the empirical work for this study over an eighteen-month period, undertaking interviews with sixteen participants. Interviews took place in pairs, including a first round with all participants, and a return second-wave with three of the pairs to develop discussion around key themes. Hence, the full data set comprised eleven sessions of data generation. The participants originated from a range of secondary schools in the Greater Manchester area. The pseudonyms of the participants are summarised in the table to the left—and the characteristics of them and their schools provided in Appendix B. Access to participants was, in all cases, negotiated through a teaching contact in the school. This member of staff also negotiated permission from parents and the participants themselves. In order to avoid selection only of the most 'studious' pupils, I made an explicit request that I was interested in hearing from a range of different individuals.

The process therefore consisted of two phases of interview, each held with two participants, within a classroom in their school during lunchtime. The first interview began with an introduction to the research, and to my background. I then gave space for participants to question and probe the researcher’s purposes and intents (for reasons to which I return in my later discussion on ethics). As the main phase of the interview began, I presented participants with a series of photographs depicting 'global issues' (included in Appendix C of this

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3 I return to the dynamics and problematics of methodology later in this chapter. Here, I intend simply to offer a sense of procedure and process.
thesis, and presented where relevant in the main exploration). The themes of poverty and inequality, conflict and insecurity, and environment structured the selection of the images, though their presentation to participants was unsystematic. I then asked participants to respond to the pile of jumbled images (in these simple terms) with little else in way of structuring, beyond prompts for expansion or clarification. The resultant conversations generally lasted between 45mins and an hour. An illustrative transcript is provided in Appendix D of this thesis.

As these sessions proceeded, two additional dynamics sometimes emerged, each with a corresponding interview strategy. Where discussion began to run flat, I asked participants to focus on a new image, though I made clear that they could jump between images and beyond them as they saw fit. In general, only one such prompt was necessary, and participants universally adopted the dynamic of shifting between images. In many cases, the interview generally also evolved into a discussion-based dynamic, both between participants, and with me as the interviewer. As such, whilst I attempted to allow participants space to find their own voice and pace within the interviews, and to establish particular directions of discussion, there was no explicit attempt to ensure a 'non-directive' interview style. My role within the process was therefore active: provoking and providing information as well as listening (I give further discussion of the nature of 'stimuli' later).

The purpose of the first wave of interviews was to generate a series of 'engagements' amongst participants focused on issues at the heart of the study. A second phase of interviews attempted to understand better the processes at play in these engagements. It aimed to explore the nature of the resultant constructions and the relationship between these and the individuals who authored them. The second round of interviews revisited six of the participants (indicated with an asterisk in the table on the previous page), selected both because of accessibility, and on the outcomes of initial analysis of the first wave of interviews. This generally occurred around four months after the first. Here I gave participants, again in pairs, the full transcript of their original interviews together with a series of extracts that I had found particularly intriguing. Initially, I offered no prompt to elicit discussion, though this built gradually to a fuller 'discussion'-type dynamic that included explicit
exploration of my emerging questions and observations. In each of these interviews, the final section became a relatively organic ‘chat’ that included the experience of participating, and participants’ observation on its methodology. Generally, these second-wave interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

**Data Analysis**

The ‘data set’ of this research therefore consisted of a two distinct elements. The first was the outcome of a review of distinct fields of literature, which was organised and categorised by both overall theme and the internal propositions that each posited. The second element was a body of empirical data generated through the two waves of interviews. Within this second element was data of two distinct forms of character and intent. The first was a series of ‘engagements’ with stimuli images, and by extension with the global issues that they depicted. The second was a meta-commentary on the first wave of interviews (and on the interview process itself), and participants’ reflections of their place, role and comments within them.

In line with the research questions outlined in the previous chapter, two distinct processes and priorities underpinned the analysis of this data. The first was an attempt to situate participants’ experiences and ideas in the social, economic and cultural conditions described in the broader literature. Here, my intent was to highlight points of particular resonance, but also those of nuance and contradiction. Analysis in this respect was relatively straightforward, with an attention (albeit careful) to the face meanings of what participants had said in relation to their perceptions of the ideological context and conditions within which they operated. The process of achieving this involved treating both the existing literature and the interview transcripts as a dataset, coding them in terms of key messages\(^4\). These messages were themselves then explored and organised in terms of their inter-relationships and overlaps, collapsing categories where necessary. Finally, I explored each coding category internally in order to draw conceptual distinctions and nuances within it. The results of these analyses make up the substance of the next movement, with influences running throughout the rest of the thesis.

\(^4\) I used the software package NVivo to organise this and later analytic processes, particularly its ability to easily collapse and expand coding categories and to generate queries for collocation of ideas within the overall dataset. Illustration of the forms of this analysis can be found in Appendix E
It is important to recognise the perils, here, of associating ‘face value’ and ‘bias free’. The analysis aims to attend to the surface meanings of participants' data, rather than engaging with any form of ‘deep unpicking’ of the constitution of these meanings. This is not, however, to say that these meanings comprise unproblematic ‘truths’, clear of any artefacts or biases generated by the processes of data generation and analysis. In part, my ethical stance in the research, explored in more detail later, tempers this problem. I begin with a presumption of competence in young people. This, in turn, suggests that participants should be trusted to honour their own integrity. Such a stance guides one away from an impulse to imply overly that their answers are merely the product of how the research has led them. Equally, though, a reflexive refrain was required, at the very least to ensure that my interpretations and analyses of the data were troubled and explored. Where it is immediately relevant, I provide these reflexive refrains throughout the thesis.

The first analytic process was essentially ‘outward looking’, in that it situated key meanings and messages in a broader socio-economic/cultural context. By contrast, the second branch of analysis focused inwardly. It was concerned with the mechanics of how participants had actually constructed their engagements. As such, this process drew loosely on the analytic processes of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Van Dijk, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), with the familiar three-levels of exploration:

- The mechanics of the text: deconstructing participants’ responses in order to appreciate better the formation and articulation of meanings.

- The act of production: the way in which the forming and doing of the response represented ‘action’ on the world (in this case moral engagement)

- Socio-cultural contexts: examining the ways in which the texts embodied broader mythologies and power-relations.

The framework through which I achieved this was very much an emergent one – indeed, it forms one of the four key research questions outlined in the previous chapter – and will become more apparent through chapters six to nine. For now, however, it serves to outline briefly some of the key
mechanisms through which I gained an analytic purchase on the data within this phase.

The starting point for this analysis was influenced by a broadly semiotic tradition (Chandler, 2007; Eco, 1979; Leeuwen, 2004). Thus, initial deconstruction proceeded through a dual focus on syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of participants' constructions. The first of these dimensions involved an exploration of the 'surface structures' of participants' talk. This method began by breaking discourse into discrete logical units (or syntagms), continuing to explore the implications of the ways in which these syntagms are joined together and ordered. Doing this begins to expose something of the 'flow' of what has been said – the way in which connections and disconnections are authored in order to suggest a particular reality, and to author notions of cause, effect and association. Syntagmatic analysis also revolved around a comparison of these 'structures', in particular the ways in which differences and similarities occurred amongst talk about different issues, and within talk of the same issue amongst different participants.

Syntagmatic analysis is, therefore, intra-textual. It focuses on the overall structure of participants' discourse, and the ways in which structural elements within a given transcript might relate to one another. Paradigmatic analysis was, by contrast, more markedly inter-textual. It explored the ways in which participants populate the syntagmatic structure with meanings, drawing on the 'paradigm sets' offered by an array of discursive currents in the individual's cultural universe. Here, omission is as important as inclusion in the sense of understanding why one body of meanings was adopted rather than others, and its implications. The focus of this branch of analytic process was therefore with an understanding of how a particular construction (the syntagmatic structure identified in the previous process) was anchored in a particular reality, and how its intertextuality served to prop up its internal coherence.

Throughout this process ran a fundamental interplay: between unpicking the mechanics of individual constructions, and the production of a framework through which to explore constructions in general. Thus, when a recurrent feature occurred in the data (whether paradigmatic or syntagmatic) it was incorporated into the broader analytic proposals. These were then reapplied to
other participants responses, both to find resonance between them and, importantly, to nuance the analytic frame itself. In relation to the latter of these processes, the analytic frame itself was therefore under constant revision and exploration. As such, it was treated as a functional (rather than theoretically complete) device through which to better understand data. The outcomes of these dimensions of analysis inform chapters six through nine most overtly, though again they run through the entire thesis.

Finally, all of the analytic processes involved in the study were wrapped in a broader loop of feedback, with initial proposals and interpretations taken back to participants in the second wave interviews. In part, this was an exercise with intents of validating and adding depth to the deconstructive process. Thus, participants’ observations and comments offered an extra layer of nuance to interpretation. Importantly, though, it was also an attempt to situate better the relationships between participants and their constructions. Thus, the analytic process aimed to tie together the transcripts and analyses with the interview context, exploring the extent to which findings were specific to that particular event. Further, it aimed to locate the responses in context of the individual doing the constructing: in participants' broader senses of self, and their particular universes of meaning. Here, then, the focus was again much more direct, on what participants’ actually said about their constructions, and how they related them (or actively disconnected them) to their broader experiences and senses of self.

**Epistemological Principles**

The processes and procedures of this research were, in the first instance, practically motivated, as an attempt to address its specific research questions. However, they were also framed strongly by a particular philosophical orientation, and it is relevant to now offer a treatment of them. Connection between literature and data is at the heart of this research, and this is facilitated by a logic of interplay between both inductive and deductive processes. As such, it oscillates between conceptual movements from specific cases to general observation and, conversely, from overarching theory to particular instances. The thesis attempts, then, to take existing understandings and theories and to explore them as they manifest at the level of the individual,
examining connections with interview data. It is concerned, for instance, with the economic, cultural and social conditions of late modern societies and the challenges these pose to ideological being, but also how these conditions play out in the context of lived experience. To an extent this process follows the theory-observation-confirmation pattern of deductive reasoning (Cargan, 2007, p. 31). As such, there is a degree of ‘testing the reality’ of macro-observations as they occur at the micro-level of lived experience, and the efficacy of theories of moral functioning in accommodating how individuals respond to these conditions.

This process is, however, not one of 'proofing': it does not set out to generate blanket validation through the testing of theory. Rather, I hold existing concepts as useful starting points, but not as permanently enshrined features. There is an active attempt within the research to challenge, augment and better sensitise these frameworks and proposals. In this respect, an inductive logic is an equally crucial underpinning to the work: through it comes development, refinement and proposal of theory (Cargan, 2007, p. 31). In part, this dynamic emerges from a conventional use of empirical data: through the analysis of participants’ data, it is possible to generate, challenge and refine theoretical frameworks. Equally, though, the engagement with literature follows an inductive dynamic. The study seeks interplay of different, previously unconnected, 'points' in the literature landscape. It attempts to demonstrate, for instance, the theoretical 'holes' which are left when attempting to apply dominant, cognitive theories of moral development to a globalised, post-modern context. Similarly, it demonstrates the ways in which theories of narrative can be usefully integrated into an approach to ideological functioning informed by a post-Bakhtian/post-Vygotskian framework (all of this, will of course, become more apparent as the main substance of the thesis proceeds).

Viewed in summary, an organic and cyclical process of deduction and induction structures the logic of this research. Indeed, part of its key contributions lie in the movement back and forth through these processes. This logic evolves from the very genesis of the research. It began inductively: as I suggest in the previous chapter, a particular set of specific experiences that disconnect from a general socio-cultural mythology inspired the research. It proceeded, quite conventionally, with a deductive process of engagement with literature that
has contextualised this proposal, and developed its locus and remit. This engagement has set out general senses of the conditions of late-modern society; its ethical challenges and how moral being occurs within it. Taking this back to data allows a degree of confirmation of these theories, but also challenge, refinement and elaboration.

I should note, here, two further observations. Firstly, that this process is not unique to this thesis. Indeed the conventional structure of this kind of writing encourages just this kind of processes of logic. A repetition of these processes in a cycle, rather than an achievement of them across the narrative, is the key difference here. Secondly, it should be recognised that this design feeds off existing work which sets out to erode the logic systems which establish conventional methodological binaries (Bryman, 1992; Hammersley, 1992) and theoretical extremes of structure and agency (Giddens, 1985). The result is a 'middle range' methodological approach, which attempts to live between high theory and personal experience. As will emerge throughout this thesis, this negotiation of middle ground has evolved to be a fundamental facet of both the methodological and theoretical ambitions of this thesis (for the most clear expression of this, I direct the reader to chapter seven).

There are key pragmatic and philosophical benefits to this approach, which brings with it something of the strengths of both directions of logic. As such, it offers a mechanism that is able to talk of broad and overarching understandings, and to draw on a sense of empirical foundation in doing so. Equally, though, it is capable of recognising nuance and counterpoint, and the ways in which broad theory is complicated when played out against contexts. It is, however, important to recognise that this form of combination also brings with it the weakness of each. The interplay and conversation between the two logics produces a middle ground where the study exists. The result of this cyclic process is that it remains cyclical. As such, it remains an on-going process and it would be difficult – unwise even – to arrive at a 'finished state' (to close down the conversation is to erode the space in the logic that this conversation creates). As such, the work presented here proposes a theoretical framework that, I maintain, is both useful and important, but which is still very much a contribution in development.
The dynamic of the inductive-deductive loop in the study draws some rationale from a broad commitment to a phenomenological understanding, and thus a constructivist epistemology (Crotty, 1998, pp. 43–65). As such, it does not seek to generate descriptions of laws, structures and processes universal to human experience. Rather, it seeks a more subtle understanding of the subjective ways in which particular selves experience their worlds. As such, the research maintains that,

> It is not necessary to map and conquer the world, but to sophisticate the beholding of it. 'Thick description', 'experiential understanding' and 'multiple realities' are expected.

(Stake, 1995, p. 43)

In this respect, the research seeks a divergent understanding of young people’s ideological orientations and constructions, expressing the uniqueness and difference found amongst individuals, rather than a normative and convergent description of core similarities. This intent guides research towards a qualitative approach, in this case one driven by interviews. This form of design allows both for the generation of data with depth and detail, and facilitates a more open-ended enquiry. In turn, it therefore begins to meet some of the epistemological precepts established so far. Notably it supports the need to challenge existing theory with new understandings and to attend to the meanings held by individuals. It is, though, important to recognise that the use of the design also brings with it limitation. This is most notable in the scale at which findings can be generalised. On one level, this is a practical point. The use of interviews places limits on the number of participants included in the analysis, and thus curtails its representativeness. More fundamentally, though, the limitation is a theoretical one: an approach that hails the uniqueness and richness of individual experiences does them a disservice to talk in generalised ways.

At this point, it seems pertinent to note, and to address, the tensions inherent to a methodology that commits simultaneously to a focus on individualised meanings and understandings, and to frameworks of theory established across literature. The first of these priorities is fundamentally ideographic, implicating the search for divergence and difference (Crotty, 1998, p. 77). By contrast, the latter casts participants amongst a state of regularity and consistency, amongst
a set of rules (of nomos) which govern their existence. Weber’s conceptualisation of social research offers a useful riposte to this tension:

Consider the individual and his action as the basic unit ... the upper limit and the sole carrier of meaningful conduct ... it is the task of sociology to reduce concepts to 'understandable' action ... to the actions of participating men

(Weber, 1970, p. 55)

The implication here is that the binary distinction between nomothetic and ideographic approaches is neither inherent, nor unbridgeable. Rather, it is possible to conceptualise a set of external conditions that contextualise the individual, without reifying these conditions as overwhelming causal processes (elsewhere, Weber usefully draws the distinction between 'necessary' and 'adequate' causation). Such a conceptualisation can be aided through a confrontation of the ontological assumptions on which the methodology rests and, in particular, drawing the distinction between a subjectivist and constructivist perspective (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). The focus, here, is very much with individual meanings, indeed it is driven by an epistemology which holds this as essential. However, it does not see 'reality' as constituted only in these meanings (as would be the case in subjectivist ontology). Rather, reality is seen as 'constructed' through the application of meanings, 'application' implicating the existence of an external context and a set of conditions against which meanings can be applied.

As such, I maintain here that the focus of this research remains ideographic, in that, at all times, it seeks out divergence and difference, and actively attempts to avoid normative assumptions. Equally, though, I would maintain that framing these understandings in a broader context does not compromise this aim. Indeed, following the logic above, a crucial part of making sense of individual constructions lies in appreciating the external contexts against which they are constructed. The development and use of theoretical frameworks, in this respect, are of fundamental use. Crucial in mediating this dynamic, however, is the caveat that these shared conditions only ever become 'experiences' through the subjective lens of the individual (hence, in Weber’s language, the reduction of concepts to understandable action). What I offer in this thesis, then, is an exploration of young people’s constructions about the
world around them, understood in reference to the context and cultural frameworks that surrounds them.

As such, I would maintain that it is possible to reconcile the application of nomothetic theory in an ideographic exploration. A second tension emerges, though, in the converse of this process, in the generation of nomothetic theory from an ideographic exploration. It may seem somewhat contradictory to seek out divergence and difference, and then to describe these understandings in generalised (convergent, consistent) terms. In response to this problem, I offer a crude distinction in the academic 'product' of this thesis. On one hand, the theoretical output is a set of challenges, refinements and connections made to, and within, existing frameworks. It is on this level that the theory-generating processes of the work are most easily reconciled with its ideographic focus. What I contribute here is a set of challenges to 'big theory' that attempt to re-sensitise it to individual realities. The research thus represents the inverse of Weber's 'reductions of concepts to understandable action'; an expression of the diversity of uniqueness that exists within a conceptual framework which describes conditions and processes in normative terms. The reader should treat this aspect of the study's output as both crucial and partial. Partial, because it represents the experience of only the tiniest proportion of human experiences, in particular contexts and particular times (indeed, the ideographic precept would suggest the pursuit of anything representative beyond this to be meaningless). Crucial, because these understandings add necessary depth to theory, by highlighting the ways in which lived experience modulates, disrupts and challenges it.

The second product of the research is a middle-range framework intended to act as an analytic device through which to deconstruct participants' ideological constructions. In short, the framework considers the way in which these constructions are 'storied', and how these narrative structures are populated with meanings. This framework exists 'in between' the deductive and inductive processes of the study, drawing on existing conceptual work and augmenting it with observations grounded in empirical data. It exists, though, purely as an hermeneutic device, intended as a mechanism through which to expose divergent constructions and ideas, and as a set of strategies, rather than fixed or fundamental rules that have any permanent reality of their own. As such,
the justification of this level of theory generation is teleological: it exists as a structure maintained by the usefulness of its consequences, and its capability to expose interesting facets in the data produced by participants.

Before moving from this general exploration of the methodological principles and philosophies underpinning the research, one final observation merits exploration. What emerges from the description of the 'idea-generating' mechanisms of this work is a sense that it exists amongst a number of key methodological tensions, sometimes in ways that require a rigorous expression and delineation of beliefs and commitments. This facet of the work is an inseparable echo of a much broader theoretical tension that will emerge in the work. As detailed more thoroughly elsewhere (see chapter seven), this thesis attempts to situate 'ideological functioning' as something which is, in equal measure, a product of the agency and freewill of the individual, but within a particular discursive context. Viewed in this way, the methodological tensions discussed above are a functional necessity of the study's theoretical basis, which implicates the need to focus on both individual meanings and broader contexts.

**Ethical and Political Dimensions**

As explored in the introduction to this thesis, the origins of this research are inseparable from my own commitments. In particular, it arose through a reaction against 'deficit' portrayals of the ethics of young people, and set out to represent better the complexity of their perspectives. Ethical concerns, then, have a fundamental place in this thesis, and it is therefore fitting to give over extended space for discussion of this facet of the research here. This section therefore begins with a brief exploration of the ways in which the study aimed to comply with a 'baseline' standard of ethics presented through codes of conduct. It continues, though, to express dissatisfaction with this form of 'deontological framework': of an ethics based on 'rules for rules' sake'. Following a broadly feminist paradigm in social research (e.g. Maynard, 1994), my position is, therefore, that ethical and political qualities and commitments are as important as any theoretical or philosophical treatment of methodology. As such, any 'token' compliance is insufficient. Thus, the section finishes with a more substantial account of the study's ethics as they stem from the 'core' of
the research, and my identity and beliefs as a researcher: their nature, impacts and their complications. The fundamental assertion, here, is that justification of research ethics can only be approached in a satisfactory way if it is embedded in reflexivity on particular moments and dynamics within the research (and not as a series of 'bolt on' rules of compliance).

Compliance with Ethical Codes

At a functional and procedural level, then, compliance with the standards set in codes of practice (notably BERA, 2011) served to establish a basic and 'best-fit' set of ethical routines for the research (and, of course, one which fulfils a necessary appeal to regulatory bodies such as ethics committees). In this vein, I obtained fully informed assent from participants at the onset of the research, together with consent from parents and guardians. Deceiving participants about the purpose of the study seemed to offer little gain. As such, I gave participants full details on the study, both in writing (see Appendix A) and at the onset of the research, which also provided an opportunity for them to probe and question its intents. Participants were given the option to withdraw from the research at all key points, and to have their contributions removed from the dataset if they so wished. There is little capacity for the research to cause 'harm', as it is defined in ethical codes. Finally, in this, the resultant thesis, I apply pseudonyms for schools and participants in order to preserve their anonymity.

Of course, the use of school pupils as participants complicates all of these fundamental principles, and situating research in a classroom setting amplifies this. The ways in which such settings complicate participants’ freewill, and thus the extent of their informed consent, is a tension well established across the literature (Alderson, 1996; Morrow & Richards, 2007). To an extent, my response to these complications are given in the more substantial discussion of the internal ethics of the research below, as it is grounded in the construction of young people on which the study is based. Within this procedural, 'rule based' discussion, however, it is pertinent to respond in two ways. Firstly, that the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), a lens through which ethical guidelines often frame themselves, not only sets out the importance of the protection of children (articles 3 and 4), but also establishes the importance of the voices of young people being heard (articles 12 through
The rules-based grounding, then, suggests that an overprotective approach to young people can be as unethical as an underprotective one: closeting and preventing their right to expression (similar sentiments are echoed in Powell & Smith, 2006).

The second response to the ethical issues raised by the use of young people is a pragmatic concession to (though not full agreement with) the view that there are potential problems raised by the differences between adults and children as research participants (although, again, I offer a more critical riposte to this problem below). Notably, beyond the consent phase, ethical codes suggest problems with more vulnerable participants feeling compelled, though unwilling, to continue involvement. In response to this problem, I asked the participants' teachers, to represent the young people's interests over my needs, and to convey these perspectives to me. As such, these individuals were not conceptualised as 'gatekeepers' represented in conventional methodological discourse: as barriers or facilitators for 'access' (though, of course, this was part of their role). Rather, they acted as advocates for participants, a casting that situated these individuals much more comfortably in terms of their day-to-day activities outside of the research.

**Beyond Deontological Ethics**

A number of 'procedural' aspects of the research therefore set out to address surface ethical issues, aspects that the discussion above begins to explore. Before becoming too involved with this line of discussion I would, however, like to refocus it with the assertion that the ethics of a study, this included, should never be, and are never, contained entirely within its procedural structure. Codes of ethical conduct, such as that explored so far are useful as starting points in the protection and safety of participants. The genuine 'ethics' of any research based solely on these principles can be questioned. Such approaches tend towards the externalisation (or at least the illusion of externalisation) of moral and political forces. The rights and wrongs of the research acquire a deontological status. They gain weight and importance not because of their impacts or efficacies, but because they are enshrined in a set of rules and regulations which govern practice. My position, in short, is that the ethics of a study stand and fall on the detail of its internal processes and external effects,
and on the integrity of its processes and claims, and not on the extent to which it is compliant with external evaluative structures.

Here, I aim to reposition the ethical locus of this research in its foundations, its rationale and by extension in my initial commitments and values. This shift involves two fundamental precepts: the necessity of a situated ethics of research, and that the researcher themselves must be included in this contextualisation (rather than treated as a neutral outside agent). What I propose here, then, is an anti-universalist model of research ethics based broadly on a principle of ‘practice-virtue’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 121). This shift is away from the application of general rules as the central ethical gravity, and towards the researcher’s ethical sensibilities and sensitivity to the specific interactions in the research event. A crude parallel might be drawn with the turn to reflexivity in qualitative analysis (Coffey, 1999; Hughes, 1999; Stronach, Garratt, Pearce, & Piper, 2007). In this, the ‘validity’ of a research is not ensured by the establishment of procedural ‘rules’, but from the organic and on-going ‘unpicking’ of biases and other such dynamics in the data. In a reflexive ethics (see also Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), then, impacts are not established in framing rules (though they are guided by particular commitments), but by a sensitivity to the moment of the research event. Viewed from this position, the deontological approach seems limited in its sensitivity and efficacy. Indeed, a mischievous outlook might lead one to question whether the ‘ethics’ is an appropriate moniker for this approach. This position holds intent and execution, rather than rule, as key measure, whereas the deontological approach frames the research not in terms of ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’, but in a litigation-legalistic discourse.

I would argue, then, that as foundation of pure ‘ethics’ the reflexive approach is at once firmer and more genuine than that offered by the deontological model. It is, however, important to recognise that these foundations in themselves, however firm, do not act as an inherent guarantee of ethical outcomes. The approach necessitates an on-going self-awareness and self-questioning. Further, it is inevitable that, in the complications of real-life contexts and the plethora of fast-paced decisions made within them, commitments will go awry. Given the importance of context and situation, making ‘right choices’ in the field is ambiguous, and the researcher is unlikely to have full-enough grasp of
all necessary information needed to underpin decisions. My defence, to these problems is that they are present too in non-reflexive approaches, though not rendered explicitly. Again, I would draw a parallel, here, in the ways in which ‘non-reflexive’ data analysis might merely obscure the problems that reflexivity highlights. These challenges do, however, introduce pause for thought – and introduce a necessity to continually and critically, interrogate the political and ethical impacts of the research event.

There is also, in this form of reflexive ethics, a risk of an inherent ‘flimsiness’: an intrinsic wooliness that can tend towards the suggestion that one cannot abstract and discuss ethical dimensions in research, as they are too situated and ethereal. Such a claim would clearly be incompatible with the need for ethical defensibility and accountability in research accounts. As such, it is necessary to produce a method through which to frame and thus evaluate the situated ethics of the research beyond the context of its execution, without falling back on external guidelines and rules (this would represent a regression to the deontological impulse). I would suggest that an interrogation of the basis of the study itself could generate such an alternative basis, exploring the values and impulses that motivate it in the first place (and by extension, the commitments of the researcher). From this point, it is possible to draw lines of implication for research practice, and frameworks through which to interrogate its ethical ‘integrity’. Feminist models of research ethics offer a framework that parallels this stance. In particular, there are echoes here of the critique of attempts at ‘value neutrality’ in research, and the call for a principle-led academia (Porter, 1999).

There is, of course, a risk here of an ontological and tautologous justification, which implies that the ethics of a piece of research are sound because it is coherent with its own internal principles. In order to address this, I offer a distinction. Here, we focus on the ethical justification of the processes of research as they stem from an underlying rationale. That rationale, though, must be accountable to an external audience, and a case made for its virtues and worthiness. In essence, the justification for its ‘contribution to knowledge’ is extended to make a case for its ethical existence. Having established this underlying rationale as ethical, coherence with them in the continuing research should have implications for its own ethical status.
Interrogating My Fundamental Foundations

The fundamental foundations of this research lay with feelings of affront: that the young people with whom I had daily contact were so systematically misrepresented, vilified even, in everyday society and culture. Alongside the other theoretical and philosophical interests set out at the beginning of the thesis, then, was a motivation to challenge this perception: to give young people a voice to express their moral and political capabilities and to express the complications they encountered in attempting to exist in the ideological context they inherit from adult society. This principled stance finds parallel with the procedural/legal establishment of the child’s right to expression and voice (as introduced previously in this chapter) but also with growing body of existing literature which asserts that the voice of young people must be involved in any theoretical understanding of youth (as in Christensen, 2000; Mayall, 2002; Pufall, 2004). It connects with broader senses that the omission of the voice of any demographic from academia is problematic, as it marginalises that group from its own theoretical telling. That telling will have a wider ramification and cultural resonances (evidenced, for instance, in the kinds of discourse which vilify youth, set out in the onset of the first chapter), and hence involvement in it is more than just narrow empowerment. To be cowed too far by ethical concerns in this context, and consequently restrict the space for voices to be heard, not only misses an opportunity, but might also be cast as a form of academic colonialism, and an abuse of privilege and power.

Importantly such fundamental principles also set out ethical foundations for the study that are distinct from the external standards established in regulatory frameworks. It is in reference to these principles that the internal ethics of the research can be unpicked and explored in detail that is more substantial. Most overwhelmingly, the initial commitments of the study imply a fundamental respect for the voice of participants, both in terms of nature and artefact. In reference to the first of these dimensions, the commitment implicates an ‘assumption of competence’ in young people, contrary to the deficit discourse which presents them incompetent and disengaged – and, indeed, dominant models of research ethics. Thus, I would suggest (following Morrow & Richards, 2007, p. 98) that the differences between adults and children as research participants are as much situational as they are dispositional. They are
borne of the way in which society and culture frame them as 'vulnerable'. Such a stance is self-fulfilling: autonomous exercise is a precondition of competence and, as such, it diminished by an over-protective stance that inhibits agency. This power-dynamic echoes that embedded both in the civil structures which render children vulnerable (Landown, 1994, p. 35) and also the conventionally unequal power dynamics between the researcher and researched. It is thus something that the procedure of this research should challenge.

The implication here is that young people must be treated as active and full participants in the research process, and not passive (mistrusted, even) subjects (James & Prout, 1997). Claims to such a stance are of course compromised at their first encounter by the necessity to comply with external codes of conduct – and the legal structures from which these codes derive – which insist that children may only assent for their participation, and that parental consent must also be sought (Broome & Richards, 1998). This kind of observation renders problematic the notion that research with young people can by underpinned by a principle of 'ethical symmetry' (Christensen & Prout, 2002), a beginning assumption that there is no difference between children and adults in the research process. Legal strictures and university regulations compel research to proceed in certain ways. More substantially, the cultural and social defaults that frame and contain the research problematise this ideal. A failure to recognise overtly these inequalities risks their emergence as passive shadows over the research. In Freire’s terms;

> Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.  
> (Freire, 1985, p. 222)

As such, regardless of how I, as the researcher, conceptualised participants’ inherent competence, the event of research was surrounded by expectations that framed our interactions, and which introduced particular power-dynamics. Such constructs arise not just from the researcher-researched binary, nor just from that of adult-child. Further layers of social convention, role and context also complicate them. That the interviews took place in classrooms was one of the most problematic dimensions. These contexts frame young people in a particular set of expectations. These, in turn, potentially render problematic the ethics of the research, particularly in that they present an environment
which expects young people to be submissive, and in which their free.choices are limited. I should also recognise, here, the reciprocal nature of this disempowerment: my prior status as a teacher also affords me with a feeling of control and power in this context.

The research proceeded, then, with an assumed principle of competence in its participants, and an internal sense of their capacity to consent. Equally, though, I maintained an overt awareness that external factors already compromised this commitment. Given this, the challenge became to somehow mitigate this compromise, and thus avoid becoming complicit in the marginalisation of participants. On one level, this mitigation occurs here: in the intentional downplaying of the importance of parental consent in this chapter. More importantly, though, was the effort dedicated to the process of interactions with participants. Thus, the situated-ness of the ethics underpinning the research was crucial. In particular, the beginning of interviews was an important phase. Beyond information giving on the purposes of the study, and prior to the main body of interview, I gave space for open discussion, led by participants to probe and question me on its nature. The function of this segment was to give participants a genuine opportunity to exercise informed consent, in a way that was active and negotiated, something that also disrupts the usually 'passive' outline-agreement structure of consent within the legalistic discourse of ethics.

**Implications for Analysis**

The second implication of a commitment to respect the voices of participants is in the obligations held towards the artefacts of these voices in the research. Most notably, it generates obligations towards interview transcripts and their use as data and as evidence in the research. Respect for the voices of participants, for instance, also implies that these voices are presented unadulterated, and that they are embedded in the context which produced them. As such, when data is presented here, it is given in as full an account as possible, to allow it, as much as possible, to speak for itself. This ethical commitment also has implications for the ways in which data is analysed. It suggests, for instance, that we take the words and meanings produced on 'face value' something that, particularly in work with children, is all too rare. I draw two further implications from this precept. Firstly, it suggests that whilst
reflexive analysis – the attempt to untangle biases and other such effects of the research process – is important one should, in equal measure, be cautious of underestimating participants' autonomy and capability for free expression. Again, the importance of situational ethics cannot be understated here: involvement with the participants in the moment of data generation enables sensitivity and rapport more conducive to this kind of expression.

The second implication for treatment of data is in how it is analysed, which here, draws heavily on a paradigm of critical discourse analysis. This approach has two tendencies that, in this respect, need tempering. The first is an impulse to overstate the degree to which discourse 'speaks through' participants, and thus to underestimate their status as active (competent) agents. This is a concern addressed primarily through the theoretical framework of the research, something that inevitably guides analysis. As established in much further detail over the forthcoming chapters, this attempts to balance socio-cultural context and individual autonomy, and thus responds directly to this ethical challenge. The second tendency is the microanalysis of data: subjecting transcripts to an unpicking at the finest grain of detail. Such an approach leaves an unpleasant taste. The hunt for implicit and unintended meanings is too close to an attempt to 'catch participants out'. Whilst the theoretical basis of this research is fundamentally discursive, and thus a focus on detail is unavoidable, I found a tentative solution in a particular methodological procedure. Analyses and interpretations were taken back to participants for open discussion, bringing with it the right of reply and an additional source of validation (Marvasti, 2004, p. 113). This process begins to address this tension, though it does not resolve it. Respondent validation, the mechanism on which the process ultimately rests, introduces new nuances and tensions (Silverman, 2006, p. 236). In this respect, this aspect of the research is still one with which I feel unease.

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5The framing of this as an ethical issue, rather than a methodological one which focuses on validity, is intentional. The implication is that the need for participants' free self-expression is a duty of the research and not just a theoretical requirement. Indeed, a non-commitment to this outcome would be actively unethical, as it would objectify participants by reducing them simply to sources of data.
The Challenge of the Teacher-Researcher

A final important factor framing the ethics of the research is significance of my identities and motivations. I am, primarily, an educator and this brings with it a set of ethical commitments and priorities. This aspect of self was crucial in the genesis of the research, and not one I would happily leave behind in becoming a ‘researcher’. The teacher-as-researcher dialectic is not inherently problematic, indeed, an array of literature suggests the two are intrinsically compatible (Ball, 1995; Carnine, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Nixon, 1987). In the context of the reflexive ethics of this research process, the combination did generate particular tensions and dilemmas. Most notably, what happens when a participant actively seeks understandings, or expresses an understanding that is misinformed or begs development?

The tension introduced here is present elsewhere in the literature, explored in the extent to which a researcher should intervene when working with children and young people. Conventionally, this focus has been on the ethical imperative of preventing physical or psycho-social damage in participants (Hatch, 1995; Keddie, 2000). Here, I extend this ethical imperative beyond the prevention of harm, and to the duty to promote good – and to a professional imperative to facilitate education where sought. A further parallel might be drawn here with feminist perspectives on research ethics, in particular the shift from a 'justice-voiced' code, to one oriented to a duty of care, and the pursuit of relationships that actively nurture those involved.

However, this professional impulse seems to lie in juxtaposition to good 'researcherly' practice. Here, there is a suggestion that one should avoid such leading interactions: that intervention should only ever aim to probe and expand. Reframing these contradictions makes a tentative resolution possible. One might question the assumed purposes of 'teacherly' and 'researcherly' interventions. On first impression, it might seem that the former aim at convergence of particular answers, whilst the latter aim at divergence and clarification. This binary opposition has, however, never been a marked feature of my professional practice, which has rested on an explicit investment in Freire's call that, 'my role as teacher is to assert the students’ right to

\[^{6}\text{Of course, whether the researcher conceptualises the work as an excavational process (uncovering truth) or a generational one modulates this assertion.}\]
compare, to choose, to rupture, to decide' (Freire, 1998, p. 48). Viewed through this lens, the conflicting impulses of teacher and researcher can begin to be reconciled. If the forms of teacherly intervention seek to 'open up' discussion, then they can be treated as another facet of stimulus in the research. Indeed, they form a facet which themselves beg study, not least in the dynamics by which 'official' knowledges interface with the interpersonal dynamics of participants. Crucial again in realising this is the situational, reflexive ethics at the core of the research. It through this that inventions are managed in a way which remain true to my core beliefs, whilst respecting the capabilities of participants and preserving the integrity of data.

Exploration of the Procedure

In this chapter, I have offered a sense of the procedure of this research, its philosophical framings and the dynamics these implicate. Having established this grounding, it is now possible to offer some more focused exploration of the specifics of the research process, and the rationale and tensions that underpinned its design. In particular, a number of features draw basis from the theoretical basis and intentions of the study: notably, the selection of participants, and the nature of 'paired' and stimulus-driven interviews. I would note that whilst the purpose of this section is to begin to identify tensions, recognise limitations and provide a sense of rationale, it only does so in an initial way. I provide fuller exploration of how methodology might inhabit substantive conclusions throughout the thesis.

The Participants

As noted in the outline of the procedure of this research, in gaining access to participants, I made an active attempt to seek out diversity, in both personal characteristics (gender, ethnicity, age, social class, etc.) and in their institutional and geographic contexts (with participants from comprehensive and single-faith schools, across inner city, suburban and semi-rural settings). The intent in the selection of participants was not, however, to build a 'representative sample'. The restricted number of cases in the study, a product of the practical constraints of an interview-based procedure, would make such an aim futile. Further to this, however, the theoretical commitments of the research preclude such intent. A phenomenological and ideographic focus on
individual meanings and subjective experiences is incompatible with senses of representativeness and generalisation. As is emerging in my treatment so far, the intent here is to explore how the subjectivity in personal experience modulates generalised descriptions of contexts. A re-generalisation across populations would therefore be illogical. Rather, the seeking of diverse participants sought to trouble a normative impulse in understanding young people's moral and ideological being. In this sense, seeking divergent perspectives and worldviews, and exposing a diversity of understandings and constructions, is crucial in actively avoiding a sense that the experience of young people is homogenous.

There is, here, a risk in the conjunction of a search for diverse understandings, and a sample comprising diverse characteristics: the impulse to author a causal connection between the two. There is, for instance, a temptation to suggest that a particular form of construction is a product of the individual’s socio-economic status or gender. My position on this is complicated. On one hand, I have attempted to reign in such assumptions, as the sample and design here are not conducive to causal 'proofs', whilst the ideographic and divergent nature of the methodology would suggest this to be a grand oversimplification. Equally, though, it would seem naive to sideline these influences completely. Demographic characteristics implicate a particular set of physical and cultural localities and implicate subtle variations in discursive currents and pressures. In turn, these variations form part of the universe of meaning on which individuals draw in constructing sense in the world, and thus their engagements within these interviews. Hence, they are part of the socio-cultural context that is fundamental to Critical Discourse Analysis. Whilst, then, it may be erroneous to conclude that a person reacts to an issue in a particular way because of their gender, it might certainly be the case that this gender situates them within a set of culturally-constituted discourses which specifically frame their experience and response.

Viewed in this way, it is possible to give credence to participants' social and demographic characteristics without reifying or essentialising them. We can explore the way in which these factors might frame them in particular discourses, and avail (or prohibit) access to particular cultural resources in constructing ideological positions. In this respect, then, I do not treat the
demographics of participants as causal variables, but as contextualising factors alongside the many other complicated dimensions that make up their ideological existence. Such an approach maintains congruence with both the methodological and the theoretical bases of the study. The latter of these will become apparent over the course of the next two movements. However, in respect to the former, this dynamic is simply an extension of the exploration of how contextual factors are subjectively experienced (see page 41).

Beyond the philosophical framings of the participants on which the study focused, there remain systematic features that should be rendered apparent at this point. Significantly, the process of selection sought out ‘interesting’ individuals. On one hand, such a strategy is useful in avoiding the tendency for schools to push forward their most ‘able’ students for participation in research – and in facilitating the emergence of counter-perspectives and observations disruptive to grand theory. However, it is also a bias against which the reader should consider the research data and analysis. It would be reasonable to suggest, for instance, that such a strategy might result in data that overstates the complexity of moral engagements by focusing on their diversity. Such a position is, of course, legitimate – though here, I offer two responses. Firstly, the default representation of youth understates this complexity. As such, what I present here is a form of balance to this account. Secondly, in line with the ideographic underpinnings of the research, difference is an inherent feature of all groups of participants. A focus on features such as ethnicity and locality is one way of bringing this to the surface, but it is misplaced to suggest that this ‘interesting’ diversity would not be present otherwise.

All of the participants in the study were, of course, young people between the ages of 11 and 17, a systematic bias that merits further justification. On one level, I gave a core rationale for the decision in the introduction to this work (see page 13): in my prior experience as a secondary school teacher, and in my reaction to the misrepresentation of young people in popular culture. The decision then, was in part practical and in part political, but it was also fundamentally theoretical. In this respect, the selection of young people represents a belief that there is something particular about young people when considering the notion of ideological functioning which merits specific focus and exploration. On one hand, it is that they are ‘emergent’ ideological actors.
This is not, of course, to imply that any of us are 'completed' ideological beings, for whom our mechanisms of engagement with the world are fixed and immutable. Indeed, the theoretical framework that is established in the coming chapters maintains that such functioning is always mediated by context and, viewed through this frame, is always an on-going process of becoming and re-becoming on a moment-by-moment basis. For young people, though, the foundations of these becomings, though they may still be embedded in dogmatic structures, are less established. Thus, these individuals are beginning to establish frameworks and practices through which to engage with the more on-going process of ideological becoming.

As established in the introduction to this thesis, it is also pertinent that young people are engaged in a process of nascent ideological becoming in a context of unprecedented complexity. As explored further in movement two, they are faced with experiences and environments which make increasingly multiple moral demands whilst, at the same time, the resources available to inform 'certain' action are eroded. In summary, then, my motivation for a focus on young people is in part situated in what it 'is' to be a young person and, in part, fixed in the nature of the context within which these individuals exist.

**Interviews as the Study of Ideological Engagement**

The choice of interviews as a primary research method emerged from the study’s methodological basis (as explored previously). The use of this method allowed for the generation of deep and meaning-rich data, and as such a better understanding of participants’ perspectives and universes of existence. The rationale acquires additional resonance when set against the study's theoretical framework. This maintains (as will become apparent through the thesis) that an understanding of moral/ideological functioning necessitates an appreciation of how the individual interacts with their discursive milieu, as it is within this context that ideological being occurs. Thus, it is only through an exploration of participants ‘talk’ that we can begin to unpick these processes. As they otherwise occur, such ideological engagements are internal phenomena, and therefore impossible to study directly.

It is important to clarify, here, that the intended implication is not that interviews somehow render observable a set of internal processes. To make
this form of assumption would be to misrepresent interviews as an excavative event (Mason, 2002), rather than a generative one. The data that I present here is and should be treated as a product of a research process. The design principles that underpin that process shape data and the actual events of interviewing contextualise it. It is consequently unwise to separate out the observations and findings given here from the context under which they were produced. This introduces some important limitations in regards to the extent to which findings and observations can be generalised. Whilst acknowledging this limitation, I would maintain that the data remains both vital and interesting. Indeed the context of production provides part of the vitality of the data. In short: the nature of small-group interaction with an engaged adult offers potential insights into pedagogic processes. It is, however, worth exploring some of the specific features and characteristics of the interview process, their potential impacts and the rationale for their inclusion in reference to the theoretical basis of the study.

Most fundamentally, we should recognise here that there are qualitative differences between the ideological engagements found in interviews, and those that occur in the ecology of everyday life. Most obviously, discussion with a researcher produced the engagements here. They are therefore perhaps both more 'considered' and more 'performed' than perhaps they might be elsewhere. This tension is, in effect, an extension of a more fundamental theoretical debate on the nature of 'morality', and the methodological responses in studying it. Existing literature as a debate over whether such phenomena are intuitive or deliberate echoes this tension:

Is moral action-cognition necessarily reflective, explicit and slow or can it be reflexive, implicit and fast? On one hand, the deliberative position ... requires the individual to engage in, and be aware of ... moral processing ... The intuitive account, in contrasts requires a modicum of moral cognition but ... removes the conscious from the story of moral functioning.

(Primer & Walker, 2008, p. 339)

In part, this debate revolves around how the researcher conceptualises what it is to do 'moral'. This is something on which I have already touched in the rationale to the research (in the distinctions which led me to focus on ideological being on page 20) and to which I will return in chapters which
follow as I explore the theoretical framework of the research. For now, though, it is important to recognise how performance, and the act of deliberation, might contort the responses here.

**Interpersonal Dynamics**

In considering the dynamics of data-generation, we should also note that each session occurred as a paired interview, with each participant interviewed alongside a peer with whom they felt comfortable (a friend). My rationale for this approach stemmed equally from practical, methodological, ethical and theoretical dimensions. Practically, it facilitated easier access to participants, and an approach that allowed interviews to commence more efficiently: the existing rapport between participants thus took some of the pressure from me as interviewer to establish a socially comfortable atmosphere. On a methodological level, the use of group interviews reduced the need for me to 'lead' discussions: the more informal, conversational feel of the sessions meant that they were sustained much more easily. The interactional nature of the paired interview also enabled the production of richer and more detailed data. Participants were able to 'bounce off' one another picking up details from their peers' contributions, reacting to and elaborating on them to produce a 'synergistic effect' (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 16). This facet of 'group' interviewing has drawn a claim that they represent a more 'naturalistic' form of data generation than conventional one-to-one-interviews (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 180). There are aspects of truth to such a claim: that the participants 'led' the conversation and that they felt more comfortable than would otherwise be the case certainly brings important strengths to the method in terms of validity. It is, however, always important to be mindful that data generation is a created event, and thus to curtail claims to its 'naturalism'.

The use of paired interviews also drew rationale from the ethical precepts of the research. Ensuring that young people outnumbered adults was an active attempt to 'even the odds' and mitigate power inequalities underlying the research. Doing so creates more space for the participants to make their voices heard, with consequent benefits for the validity of the research. The use of focus groups in this manner is well noted in feminist methodology (e.g. Finch, 1984). It is, though, easy to overstate the impact of these kinds of 'procedural' attempts to inoculate research and, as I suggest in the ethics segment of this
chapter (page 43) it remains important to constantly interrogate the impacts of social power wielded in assuming the mantle of the researcher.

Finally, as the theoretical framework of the study developed, the methodological decision to interview in pairs drew a further level of rationale. The framework suggests a dual focus on the individual and their social context on two levels. Firstly, it implicates a broad context: the ways in which discourses in society's culture frame participants' constructions. In recognising the 'big picture' it is, however, easy to overlook the importance of the middle-range context. An active and vibrant social sphere surrounds young people, not least that consisting of their peers. It would be remiss to ignore this in trying to understand the social context of their ideological functioning. Of course, it would be foolish to assert that the use of paired interviews recreates this middle-range social context in anything but the most rudimentary of ways. The approach does, though, begin to encapsulate a social dynamic and, as a result, can make (albeit rudimentary) allusions to the ways in which ideological functioning is not just an individual or societal accomplishment, but also a communal one.

There is, then, a strong methodological and theoretical rationale in the use of paired interviews in the study. It is also important, however, to recognise the many pitfalls inherent to the approach. Paradoxically, these often stem directly from features that are also the approach’s strengths. Most notably, that an interpersonal dynamic underpins paired interviews raises issues. Social pressures may, for instance, prompt or inhibit responses on the part of participants (though this, in itself, implies that our ‘natural’ state is one of free-action, independent from context and others). Similarly, the dynamic can create and ‘carry’ particular lines of discussion, giving it a sense of importance in transcripts that may not correspond with the importance attached by participants outside of the interview event. It may also be that some participants are less vocal than others are, as was certainly the case in most of the interviews conducted for this study, and the paired dynamic could compound this.

One might question validity in relation to each of these issues, though they may be voiced equally as ethical concerns. Each problematises the right of
participants to have their voice, and their perspective, heard. The response to each is the need for careful interview practice. It calls for reflexivity in the moment of research, and a thoughtful response to the problem of 'intervention' on the part of the researcher. In the case of 'quiet' participants, for instance, the response taken here was a minimal use of targeted prompts, in an attempt to reduce performance pressure, but the careful encouragement of any contributions that were made or attempted. The challenge of 'dominant' and 'quiet' participants also has implications for analysis. In each interview, the less vocal participants did make interesting and relevant contributions and there is, it seems to me, therefore an ethical imperative to seek out and pay attention to these contributions, and not to let these participants' voices become 'drowned out'.

It is also important to recognise, in considering this aspect of the research event, that I too was involved in the process and was therefore a contributor to its dynamic. Layers of social convention and expectation in this case, intensified this well-recognised influence. The interviews occurred in classrooms, with participants who were also students, and an interviewer who was also a teacher. There is, then, a risk of reproducing interactions that are rooted in part in the roles that one might expect in these particular contexts. I recognise as these processes, and their impacts, as methodological flaws. Equally, however, I also hold them up as generators of insight, particularly in the exploration of the pedagogic implications of the research given in the final chapter of the thesis. Beyond a retrospective attempt to unpick the teacher-student interaction, I also attempted to minimise this dynamic wherever possible through the setup and execution of the interview. As such, my first name was intentionally used, and clothing worn which, whilst appropriate to a school setting, avoided marking prestige (as, for instance, a suit might have done). There was also an important attempt to ensure that participants 'owned' the research event in as far as possible, and to disrupt my 'teacherly' leading of the process. As outlined in the ethics section, a key process in this was to disrupt the normal 'consent-gaining' phase of the interview by encouraging participants to probe and critique its intents and purposes. Here is one typical example of this process:
Interview 5

Mark  Ok, so a little bit about this … thing that I’m doing. I’m interested in how you engage with big moral and political issues … part of it is I hear people whinge about ‘the young people today’

Aylish  Yeah … that’s dead annoying

Mark  I thought so … cos when I work with people … like you … I don’t think they’re like … politically disinterested, or morally apathetic

Gemma  What’s apathetic?

Aylish  It’s like when you don’t care … I think we care about stuff … about the environment and that

Mark  So I’ve decided to get people like you together in a room and to talk about these kinds of issues, and show people how you actually talk about them.

Aylish  Sure … like … um … a focus group?

Mark  Yeak, you know about them?

Aylish  We done them in sociology

Mark  Well that’s useful … I think … perhaps, if you know about some of the problems that researchers face … in their data and that … you can keep an eye on how these things are unfolding … maybe offer some constructive criticism of the process

Gemma  Ooh, like you’ll have to avoid leading questions and that …

It is never possible to fully equal out power relations in the research process. As such, I do not intend to imply that the strategies here absolve the research of the problem of ‘teacherly’ and ‘studently’ interactions. Equally, though, it represents at least an attempt to disrupt the dynamic, and to somewhat flatten the power inequalities it implies. As such, whilst it far from removes the problem, it at least partially mitigates it.

Use of Stimuli

The pairing of participants in interviews is, therefore, one facet that should be considered in exploring the methodological design of this research. An equally important consideration relates to the way in which stimuli images were used to provoke conversation. In itself, this generates two interrelated layers of complication. The first is the forced and artificial nature of such an approach, whilst the second relates to the tensions involved in selecting and presenting a particular medium of stimulus and the ways in which they may, in themselves, produce particular realities which frame the interview process.
In relation to the first of these complications, the engagements produced were, undeniably, artificial. Patently, they were an artefact of the interview process and not one of naturalistic ideological engagement (a theme also discussed earlier). Whilst it is important to acknowledge that this introduces caveats in terms of the form of conclusion which may be drawn (caveats which I will consider shortly), I feel that the choice of approach is ultimately defensible. Most fundamentally, I would argue that whilst these engagements were artificial they were still genuine. In response to the stimuli, participants are involved in processes of sense-making, the construction of realities and the positioning of selves. In other words, they are involved in just the processes with which this study is concerned. I would also add to this a further layer. That the data generated is a product of ‘forced encounters’ also gives it a quality that parallels ‘everyday’ engagements with the kinds of global issue at the heart of this study. These too are, arguably, often intrusions into everyday experiences in the form, for instance, of media reportage.

As such, there is a sense of face validity to the process, though its ecological validity is more problematic. There are qualitative differences between forced moral encounters in interview settings, and those experienced in day-to-day life. Most notably, outside of an interview context, the individual has the capability to minimize their engagement with an encounter, or to engineer active disengagement. When, for instance, we are confronted by imagery in television news, we have the option to ‘turn off’ or ‘tune out’. Even in a context such as the classroom, where compliance with a particular engagement seems more rigidly enforced, students have myriad strategies to disengage or cast as irrelevant. In an interview, however, the pressures of social convention force the individual to become a ‘participant’, to be active in both the discussion and the engagement. As such, there was a need for reflexive and careful analysis of interview data, to maintain awareness of this framing factor. This was matched with a necessity to return to participants in order to start to unpick the differences between these encounters and those outside of interview contexts.

A further thread of rationale for this methodological approach is that it offered a least-worst alternative. Other interviewing strategies, such as direct questioning, produced a higher sense of contrivance. They raised difficulties in not leading participants into a performance of a perceived ‘right’ moral stance.
In the chosen approach, the image, rather than the encounter, becomes the centre of discussion, reducing (though not removing) some of the pressure on participants to produce a given answer. The engagement itself also becomes ‘first hand’, and not a telling of experiences and recalls. Finally, image-based elicitation reduced the need for me to cue participants (though one must be mindful to the cues contained within images themselves), and its ‘open artificiality’ made the untangling of biases through reflexive analysis simpler. 

Whilst the interview event was, of course, still a dynamic and organic process, some of its nuances and pressures were contained in a standardized instrument. As such, analysis of this instrument, and the ways in which it ‘lived’ in the interview event, provided a coherent ‘starting point’ through which to unpick the dynamics of the interview.

That the interviews drew on stimuli therefore introduces inherent methodological tensions and complications. The analysis must, however, dig deeper: these stimuli were not just ‘stimuli’, not just amorphous ‘starting points’ through which to facilitate the generation of discourse from participants. To take this stance is to mistakenly treat these features of the methodology as neutral; as ‘functional projective surfaces for the production of data’ (Torronen, 2002, p. 344). Rather, the photos themselves embody assumptions, in part because they have been selected as part of the research design process, and in part because they exist in and of culture and are therefore constituted of its constructions and discourses.

There is a conventional methodological tension in interviews that the framing of questions can shape responses (Hatch, 2002, p. 106; Moston, 1987) sometimes in sophisticated ways (through intonation, body language, etc.). In some ways, the complication here is an extension of this issue. It is easy, though, to assume a level of neutrality in interview stimuli that take the form of photographs, as in this research. We have a cultural disposition to treat such imagery as fact; ‘a photograph – any photograph – seems to have a more innocent, and therefore more accurate, relation to visible reality than do other mimetic objects’ (Sontag, 1979, p. 5). In an image, though, there is as much authorship as any written text. It is therefore important to retain a sense that the photographs used here as stimuli are saturated with purposes and meanings. They have been taken, and released into the public domain for
particular reasons, whilst their composition draws on subtle, and socially constituted, grammars (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), in order to present a preferred reading. The production of an image does not just present a reality, it actively constructs one through processes which are both obvious (computer manipulation) and latent (through framing and composition). This notion demands that analysis pays careful attention to the meanings embodied in the images used, and the dynamics of these meanings in the resultant data. Indeed, analysis in this case focused on what participants ‘did’ with the images presented, and this pivoted as much on how they drew on meanings contained within it, as it did the processes of imposing sense from external sources.

Any interview, of course, needs some form of catalyst and framing device. Thus, the justification for the use of images here is partly pragmatic. As I suggest above, initial methodological pilots produced an interview event that felt too contrived or awkwardly unfocused. Part of this piloting involved various strategies for the selection and presentation of stimulus images, in an attempt to minimize the extent to which participants were ‘locked in’ to particular readings or discursive realities. What ultimately emerged from this process though, was a sense of futility: all images present particular realities, some more subtle, but still pervasive. Ultimately, then, that stimulus imagery will embody particular realities is not a danger, but an unavoidable truth. I would suggest, however, that a risk lies in not interrogating the framing nature of those stimuli, and thus when the discursive contours of the photographs are too subtle to easily unpick their influences in analysis. I therefore made a decision to actively choose loaded stimulus images which represented dominant presentations of global issues in popular culture (the stranded polar bear, child soldier or third world farmer, for instance). Doing so would not only support the process of analysis, but would also enhance the sense of face validity introduced above. Thus, the instrumentation supported the parallel I suggest above, that encounters with global contexts inside and outside of interviews have ‘forced’ qualities.

In confronting the extent to which participants might be ‘led’ by the stimulus imagery it is also relevant to return to the ethical imperatives set out in the opening section of this thesis. In particular, an over-concern that participants might be ‘led’ contravenes the need to assume competence. To an extent, this
commitment also influences my perspective on this particular issue. Support for this position is also evident in some of the consequent data. In particular, there were numerous examples of the ‘readings’ of the stimulus data which ran contrary to the dominant discourse embodied with them. In other words, participants actively ‘rejected’ the leading message of the image in favour of their own alternative constructions (see page 257 for a particularly interesting example). From this, I make two methodological assertions. Firstly, whilst the instrumentation used to generate data may well embody particular preferred discourses, both the participants’ agency and their broader emersion in counter-discourses mediate this. Secondly, the response to the images (even when participants ‘buy in to’ its preferred reading) is one of active sense-construction from available cues, and not one of unthinking inhabitation. In short, that the engagements are produced in response to these loaded images are sophisticated and in themselves interesting and worthy of study.

To an extent, the practical selection of photographs was haphazard, with the accompanying justification that ‘ease of availability’ of an image was probably indicative of its saturation in culture. There was no attempt to ‘sample’ this discourse and, as such, I cannot claim that the issues of focus are in any way representative. Neither, however, do I strongly recognise the importance of this, as the justification of the images inclusion is ultimately teleological. There was, however, a loose underlying organizing principle that arranged the images around the three themes of ‘poverty and inequality’, ‘security and conflict’ and ‘environment’. My key intent in arriving at these points was to add some range to the images, and influenced by the dominance of these as structuring devices in pedagogic treatments of education for sustainable development and citizenship.

There are also particular tensions surrounding the use of any stimuli in research on moral being. In providing images in this way, we presuppose that the contexts and circumstances they represent should be considered by participants as moral in nature, what Frimer and Walker (2008) call a third person construction of morality. The problem here, of course, is that even if there is a tight correspondence between what participants say in response to these stimuli and their existence outside interviews, they may not necessarily attach any moral relevance to what they have said. To contextualize in the
frame of this study, it is entirely reasonable and legitimate that a person might buy a fair-trade chocolate bar for reasons of fashion or taste – they do not necessarily need to invest moral purpose in the action. There is, of course, an alternative methodological approach: one might reject ‘stimuli’ and instead ask participants to recall examples of moral activities. Such an approach does not pre-suppose a definition of morality, but it introduces problems of its own. For instance, it must first overcome barriers of memory or social desirability. Even then, however, it is theoretically problematic, as it implies that an action can only be counted as moral if the actor explicitly considers it as such (Frimer & Walker, 2008, p. 336). To extend the example above, one might argue that the individual buying the fair-trade chocolate bar has engaged in an activity with moral implications, even if they do not explicitly reference it as such.

There is, then, a methodological tension in presupposing those activities and experiences that should be classed as a moral encounter, but this problem extends further. Following Frimer and Walker (2008) and Sher (1997), I recognise here that any study of morality also tends to make assumptions about the processes which constitute moral engagement. In doing so, the study itself buys into a particular discourse of morality, for instance one focused on reasoning, justice or autonomous thought (Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1965; Rawls, 2005), or on the importance of empathy and care (Gilligan, 1984). By extension, we implicitly define not only a focus of moral engagement, but also a set of tools through which ‘right responses’ should be produced (and possibly, even, what those responses should be). For me, what all of this implies is the need for careful interrogation of which non-neutral set of values are being appropriated in the analysis at any given time, an extension of the reflexive processes which are emphasized throughout this chapter. In order words, to ask: what frameworks am I using which lead me to read this as a form of engagement?

The decision to use a broad definition of morality in this research, and to talk rather of ideological, rather than ‘moral’ engagements, was in part rooted in this problem. To talk of ‘morality’ implies a division between right and wrong, and thus a binary decision. The notion of ideological engagement, by contrast, gives more scope for ambiguity, both in the position taking of the participants, and in respect of the context with which they are engaging (though it is, of
course, still privileging engagement over non-engagement). Analysis then proceeds to explore how participants construct sense to facilitate that engagement leaving open the space for them to impose particular moral frameworks (justice, care, etc.), rather than presupposing a particular logic as constituting morality.

The reader should therefore view the engagements produced through this empirical work as just that: as engagements created by a research project. They may be forced and artificial, framed by the instrumentation used to provoke them. There may be a lack of correspondence between reasoning within them and outside action. However, they are still engagements, and we have a duty to presume the competence of those individuals who produce them. The data has a kind of external validity constituted by its qualities, if not its specifics. Indeed, it might even be argued that some of the ‘problematic’ qualities of these engagements (that they are forced and provoked, and socially mediated, for instance) gives them parallel with some of the ways in which we, and the participants, find ourselves engaging with global issues in non-interview contexts.

**Final Comments**

In this chapter, then, I have set out the key processes that have generated the remaining chapters of this thesis, its substantive contributions. In doing so, I have begun to outline not only the rationale underpinning the research design, but also the tensions inherent to it. Of course, discussions of these tensions are not confined only to this chapter; such dynamics also cast a shadow over the substantive observations that they produce. As such, I will return to a discussion of methodology throughout the remaining chapters.

In the intermediate chapters, though, I begin the substantive exploration of this thesis. It begins, in the next movement with an exploration of the moral and ideological challenges that are levelled at the individual by the contemporary context, and at the theoretical frameworks that exist to explain their moral existence. Movement three attempts a reconstruction of these theories in order to better accommodate the complex realities faced by individuals. All of these chapters, however, draw on the methodological spine that has been set out here in this chapter. As such, they are based on a synthesis of ideas fed from the dialectic between different bodies of theory, and between that theory and experiences of participants as embodied in the study’s empirical work.
Movement Two

Problematisation
Introducing the Movement

As established in the opening chapter to this thesis, one of my core precepts in this research is the notion that ideological becoming in the contemporary world is a complicated affair. By extension, I maintain that the apparent moral and political apathy of young people should be dislocated from senses of deficit. Rather, we should understand it instead in relation to a process of orientation within this complication. Thus, this chapter begins a movement which attempts to tolerate, and in doing so encapsulate, a sense of this complexity. In doing so, I intend to highlight some of the key dynamics of this complication, borne of social, historical, political and economic processes. I intend to arrive at a sense of ‘problematisation’: in the sense of both individual experience, and those theories (of ‘moral development’) which attempt to explain their responses to experience. As set out in the previous chapter, interview data plays an active role in this process. Through this, I intend to tie together some of the abstract macro-processes set out in the literature, and the moral conundrums they present, with concrete lived experience. The use of data is therefore more than illustrative. Rather, the empirical work intends to offer nuance too to the abstract theoretical treatment.

The first two chapters of the movement are concerned with the nature of shifts in the macro-level of context over the past fifty years, and the dialectic between this and experience at the level of the individuals in the study. Underpinning this discussion is the sense that these focal aspects of ‘context’ have been complicated by the dual, and interrelated, processes of globalisation (this chapter) and what, according to stance, is variously referred to as ‘postmodernity’, ‘late/high/fluid modernity’ or post-industry (I revisit the significance of these distinctions in the opening to chapter four). I take as a starting point Zygmunt Bauman’s succinct observation that these processes combine to create ‘a mismatch of supply and demand’ (Bauman, 1993, p. 17): a condition in which individual experience is subject to multiple and increasing moral demands, and to a steadily decreasing sense of certainty over how to act in resp

7 It may serve, here, to remind the reader that I have displaced notions of ‘moral functioning’ with a broader sense of ‘ideological becoming’. Rationale for this discursive shift is given in more detail on page 20.
onse. These contexts, I contend, have complex ramifications for both the cognitive and emotive contexts of ideological being.

In exploring these two aspects of context, I draw out a number of dimensions of complication. My initial consideration focuses on the ‘realities’ from which demands against the individual are generated, and against which engagements are forged. I suggest here that changes in material, social and political conditions that constitute these realities introduce multiplicity and ambiguity into ideological engagements. The second point of focus, in the chapter that follows, is with the resources available to the individual in constructing an ideological position/engagement in response to these demands, and an uneasy collocation of ‘oversupply’ of meanings, and paucity of certainties. Finally, I consider changing natures of self and community within these broader contexts, and the interrelationships between identity, community, context and ideology.

The opening two chapters of the movement therefore establish a sense of the ways in which ‘context’ problematises the ideological being of the individual, in both abstract terms, and in the actual experience of participants. In the final chapter, I shift my attention instead to the conventional theoretical tools used to understand and explain ‘moral development’. Here, I extend notions of problematisation deriving from shifting contexts. I suggest that such shifts pose challenges not just to individuals, but also to the theories which attempt to describe how they respond to them. In this chapter, the key dialectic is between the first segment of problematisation (which interacts empirical data with a set of macro-theories), and a distinct body of more psychologically focused ideas.
Chapter Three

Globalisation

Situating Globalisation

In this chapter, my focus is with one particular transformative process in the context of individual existence: on globalisation, with an accompanying assertion that the process is changing and reshaping the context against which engagements occur. Before continuing, it is worth emphasizing two points of recognition. The first is that in discussing the transformative effects of globalisation, it is possible to appear to overstate the extent of both its impact and recency, points over which there is well-documented debate. Held et. al. (1999) identifies three distinct theoretical perspectives in this debate. The Sceptics maintain that globalisation is simply a manifestation of an age-old process; the Hyperglobalisers assert that it is an entirely new process, radically changing human consciousness and political, social and economic realities; whilst the Transformationalists argue that whilst globalisation is not new its current incarnation is distinct, and its impacts are notable.

In producing this work, I situate myself towards the latter of these positions. I recognise, then, that the process of intensification in the interrelationships between regions of the world, and between nations, localities and individuals within them is one with historical precedent. Indeed, the current era is, according to Robertson (2003), the third historic ‘wave’ of globalisation. At the same time, however, I maintain that whilst the process of increasing connectivity is as old as human society globalisation, as it has occurred through the past half-century, is unprecedented in both its speed and magnitude (a position which echoes that of Giddens, 1991; Omae, 1999; Scholte, 1993). Social, cultural and economic activity is increasingly diffused and transnational, creating features and outcomes not easily mapped using conventional geographic frames of reference. To this end, Appadurai (1996) identifies a number of ‘scapes’ through which the dynamics of a globalised world might be better understood, some conventionally geographic (the land-scape), others economic (finance-scapes), technological (media-scapes, techno-scapes) or embedded in human capital (ideo-scapes and ethno-scapes). The current wave
of globalisation is also significant in its impact on popular consciousness and, as such, it is notable not only because of the magnitude of inter-national connectivity, but also in the awareness of these connections at the level of individuals (Giddens, 1991).

The second clarification to make here is that globalisation, and the kinds of engagement it begs, represent just one aspect of young people’s broader existence. A vast array of more immediate contexts surrounds the participants of this study, as is the case for all individuals, and these frame their moral and ideological existence in important ways. Elsewhere in the literature, attention has been given to these aspects of life, notably in the moral dimensions of children’s friendships (Bigelow & La Gaipa, 1980; Cutting, Demetriou, & Dunn, 2000; Nilan, 1991), in their play (Dunn & Hughes, 2001; Nucci & Nucci, 1982), together with other focal institutions such as the family (McCarthy, Edwards, & Gillies, 2000; Powers, 1988; L. J. Walker & Taylor, 1991) and school (Noblit, 1996; Thornberg, 2007).

In expressing an interest in globalisation in this research, and in asserting that this focus is of importance, it is not my intent to suggest that these immediate contexts are less important, or even that the globalised landscape approximates the importance of these immediate ones. Despite this, I maintain that it is crucial to form a better understanding of how young people (indeed, people in general) engage with issues generated by globalisation. Justification of this importance is in part intrinsic: civil society is increasingly presented with challenges and problems which can only be resolved with the engagement of individuals with global contexts (Archibugi, 1998; Held et al., 1999; Held, 2003; Orr, 1993; Osler & Starkey, 2003). Given this imperative, an understanding of how young people engage, at a personal level, with macro issues such as environment, inequality, conflict and insecurity is of fundamental importance.

One strand of rationale of focusing on these engagements, then, relates to their increasing importance for global society. Equally, though, I draw support for the focus from the similarly increasing importance of these issues in the lived experience of individuals. In doing so, this thesis stands in opposition to a body of theory which asserts the impossibility of individual ethical operation at a global level (e.g. Williams, 2008), and further that the experiential domain of
children is intrinsically proximate. Rather, following Horschelmann (2008), I maintain that young people will inevitably engage with the global, and that they increasingly perceive ‘far’ as relevant in their realm of experience. Thus, whilst much of this chapter dwells on the problematics of engaging with this global context, what will emerge throughout is a sense that attempts to foster such engagement are plentiful. I would therefore contend that the degree of separation between immediate and global contexts is sometimes overstated. The former after all is embedded in, and not distinct from, the latter. Further, the conscientising effects of the current wave of globalisation increase the permeability of the boundaries between personal and global. In particular, as popular media representations of ‘the global’ become more pervasive and such issues gain purchase in school curricula, the prevalence of the global stage in everyday experience is heightened and the permeability of the boundaries between personal and global increases.

In this vein, the literature documents the increasing awareness of ‘the global’ amongst young people, and an increasing sophistication of knowledge around the processes involved in such issues, together with the capacity to author political positions in relation to them (Holden, 2006; Oscarsson, 1995). These are observations that are also ever-present in the responses given by participants in this study. What they also express, though, is a sense that this awareness is not just an accumulation of intellectual capital, which is deployed in formal settings (such as the classroom or research even). Rather, there is also a sense by which they intrude into young people’s more immediate contextual experience:

**Interview 5**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aylish</td>
<td>We watched about it [the execution of Saddam Hussein] on the telly and … like … we were all shocked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemma</td>
<td>We were all talking about it the next day … like … I think capital punishment is right, but /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylish</td>
<td>I don’t – we’re always having debates about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Really? So are these things that you talk about amongst your friends..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylish</td>
<td>Um … yes and no … I mean, we’re not, like always talking about it – but if we see something on the news that’s, like, dramatic or something, then we’ll all be talking about it before lessons in the morning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is here a sense, albeit in a limited way, of issues drawn from ‘the global’ permeating the cultural capital of friendship groups. The negotiation of ideological positions against these global contexts is tied (in soft and loose ways) to the dynamics of friendships and peer groups. Of course, one should recognise the important caveats to this claim: most notably that these negotiations are a facet of these friendship dynamics, and not their glue.

The suggestion so far, then, is that globalisation has a transformational impact on a macro level, and that these transformations of economies, societies, cultures and politics, are resonant at the level of the individual (including young people). These resonances may be nascent and subtle, but they still signal intrusions of the global into the immediate in increasingly pervasive ways. In turn, these intrusions bring with them challenges in existing as an ideological being. There is a sense that there is something fundamentally different about these forms of engagement; that immediate context does not generate them instils an ambiguity that marks them as different to other ideological and moral demands. In part, this shift has been quantitative, in the numbers of everyday activities invested with political dimensions, and in the dimensions within each of these activities. Alongside these quantitative ‘increases’ in moral demand, though, is qualitative shift in their nature. Thus, individuals are presented with an ideological landscape which confounds the imagination and our ‘powers of perception’ (Bauman, 2001), with contexts which lead conventional modes of moral reason and practice, which are attuned to more proximate experiences, to falter and fail. It is this sense with which the remaining substance of this chapter grapples, in attempt to demonstrate the challenges which globalisation poses both to ‘moral cognition’, and to the effective and emotional experience of being a ‘moral actor’.

**Uncertain Effects**

One of the most apparent ways in which globalisation transforms the context of ideological engagement is in the ambiguity it creates in relation to the

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8 This is, of course, not to allude to a mythic bygone era in which individuals could happily make everyday decisions free of moral weight – such a stance would be blind to the ways in which every act (or inaction) in and on the world is infused with moral implication. As I attempt to establish in this chapter, though, the process of globalisation has added additional layers of moral demand to these activities – and additional awareness of these layers.
consequences of actions in and on the world. One facet of this ambiguity is in the multiplicity of consequence that is borne of globalisation. Its transnationalising effects mean that our actions have outcomes which resonate increasingly through multiple contexts, environments and in the lives of countless distant others (Bauman, 1993). The result, for the individual actor, is an uneasy contradiction. On one hand, actions become invested with increased moral weight, through our awareness of their multiple impacts (Bauman, 2001). On the other, the ‘right way’ of responding to these consequences becomes more uncertain, as the competing potential outcomes become mutually exclusive. At the emotive level, the results are conflicting sense of both urgency and of paralysis; ‘ours are the times of strongly felt moral ambiguity. These times offer us freedom of choice never before enjoyed, but also cast us into a state of uncertainty never before so agonized’ (Bauman, 1993, p. 21).

Participants in the study express the paralysis borne of these contradictions. Here, for instance, Quasim and Josh discuss the image to the right, which they have conceptualised in terms of manufacturing ‘counterfeited’ versions of branded goods;

**Interview 2**

Mark So if you’ve a fake pair of jeans and a real pair which should you buy? Which would be the most moral?

...  

Quasim The fake ones are, like, illegal because it’s not actually copyright ... But the, they might get paid more; the people who are making them, if we buy fake clothes.

Josh And then maybe people who work here won’t get paid.

This extract gives a sense of some of the ways in which participants perceive contradictions in the contexts with which they engage, and difficulties that these produce in reasoning firm moral positions. This is, of course, not a failure of perception or reasoning as such. Indeed, the participants demonstrate impressive perspicacity in their sensitivity to the multiple calls and consequences that are borne of a global supply chain, arising here from the competing interests of multiple stakeholders. The sense of paralysis amongst
these calls remains, however. Participants’ oscillate in their ideological construction as they weigh up the competing demands of different social agents: the corporation whose ideas are misappropriated, the overseas labour involved in production, and the domestic workers whose livelihoods are harmed through loss of jobs to the global context.9

Josh and Quasim thus arrive at, and grapple with, one source of multiple outcomes: the numerous stakeholders invoked through a globalised supply chain. This is, however, not the only source, and where a context of more singular stakeholders is constructed, new sources of ambiguity arise. Here, Iram and Aftab respond to the same image:

**Interview 3**

Iram  
Well, I think we should ... I don’t think we should buy the things they make. I think we should ... boycott them.

Aftab  
But then they ... um ... won’t be getting anything?

The same sense of complication is present here, with participants traversing a set of seemingly ambiguous consequences but with an ambiguity of slightly different origins. There is, in this case, only one set of social actors implicated (the workers depicted in the image), but a sense that any particular decision on the part of the participants might have multiple possible, and thus uncertain, outcomes. As such, the complication here is not in locating a ‘right’ choice amongst competing confident outcomes, but in negotiating a sense of certainty of outcome against a perceived limited array of choices over action, and a limited availability of information to inform that action.

**Distortions of Time and Place**

In part, therefore, the challenge posed by globalisation to the individual as a moral/political actor stems from the sense of ambiguity surrounding the consequences and effects of our actions. In turn, the origins of this ambiguity arise from a layering of the involvement of multiple others, and a multiplicity of consequences possible in relation to them. Of themselves, however, these

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9 We should reassert, here that premise of this work is to respond to the misrepresentation of young people as ‘morally apathetic’. As such, the exploration of ‘difficulty’ here is just that: it is not meant to imply any sense of apathy or disengagement. It pre-empts the later develop of the thesis, which suggests that the participants do achieve these ideological engagements, despite the difficulty of doing so.
pluralities are not problematic. Rather they are a reflection of basic realities of interconnectedness in a globalised world and evidence, if nothing else, an interest in that world amongst participants. The challenge arises, though, in locating the self, and one’s actions and behaviours, in relation to these outcomes with any degree of confidence. In short, I would suggest that in a globalised world, cause and multiple effects are dislocated in the experience of individuals. A variety of processes is involved in this disconnection: the most notable, though, is the vast distances in space and time that lie between a behaviour or choice, and its outcomes.

The implications of such an arrangement are multiple. On one hand, Smith (2000, p. 93) notes the mediating effects of distance (in space and time) on our moral relationships and, notably, the problematising impacts it has on ‘care’ as a principle in these. As Barnett and Land (2007) summarise, such a concept is predicated on a sense of particularity, partiality and proximity. These qualities run contrary to the realities of interaction with the globalised other. In an attempt to further describe these differences in moral relationship between immediate and distant individuals, Slote (2000) invokes a distinction between intimate caring (towards those that one knows) and humanitarian caring (towards those that one knows about). Such a distinction invests a differentiated value and compulsion to these forms of care, which might otherwise be described as ‘caring for’ and ‘caring about’ (Noddings, 2003). The former implies an investment in individuals as subjects of care, and sensitivity to their particular needs. The latter, in contrast, involves an investment in a framing issue rather than the specificity of individuals. I hesitate to extend from this the conclusion that ‘caring for others is … more authentic to caring about others’ (Barnett & Land, 2007, p. 1066), but it is worth recognising the potential effects of distance in the qualities of these mediated relationships. However, following Horschelmann (2008), it would be unsubtle to assert that distance intrinsically produces a sense of irrelevance or indifference amongst young people (or people in general). Similarly, it is possible to overstate the distinction between the proximate individual and the distant stranger, for ‘we learn to care for distant others by first developing close relationships to nearby others, and then recognising the similarities between close and distant others’
(Clement, 1998, p. 85). Echoes of this sentiment are found amongst participants in this study (focused on the image below).

**Interview 6**

Emma  | There he ... just ... working hard for the money
Sarah  | Just going to work day-in, day-out to earn his money to look after his family
Emma  | So that his kids can go to school and ... like ... get the things they need

The interesting process here is that, presented with a ‘distant stranger’, Emma and Sarah’s first impulse is not to ‘run distance together with difference’ (Barnett & Land, 2007, p. 1006). Rather, they deploy a language of familiarity, actively positioning similarities and points of recognition in their construction. In other words, they manage to author a connection, and because of that, generate empathy. It would be misguided to assert that the girls ‘care for’ the subject of the image, but they certainly author a connection that is far from ‘impersonal’. Of course, we should recognise also a methodological caveat here (one that should be present throughout this thesis): a photograph mediates Sarah and Emma’s relationships to the subject of their engagement. Reminded of this, I might suggest that whilst the subject of their engagement is literally distant, they are also proximal in a representational sense: thus, they were very much ‘in the here and now’ of the interview context. The photo, then, acts as a perceptual bridge, which enables the participants to forge connections across distance.

The suggestion emerging here, then, is that part of the challenges produced by the temporal and spatial distances of a globalised work is emotive, in the difficulties it poses to empathy. Beyond this lies a second problematic factor: in its challenges to our mechanisms of moral reasoning, which are fundamentally proximal. ‘After all, they tell us how to approach people within our sight and reach, and how to tell which actions are good ... and which are bad ... depending on their visible and predictable effects on such people’ (Bauman, 1993, p. 18). The spatial and temporal disconnect of action and outcome
distorts experience, and therefore the ‘logics’ (used in the loosest sense, and implicating subjective, personal processes as well as reasoned ones) used to author moral positions;

Things which are substantively-objectively, spatially and temporally disparate are drawn together causally and thus brought into a context of ... responsibility ... however presumptions of causality escape our perception. They must always be imagined, implied to be true, believed ... the implied causality always remains more or less uncertain and tentative. Thus we are dealing with a theoretical and hence scientized consciousness, even in the everyday

(Beck, 1992, p. 28)

The emphasis I have given in this quotation intends to highlight what I see as a crucial dynamic; imagination must fill the space between actions and consequences before we can draw causal links. From this, I draw two further implications. The first is that belief also involves conviction and confidence, but when contextual evidence for the connections between our actions and their outcomes is sparse, engagement becomes tautologous: the only sustaining factor in our beliefs is the belief itself. The result is the sense of uncertainty, identified explicitly by Beck, and implied by each of the participants so far.

What is left are tentative hypotheses, and a nagging sense that in this global context what initially seems like a moral choice can later prove problematic. It is a sense that side effects can smother good intentions, and harm can be done through ignorance as well as design (Bauman, 1993). Thus, seemingly neutral actions, the buying of a chocolate bar for instance, can have profound effects in distant places. Apparently innocuous and mundane acts of forgetfulness, such as leaving a light on, can accumulate and have similarly dramatic effects in future times.

Paradoxically, though, as the certainty over the connections between our actions and their outcomes grows ever more intangible, the sense of certainty that such actions are, in fact, having an effect is amplified through reportage in popular culture;
We have acquired ‘artificial eyes’ which enable us to see what own eyes never would ... our sensitivity is assaulted by sights which are bound to trigger our moral impulse to help – yet it is far from obvious what we could do to bring relief and succour to the sufferers

(Bauman, 2001, p. 52)

There is, here, a further emotive context to this aspect of ideological functioning in the globalised world. As I suggest above, though, Beck’s emphasis on belief can produce a second implication, a performative or practical one. Belief, in this context, is an active process. Where the immediate context is one of missing information, in which causality ‘must always be imagined, implied to be true’, the individual must become an always-hypothesiser. They must fill the gaps in experience and actively construct chains of consequence. Such a process, in which information has to be ‘added’ to a context in order to perceive fully its implications, is one that is easily lost in the heat and spur of the moment. As expressed by John and Paul;

**Interview 8**

Paul  It’s competition, innit, it’s like, keeping up with the Joneses – it’s there, you want it, don’t you. I’ll happily go out and get new stuff ... but when you’re buying it, you actually don’t think ‘there’s someone working away and making this in a sweatshop.

John  I mean, we don’t learn about it in school. I mean we do ... um ... in like geography, but it’s different innit.

Paul and John’s expressions here are not ones underpinned by a lack of understanding. Nor, indeed, are they linked to apathy or rejection of a moral position (nor a lack of empathy). Instead, there is a sense here of a stratified consciousness. On one level is an expressed knowledge and understanding of the issue at focus and an express commitment, at multiple points in the interview, to a sense of social ‘justice’ around it. On another, there is a struggle to exist within these principles and understandings when transposed to day-to-day contexts. I would discern two separate aspects of ‘space’ in this separation. The first is an issue of ‘distance’, a lack of physical connection between an action and its moral ramifications. Equally, though, there is a more subtle sense of space, here – or rather one of ‘place’. Particular contexts frame ideological existence in particular ways, by emphasising differing virtues and providing differing pressures, a sense echoed by Sack (1997). In this case, existence
within a peer group with particular priorities (and embedded in a broader consumerist culture) emphasises a set of needs and desires which overwhelm those less immediate moral virtues to which the participants aspire. There is, here, a reminder of my focus (drawn from Bakhtin, and introduced on page 20) on ideological becoming: of the actor ‘awash’ in their contexts and the meaning they provide, occupying both physical and conceptual spaces with different pressures and preferences. This sense will form a central strand in the on-going development of this thesis, and I return to it at multiple points.

**Dislocating Scales**

A further strand of problematisation might be laid alongside the challenges of temporal/spatial distance and place/context. Perception of cause and effect in a globalised world is also troubled by the apparent disparity between the immediate and eventual impacts of actions: that, ‘the scale of consequences our actions may have dwarfs such moral imagination as we may possess’ (Bauman, 1993, p. 18). An aesthetic of balance would preclude imagining that buying one chocolate bar over another might obscure the decision to starve a farmer. Neither would it easily accommodate a sense that leaving on a light could destroy all of human civilisation. In the language of Sophie and Chelsea (and in an extract which also expresses some of the problems of temporal distance in perceiving cause and effect);

**Interview 4**

Sophie  Mum always ... like ... when you’re meant to turn the switches off ... I just think it’s annoying, bugs me. I mean, it’s just a light.

...  

Chelsea  But, then, you’ve got to think – you might have children and your children might have children ... you’re gonna know your grandkids and you might be here when it happens.

Sophie  Oh, I can’t think that far ahead ahead – I just...

Chelsea  Yeah. You can only be in the here and now.

Sophie  You know what, it’s just too much for me to keep in my head, all that.

Chelsea  I mean, we’re just doing our day to day thing ... um ... we can’t be thinking about all this doom and gloom all the time.

I would highlight a further interesting dynamic here. In her closing turn, Chelsea implicates ‘doom and gloom’ as a hazard borne of this context and
moral engagement with it. Such an observation is provoking: it suggests we consider a scale beyond ‘individual’ engagements, and instead explore the weight of ‘carrying around’ these concerns as conscious ideological commitments. Again, we arrive at a sense of dislocated scales, a concept that will be recurrent in this thesis, although a slightly different manifestation. Here, the discord lies in a mismatch between the emotional and cognitive heaviness of such implications, against the lightness of everyday activity and existence.

**Uncertain Authorship**

So far, the focus of this section has been with the complications surrounding the consequences of actions, both in terms of their multiplicity and ambiguity - and with the perceptual and emotive problems which are involved in perceiving links of cause and effect against disparate distances in time, space, place and scale. An additional layer of complication is present in the ways in which such actions are authored in a globalised world: the ambiguities that this creates around constructs, and feelings, of responsibility. In part, such an ambiguity is a direct and logical extension of the previous discussion. If the consequences of an action are multiple and unclear, and if it is difficult to imagine the connections between action and consequence in a compelling way, then explicit feelings of responsibility will also be less sturdy.

To this, Bauman (1993) adds that a central feature of globalisation is the emergence of complex divisions of labour. These, in turn, mean that effects on the world, whether positive or negative, are both co-authored and co-experienced. The implications of any individuals’ given action will resonate across numerous actors, and the impact on any given context or actor will be a combination of contributory actions from countless disparate individuals. Such an arrangement further problematises moral perceptions and the exercise of moral logics, which are tuned to focus on more simple chains of cause and effect. How am I, for instance, to unpick my responsibility amongst the morass of impacts authored by myself amongst others? Sarah and Emma express just this form of problem:

*Interview 6*

Sarah    I mean, I still feel bad and that but ... um ... I didn’t do it

Emma    Well we did, a bit – I Wear Primark sometimes, so I guess...
Sarah: Yeah ... um ... but its not like, um, I went and said, ‘right, I want this cheap, so you have to make it for me’.

Emma: You see it on the telly and ... um ... you feel bad, but then ... you can’t feel the same bad when you’re shopping and that.

There is, of course, a deeper normative issue here in terms of what constitutes ‘responsibility’ in a moral sense. As such, Barnett and Land (2007) highlight that when individual culpability is contingent on establishing a set of mediating actions, it becomes logically indeterminate and hence less compelling. In other words, when harm stems directly from our actions then moral responsibility is obviously implied. But when that harm is only established if other people act in particular ways, the moral imperative is much more ambiguous, that

A person can be morally responsible only for what he does; but what he does results from a great deal that he does not do; therefore he is not morally responsible for what he is and is not responsible for.

(Nagel, 2006, p. 34)

Where, in the earlier discussion, we noted the ways in which globalisation problematises notions of care as a basis for moral engagement (most notably associated with Gilligan, 1984), here, the other major alternative ‘voice’ of justice (Kohlberg, 1981; Rawls, 2005) is viewed as similarly problematic (at least in terms of ‘just action’).

This kind of logic is easily established in normative terms, but less easily experienced at a subjective level. Thus, for Emma and Sarah, ideological engagement with ‘sweatshop labour’ is framed by a sense of culpability (and guilt), without a corresponding notion of responsibility in terms of specific actions. A second theme in this ‘subjective’ context stems from a sense of diffusion of immediate sense of responsibility for action and inaction. In turn, this implies that change amongst any one of a set of partial actors can have only a negligible impact. This breeds a sense of futility and a perceived lack of self-efficacy (Lévy-Leboyer & Duron, 1991)

Interview 8

Paul: You’d have to change the attitudes of the whole world then, wouldn’t you – cos nobody’s going to say ‘no I’m not going to buy that brand’ ... cos everyone’s still gonna, aren’t they; cos not everybody’s bothered about it ... so ...
Both of these extracts express the same mutually reinforcing perceptions of diffused responsibility and futility, though across two very different issues. We should also recognise that it is not simply the arrangement of actors in relation to causes and outcomes that produces this feeling. Rather, those individuals are embedded in a set of material, economic, political and cultural structures that further frame senses of responsibility, and the efficacy of individual action. One dimension of these external circumstances is the ideas and beliefs in circulation in within culture. Here, for instance, Chelsea appropriates one such mythology, in wide-circulation (particularly at the time of the interview, when the popular media was reporting it as a common ‘mindset’) around the issue of ‘climate change’

**Interview 4**

Chelsea And it can’t be reversed anyway, so I think a lot of people are just like: ‘well it can’t be reversed so we might as well carry on’.

This sense, of external factors constraining and shaping responsibility and efficacy of individual action, also orbits an awareness of political and economic realities;

**Interview 4**

Sophie Yeah ... it’s up to the company more than anything, isn’t it - to pay them more ... cos, like, if we want to go and buy something ... Nike, they don’t have a fair-trade and a normal one - and you’ve got to have clothes, haven’t you [pause]

And elsewhere in the same interview

Sophie Isn’t there that ... project thing ... that all the countries did - I don’t know if its on global warming or not ... they did it ... they, like, all joined together and they said they’ll all stop doing this and stop doing that - but then America wouldn’t do it ... but then America refused to join it ... and it makes other countries think, as well, well if
they’re not joining, I’m not joining – why should we bother.  
It’s a negative impact – cos they’ve got so much power.

In both of these extracts, there is a sense that the diffused responsibility amongst the individual and their co-actors is embedded in sets of processes and structures which exist at the macro level. In turn, these contexts amplify feelings of fatalism at the level of the individual, whose efficacy is so seemingly dependent on decisions made at the highest echelons of political machination. In the first of the extracts, this focus is economic: with the pervasive, unavoidable nature of unfair trade. The second extract establishes that political frameworks and processes contextualise action. Participants further explicate the relevance of these political processes at the level of individuals:

**Interview 4**

Sophie  
So there’s no point, is there, really ... in us turning the light bulb off or whatever, cos it’s the governments that need to act.

Chelsea  
um ... that’s well depressing.

The fundamental sense, here, is that futility is also borne of a sense that the individual does not freely author their actions, but rather participates in a set of structures. In this way, it becomes questionable whether individuals are engaged in the production or reproduction of harm. This distinction again reframes normative notions of responsibility, and hedges the degree of culpability of individuals, a further echo of Nagel’s assertion that the individual ‘is not morally responsible for what he is and is not responsible for’.

**Summary**

In focusing on globalisation in the opening section of this chapter, my intent has been to explore the shifting ‘landscapes’ on which the individual’s ideological engagements are forged. I have suggested, and illustrated, that such shifts bring with them new complications, illustrating how these play out in the specific experiences of participants. A number of particularly crucial features of this context have emerged:
• ‘Consequences’ are multiple and contradictory.

• The authorship of these consequences is collaborative and ambiguous.

• Disparities of space, time, context and scale lie between these two points.

Throughout this discussion, I have noted that these challenges affect the individual in two distinct ways. Firstly, they complicate the subjective experience of moral existence – the way we ‘feel’ about particular issues and problems, and the ways in which we relate to those on whom we hold influence. Secondly, they pose challenges to the logics by which we act upon the world; the mechanisms through which we think about moral existence. In the next chapter of this movement, I continue this sense of exploration, moving from a focus on the ‘contexts’ which generate moral demands, and to the resources and understandings available to the individual in responding to them.
Chapter Four

The Complication of Moral Resources

Situating ‘Postmodernity’

The transformative effects of globalisation on the material, political and cultural conditions within which individuals operate therefore impacts on both the scope and complexity of ideological functioning (in Bauman’s conceptualisation, it has amplified and multiplied moral ‘demand’). This global shift has however been accompanied by distinct (though associated) cultural shifts within Western, Capitalist society: towards what, for sake of simplicity I refer to here as ‘postmodernity’. In the context of this study, these shifts represent a second branch of complication to the ideological existence of individuals, one that (again following Bauman) has complicated the ‘supply’ of meaning available in forging ideological positions.

Before continuing, it is worth better situating the research in terms of the implied meaning of ‘postmodernity’, a concept that is surrounded with controversy\(^{10}\). Echoing debates over globalisation explored earlier, contention here pivots on the relative distinctiveness of the current era of society compared to that which it follows. For some commentators (e.g. Baudrillard, 1994; Lyotard, 1997), it represents a distinct rupture in history. This rupture typically defined as a collapse of societal confidence in ‘meta-narratives’, those overarching and all-encompassing explanations of the world previously provided by institutions such as religion and politics. By extension, these theorists see this turn as representing the end of the modernist/scientific project, and of unifying ideologies. Without the conceptual weights that foster uniformity and coherence society, and those people with it, experiences a consequent rise of hybridity, fragmentation and pluralism in all aspects of life.

For a notable group of theorists, however, the term ‘postmodernity’ represents something of a misnomer. They maintain that the current phase of society is

\(^{10}\) An additional emphasis may be helpful here: that my focus in this exploration is with ‘postmodernism’ as a facet of culture, society and individual experience – rather than with the associated debates about the postmodern turn in research methodology.
simply a continuation and an evolution of modernity and its processes and institutions, rather than a rupture from them. Thus, they maintain that the material and emotive contexts which surround individuals in the contemporary era are just the ‘structure of feeling of late-capitalism’ (McGuigan, 1992, p. 221). Whilst these theorists often recognise the epistemological shift also identified by the ‘true’ postmodernists, they view it as the continued trajectory of the institutions and traditions of modernism. The turn away from meta-narratives, for instance, and associated overbearing authorities can represent a natural evolution in the libertarian dynamic of capitalism, rather than its collapse. To this, each commentator adds their own nuance to the description of the conditions that individuals within these societies face. Giddens’ (1991) concept of ‘reflexive modernity’, for instance, posits that the turn away from traditional sources of understanding implies a more self-referential and self-governing model of human conduct. For Bauman (2000), the result is a sort of ‘liquid’ modernity in which individuals move between social positions and narratives of self in fluid ways, akin to tourists or nomads within their own lives. Elsewhere theorists have described the consequent rise of the ‘Network Society’ (Castells, 2000; Van Dijk, 2008), in which media and information technology begin to facilitate the creation of informal ‘bottom-up’ connections between people in place of traditional ‘top down’ organisation.

I would observe, though, that these debates derive partly from historical semantics, relating to the label applied to contemporary conditions, and consequent implications for how they are conceptualised as either rupture or evolution. They share, however, a background sense that the context that surrounds the individual has shifted. Thus, there are common observations that overarching singular ideologies, and the institutions which propagate them, have become less potent and encompassing. The result is that the individual in contemporary contexts inhabits a more pluralistic epistemological context, one that they must navigate independently. The resultant experience adds new layers of meaning to the Bauman quotation previously given, though which I now situate at the intersection of globalisation and postmodernity:
Ours are the times of strongly felt moral ambiguity ... these times offer us freedom of choice never before enjoyed, but also cast us into a state of uncertainty never before so agonising.

(Bauman, 1993, p. 21)

Thus, the post/late-modern turn is a paradoxical one in terms of the experience of individual. It represents a significant new freedom for individuals and their beliefs and values. Equally, though, removed of old certainties and authorities, such shifts place complex demands on the individual, and their moral and ideological being.

**Scarce Certainty, Abundant Meaning**

The shifts explored by theorists concerned with postmodernity are of concern to my focus in this thesis, for they weigh heavily on the fabrics from which ideological engagement is produced. At its most basic, the loss of ideological absolutes erodes certainty of action. There are fewer available ‘prefabricated positions’ through which to act, a paucity of external discourses with their own internal moral justifications which might otherwise be provided by religion or politics. In Bauman’s terms, this postmodern turn erodes the ‘supply’ of certainties through which to respond to increasing, and increasingly complex, moral demands (not least those generated by globalisation). Here, the participants express this kind frustration (in the context of a discussion about the war in Iraq).

**Interview 5**

Aylish  Like, you just don’t know who to trust – they say that they need to invade to /

Gemma  Cos of the weapons of mass destruction

Mark  Who’s ‘they’?

Gemma  The Americans ... The government.

Aylish  But then some people say its all about the oil ...

[slightly later]

Aylish  Well I think its all about religion anyway

Gemma  about people believing different things ... cos like the Muslims say ... em ... well Iraq is their home /

Aylish  But Bush is like, reeeaaallly Christian – so they’re as bad.

In part, this extract reflects a process already explored in this chapter: the ways in which the competing claims of multiple actors inhabit global moral contexts.
Equally, though, the transcript says something of authorities, and the participants’ incredulity towards what, in past times, would have been absolute messages. Explored more carefully, though, and we can note that this extract expresses something more sophisticated than ‘not knowing’. For it is certainty, and not ‘meaning’ which postmodernity erodes. The reciprocal effect of the decline in absolute metanarratives is a rising plurality of competing ‘answers’. This phenomenon further troubles ideological existence: confronted with complex contexts, the individual is left not only without an absolute moral resource on which to fall back on, but also with a multiplicity of discourses that make competing and often contradictory claims as to ‘right action’. These each construct experiences differentially in terms of what is normal or acceptable, thus framing the ‘morality’ of situations in entirely different ways. Coupled with layers of moral dimensions suggested in the previous section, the result is a bewildering cacophony of demands, and an equally confusing set of ‘solutions’. Within all of this, the individual is responsible for navigation and negotiation. The notion of ‘lack of supply’, then applies only to absolutes. Concerning meaning, the problem is a positive ‘oversupply’, or rather as Niall expresses it (here, he is talking about nuclear energy):

**Interview 7**

Niall It proper does my head in sometimes, like … on the news they’ll say something, but on the next programme they’ll say something else and in school someone will tell you another thing.

Such phenomena adds to the sense of paralysis and fatalism explored in the previous section for,

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Each act of obedience is also an act of disobedience; and with no authority strong enough or bold enough to disavow the others, and claim monopoly, it is not clear the disobeying of which is the ‘lesser evil’.
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(Bauman, 1993, p. 21)

Thus, such arrangements trouble the impulse to ‘be good’, and to be seen as being good by those who surround us. They create a context of ambiguous ‘pulls’. Each voice lays claim to a contradictory good, but none making its claim so strongly as to overwhelm the others. Of course, such a stance implies that all authorities are equal, a stance that demands further exploration.
But Have The Authorities ‘Gone’?

In this context, it may be relevant to exercise a brief critical refrain. The claim that metanarratives have declined in society as a whole can also mistakenly imply that all members of society have abandoned singular sources of truth (or indeed, that no authority is ‘bold enough to claim monopoly’). Such claims are, of course, extreme and should be tempered by pragmatic reflection. One response to the perceived post-modern shift and the insecurities it breeds is to invest an even greater faith in traditional singular ideologies (Gellner, 1992), which offer tantalizing certainty. Extreme examples of this dynamic might be found in the resurgence of nationalist political ideologies (Minkenberg & Perrineau, 2007) or of fundamentalist religious ones (Jacobs, 2006).

These extremes are not found amongst the participants in this study, of course, but authorities are certainly present in their lives. In some cases, these are the traditional voices that postmodernism claims have declined. Here, Sarah and Emma talk about the 11th September plane crashes, and the motivations of those who undertook the hijacking.

Interview 6

Sarah  So, like, in church we learn that Jesus would want us to turn the other cheek … like … if someone does something to you, you should just ignore them …

Religious discourse is, then, significant in the lives of some participants, potentially to a degree that it constitutes an authority. However, the context against which they are set always troubles these resurgences of singular ideology – in particular, the pluralistic cacophony of broader postmodern society. As such, Sarah accompanies its occurrence here with a reflexive turn that not only recognises plurality, but the potential validity of other stances;

Interview 6

Sarah  [continued] but then Muslims don’t think that; they think you should stand up for yourself and not be pushed around. That’s what jihad means – struggle /

Emma  Yeah, we learnt about this – people think Jihad means killing someone, but it just means struggling to stand up for what you think is right.

We should recognise, of course, that this turn might equally be a product of the interview process – which is built up of processes of reflection and counterpoint – or of the context of a classroom, which almost expects
‘alternative points of view’. At the very least, though, the snippet offers a glimpse of the ways in which a pluralistic context disrupts, or at least interrupts, what would otherwise be ideological absolutes.

Of course, the experience of participants encapsulates other authorities, and other institutions that structure their lives in significant ways. In particular, the school and the media emerge as notable recurrent themes in the data. Whilst these institutions are undeniably authorities, however, the internal messages that they convey often reflect the kinds of pluralistic currents of broader society;

**Interview 1**

Alice  So in citizenship we ... um ... we spend lots of time looking at different points of view. Um ... like, what religious people /
Olivia  / people of different religions /
Alice  Yeah, what they think ... and we learn about the different political parties and what they say about it.
Olivia  So it's all about ... um ... like there's no right answer, you need to listen to all of the different perspectives.

The voice of the school is not, of course, singular and homogenous. Elsewhere, its messages are more assertive;

**Interview 7**

Niall  This has come from global warming ... and this links to all of these pictures, like that one
Ryan  The trees ... deforestation
Niall  We learnt about it in science ... deforestation ... we breathe out carbon dioxide / trees are supposed to take it in, but with each tree that we cut down is stopping that from happening ... whereas in that one, we're giving out carbon dioxide even more so we're just thickening the atmosphere, making global warming, which is linking back to that one.
Ryan  Every single picture that you see here is just about the [environment] ... and global warming ... and ... deforestation is something that’s causing global warming, as is carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulphur oxide given off from factories ... the litter ... we’re gonna run out of places to put it cos there's that much ... so ... its just messing the [environment] up ... and then the picture of the polar bears - the one that we picked - is just the effects of global warming and the economy ... and its just showing the far off things / in the south pole, the north pole / Antarctica or whatever, its just showing how its affecting them ... and ... when the polar ice-caps melt, the sea levels will rise and people will actually understand that global warming affects
everyone and not just the far off places, like, where the polar bears are and stuff.

[Shortly after]
Ryan But then again, I’m not sure it is ... um ... global warming. Like, I watched this programme on the telly, and they were like, its not man-made, it’s just natural ... um ... cycles
Niall Yeah, em, the CO2 levels 2000 years ago were like 0.2, but now they’re 0.4 - it’s hardly dramatic.

Here, then, the participants reference a coherent subject narrative within their school experience. Significantly, though, they do not treat the origin of this narrative as an overwhelming authority, passively accepting its message. Rather, they set it against other authorities and their messages, drawing in those external postmodern currents into a context of which might otherwise assert absolute certainty. A similar incredulity is evident in relation to the media:

Interview 4
Sophie Oooh, I saw about this [a photo of a Polar Bear on an ice-... float] ... it wasn’t real - he’s not really stranded ...
Chelsea ...yeah, um, they took the picture from a particular angle ... to make global warming look really bad.

Interview 5
Aylish The media still makes our ... how much we are suffering / even though we’re not suffering / they ignore other countries, how much they’re suffering - to make it seem much worse than it actually is.

We should also recognise that it would be fallacious, though tempting, to attribute absolutism in school-subject narratives to the nature of that subject (that, for instance, science lessons are based on immutable facts). The realities are more complex, and mediated by the pedagogies of particular teachers, as evidenced by the experiences of Josh and Quasim:

Interview 2
Josh Cos like, in science, you see these charts - and the temperature rose in the past five hundred years and then shot down, rose, shot down, rose, shot down - and it might just be rising up now.
Mark So it might be natural?
Josh Yeah, but we’re just pushing it along.
Quasim I think that ... you know ... we done it in science, that some oil companies have, like deals with - they give money to car companies to produce more oil-eating engines. So
they'll make more money – but it's going to make, like, global warming well worser

That the school does not always privilege a particular agenda – and that participants respond to it and other authorities such as the media with a degree of criticality – is appropriate. From one perspective, certainly from mine, it is the ethical duty of the school, in particular, to allow its pupils to find their own perspective and values. What ultimately remains, though, is a reproduction of the same fundamental challenge of postmodernity: forging sense amongst an abundance of meanings, but scarce certainty.

**Fragmentary Selves**

In one sense, the impacts of postmodernity on ideological functioning are external: they fragment the discourses that surround individuals in their attempt to appraise right and wrong and negotiate appropriate actions. However, such a process can also have a reciprocal ‘internal’ effect on senses of identity and self (and of the communities that frame these notions). So far in this chapter, I have envisaged ideological functioning as engagement with fundamentally external factors: with contexts, and with evaluative frameworks. This, though, represents only half of the equation, for these forms of judgement rest equally on internal questions: not just ‘what is right’, but ‘what do I believe is right and important?’ and ‘with whom and what do I identify with?’ As such, moral outrage is stoked where a perceived set of external conditions conflict with inner core values, and these only become externalised through the aspects of self which lend to them compulsion (Blasi, 1983). Aylish and Gemma express this dynamic:

**Interview 9 (Follow Up)**

Aylish  Like … I try to think of myself as a good person – I really do … um … I think I’m really /

Gemma / Opinionated /

Aylish / um … I was going to say principled

Mark And how does that relate to the kind of .. um .. issues we’ve been talking about here?

Aylish Well, like, I think it’s really important that you treat everybody fairly .. so .. I feel bad when I’ve bought / when I realise I’ve bought something and it’s ripped someone else off.
A person’s sense of identity therefore underpins moral and ideological engagement, but there is also a deeper, reciprocal nature to this relationship. Taylor (1989), for instance, maintains that senses of self pivot on an engagement with notions of value and worth: around existential questions of a moral nature, ‘what is the point of life (and, by extension, of me)?’, ‘What is a life worth living?’ As such, an on-going ideological engagement forms identity, both in general terms, and in relation to particular defining issues:

**Interview 1**

Alice  You’ve become a proper eco-warrior haven’t you?

Olivia Yeah … like … I’m in the eco-club in school; we campaign for things like better recycling and that – and like, out of school I’m always telling people to turn lights out and that…

**Interview 5**

Aylish Cos like, I’m really against capital punishment.

Gemma Yeah, you get really wound up about it when people talk about it in the common room.

Of course, the moral engagements and positions adopted by these participants do not comprise their identities in any holistic sense. Equally, though, the issues are clearly important to them – illustrative of the ways in which identity connects to moral being. More fundamentally, though, these excerpts also suggest the importance that internal values are verbalised and otherwise manifested. Thus, they provide a sense that the ‘doing’ of these principles is also a process of identity formation and construction.

Further, the dynamics of postmodernity outlined thus far also problematises these processes surrounding self and moral/ideological being. On one hand, the decline in absolute metanarratives has eroded the extent to which selves are constituted through ‘hard definition’ from overwhelming institutions of society. According to Cushman (1990), we are left with an ‘empty self’: a sense of vertigo stemming from the loss of ‘given’ meaning, and from the security which derives from validation against an external ideological backdrop (that I am, for instance, a ‘good person’ because I am true to the principles of my beliefs as enshrined in religious or political doctrine). As Bauman puts it, ‘relying on rules has become our habit, and without the fatigues we feel naked and helpless’ (Bauman, 1993, p. 23). Niall and Ryan articulate this sense as a kind of ‘drift’:
Interview 7

Niall  I think we … um … that teenagers … most of the time we just want to get on with stuff … um … most people just live for the moment don’t they?

Ryan  But that’s not the same as saying ‘I don’t care about this … I don’t care about farmers in the third world’.

Niall  Yeah, it’s just that … you feel bad about it when you’re thinking about it, but most of the time it’s … em … just stuff in the background … do this, do that, do the other.

Ryan  Just drifting along

It is significant, here, that the participants are not expressing disinterest – quite the opposite, in fact. Rather, they express a sense of experiencing a cacophony of calls, with any given voice inaudible in volume: relegating the whole to ‘background noise’. Aylish and Gemma (who, slightly earlier also expressed their particular moral commitments) express a similar ‘backgrounding’ process:

Interview 5

Aylish  But most of the time I’m not like that /

Gemma  Yeah … you’re um not always like ‘no to capital punishment!’ [giggles]

Aylish  Most people are like … just normal … you hang out with your friends and that.

Gemma  And all the blah blah blah in politics just washes over you

It is, of course, possible to overstate this observation, and to allude to a fictional past, in which all people were always strongly oriented to particular ethical magnets. ‘Getting on with life’ is, then, a default mode of existence: and sensibly so. The significance here, though, is two-fold. Firstly, it suggests something more significant than simple ‘moral apathy’, as the popular portrayal of young people would suggest. Secondly, the sense of ‘drift’ is interesting: not just ‘getting on with life’, then, immune to these demands, but actively aware of them as white noise, yet without a strong sense of any particular ethical magnet. That none of these voices appears to assert dominance is part of this phenomenon (the postmodern thematic strand of sparse certainty). Equally, the volume of the cacophony, and the inaudibility of individual voices within it, is a product of the reciprocal rise and oversupply in meanings:
We are the first generation bombarded with so many stories from so many authorities, none of which are our own. In a sense, we are saturated with stories; we’re saturated with points of view. But the effect of being bombarded with all these points of view is that we … lose the continuity of our experiences; we become people written on from the outside.

(Keen, 1989)

As a result of this oversupply of information is what Gergen (1991) calls the ‘saturated self’, a fragmentary, inconsistent and labyrinthine identity based on a multiplicity of meanings: a ‘free play of being’ (p249). This, he argues, is a shift to celebrate (in parallel with Bauman, 1993, 2000), signifying new freedoms: a break away from traditional structures of society, and a new era of individual autonomy. Equally, though, it erodes certainty, and a spine of consistency against which individuals might test the moral integrity of their actions.

### Interview 7

Ryan You can’t do it … can’t be all the things to all of the people … um … it’s just not possible.

Niall Yeah; like … in citizenship lessons, you’ve got to be all, um … worried about the world and that … and when you watch the news, you’re bothered and that … but then … with your mates

Ryan / it’s a different thing

Niall It’s … um … you’ve got to have the right clothes, and the right games console

Mark So it’s about buying the right things

Ryan Well yeah … um … and no – it’s about being part of the group

Niall Kind of like being loyal.

Mark So which of those is the real you?

Ryan I reckon with my mates

Niall Um … well you’re like that more, but I guess they’re all you

Mark I guess otherwise, you’re only pretending to be bothered /

Niall / yeah, it’s not that.

In part, of course, I supply participants with a particular end meaning here, one which overcomes a social desirability problem of seemingly expressing disinterest. Equally, though, the participants are expressing something more sophisticated than disingenuously feigning interest, or a shallow commitment. Indeed, I would suggest that the participants in this extract are actively aware
of this possibility and defend (if not define) themselves against it. Instead, there is a sense of selves in flux, modulated by the different contexts they occupy and, by extension, the communities that comprise those contexts.

There is, of course, a more subtle further dimension to this interpretation. Ryan opens this passage with the assertion that ‘you can’t do it … you can’t be all the things to all the people’. Such a stance is not just accepting of the fragmentary pressures of postmodernity; it actively guards against this. This would suggest an interpretation in which an individual struggles against fragmentation. In itself, this does not discount the substance of this segment of the chapter – however it does offer a further nuance to the way that the individual is situated in relation to broader socio-cultural currents.

**Problematising Community**

We arrive, then, at a second context of the self, that it draws meaning, and moral sense, out of the communities with which it engages. For MacIntyre (2007), it is the symbolic systems of these communities from which individuals draw answers to fundamental questions of identity;

> The self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities such as the family, and neighbourhood … without those moral particularities to begin from there would never be anywhere to begin.

(MacIntyre, 2007, p. 221)

However, a corresponding transformation in the nature of the ‘defining communities’ in which individuals are embedded accompanies the shifts in experience brought about by a postmodern turn. On one hand, this is rooted in an increasingly multiple sense of affiliation and membership. Immediate locality (neighbourhood, for instance) and narrowly experienced institutions (such as church) have become less significant. At the same time, globalisation troubles the notion of a ‘defining community’, as geography in no longer the sole organising principle of personal relations or citizenships – a concept which is fundamentally territorial (Held, 2003). Instead, affiliations and memberships are multiple and impermanent, disembedded from the land-scape by new technologies (Castells, 2000; Van Dijk, 2008) and framed instead by a range of other defining principles, some conventionally territorial, others ethical or
ecological, legal or conceptual (Steenbergen, 1994; Urry, 2003). As a result, individuals construct and reconstruct their identities through engagements with multiple communities, resulting in a fragmentary and context-dependent self. This is a sentiment which is echoed in the discussion above.

Inherent in this observation, however, is a risk of alluding too strongly to a theoretical construct of completely disembodied and disembedded individuals. The participants in the study are, however, actively involved in numerous meaningful, and meaning-making, communities. Many of these are both proximal and geographically bounded. One only needs to look to the data explored this far to find plentiful reference to the school, the peer-group, the family and sites of religious belief (to name a few examples), and for a sense of the ways in which these communities offer substantial and important meaning to the participants. Thus, the possibility of meaningful community remains, but the additional possibility of existence in relation to manifold, non-traditional social grouping complicates it. Thus, the individual is caught in a duplicitious situation, at once embedded in conventional communities of practice, and disconnected from geography.

As a result of these processes, participants can be caught up with multiple sites of engagement. Here, for instance, Iram and Aftab react to the notion of sweatshops in the Indian subcontinent.

Interview 3

Aftab So I visited home … um … Bangladesh /
Iram / I email my family all the time /
Aftab And it’s not really like this … the pictures, I mean, that you see on the news and in lessons and that [pause]
Mark How so?
Aftab Well, it is … people are poor there and everything but they’re not ALL poor – there are shopping centres just like here, and … like … my uncle is an accountant; he doesn’t work in a sweatshop …
Iram Yeah, and my cousins, they just go to school like we do.

Here, the participants’ memberships of multiple communities disrupt the telling of a particular perspective on the majority world. Elsewhere, the internet facilitates this same kind of disruption:
Interview 2

Quasim: Yeah, like ... I heard that it [the 9/11 hijackings] ... they was like a conspiracy, um ... the Americans staged it so that they could invade Iraq for the oil.

Mark: How do you know that?

Josh: / Internet /

Quasim: There was this video on Youtube, like a documentary thing - and um ... I think Mo sent it to me.

Josh: Yeah, it was doing the rounds on Facebook.

Mark: Did you talk about it in school?

Josh: Yeah.

Quasim: No ... well, a bit - but we were really doing all our chatting on MSN or Facebook ... in school we talk about different stuff.

Josh: We talked about 9/11 though - didn't we ... in Citizenship ...

Mark: And did you talk about the conspiracy video ...

Josh: Err ... no ... I don't think, em, that would be right.

One should note, here, that the community membership at play here is substantively different to that described by Iram and Aftab. Whilst their engagements were distant but ultimately sustained and intimate, those created by the internet can be more flimsy and sporadic. Indeed, the most substantial ‘community’ referenced by Quasim and Josh is the peer group in which they are also embedded in the offline, everyday world. Even given this, though, it interesting to observe how the delocalised medium of the internet shifts the dynamics of the peer-group, augmenting those that exist within the school. Here, a counter-hegemonic message is passed around that community outside of its bounded limits, one that complicates the ideological context of the participants 11.

A second, more subtle, shift in the nature of community in postmodern society is identified by Taylor (1989): in the ways in which they define, articulate and validate their notional values. Historically, he posits that communities have been based on a ‘substantive order of meaning’: the notion of an externally defined conceptualisation of ‘the good’ (that is, one handed down by god, or

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11 It is not, of course, the business of this chapter to comment on the relative merits of particular perspectives and ideologies – that they complicate the contexts of participants is, for now, sufficient. Some tentative discussion of the ways in which participants layer evaluative frameworks onto such discourses is given beginning on page 113.
defined through rational-scientific reasoning). With the fall of metanarratives, however, this ‘ontic logos’ (the idea that ‘the good’ pre-exists in an objective form) has been replaced by a ‘procedural model’. Here actions are judged against standards that are generated as communities construct and reconstruct order, rather than ‘discovering it’. Sarah and Emma have experienced a tentative version of this process:

**Interview 6**

Emma: All these things … it’s not like there’s ever a ‘right answer’ …

Sarah: I don’t think there’s ever a right answer to anything … um … well, obviously in Maths and that [giggles].

Mark: So there aren’t any … when you’re thinking about issues of right and wrong … there aren’t any rules that are always true?

Emma: Yeah … um … well, maybe it’s wrong to kill?

Sarah: Is it though … we talked about this in RE … what was it … oh, yeah; what about if you’re a soldier and, like, you needed to protect a family?

Emma: Hmm, I guess

Sarah: I think you need to talk things over, rather than just assuming something is right or wrong.

Mark: So who decides … em … what is ‘right’?

Emma: Nobody gets to say that … em … well I guess the Prime Minister – but, um, ultimately people … and groups of people … decide for themselves

There is, of course, a degree to which this may be the kind of response rehearsed through RE lessons (which the participants explicitly reference), in which tolerance of multiple perspectives is an expected benchmark. Equally, though, it demonstrates an extent of possibility that participants identify with a process-driven and emergent moral code, rather than a ‘given’ one.

Another context of this procedural model of morality is present in the ways in which particular forms of engagements serve the community itself (rather than external actors). There is a sense, then, running through many of the transcripts so far explored, of engagements acting as a form of social capital, as rituals that reinforce the community itself. This might, for instance, be the passing round of elicit contraband (as in Quasim and Josh’s 9/11 documentary), debates amongst friends (Aylish and Gemma on capital punishment), or organized activities (Alice and Olivia’s eco-club). What is particularly interesting
here is that, in a mirror of the reciprocal relationships between moral activities and self, the act of engagement is not just a product of the community that produces it. Rather, there is something of the nature of the collective involvement that allows that community to co-construct and reassert its particular identity.

There are echoes here of classical sociological treatments of religion, in particular Durkheim’s notion of ‘collective effervescence’ (Durkheim, 1912): the sense that collective engagement in religious rituals serves as a proxy for an expression of shared commitments to society’s value system. What differs, though, is whilst Durkheim’s conceptualisation was of a renewed commitment to a given set of values already pre-existent in society (in other words, an ontic logos), here, the commitment is just to a collaborative generation of ultimately improvised values. Again, such an arrangement adds new challenges to moral being, and ultimately erodes predictable certainties. However, it does not necessarily signal a decline, as a particular telling of these shifts to social conditions might suggest. On one hand, it suggests a degree of freedom for the individual within that community and a more democratic evolution of its values. On the other, the community itself remains important, these values and positions are generated through collaboration within it.

**Performance Anxiety**

So far, I have suggested that the postmodern turn complicates ideological functioning by eroding absolutes and over-supplying meaning. In turn, these trouble a range of ideological ‘anchors’ for the individual: whether the raw ideas or discourses which populate their universe of meaning, the communities which generate, sanction and propagate them — or the internal compass of the individual’s own identity. There is, however, a further facet of complication involved in this aspect of context. The decline of external authorities means that the individual is placed under increasing ‘pressure to perform’: to independently weave cogent and consistent ideological positions from a yarn of contradictory and competing discourses. For Bauman (2000), the result of this disconnection of individuals from the firmament of structuring devices is a form of ‘liquid modernity’, in that the self drifts between various constitutions: a tourist within its own life span and experience.
Such a phenomenon produces a sense of increased self-accountability with the individual, ‘unable to hide behind the rules’ (Bauman, 2001, p. 20): to validate their actions in relation to external ideologies (a sense echoed in many of the recent transcript extracts). Functioning thus becomes a more ‘improvisional process’, with individuals placed under greater pressure to ‘self-validate’ their actions. Taylor (1989) describes this as an ‘inward turn’, typified by a dual reflexivity. On one hand, and echoing Foucault (1977), this has involved an increased emphasis on self-control and self-regulation. On the other, it has implicated an emphasis on self-direction and ‘self-exploration’: a pressure that, without an external source to give one’s life meaning, introspection and self-exploration is the only way to obtain (and attain) it. This is a feeling with which Sarah is familiar;

**Interview 6**

Emma: It’s just up to you – um – nobody’s going to tell you ‘you’ve got to think this’ or ‘you should think that’

Sarah: Your mum and dad might – or teachers.

Emma: Well, yeah, they might – but they’re not going to be able to MAKE you think it – and ultimately, if you believe something – um – personally – you stick to it.

Sarah: But then some people – err – I don’t want to sound bad – some people – in school – are really religious; they don’t always make their own minds up – they – er – well you know.

Sarah’s pragmatism here is, of course, a reminder that it is possible to overstate the degree to which traditional authorities have declined. Nevertheless, what remains is a sense of the individual afloat amongst competing potential ideas and positions, without the structuring guidance of particular authorities. In major respects, this shift should be regarded as liberating, but it also poses distinct problems, to the individuals – and particular pressures;

**Interview 7**

Niall: Like .. everyone wants you to be perfect – not just being good in school and that .. but you’ve also got to save the world /

Ryan: Yeah .. like, you’ve always got to be worried about the environment /

Niall: And you’ve got to think about .. um .. fair trade and that ..

Mark: And why is all that difficult?
Niall: Well … everyone’s always, like, here are all the things you’ve got to be bothered about … um … but then they’re like, you’ve got to make your own mind up.

Ryan: Yeah – in citizenship, they’re always … um … here’s some different points of view, and you’ve got to choose between them – but you’ve got to work out which is right.

Mark: So would it be better if they just told you which was the right way of … em … thinking.

Niall: Oh … no, I wouldn’t like that

The uncertainties generated by postmodernity therefore put an external ‘performance pressure’ on the individual. In equal measure, though, these pressures are internal, particularly when coupled with the observations on shifting notions of self, identified above. Thus, a fundamental challenge is in ‘holding it all together’. In the context of this open-endedness, the individual is challenged to produce a sense of unified ‘selfhood’, and thus the ontological security to construct ideological engagements. To this end, Giddens posits that,

A person’s identity is not to be found in behaviour, not – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual’s biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing ‘story’ about the self.

(Giddens, 1991, p. 54)

Thus, Giddens proposes a sense of self that is neither given, nor entirely fragmented. Rather, self is constantly reflexive as the individual struggles consciously or semi-consciously to attain meaningfulness ‘from within’, through a struggle for unity and coherence. In this are echoes of Maclntyre’s (normative) concept of a ‘just life’ (2007) as one with unity of action: with morality judged not only in terms of approval or disapproval from a defining community, but also in terms of its consistency in an individual’s broader biography. The judgement of action is not, of course, solely in regards to other actions. The first challenge for the moral actor is in authoring a narrative against which these actions feel cogent. These are senses familiar to the participants, and the dynamic was particularly striking in the case of Alice and Olivia:

Interview 1

Mark: So you said you were an eco-warrior, Olivia
The interesting dynamic here is in the ways in which the strength of particular ‘issues’ in participants’ narratives of self modulate their perception (rather than the reality) of their broader moral being. It seems, at least from Alice’s perspective, that Olivia’s strong identity commitments to ecology give her a weight and centre around which to organize the rest of her ideological being, and thus coherence (Alice’s actions, in contrast, are more ‘random’). We could connect such an observation to earlier explorations. Without external overwhelming authorities, personal integrity can only ever be evaluated self-referentially: that is, against one’s own prior commitments and beliefs. Given this, the presence of a firm personal commitment would afford a greater sense of ontological security.

Before concluding this line of discussion, it is worth taking a brief critical aside. Whilst the theorists examined so far allude to the degree of freedom exercised by individuals in a postmodern society, others (Rose, 1999) are more hesitant. Following broadly Foucauldian (Foucault, 1977, 1990) lines of argument, they would posit that it is mistaken to conflate the decline of absolute metanarratives with the rise of complete individual choice. Rather, they maintain that, whilst the influence of sovereign authorities (such as the church)
may have diminished, a range of more diffuse ‘technologies of the self’ has replaced them. These are sinuous in all social relationships, and encourage individuals to ensure that their behaviour conforms to particular social norms. As such, Giddens’ self-reflexivity becomes self-surveillance, whilst his ‘project of the self’, ‘is recast … as a matter of individuals policing themselves’ (Buckingham, 2008, p. 10). Such a position can be found in revisiting an extract from Niall and Ryan;

**Interview 7**

Niall  Well … everyone’s always, like, here are all the things you’ve got to be bothered about … um … but then they’re like, you’ve got to make your own mind up.

Ryan  Yeah – in citizenship, they’re always … um … here’s some different points of view, and you’ve got to choose between them – but you’ve got to work out which is right.

One reading of this extract is of individuals given the freedom to choose their own positions and values. Running more deeply though, and intertwined with the ‘pressure to perform’, is the broader exercise of self-surveillance: a sense that individuals are given freedom of perspective, but that they are compelled to account for that perspective. In other words, this particular context does not afford the individual with the freedom *not* to engage.

**Summary**

In this chapter, then, I have attempted to give a sense of some of the complications posed to the ideological actor in relation to the conditions of late modern, capitalist societies within which they operate. Notions of declining authorities and certainties, and the rise of multiple competing meanings have, to a greater or lesser extent, brought about transformations in relation to notions of self, and to the external discourses which frame that self and which might contextualise its ideological engagement. The nature of such shifts is ambiguous. On one hand, they herald democratisation and new freedoms, the capacity to author one’s ideological position outside the tyranny of overwhelming authorities. Arguably, such a shift also facilitates the kind of flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity necessary to meet the demands posed by globalisation (and explored in the previous chapter). In equal measure, though, these shifts also situate the individual in a vulnerable position, at once under
pressure to account for themselves in reference only to themselves, whilst at the same time eroding the certainties on which to base this account.

Throughout the chapter, I have offered data, and an interpretation of that data, which echoes many of those features that theorists ascribe to the late-modern society. We have encountered pluralities in idea and identity, gained a sense of individuals attempting to negotiate these uncertain terrains, and the emotional pressures and exposure that this creates. However, this has not been a cosy validation of those observations; my presentation of the voices of participants, here, has also disrupted some of those assumptions. As such, old certainties and remaining authorities have figured significantly, as has the active resistance of fragmenting uncertainties. This initial contradiction is, I would suggest, more easily resolved that one might initially think. It does not negate the view that late-modern society has particular characteristics. Rather, it demonstrates that the individuals who occupy such contexts do not experience these characteristics passively. It begs attention to their agency and autonomy as active sense-makers, attempting to ‘hold together’ cogency amongst complexity. I turn my attention to this challenge in Movement Three of this thesis. First, though, in the final chapter of this movement, I consider the status of conventional moral theory in the context of these kinds of observation.
Chapter Five

The Problem with Moral Theory

In the opening two-thirds of this movement, my intent has been to explore the ways in which contemporary contexts pose ideological challenges to the individual in terms of both their reason and feeling. In doing so, I have established a set of understandings which form the basis of the rest of this thesis. In particular, it will underpin the proposal of a framework through which to appreciate better the way individuals actually function amongst these challenges. Implicit in this proposal of a ‘new’ framework is the suggestion that existing ones are insufficient. In the closing chapter of this movement, I provide some substantiation to this claim. Thus, I shift my focus away from the experience of the individual, and instead to the theoretical frameworks which attempt to describe the development and functioning of individuals as moral and ideological beings. I set out to suggest that these conventions are problematic, in the first case because of their inherent tensions. Further, though, I suggest that these intrinsic problems resonate even more loudly when set against the complications introduced by globalisation and postmodernity. In short, this chapter posits that the problems that contemporary contexts pose to the individual apply equally to those theories that attempt to encapsulate the way those individuals operate.

Outlining Conventions

The focus of this chapter is therefore with theories of morality as an aspect of personal functioning: as something that occurs within lived experience, rather than in the philosophical sense (of what normatively constitutes ‘moral’ and ‘immoral’ behaviour). Two contrasting academic perspectives dominate this field. At one extreme is an emphasis on the social genesis of morality through the inculcation of the individual into shared codes of conduct. At the other is a suggestion of psychogenesis, through the development of internal competencies that facilitate autonomous, self-directed behaviour. It is relevant, here, to explore briefly each of these extremes, before examining the tensions that exist between them, both theoretically and when applied to the context explored in the section so far.

The first of these traditions derives primarily from structuralist sociology (e.g. Durkheim, 1925). It thus emphasises the processes of socialisation, through
agencies such as family and education, in transmitting and instilling the core values that underpin society. The dynamic of this process at the level of the individual is theoretically paralleled in psychological perspectives that emphasise the primacy of early experience in moulding later behavioural routines and tendencies. This approach finds connections, for instance, with the psychodynamic perspective (e.g. Freud, 1961), which conceptualises the voice of parents, as authority figures, as being gradually internalised into the individual’s superego. There are also significant interconnections with the behavioural approach to psychology. This approach emphasises the direct shaping of particular habits and routines (rather than the underlying ‘authority voice’ which direct them) either through conditioning (Aronfeed, 1968) or observation (Bandura & McDonald, 1963). Such a view of moral development implicates a construction of moral functioning which is fundamentally social, that ‘we are moral beings only to the extent that we are social beings’ (Durkheim, 1925, p. 64). As such, they see morality at the level of individual experience as the ‘acting out’ of underpinning, internalised values and beliefs which orient behaviour towards particular norms and expectations.

At the other extreme of convention in theories of moral personhood lies a body of theory derived from the cognitive school of psychology. This perspective (influenced heavily by philosophical traditions deriving from Kant, 1998; Rawls, 2005) emphasises the autonomy and rationality of individuals in moral functioning (rather than social context). Consequent frameworks – as first established by Jean Piaget (1965) and later developed and refined by Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) – are therefore concerned with explaining how individuals come to attain this autonomy and rationality (in terms of development), and how they exercise it in real-world contexts (in relation to functioning). In congruence with their Piagetian roots, they therefore envisage a series of age-delineated stages of development. In each, evolutions in the individual’s broader cognitive tools allow them to transform information in ways that are more sophisticated and, as a consequence, to consider their moral universe in more rational and logical ways. Through this process, the individual is able to gradually accommodate the ‘rules’ which govern their existence, to transform them in more flexible ways, to extract and improvise on underlying principles and, ultimately, to become independent of them, emerging as autonomous and self-regulating moral beings.
Structure and Agency in Moral Being

In a crude way, then, these two perspectives describe the same process in opposite directions. For the structuralist/psychodynamic/behavioural coalition, morality can only occur when the innate autonomy of the individual is gradually constrained to correspond with the behavioural expectations of an external society. In the second, the same individual is ascribed a higher moral status as they break free of these external constraints and become more autonomous and self-regulating. In the remainder of this chapter, I maintain that both of these extremes are unsatisfactory before, in the movement that follows, suggesting that a theoretically cogent middle ground can, and should, be posited.

Viewed in this way, the tension at the heart of this debate is, in essence, a well-worn debate about structure and agency: the degree to which individuals are a product of their social context, or of their own intent and freewill. In and of themselves, these positions are problematic. An over-emphasis on socialisation, for instance, tends towards a denial of autonomy and rationality. By extension, it denies the possibility that an individual can hold a personal position or principled stance beyond those with which socialisation has instilled. It also inadvertently problematises personal responsibility. If moral behaviour can be reduced to the acting-out of social programming, then immorality stems from failure in either the program, or the institutions that have instilled it. In this context, the holding of an individual to account is no longer an exercise in accountability, but one of containment and social control.

Set against this problem, one of the great achievements of the cognitive school of moral development is that it accommodates the ability of individuals to reach their own supra-social conceptualisations of right and wrong. This extreme is, however, fraught with its own problems. In emphasising individual autonomy, for instance, it is possible to begin to lose sight of the extent to which moral being is socially constituted and contextualised. Thus, this construct of the atomised moral actor fails to attend to the socio-historical specificity of morality: the ways in which concepts of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ (and of what constitutes a ‘moral’ domain or choice) change in different places and across time. Furthermore, whilst an approach which emphasises autonomy seemingly clarifies issues of responsibility (after all, it puts the individual at the centre of the account), in reality it offers only a transposition of the problem: it leaves nothing against which the individual might be held to account. Without
an external community articulating notions of right and wrong, the only measure of moral worth (for both the individual, and the outside observer) is that which stems from the individual themselves.

**Moral Processes, Moral Ends**

A second shared problem in the conventions of the field is the way in which each of the perspectives imposes on its subjects a particular construction of what constitutes ‘morality’. In attempting to explain the processes of moral development and functioning, each inadvertently also imposes value judgements of moral worth on its subjects. For the socialised model of morality, this normative tendency is overt. For it, morality is deontological, consisting of that set of behaviours that the society in which the individual is situated defines as right and wrong. On the surface, it would seem that the cognitive stance, with its emphasis on the individual as an autonomous reasoning unit, sidesteps this issue. Such a view, however, obscures the way in which this issue manifests itself in a more subtle way. As Frimer and Walker (2008) recognise, the cognitive approach may avoid normative deontological assumptions (over the rules that govern moral behaviour), and even teleological ones (about what constitutes a moral end or consequence). Fundamentally, though, it does make assumptions about the processes through which individuals should think about, and arrive at, their choices. As such, these approaches imply that a person can only be moral in as far as they can logically appraise and rationalize situations.

Thus, whilst the models provided by Kohlberg and Piaget leave space for individuals to arrive at their own moral decisions (indeed, they see this independence as their height of moral functioning), they suggest that these are valid only in so far that they are arrived at through a specific form of rational deliberation. Such a stance, according to Carol Gilligan (1984), privileges the concept of ‘justice’ (inherited through Kant and Rawls) as an evaluative framework surrounding morality. This, she continues, represents an androcentric bias: privileging a patriarchal, detached construct of morality over a more female-oriented, inter-personal ‘care’ voice. Critics have similarly accused the Kohlberg model of ethnocentrism, in that it privileges ‘independence’ (a peculiarly Western, Capitalist virtue) over communitarian interdependence (Simpson, 1974). As a result of these biases, and the insistence of the framework of situating morality in a hierarchy, measurements
of moral ‘capacity’ tend to systematically favour particular groups, for little reason other than their tendency to work within its assumptions.

**Morality In-Situ**

At a purely theoretical level, then, two tensions exist within the conventions of moral theory: the need to reconcile individual autonomy against socio-historical context (and the consequent shared ‘problem of responsibility’); and the challenge of explaining moral development and functioning without unwittingly imposing a normative view of what constitutes a moral choice or act. Beyond this abstract level there is, however, a further layer of tension relating to the ‘performative’ sense of the theories: the way in which theory portrays individuals acting ‘in-situ’ amongst their everyday life experiences.

In essence, these two approaches construct two very different images of the moral/ideological being. For one, the individual is essentially ‘empty-headed’ and impulsive, reacting to the world on a moment-by-moment basis according to their social programming. For the other, that same individual is an active deliberator, reasoning themselves through their existence in a rational and logical way. When positioned like this, the latter of these perspectives seems obviously more attractive than the former. This attraction must, however, be tempered given its mismatch with what people actually do. Haidt (2001), for instance, highlights that the speed with which most moral decisions are made precludes the possibility of deliberative, logical reasoning. Rather, he argues, ‘intuition’ is the driving process in moral existence, with rationality occurring ‘after-the-fact’, to provide post-hoc justifications for earlier impulses. Thus, in Haidt’s terms, the cognitive stance embodies a confusion in which the rational tail wags the emotional dog.

There is therefore a necessity to accommodate ‘intuition’ into models of moral functioning, though the nature of this, in itself, can be contested. On one hand, it might involve an alignment with the structuralist model of morality: thus, intuition becomes the sum of our social programming. Elsewhere, the literature attempts to reconcile intuitive morality with a cognitive grounding. For Lapsley and Narveaz (2004), for instance, intuition can underpin moral functioning because, through rehearsal, moral schemas are refined to the point of automaticity. One should, note, however, that making this compromise also involves a dilution of the agency embodied in the cognitive approach, as the automaticity of schema becomes close to ‘programming’ (albeit programming
which is a product of self-discipline). In attempting to accommodate intuition, then, it is seemingly necessary for the cognitive stance to align itself uncomfortably with its socialised antithesis.

A second layer of complication in considering the performative implications of cognitive moral theory, in particular, is the extent to which ‘rationality’ forms its central tenet. Even where ‘deliberation’ occurs, there is nothing to presuppose that it, in everyday life, is comprised of logic – and where intuition is seemingly important, rationality is correspondingly unlikely. An assumption of rational consideration therefore overlooks the extent to which moral being is a subjective phenomenon, informed as much by preconceptions and assumptions as rational decisions, and influenced by broader ideologies that frame and surround the individual. A range of other criticisms, already discussed here, resonate in this point. A connection can be made, for instance, with the inherent normative definition of morality embodied by the Kohlberg-Piaget tradition: in expressing an ideal of what morality might look like, the theory inadvertently obscures the messiness and complication of how morality might actually occur in reality. Furthermore, it illustrates the key tension introduced by the dichotomy between socialised and autonomous constructs of the moral being; it suggests a necessity to understand the ways in which the belief systems and mythologies of a society might intrude into the autonomous activity of the individuals within it. It necessitates, in short, a reconciliation, which sees the autonomous individual as existing within a society.

**Theories in Contexts**

There are, therefore, important theoretical and performative tensions involved in the conventional poles of moral theory. Further to this, however, I would suggest that these problems are both echoed and amplified when the theories are set against the conditions explored in the opening chapters of this movement. Both extremes are predicated on modernist and contained construction of the external world, and both are troubled by a shift away from this context. As such, each struggles to accommodate the ways in which individuals operate amongst the kinds of complexity created by processes of globalisation and postmodernity. For example, the socialised model of moral functioning is based on a vision of a relatively singular, monolithic moral structure in society: alluding, for instance, to absolute sources of truth such as religion. In itself, then, the approach struggles with shifts external to the individual, to the necessity of accommodating the increasing multiplicity of the
contemporary context. As a result, it is forced to lament this pluralism as a fragmentation of society, and thus a degradation of its integrity. Further, the approach struggles to accommodate shifts internal to the individual, and to the ways in which they are able to engage with multiple sources of truth as they pass through the various contexts of their universe of meaning.

The shift in context outlined in this movement is also particularly troubling for the cognitive school of moral personhood which tends to conceptualise its autonomous individuals as existing in fixed, stable, and fundamentally knowable world (J. Walker, 2000). The exercise of moral rationality around any given action is predicated on understanding the nature of its consequences in full. The moment any of these consequences are uncertain, then decisions must be made based on probabilities and beliefs. Viewed in this way, it seems unlikely that any ideological engagement might be entirely rational, and this is exponentially pronounced in the context outlined above. ‘Missing information’, and the need for the individual to improvise actively in order to fill the gaps typifies engagement amongst globalised and postmodern contexts.

The material on which this improvisation might draw is also complex. Consequences for a globalised actor are outside the realm of experience, both literally, and in terms of quality. Thus, the extent to which the individual might borrow on other personal experiences as proxies – whilst of course, still important (after all, the capability to empathise as a son, a sister, a fellow human being are still possible) – is limited. The limits of personal experience necessitate a heavier reliance on understandings they find elsewhere. The individual is forced, then, in any exercise of autonomy (whether rational, or subjective), to draw upon socially constituted mythologies and meanings as a method of creating an ideological engagement. In describing this ideological existence, however, I do not make simple recourse to the socialised model of personhood. Rather, there remains an active agent at the centre of this functioning: a person, making sense of their existence and drawing on whatever resources are available to them in order to support this sense making.

The authoring of an ideological engagement through purchase of a chocolate bar, for instance, might well involve rational thought. Fundamentally, though, it draws on notions outside of the individual’s direct or broader experience,

\[12\] Though, in equal measure, it might draw on subjective impulses and the individual’s broader conceptualisation of who they are
predicated on the connection of the fair-trade logo (or lack thereof) to a set of socially constituted discourses: on histories and understandings of economics (and of empathetic understandings connected to these, of course) which exist elsewhere. Crucially, though, the individual is not inhabiting these ideas (nor are the ideas ‘inhabiting’ the individual), rather they are using them as points of reference through which to make sense of their existence.

**The Key Challenge**

I would argue, then, that faced with the inherent problems of conventional models of moral personhood, and the amplification of these problems when situated in context, there is a necessity to re-imagine this body of theory, in a way that attends to a number of crucial factors:

- The necessity to reconcile autonomy and social context, to accommodate the individual and their agency, and that moral and ideological functioning always exists in a particular socio-historical and cultural context.

- A recognition that rationality is only one mechanism through which individuals might author an ideological position, and accounting for the place of subjectivities within individual agency.

- The capacity to accommodate impulsivity alongside deliberation.

- Sensitivity to the risks of imposing a normative definition of what constitutes ‘moral’ on its subjects.

- The ability to encapsulate an ideological universe which is fluid, shifting and contradictory.

In the next movement, I turn my attention to these requirements. In doing so, I bring together a body of existing alternative theory on moral development, and propose that these are more capable of accommodating the complexities and challenges outlined here.
Movement Three
Reconstruction
Introducing the Movement

The task of the previous movement was to articulate something of the complexity that the contemporary ideological and material context presents to the individual. In doing so, it was my aim to express the challenges faced by individuals existing in that context, both in generalised, abstract terms, and in connection with the lived experience of participants involved in this study (as representatives of ‘young people’). In the closing segment of that movement, I have also suggested that the challenges experienced by individuals are also felt by dominant theories of moral being and moral development, whether psychologically or socially focused. I maintain that these perspectives are flawed, both inherently and in their capacity to encapsulate how individuals operate against this complicated ecology of ideological supply and moral demand.

In short: the process so far has been one of problematisation, and its key theme has been that of ‘difficulty’. It has focused on the challenges faced by individuals and theories alike in orienting themselves to an increasingly complicated context. This said, the movement might be read, in equal measure, as a narrative of achievement over these difficulties. Thus, what has emerged through participants’ data is not a sense of failure: not an inability to foster engagements against the contexts that face them. Quite the opposite is true in fact. In each and every extract, and even when they are articulating senses of difficulty and struggle, participants achieve very real, and often sophisticated and multi-layered, forms of engagement.

In this respect, the data explored so far is important in itself. It goes beyond ‘excusing’ apparent moral apathy against a backdrop of ideological difficulty. Rather, it demonstrates the intelligent and committed ways in which every day young people position themselves in relation to these challenges in committed (or at least interested and oriented) ways. In doing so, it partially addresses the political motivations that inspired this research: to offer, at the very least, a counter-representation of young people that contrasts with a discourse that vilifies them. However, the accomplishments of participants in this data, and the mechanisms by which they do so, begs further exploration. As such, my intent in this movement is to begin to reflect, and reflect upon, these types of
achievement in detail. In doing so, I attempt a degree of ‘reconstruction’: in sensitising perception of how these participants foster engagement with contradictory and ambiguous contexts, and building the capacity of theory to explain and describe this process.

The methodological drive of this movement follows that found throughout this thesis: centred on interconnectivities between various points of theory, and data offered by participants. In the opening chapter of the movement, I reach for a new theoretical connection. Here, I suggest that a possible reply to the challenges set out at the close of the last chapter exists: in James Wertsch’s theory of ‘Mediated Action’ (1993), and its consequent application to moral functioning by Mark Tappan (2006). In particular, my focus here is on the way in which notions of ‘social mediation’ offer a useful way of addressing how individuals respond not just to moral engagement in general, but also in the specific contexts of uncertainty and oversupply which I have outlined in the previous movement.

The chapters which follow are concerned with attending to a range of ‘details’ which arise from this orientation, in terms both of theoretical precepts, and the contexts on which this thesis dwells. Thus, in chapter seven, I explore how the approach situates itself in relation to notions of social structure and agency, a key tension set out in the previous chapter (and, in turn, how its resolution of this tension offers broader benefits). Chapter eight extends this exploration in relation to how it reframes notions of accountability and responsibility. Chapter nine integrates a distinct theoretical dimension, suggesting that narrative offers a useful complement to the theoretical and contextual matter of this study. Running through each of these explorations is the interplay of theory and data that I have established throughout this research. As such, what participants have said in interview is used in three key ways: to illustrate facets of theory, to offer a bridge between existing concept-work and the observations on contexts offered so far, and to generate nuance in relation to these aspects. Finally, chapter ten offers a conclusion to the thesis, and a drawing together of contributions, limitations and implications.
Chapter Six

Towards ‘Social Mediation’

The Theory of Mediated Action

In this chapter, I suggest that the work of James Wertsch (1993) offers a theoretical space which is capable of both accommodating the complexities of context outlined across the previous movement, and negotiating the theoretical tensions set out at its close. In his work, Wertsch begins with a single prime notion of the individual as autonomous, free and thinking: capable of independently appraising contexts and experiences, drawing on whatever information and resources are available to him or her in order to achieve a given actions or goals. The relatively simple premise sets out a powerful (and, in the context of this research, useful) analytic framework which echoes that of Activity Theory (Bednyi, 1997)\(^\text{13}\). Thus, the fundamental frame of analysis for both perspectives comprises the operation of an actor (a subject) engaged in ‘activity’ in order to reach particular outcomes or goals (objects). In the case of this research, and imagined in its crudest sense, this framework comprises a group of participants attempting to foster meaningful engagement with stimulus images, and with an interview context.

Fundamentally, though, Wertsch argues that the exercise of individual autonomy is, and must always be, a socially mediated process. In this, his suggestion is that our experiences, and our actions on the world, are only meaningful in that we can populate them with meanings that our socio-cultural context supplies. Thus, even the most apparently mundane of human activities (that of turning on a television, for instance) are only possible in that they can be anchored in a set of external understandings (from the symbols representing functions of that device, through the social conventions which surround its operations). Thus, we arrive at a sense of individuals engaged in 'mediated action': drawing on ideas and beliefs supplied by their surrounding culture in order to populate experience with meaning and thus assert their agency. As such, Wertsch suggests that the mythologies, categorisations and

\(^{13}\) This is perhaps unsurprising, given that they draw common foundations in the work of Vygotsky and has associated circles of influence.
definitions which are availed to us by our cultures are literally akin to ‘tools’: in that they extend what is possible using innate abilities alone, and thus facilitate activity\textsuperscript{14}.

Over the course of this movement, I will attempt to demonstrate that this perspective offers a useful response to the challenges set out thus far. In this chapter, my focus will be with the ability of the approach to accommodate a representation of individuals (established through the previous movement) as existing in an ideological milieu: subject to multiple calls and demands, and embedded in competing and contrasting discourses and mythologies which frame ‘right’ action. I suggest that a useful response is to imagine the production of moral engagements by the participants as a dual process of mediated action, and that the ‘appropriation’ of socially-constituted meanings and mythologies, therefore lends two qualities to those constructions,

- **Moral evaluation:** senses of right and wrong are drawn through the application of differing languages and arrays of meaning (both moral and more broadly social in tone). Recognising this process, I suggest, gives us a more cogent method of understanding how individuals negotiate the pluralistic constructs of right and wrong which inhere in postmodernity.

- **Context Anchoring:** the appropriation of broader mythologies and meanings allow the individual to anchor their engagements in a sense of a stable external reality. I will argue here that such a process is crucial in responding to the partial and contradictory moral calls which globalisation produces.

Underpinning the usefulness of Wertsch’s approach is a partial resolution of the tensions outlined in the previous chapter. In the sections that follow this one, I will spend time addressing some of these dimensions, and the new tensions that they produce. Here, however, my initial focus remains with the practical methodologies through which participants respond to the challenges set out in the previous movement, and the capacity of this theoretical approach to accommodate them.

\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, a proportion of Wertsch’s work situates semiotic tools as part of the same psycho-social nexus as physical ones, and thus subject to the selfsame principles.
‘Reason’ as Mediated Action

The parameters and calls established by Wertsch have been taken up extensively by Mark Tappan (1991, 1997, 2006) in an attempt to better understand the ‘activity’ of ‘doing morality’. Following the framework, his claim is that moral being, like any other aspect of human functioning, comprises an individual drawing on cultural resources in order to produce a meaningful action of the world. Tappan therefore proposes that increasing 'sophistication' in moral thought, something that cognitive approaches to morality tend to cast as developing 'internal' cognitive capacities, might equally be cast as a growing mastery over particular organisations of meaning:

specific words, language and forms of moral discourse: 'it's not good to steal', 'it's against the law', 'someone could ... call the police'. These are phrases that a ten-year old would have heard again and again, in a variety of contexts, for many years. They are cultural tools ... appropriated and used to make sense of and understand a particular social situation, and thus to construct a response to the question, 'why shouldn't you steal from a store?'. As such ... more functioning here is mediated and shaped by these particular forms of moral discourse.

(Tappan, 2006, p. 10)

In illustration of this process, Tappan turns to the ways in which it reframes Gilligan’s (1984) critique of Kohlberg’s dominant cognitive framework. In brief, this asserts that conventional models privilege an andocentric, or even patriarchal, method of thinking and talking about moral being: emphasising ‘justice’ over a more feminine ‘care’ centred articulation. Tappan’s break from this is the argument that ‘justice’ and ‘care’ are not just outcomes of particular ways of ‘thinking’ about moral issues. Rather the dispute reflects the existence of entirely different moral languages. These different ways of talking about ethical dilemmas each bring with them a different array and arrangement of internal concepts and meanings, a different set of connotations and denotations, which comprises an internal logic.

What emerges here is a sense that the ‘reasoning’ which lies behind moral explanation (or perhaps more pertinently: that the ‘reasonableness’ of such a position as it is received by others) is not an exercise of pure logic. Rather, it also stems from deployment of the particular languages through which that logic is realised, and from a shared appreciation of the meanings that adhere to
those languages. In other words, that moral reason is an exercise of mediated action. This assertion provides one potential analytic avenue in considering how participants produce engagements in the interviews for this research: in an exploration of the languages of justification on which they hinge. Here, we are interested in how these languages produce senses of ‘reason’ or ‘logic’, and facilitate different modes of evaluation, judgement and rationale.

**Law, Justice and Care as Moral Discourse**

The work of Tappan, and of Kohlberg and Gilligan, has coalesced around discourses of law and justice, and those of care, and it possible to locate much of the data of this research in these languages and terms. Here, for instance, Josh and Quasim have cast a picture of a majority-world workshop in terms of the production of counterfeited goods, and I probe their particular moral perspective on this

**Interview 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>So if you've a fake pair of jeans and a real pair which should you buy? Which would be the most moral?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>The real ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasim</td>
<td>The real ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasim</td>
<td>The fake one’s are, like, illegal because it’s not actually copyright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>It's not actually made by actual companies, so it might not be as good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasim</td>
<td>It might rip or something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>It'll encourage more people to ... keep making fake clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasim</td>
<td>But they might get paid more, the people who are making them, if we buy fake clothes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the participants broadly cast their response in terms of ‘the law’, its implications and inherent rationality. In Kohlberg’s framework, it might suggest that participants operate within the ‘preconventional’ stage of morality, in which rules exist for their own sake, and individuals orient themselves in relation to obedience and punishment. Through Tappan’s lens, however, this logic is only realised through the evocation of a particular (legalistic) discourse, most strongly felt in Quasim’s reference to copyright, and Josh’s articulation of the notion that laws exist to rein in the propagation of an undesirable act: a key premise in the way in which legalistic discourses self-perpetuate. Both of these
turns in the evolving discussion serve to anchor it in a particular set of realities, and thus lend legitimacy to the position constructed.

Where Kohlberg would suggest that this mode of reasoning emerges from the individual’s particular cognitive capacities, however, Tappan’s approach is more fluid. Thus, it recognises that individuals draw on discourses, and their associated logics, in order to solve particular practical challenges: in this case to resolve a direct moral call, initiated by me. In turn, this framing suggests a more ‘experimental’ use of external logics, rather than situating ‘logic’ as part of a fixed and internal cognitive system. This fluidity is apparent in the extract above. Thus, whilst there is a pure appeal to a discourse of law, there also exist slightly different applications of this discourse, most notably, drawing on a set of meanings associated with consumer rights. The reasonableness of this overall position condenses, of course, around the same discursive organisation of law (and order), which maintains that legal frameworks are rational, and based on a contractual obligation by which the individuals’ freedom is curtailed in order that they might be protected from negative outcomes. Of course, there is actual logic here, and arguably a given reality. For me, though, the most important feature here is the realisation of that logic amongst a communicative activity. The reasonableness of Josh and Quasim’s position, between themselves, and with us as readers, derives from a sense that we all share the meanings embodied in the discourse that they evoke.

Amongst all of this, however, the final remark in Josh and Quasim’s dialogue represents something of a discursive turn, in that it disrupts the growing sense of the law as a rational and ‘given’ basis for moral position taking. Thus, the sense that ‘they might get paid more, the people who are making them, if we buy fake clothes’, breaks free of the preconventional Kohlbergian anchoring in law and order: that the ‘rule’ is the primary unit of morality. It instead pivots on a different discursive array, constituted through notions of equality, fairness and reciprocity: the constituent features that comprise the ‘justice voice’ as identified by Gilligan. Piaget and Kohlberg privilege such an evaluative framework (expressed directly in philosophical principles by Rawls), seeing it as a ‘higher’ form of moral reasoning. Here, though, it represents participants deploying different languages in order to grapple with a difficult dilemma.
The use of this kind of language is particularly common in the data,

**Interview 5**

Gemma

Um, well, we're in the wrong for buying them, if we know it's been made in a sweatshop ... cos we know we shouldn't buy it, because those people should be paid more ... so we shouldn't buy it ... but then, retailers are also in the wrong, because they shouldn't make so much money on it when they hardly make anything and they do most of the work

Aylish

Yeah, it depends what you see as your morals and values ... some people would say that the manufacturers who pay the people in the sweatshops are wrong for paying the minimum wage, but then they'd also say that the retailers are in the wrong for buying them off the manufacturers ... but also then, that we're in the wrong for buying them off the retailers ... but then other people would say well, everybody wants / the manufacturers aren't in the wrong because they want to make a profit as that's how they're going to go further, and how they're going to get the profit ... and the same with the retailers, that's how they're going to get the money ... and we're not in the wrong for buying them, even because ... because by buying them, it's like, we want them, we need them, and if we've got the money to be able to spend how we want, then we should be able to - it's just conflicts of arguments with different people

In this extended exploration, Aylish and Gemma toss over the various moral positions that they might take in relation to their issue of ‘sweatshop labour’. In doing so, their discussion pivots around principles of fairness and, in particular, of balance (notably in the way it attempts to distribute fault). The extract also illustrates an additional feature of the discourse of justice, and the constructions that rely on it: senses of impartiality and distance are foundational principles. In this respect, the absence of any reference to emotion or interpersonal empathy is a part of the logic that makes Aylish and Gemma’s statements compelling and coherent within the discursive paradigm. Similarly, I would suggest that the grammatical personhood used in the extract is significant. Most interesting is the casting of the individual in the first-person plural (‘we’ rather than ‘I’), which serves to situate the discourse in generalised, rather than personalized terms. In doing so, it reinforces distance and impartiality, and thus supports the justice-based discourse on which the reasonableness of the construction rests.

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15 Of course, the ‘we’ here might equally refer to the immediate context of the interview participants: a topical, rather than obviate third person, which actively personalizes the discourse, rather than generalizing it.
For Gilligan, the inversion of this feature characterizes the relationship between ‘justice’ and ‘care’ voices. Thus, for Tappan, an alternative discourse of morality takes as its starting point empathy, interrelationship and mutual dependence, rather than impartiality and emotive distance. As I have explored elsewhere in this thesis (page 80), this process is troubled by challenges of globalised contexts which create literal, and potentially emotive distance. It is therefore unsurprising that the generalised justice voice tends to be dominant in participants’ constructions. However, these challenges are not insurmountable, and I have already documented that participants overcome them (page 82). As a result, a discourse of care is present in a number of responses. In some cases, the stimulus image enables this by providing a localised ‘hook’ around which to organise responses. Here, for instance, Ryan and Niall respond to the image to the right.

**Interview 7**

**Ryan**
This one … in the photo, it looks like just a group of mates, sat down talking … they've been shopping, cos they've got loads of bags of clothes … and they're just happy about being there, really, with their mates.

**Niall**
I just think it's some kids who are just having a brilliant time, but they're just careless to the people in the other picture / the people who are making those, who get poor wages, when they're spending millions and millions of moneys on clothes that they might not wear.

**Ryan**
They .. they don't live .. in .. like, countries in poverty - do they - they've been, like, brought up to .. like expensive clothes; go out with makes .. and just care about themselves and their mates, and not about other countries .. they're just sat there, probably just thinking about having a good time .. just thinking about what each other has bought, like how good everything looks on them, they don't really think about the other people, do they, they're just thinking about themselves.

**Niall**
Yeah, like, everything we do - you do, I do - like it has an effect on other people, and I think .. um .. I reckon its really wrong not to think about that sometimes.
Here, Ryan and Niall articulate a moral position situated at the level of interpersonal relationships and the responsibilities owed to those with whom we are interdependent. Beyond the explicit reference to ‘carelessness’ (which, though eye-catching, is too literal and minor a marker), the discourse is more proximal. Thus, though its language is framed in the third person, this is a specific, rather than generalised, group of people (those referenced specifically in the picture). Participants articulate moral judgment through an appeal to empathy with the subjects’ thought processes, in contrast to the distant framing of the previous extract. Elsewhere, the participants apply this discourse of care in relation to non-human interrelationships.

Interview 8

Paul: The way I see it, America has done bad things to Iraq, and Iraq has done bad things to America. So what they need to do is ... George Bush needs to say he’s sorry for the things he’s done, and Saddam Hussein needs to apologise for the things he’s done.

Here, Paul uses ‘George Bush’ and ‘Saddam Hussein’ literally, but also as metaphors, underpinned by qualities of both metonymy and synecdoche. Thus, they are used to represent those groups of which they are a part (America and Iraq, respectively), but also those sets of economic, political and ideological arrangements with which they are associated. In adopting this discursive strategy, Paul is able to subject the complex geo-political engagement with which he is engaging in through an interpersonal lens, and thus render it reasonably (if not entirely persuasively) amongst the discourse of care. There is, however, a deeper layer of significance here. The meanings on which Paul draws are not just the generalised discourse of care but a very specific one: with which he (and, indeed, anybody who has worked as a teacher) will be intimately familiar. The language used here, and the pattern of reasoning it encompasses, is a transposition of a discursive turn often deployed by teachers in attempting to resolve arguments and disagreements between pupils. Its appearance here, though perhaps simplistic as a solution (and a product of a discursive turn which simplifies in order to render an easy answer), is interestingly illustrative of the ways in which specific evaluative discourses might be transposed from one context to another and used as a mediational means to render sense into ambiguity. The transposition is perhaps eased by the ways in which the pattern of reasoning is used in its natural ecology: as a
mode of conflict resolution and, in particular, as a strategy which, on reflection, teachers (I, at least) often use when disagreements appear intractable and ambiguous (when we cannot easily identify ‘the culprit). There are, of course, significant echoes of this use, and the difficult ideological context with which Paul engages.

In this data, there is a sense of differing languages of moral evaluation and, in particular, the ‘justice’ and ‘care’ voices around which the discord between Kohlberg and Gilligan has revolved. I might also highlight, though, that there are no strong associations (here, or in the data more generally) between gender and preference for a particular language. Such an observation contests Gilligan’s claim that justice and care voices are gender specific, and supports Tappan’s conceptualisation of them as tools, with which individuals experiment in order to find an effective mechanism of answering a moral call. To this end, the most common form of use of evaluative resources was a ‘mix and match’ approach, drawing on both justice and care derived meanings. In this respect, the dynamic of the following extract is interesting:

**Interview 5**

Aylish  Because we buy the things that they make – like, he makes the coffee and we buy the coffee from the suppliers who buy the beans off him, and then we buy the clothes that the people in the sweatshop make … and buy what the little boys harvested … and they all go into our shops, and we pay the money for them, which they get / well they don't get a lot of it, but they get some of it.

Mark  Are they grateful for that?

Gemma  Yeah…yeah, they probably are grateful for what we do give them as without it they wouldn’t have any jobs … but they’d probably like to have a bit more / but as they don’t know they can have more, they probably don’t realise how little they do get compared with what they should get.

Mark  Ok, we’ve talked a lot about the stuff that ‘we’ do there, I wonder if I can be a little bit mean and push you to talk a bit more about the stuff that ‘you’ do?

Gemma  I don’t, I don’t drink coffee

Aylish  I don't know … I don’t decide myself what coffee we get at home; but I do drink that coffee, and if I said to my dad “can we have fair trade coffee” we probably could … but, it's that we don't think of it. So … I guess … maybe I have a responsibility … um … to people like this … that I don’t always think about
Here, there are overlapping uses of care and justice languages, of discourses of distance and impartiality, and those that emphasise interrelationship and empathy. This is, of course, not an organic oscillation, for I am very much a part of the interaction here: I intervene in order to disrupt particular lines of logic and emerging construction, and thus provoke the modulation between different ethical languages. This, I would maintain, does not discount the significance of the processes in the transcript. Indeed, one might suggest that this process of interaction is further illustration of the use of ethical languages as ‘experimental tools’. In this sense, the shifts here represent attempts to respond meaningfully to the shifting moral calls I present.

The oscillation between justice and care voices may be taken as participants drawing on a range of discursive tools in order to respond meaningfully to a particular moral challenge. It would be remiss, however, to suggest that competing languages always operate to support the individual actor. Consider, for instance, the following extract

**Interview 4**

Chelsea: You know it's not fair ... that they should get a more ... um... fair amount ... but when you're shopping ... um ... you've other things to things about

Sophie: Yeah, when I go shopping, I'm not like ... ooh, I wonder who made this ... I wonder /

Chelsea: But it's not like you're not worrying about things - you've got to buy the things that make you look the best ... that your friends will like ... um ... and I think ... there's other worries about your friends ... um ... like that time you liked the dress in Primark, and I liked it too

Sophie: Oh yeah, and we both really wanted it

Chelsea: Yeah ... well I wouldn't just go and buy it cos I didn't want to hurt your feelings

Sophie: I was, like, the same - so in the end, neither of us bought the dress [laughs]

Chelsea: Um ... and ... like, if you did I couldn't be all like 'err, someone made that in a sweatshop'... I wouldn't think about that, and I wouldn't say it anyway cos it’d hurt people's feelings.

It is easy to discount the moral qualities of this extract: to see it as echoing a surface, insular and self-absorbed body of commitments. To do so, however, does a disservice to the genuinely ethical character present in Sophie and Chelsea’s construction. It may be immediate in context, but it is nonetheless
important in their particular lived ecology. Further, the ethical juggling involved here is sophisticated. It derives from both a conflict of contexts, and a contradictory pull of differing moral languages. The first of these dimensions is clear, and situated in the competing calls of actors in the local and global realms of existence. The latter is more complex, and stems from the way in which languages of justice and care preference particular facets of the evolving engagement. The former, with its tendency towards generalised and distant judgment, pulls towards global contexts, and thus places an imperative on ‘worries’ about far away others. In contrast, the care voice, with its emphasis on interpersonal understandings, places more weight on the nature of immediate relationships. The two interweave throughout, but arrive at direct conflicts in the final turn of the thesis.

Ultimately, Sophie and Chelsea manage to maintain an ethical engagement with both forms of discourse and both contexts. This illustrates that whilst immediate moral concerns may be significant, they do not necessarily ‘overwhelm’ more global and distant ones. Both sets of dilemma and pressure remain ‘live’ in the resultant construction, but they do so in an appropriate way, which reflects the lived reality of negotiating these competing calls. Of course, we must remind ourselves, here, that this is data derived from an interview context. Hence, this ethical juggling may well be a product of its particular methodology. What remains, though, is still significant: however partial and contrived, the participants still accomplish this delicate balance in a sophisticated way.

**Reasonableness Beyond the ‘Moral’**

So far in this exploration, I have suggested that it is possible to locate languages of both care and justice in participants’ attempts to respond to the stimuli with which they are presented. Further, it has begun to become apparent that these languages co-exist and interact in participants’ actual constructions. I would suggest, however, that previous extract also begins to reveal a further layer in the ways in which ‘reason’ is constructed within engagements through the appropriation of discourses that are not strictly ‘moral’ in tone. Thus, the senses of ‘rightness’ communicated in the extract also derive from notions of group solidarity: that a given construction is reasonable because it conforms to, and perpetuates, the internal expectations of a subculture of peers. An
incorporation of this facet is, I would suggest, cogent with the overall focus of this thesis, in which my concern is with a broad sense of ideological, rather than moral, engagement. Such a shift implies that the ‘rightness’ of a given construction is bounded not just in logics which govern ethical correctness, but also a range of other socially constituted discourses which legitimise and marginalise particular positions. This kind of framing implies a much broader and more diverse range of ‘evaluative resources’ on which participants might draw.

In this line of exploration, an appeal to group solidarity as the origin of ‘rightness’ can be found in Alice and Olivia’s data:

\textbf{Interview 1}

Alice & You’ve become a proper eco-warrior haven’t you?
\hline
Olivia & Yeah … like … I’m in the eco-club in school; we campaign for things like better recycling and that – and like, out of school I’m always telling people to turn lights out and that…
\hline
Mark & Tell me a bit more about what it’s like to be in the club
\hline
Olivia & Um … well … we all believe that it’s important that you’re, like, worried about the environment … um … so we do things together to try and promote that in school … we all meet up at lunch time, on a Tuesday, and we decide what we’re going to campaign for and then we do it.
\hline
Mark & And what if you disagreed with somebody … do you have arguments about things?
\hline
Olivia & No … never
\hline
Mark & So you don’t have disagreements
\hline
Olivia & Sometimes I don’t agree with what someone is saying … or … um … I think something else is more important. But you don’t SAY anything – you wouldn’t want to hurt their feelings!

Compared with the previous extract, we might suggest that the concerns here are more ethically ‘important’ and ‘genuine’. I would, however, resist this impulse and suggest that whilst cultural expectation lends more legitimacy to its surface ‘theme’ as a moral focus, its tone and internal dynamics are comparable\(^\text{16}\). Here again the business of the discussion is about the maintenance of a group and its solidarity, and the rationale for the

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\(^{16}\) As asserted elsewhere in this piece, my intent here is not to imply complete moral relativism, nor to deny that a judgement of differential moral value might be applied to the two constructions. Put simply, however, I do not see such judgement to be the business of this thesis.
commitments expressed are couched in reference to this a legitimising facet. It is possible to bring this analysis full circle, and back to earlier discussions: these extracts might be seen to be extending a discourse of care, in that they both rest fundamentally on the preservation of good interpersonal relationships. Thus, the discourse deployed in both the seemingly macro expression of global concerns, and the more intimate concerns for friends, are couched in emotional and empathetic discourse. Both make explicit reference to feelings of proximal others as important principles in evaluation. Such a framing allows us to view an otherwise superficial expression (‘you’ve got to buy the things that make you look the best ... that your friends will like’) through a different lens. In enables us to recognise that whilst such a priority may seem less ‘important’ to external viewers when compared to more global and overtly political issues, it is still a dimension of the ideological framing of engagement.

Postmodernity and Appropriation of Reason

In this opening section of the chapter, I have attempted to illustrate one particular dynamic in the ways participants use mediational means to construct ideological engagement: in production of senses of reason and reasonableness through the appropriation of bodies of meaning. The usefulness of this conceptual framework is, however, two-fold. Beyond the specific instances of moral engagement explored so far, it also speaks well to the problematics of context with which this thesis grapples. In particular, as set out in the previous chapter, the postmodern context is one typified by a plurality of meanings, a cacophony of truths and a paucity of absolute authorities. This is something which conventional models of moral being struggle to accommodate (for reasons set out on page 120). This is either because they miscast culture as monolithic (in the case of over-socialised models), or because they suggest that external conditions are stable and knowable (in the case of over-rationalised approaches). By contrast, the Wertsch/Tappan model of morality as mediated action not only accommodates such a pluralistic epistemological context, it actively expects it. As a result, I would suggest that the perspective offers a useful framework to understand individual responses to this context.

Applied to other remits of life, this oversupply of meaning tends to result in a cultural hybridity. Individuals engage with different sources of meaning in a ‘pick and mix’ manner, attempting to locate those truths that are useful for
them in particular contexts (found, for instance, in the religious experimentation of ‘spiritual shoppers’ or the rise of ‘alternative’ therapies alongside conventional medicine). A parallel can be drawn between this process and the essence of the descriptions of the interactions above. The overwhelming sense is of individuals testing particular modes of explaining right and wrong in order to find ‘ways in’ to problems that often seem intractable. The theory of mediated action necessitates such a degree of fluidity in the relationship between the individual and their culture, and thus easily incorporates flows and currents in the discursive milieu they inhabit. Ultimately, the value of the meanings that the actor appropriates stands or falls on a two-fold principle of utility: that it enables them to render meaning into their experience and actions, and that it facilitates a communication of that meaning to those other individuals with whom they interact.

In part, recognition of this dynamic is an internal necessity: individuals are engaged in making sense of this pluralism, and a cogent theory of moral being must accommodate this. Equally, though, the conditions of postmodernity bring with them a corresponding ‘external’ necessity. Beyond the level of individuals, liberal culture and society are engaged in the same ongoing project to reconstruct and reorient ethics, together with concepts of democracy and citizenship, in the context of their internal plurality and diversity. This theme is particularly notable in the works of Charles Taylor (1989, 1994) and of Jurgen Habermas (1990, 2007), both of whom assert a necessity to abandon (in Taylor’s terms), a ‘procedural liberalism’ based on a deontological application of blanket ‘rights’. Such a politic, they assert, tends to favour majorities and ride roughly over the perspectives and views of minorities (who consequently sit uncomfortably and in contrast amongst civil society). Both theorists propose a reorientation that is based on difference as both a fundamental given, and a social good. Taylor suggests that from this arises as ‘politics of recognition’, of entitlement to difference in identity and values.

For some thinkers the appropriate response to pluralism in relation to ethics is to retreat from the enlightenment project of universal (or universalising) values, and to a sense of moral relativism (e.g. Lyotard, 1997). In his notions of

17 These are notions to which I will return in upcoming chapters.
communicative and discourse ethics, however, Habermas actively resists this. Here, he suggests that given the plurality of competing ‘goods’ present in a typical liberal society,rightness can never be established through monological reflection. In other words, internal and private ‘reason’, of the form emphasised in the Kohlbergian tradition, whilst potentially useful in isolated cases, will fail to establish the necessary consensus for coherence to occur within a pluralistic society. This is, however, not to say that moral universals are impossible: achieving such consensus, however, requires the locus of their generation to shift from private reason to public discourse and discussion. In an echo of Taylor’s assertions this, in turn, necessitates a socio-political context tolerant to difference and open to the opinions of all.

Both Taylor and Habermas therefore imagine a liberal society comprising rational individuals who exists comfortably in a multiplicity of perspectives, and able to engage meaningfully with them. Framed in this way, then, it might be suggested that Wertsch’s approach not only offers a pragmatic insight into the mechanisms and methods by which individuals orient themselves to the context in which they exist, but also that it offers a reciprocal voice to Habermas. It therefore potentially demonstrates that the philosophic reconstruction of ethics he posits is also possible in the experience and consciousness of individuals embedded in real life.

**Context Anchoring, and Borrowed Certainty**

The general exploration of Wertsch’s model of mediated action, and of Tappan’s specific application to morality, given so far has focused on the nascent sense of how ‘reasonableness’ is constructed within an ideological engagement. I have suggested that this, in part, derives from the use of broader ‘evaluative’ discourses (and that such a process is necessary in the context of a pluralistic society). As such, I have argued that these languages not only provide a set of coherent ways of talking about issues, but also lend a kind of ‘communicative logic’ around which particular judgments of ‘rightness’ coalesce. In this section, I intend to expand this treatment, and to suggest that this is just one dimension through which ‘ideological engagement’ is constituted of mediated action. Notions of ‘logic’ acquire primacy when we talk of ethics in abstract and normative ways. In the broader ecology of everyday
life, however, moral evaluation and the lines of argument and justification it implies stands and falls not just on reason, but also in reference to the context onto which that logic is applied (and the coherence of the application against context). These facets of moral/ideological constructions, which one might otherwise too easily discount as ‘detail’, serve an important function. They provide a necessary ‘reality’, a sense of weight that consequently serves to lend reasonableness to the evaluative resources applied.

The rendering of context is therefore a facet of ideological engagement, and I would suggest that here too Wertsch’s concepts are useful. The process by which context becomes meaningful, and that meaningfulness socially communicable, is also reliant on a broader cultural framework. Following Tappan’s method of re-applying this theory, I would offer illustration in relation to Kohlberg’s datasets. Here, one of his original participants responds to the abstract moral dilemma posed in his interview,

“It was really the druggist’s fault, he was unfair, trying to overcharge and letting someone die. Heinz loved his wife and wanted to save her. I think anyone would. I don’t think they would put him in jail. The judge would look at all sides, and see that the druggist was charging too much.”

(in Crain, 2010, p. 156)

Kohlberg suggests that such a statement evidences a particular form of reasoning (moral evaluation in relation to good interpersonal relationships), underpinned by cognitive structures within the individual. In turn, Tappan suggests a different reading: that the response can be interpreted as the use of particular forms of ‘discourse’, in this case, a language of care. I would extend this position, and suggest that the ‘coherence’ of the response, pivots only partially on the application of an overarching moral discourse. The discourse itself is predicated on a whole range of additional systems of meanings and, more importantly, it is only ‘reasonable’ in its deployment insofar as it is supported by an array of other contextualising turns which impart the additional ‘reality’ not present in Kohlberg’s original dilemma. Thus, Heinz’ love for his wife is an imposed motivation, one bolstered by a particular discourse of relationships, as is the judge’s implied impartiality (here supported by a particular telling of the processes of law). In this sense, participants are actively filling in the details absent from the dilemma. In doing so, they reference
meanings and expectations which are fundamentally culturally constituted. Each of these ‘details’ brings with it a sense of context through which the imperatives derived from a discourse of care are more cogent. Without them, a moral position is still achievable of course, but it becomes logic without compulsion, and is thus less persuasive (seemingly, less ‘reasonable’) in a practical ecology.

**Ideological Being in Partial Contexts**

Fundamentally, then, I propose here that ideological functioning is, in part, an exercise in context building and securing, and that ‘mediated action’ provides a useful lens through which to understand this process. The illustration given above suggests that such an interpretation is viable in relation to moral engagement in general terms. Here, however, I suggest that it is particularly crucial in understanding how individuals engage with the specific complexities of the contexts on which I focus in this thesis. As explored in the previous movement, processes such of globalisation – and its associated economic, social and cultural shifts – present the individual with contexts of engagement that are notably ambiguous, partial and contradictory. Ideological engagement with these contexts therefore presents the individual with uncertain foundations, and evaluative discourse alone is insufficient to overcome these. The application of appropriated logics in this way does not necessarily imbue engagements with a stronger sense of certainty as might be expected. Rather, such logics, without firm contextual realities, produce mismatched senses of certainty, undermining the compulsion of the constructs. Participants recognise this tension:

**Interview 6**

Sarah  
So, like, in church we learn that Jesus would want us to turn the other cheek ... like ... if someone does something to you, you should just ignore them ... but then Muslims don’t think that; they think you should stand up for yourself and not be pushed around. That’s what jihad means - struggle /

Emma  
Yeah, we learnt about this - people think Jihad means killing someone, but it just means struggling to stand up for what you think is right.

Mark  
So, when you think about things like 9/11 ... do you ... do you use that idea of ‘turn the other cheek’ in making a judgment.

Sarah  
Well no ... but ... um ... its more complicated than that, isn’t it ... I mean, I don’t think it was right or anything - that’s
not what I’m saying! But at the same time, ‘turn the other cheek’ is all very well — um — when it’s to do with you, and you know all the things your turning your cheek again — but this isn’t like this — all the things that they’ve experienced, that led them to do that, I just don’t know.

Interview 4
Chelsea Like … I can say this is dead bad and everything … and it is / of course it is … but if I’m honest, I’d just be saying that — I wouldn’t necessary feel it … [pause] hmmm … that makes me sound bad doesn’t it. Ultimately, I don’t really understand everything that’s going on with this man, or these ones, so it’s difficult to be that passionate about it — I just know ‘its bad’ from what people tell me.

Fundamentally, the stimulus images here, and the issues and contexts to which they allude, are contested. They are potentially embedded in numerous realities, but without enough detail to be confidently located in any. Without this reality, the application of evaluative discourses fails. The task thus falls to the individual to ‘produce’ this reality, to import and impart meanings into stimuli in order to anchor them in something more stable. It is only then that a meaningful, compelling and positioned engagement can be fostered. Here, participants reflect on this claim,

Interview 9 (Second Wave)
Mark So one of the things I’ve noticed is how much extra information people tend to layer onto the images — stuff that they bring in, rather than stuff that’s ‘there’.
Aylish Well, I guess you kind of have to do that … otherwise, we’d just be describing the photo — like; ‘here’s a man, he’s got a tray of things, he is looking at us, there he is’ [laughs]
Mark But that gets me thinking — I wonder whether we do this elsewhere … um … like, when you see pictures on the news, whether you’re got to add all sorts of information to it for it to make sense
Aylish Yeah, I guess
Gemma I think that’s probably true; cos … like … when you watch a starving child on the news, they’re telling you a thing — like the story and that — but your thinking about all sorts of other things, that’s not in the story — about Africa in general, and its reminding you about stuff you’ve learnt in citizenship and that. And it kind of all makes sense when you put all that together.
Aylish Yeah … like, making all sorts of connections.

In part, then, we should recognise that the necessity to ‘add meaning’ to engagements here is a methodological artefact: presenting images as stimuli for discussion invites just such improvisation. There is, however, also a sense of
broader significance in what Gemma and Aylish say. Further, I would contest (echoing my earlier discussion in the methodology section of this thesis) that there remain parallels between this methodological contrivance and the partiality in how we encounter such contexts in our daily ecologies.

**Securing Reality, Anchoring Context**

The production of ‘reasonable’ and ‘cogent’ ideological engagements therefore rests on the capacity to ‘anchor’ context in a given reality, and to fill that context with the necessary detail for it to feel compelling. The strategies by which participants achieve this might be read through the analytic framework of the theory of mediated action: that they ‘import’ meaningfulness by borrowing those available to them in their surrounding culture. Illustrations of such a dynamic are abundant throughout participants' data. In the most obvious cases, the process occurs in overt ways, and participants actively reference those sources on which they draw,

**Interview 7**

Ryan The leaders of the rebellion, that are fighting against the government, would have probably taken him away from his village when he was young, and trained him up, and made him believe what the rebels were doing was right...

Niall Blood Diamond

Ryan Yeah, like Blood Diamond -- the film -- and, at the end of the day, he’s been brought up thinking shooting government / shooting innocent people / is...

Niall Right

Ryan The right thing to do .. cos he doesn't know any different because the whole country's just ... in a state of turmoil

**Interview 3**

Iram Like .. some people say that global warming isn’t happening ... that it’s just natural but we watched this documentary

Aftab An Inconvenient Truth

Iram Yeah ... and actually .. um .. he showed how climate change was natural -- but what was it?

Aftab I think it was that this cycle had been loads more than other ones

Here, the narrative provided by particular films offers participants a set of meanings by which they can render sense into stimulus images; and through which they can read the context with which they engage. Elsewhere, the
The origins of meanings are less obviously referenced, though the resultant construction still resonates with the same feel of prefabrication;

**Interview 5**

Aylish The governments, some of them, they have the money … they manage the money in certain ways, so that it's not going into the health care and the benefits for the poorer people – and into education, the education you have to pay for yourself, whereas here it's all … you get it for free, your education – unless you want to go into private … so … people aren’t having the opportunities

Gemma They have … like … a different type of government to us … like, it's more … I don't know …

Aylish They’ve probably, like, been colonised by the British, previously … and then as we’ve given them the freedom, the governments have come in and the people don’t … haven't ever had as much rights as we’ve had, so they’ve not been able to vote for who they want, so they get more dictatorships – so there’s, like, fighting to do with that, because they want their freedom, but the dictators don’t let them have it.

Though no explicit ‘source’ is referenced here, the extract feels ‘paradigmatic’. It draws on a cogent and internally coherent underlying system of explanations of the world. In her follow-up interview, Aylish reflects on this;

**Interview 9 (Second Wave)**

Aylish Ha … its like … I’m telling you a story – this, then that, then this then that – look at me going on with myself [laughs].

Mark But there’s a lot of … stuff … going on here, too?

Aylish Yeah

Mark Where’s it all coming from?

Aylish Hmm, now that I look at it … um … I guess this is all stuff we’ve done … I think we watched a video in citizenship.

Gemma Yeah, and these are some of the … messages … the things that the narrator was saying.

Here, Aylish identifies a source most obviously familiar to her, though we might also note a broader resonance: the meanings on which she draws are not just specific to a 'citizenship lesson'. Rather, they exist amongst a broader array of debates, perspectives and mythologies which surface, amongst other places, in the participants’ immediate remit of school-based experience.
In each of these cases, the participants run the stimulus image together with an overarching and pre-existing narrative. Elsewhere, reference is more subtle and individual,

**Interview 6**

Emma: There he ... just ... working hard for the money

Sarah: Just going to work day-in, day-out to earn his money to look after his family

Emma: So that his kids can go to school and ... like ... get the things they need

Here, the use of external meanings follows a slightly different dynamic. A particularistic story of that image in improvised (in contrast to a prefabricated one). Nevertheless, the processes outlined by Wertsch are at play, and the extract thus draws on an array of smaller units of meaning in order to support it. Most notably, it rests on a set of associations and expectations derived from 'family life'. The differences in these strategies are, of course, important - as are the consequences derived from their use. I give further exploration of these facets throughout this chapter. Here, though, I would dwell for a moment solely on the significance of these processes, both to Wertsch and to me.

In order to fully appreciate each of these extracts, it is necessary to reframe our reading slightly. It is possible, on first viewing, to read them as evidence of 'learning' about particular ideas and issues from various source materials, and this is, of course, certainly a part of what is happening here. More interesting, though, is the way in which participants now deploy those meanings, how they have been transposed into an alternative context. In each case, the stimulus image is wrapped up in a broader overarching story (whether improvised or adopted), and thus pulled along with a narrative flow which lends it a particular reality. In other words, the meanings supplied by a broader cultural framework enable the individual to 'anchor' an otherwise partial and ambiguous stimulus in a more stable reality. In doing so, they render the image meaningful, and thus a meaningful engagement is facilitated with it.

**Subsumptive and Improvisational Contextualisation**

There is therefore diversity in the sources of meanings on which participants draw. Further, the strategies on which they base the use of these resources also vary. In one approach, which I call subsumptive contextualisation, the
stimulus is drawn into overarching and overwhelming systems of meanings, and carried along with its particular reality. This is most notable when participants draw references from popular culture: to articles read, for instance, documentaries and films viewed. Here, there is often an explicit narrative into which the stimulus is drawn (subsumed) in order to lend it a ‘sense’ (see the extract on page 149 for a clear example of this). However this form of subsumption need not be drawn in relation to obvious narratives, nor must it relate to texts drawn from popular culture (though their specificity and narrative rendering makes them particularly apparent). Thus, a similar contextualising strategy can be found in participants drawing on particular economic and historical narratives (as on page 150) – or in relation to particular ‘issues’;

**Interview 1**

Alice  It's like ... crops so it's probably like ...

Olivia  A third-world country ... like ... fair trade people because they look happy and not sad. Cos, like, on, like, adverts for Make Poverty History and stuff, when they show you a few countries where it's not fair trade and stuff, they're always dead sad, but then fair-trade - happy.

Alice  Fair trade's where, em, where the person gets a fair amount of money for the things they're selling instead of paying them, em, really cheap, em, not much money

Olivia  'Fair' 'Trade' ... Cos, then they'll get more money so that they can live and stuff

Here, then, participants draw on an array of meanings that surrounds notions of ‘fair trade’, integrating the stimulus context through the mechanism of subsumptive contextualisation. The process by which they achieve this contextualisation parallels that used elsewhere in references to film narrative. Indeed, it could be argued that the latter often draw on broader ‘issue’ discourses (and beyond) in *their* construction of meaning. Thus, the narrative of ‘Blood Diamond’, the film to which Niall and Ryan refer on page 149, is not an exercise of absolute originality. Rather it produces its meanings through a process that actively draws on pre-existing discourses: particular ways of talking about sub-Saharan Africa’s politics, geography and people, for instance, and of articulating the nature of corporations. These bodies of meaning offer static cues to the portrayal, and thus establish expectations of the symbols and meanings which we might expect to encounter in a ‘realistic’ representation. In
other words, they constitute shared cultural meanings that mediate, and thus enable, our interpretation of the film. In this sense, discourse acts as ‘props’ to the emerging narrative (‘its crops, so it’s probably like ... a third world country’), but it can also play a more assertive role: implying particular processes and interactions, and thus providing weight to particular preferred constructions.

Olivia’s straightforward deconstruction of the discourse (‘fair’...‘trade’) in this extract therefore belies a whole range of taken for granted and implicit meanings. The issue-discourse does not provide the same overt and recognisable ‘story’ as we might otherwise recognise it (a unitary narrative within which to embed the stimuli). There are, though, stories occurring within it: preferred plots, sets of processes and logics of sequence within which the otherwise partial image is better understood. For Alice and Olivia, the discourse tends to guide towards a celebratory treatment of the interventions of Western NGOs (and the consumers complicit with them), and the process by which they have a beneficial effect on far-away peoples. Elsewhere, the fair-trade discourse offers a particular understanding of the human subject portrayed by the stimulus (rather than the organisational one):

**Interview 2**

Quasim Oh yeah, it's like ... not fair trade
Josh He probably works for a massive company
Quasim All of these ... um ... berries ... he gets hardly any money out of them because the owner ... the companies are just buying them for nothing. And he has to sell them because ... they'd shoot him or something otherwise.
Josh I just think he's one of the pickers ... there's like, loads of them.
Mark And how would this be different if it was fair trade?
Quasim Right, well...
Josh He'd have more money
Quasim ... he'd do loads of, like, berry picking for little money, whereas if you've got fair trade, you get more money ... but, if somebody back here paid for it, you'd get more money.

Here, then, the fair trade discourse establishes a more 'interpersonal' reading, which frames the engagement in terms of a particular individual’s experience (rather than explicitly describing a set of processes at the macro-level). Whilst this construction is 'personalised', however, it is still very much a telling of the
reality contained by narratives surrounding fair trade. It is also interesting that the same image can be read as opposite illustrations of the same discursive arrangement; where Alice and Olivia see a victory narrative, Josh and Quasim note one of oppression (and consequently, of the potential of liberation). Underpinning both, though, are different ends of the same 'plot', governed by processes contained within the conventional reading of the ‘fair trade’ discourse.

In addition to these kinds of ‘procedural’ logics, these extracts also begin to illustrate the notion of discourse-as-prop. In this respect, the ‘crop’/‘berry’ references are significant as they act as emblematic signifiers of the fair trade discourse, around which the rest of the construction is composed. This element is, of course, also dominant features of the stimulus image (given above), and it is therefore unsurprising that participants choose to foreground it in their responses. Equally, however, participants’ responses are more than just passive descriptions of the picture, and they are not simply being ‘led’ towards a particular reading. Rather, they are active in the construction, complicit in engaging with this particular discursive cue, and populating its context with additional meaning.

In each of these examples of subsumptive contextualisation, the stimulus is given context by running it into an external, prefabricated reality. The dynamic of this involves drawing in a logic that determines ‘processes’, supported by a range of additional discursive cues that act as ‘props’ to support its reality. Elsewhere, improvisational contextualisation is more notable, with the reality around the image constructed in a more piece-meal way. Here, the model offered by Wertsch continues to be useful: the fabric of the consequent reality, though improvised, is thus constructed in reference to an array of mediational means. It is an act of ‘bricolage’, drawing on discursive resources which find utility in context (Derrida, 1978). The result of these processes is often a sense of an ‘emergent’ narrative, which becomes gradually more stable as the participants build in meanings and thus a firmer anchoring in reality. Sophie and Chelsea produce a good illustration;
Interview 4

Sophie  Looks like somebody in, like, Africa or somewhere

Chelsea  Yeah ... it’s nice weather

Sophie  Yeah, he’s doing – it looks like he’s working – like picking ... grapes or something ... I don’t know what they are ... cherries or whatever they are

Chelsea  Yeah ... he’s happy though

Sophie  It must be hot, cos he’s sweating ... He’s probably not getting a lot of money for what he’s doing – he looks quite poor cos his clothes are a bit dirty and everything

Chelsea  Looks like he’s been working hard

Sophie  Yeah, he must have been working all the time, because he’s got, like, loads – a whole basket – so it’s long hours and everything ... It’s like ... hard ... work – it’s not like loads of money for it or anything

Mark  And why do you think that is?

Sophie  It’s just the way it is, isn’t it

Chelsea  Cos they haven’t got a lot of money in third-world countries ... he’s probably got a family

Sophie  Lots of children

Chelsea  Yeah...to do the work as well – a family income

Sophie  Probably not a very good house – just, like ... not straw

Chelsea  A hut

Sophie  A mud hut, something like that ... and they have to travel for everything, for water and things like that – they don’t have electricity or anything

Chelsea  I think it’s ... like ... to show they’re enjoying the work ... kind of - but it doesn’t show the whole picture, cos they’re not being paid good money and they are working a long time –

Sophie  - it’s like fair trade – It’s like the fair trade stuff, like, he’s happy cos he’s probably working for fair trade or someone like that, and he’s getting a decent wage maybe – and it’s just, like, representing that. ... Cos they don’t get a lot for the work they do – it’s all, like, taken by companies and stuff ... em ... that’s all I know about that.

Here, participants arrive at a construction that is similar in orientation to the previous examples. However, there is a different tone to extract, reflecting the different process through which they arrive at it. In previous extracts, participants’ use of subsumptive contextualisation has implicated a rather direct arrival at a ‘point’, and a consequent unravelling, as they draw out threads of contextualising detail from it (in essence: this image is of fair trade. Therefore, the subjects experience is as this...). In this extract, however, the
overall narrative into which participants integrate the stimulus is produced more gradually. Thus, a number of component 'threads' are first improvised which gradually evolve and interconnect until they support a broader narrative of 'fair trade'. This is not, of course, to imply that this improvisation is isolated from cultural context: again, the individual components are devised in reference to a range of mediational means, through which sense is rendered into the image. Perhaps the most notable of these means is a particular, and dominant, discourse of ‘Africa’ that supplies a set of expectations emphasising particular features of geography and climate (hot/barren), work (menial) and family (large). The initial interaction of this discourse with the overall construction is, however, notably different. Rather than forming an overwhelming logic and narrative flow, it instead supplies snippets of meaning which participants apply to their own emerging conceptualisation of a given reality.

**Available and Imported Meaning**

Sophie and Chelsea's constructive strategy also renders apparent a further, more subtle, dynamic in the process of contextualisation. As I have explored previously (see page 63), the stimulus images are themselves social constructions. As such, they are replete with their own meanings - or rather, they are saturated with cues to preferred connections in broader discursive arrangements. Viewed in this way, the process by which engagements are contextualised consists not only of subsumption or bricolage/improvisation. It also involves a second dimension: the interplay of 'available meaning' (present, or implicated, by the image) and that 'imported meaning' which the participants apply to it from outside sources\(^\text{18}\). Again, it is possible to identify distinct strategies by which the participants oriented themselves to this dynamic. These can be broadly characterised as 'inside out' (or inductive) approaches, and 'outside in' (or deductive) strategies.

In some cases, notably the previous extract, the detail of the images was central to the actual construction. The result was an inductive contextualisation (in that it moves from specific features, to overarching 'theory' of context).

\(^{18}\)Both of these are, of course, socially mediated: the meanings embodied in the image are not literally encoded, but are realised because the viewer is familiar with the discourse that they reference
Here, participants would scour the image for cues and clues, mining it for particular meanings and ideas that they then connected to outside discourses in order to construct a more coherent overarching reality. Typically, and in the case of Sophie and Chelsea’s response, these strategies were typified by a series of short, observational turns that draw out a particular feature and then connect it to a broader significance. This significance then develops in its coherence until the contributors are able to talk in terms of a stable reality. At these points, the turns of interaction become more prolonged as the external body of meanings begins to sustain analysis and exploration, over the hunt for details to cue discussion.

Elsewhere an outside-in, or deductive, strategy was employed. Here, the ‘theory’ of context is arrived at relatively quickly, and then used to feed individual ‘strands’ of exploration of particular details in the stimulus image, which are used to confirm its reality. In these strategies, the interaction pattern described above tends to be reversed. Thus, participants begin with a more extended exploration of ‘the issue’, establishing the basic framework and parameters of its meaning. This tended to be followed by a series of shorter turns, as participants related and tied the broader context to the threads of individual detail featured in the image. This kind of patterns can be observed in the extract given on page 153.

It is worthwhile clarifying, here, that the subsumptive/improvisational and inductive/deductive strategies described here denote slightly different dimensions of construction. The former relates to relationship between the specific image, and the broader ‘story’ into which it is integrated, whilst the latter derives from the dynamic of interplay between ‘given’ and ‘imported’ meaning. Because ‘subsumptive’ patterns tend to work within the framework of an existing external narrative, they tend also to be based also on a deductive strategy. By contrast, improvisational patterns, with their emergent narratives, tend to be inductive. The separateness of these dimensions is, however, a matter of emphasis and it is possible to pick out extracts of data that run contrary to these tendencies;

*Interview 4*

Sophie  What’s that?
Chelsea  Is it a hospital?
Sophie: Oh... they're sewing.

Chelsea: Oh, are they? ... oh, it's like a sweatshop.

Sophie: Yeah and there's children - are they children? In a third world country again.

Chelsea: Working ... hard ... for the money.

Sophie: It must be hot, cos they've only got their trousers and that ... so it must be warm ... it's a small room, they're all cramped in aren't they.

Chelsea: They've got children working as well, so they're starting work young.

Sophie: It's danger ... are they like under the machines, picking stuff up and that - it's dangerous ... it's not very safe is it ...?

Chelsea: They need to start earning money when they're young.

Sophie: To support the family, init ... cos the family probably don't have much money ... plus there's probably no education system, or they can't afford to go to school or something, the parents won't just let them sit around and do nothing.

This extract, then, is illustrative of a subsumptive strategy, in that contextualisation is situated within a particular discourse surrounding an issue ('sweatshops'). However, the on-going emphasis of the transcript draws out features of the photograph as guiding facets (an inductive strategy). Such a pattern is reversed in the following extract:

**Interview 6**

Emma: There he ... just ... working hard for the money.

Sarah: Just going to work day-in, day-out to earn his money to look after his family.

Emma: So that his kids can go to school and ... like ... get the things they need.

Sarah: But he gets ripped off, doesn't he ...?

Emma: Yeah, like, the people he works for, they don't really pay him very well ... only, like 10p.

Sarah: So he just has to work harder and harder, for longer and longer hours, just to earn the same amount of money.

Emma: It's a bit like the fair-trade stuff.

Here, participants adopt an improvisational strategy (gradually developing a narrative as they go), but one which is more deductive in tone. In this sense, it is notable that each individual detail, though related to the specific image, is based on meanings imposed on the image rather than drawn out of cues present within it.
The notion of inductive and deductive contextualisation provides a method of describing the differing emphasis of participants’ constructions. However, it should not be read to imply that internal and external meanings are isolated facets. Rather, the discursive dynamics that underpin the stable production of realities are complex, interweaving and interdependent. Thus, even where the emphasis of a construct is on picking out details found in the image, the production of ‘significance’ involves importing external meanings through which to make sense of them. Sarah and Emma’s reading, for instance, of the farmer’s life of toil and labour are not separate from their later arrival at a discourse of fair trade. Rather the latter lurks in the background of the construction until they evoke it overtly. As such, both discourses exert a mutually reinforcing pressure on the overall narrative of the construct. That the farmer is subject to such hard work propagates notion of exploitation in the discourse of fair trade whilst it, in turn, provides a sense of rationale and meaning to the toil itself.

There is, here, a potential to refine further the notional ways that ‘cued’ and ‘external’ meanings interact. The process is not just linear and direct: there is something more complex, here, than one-dimensional association between signifiers and meanings. Following a broadly post-structural line, I would suggest here that meaning is relational and webbed; more than just the interface between signs and referents, but also between signs and other signs, meanings and other meanings. Such relationships generate complex webs of connotation and denotation which also begin to construct particular social realities, and which interface with participants’ constructions. Consider, for instance, the image that provoked Sarah and Emma’s response (that of the majority-world farmer) and imagined others. If the image was of a different setting – a greengrocer on a British high street, for instance, lugging heavy boxes to the front of his shop – then the notion of ‘working hard for his money’ brings with it an entirely different array of implications (one which perhaps has more of a celebratory connotation). Coupled with other signs though, particular localities, ethnicities and activities, then its implications are entirely different\(^{19}\).

\(^{19}\)At this point, it is worth reinforcing that the objective realities of the stimulus image, and of the issue of fair-trade, are held as relatively irrelevant. They are beyond the
The Consequences of Mediational Means

We arrive, here then, at an important point of principle: the culturally derived meanings on which participants draw facilitate constructions and engagements, but they also fundamentally affect their nature. This is a sense that is entirely cogent with Wertsch’s proposals on mediated action, and his assertion that mediational means both facilitate and constrain activity. In the context of this research, participants draw on mediational means in order to render sense into ambiguous and partial contexts, and to attain some purchase on moral evaluation over them: thus constructing a moral/ideological ‘engagement’. The use of such resources therefore enables a particular activity where it otherwise might be difficult or impossible. As the previous paragraph begins to note, however, the preferred reality that accompanies these mediational means also serves as a notable influence on the nature of that construction. It inhabits the poles of influence and of right and wrong involved within it, and the author’s relationship to them. Here, we begin to arrive at an important tension: between the individual and the meanings and resources available to them. This, its implications for positioning, notions of self, and of responsibility are the major themes of the chapters which follow. Here, though, it is relevant to illustrate briefly this sense of consequence.

It is possible to continue the analysis of the ‘fair trade’ discourse I initiated above in order to produce this illustration. Most notably, the arrangement of meanings implied by the dominant version of this discourse situates particular lines of harm (those associated by macro supply chains) and of benefit (those facilitated through fair-trade agencies). Thus, it constitutes a presupposed ethical formation. This kind of prefabrication brings with it implications for the positioning of the author as an ethical actor or otherwise. Hence, in exploring the constructions that are predicated on this discourse, we tend to find either a firm articulation of a commitment to the principles of fair-trade, or a vague sense of guilt about participants’ lack of practical engagement with these principles in day-to-day life.

Whilst the fair trade discourse is perhaps the preferred reading of this particular stimulus, participants did not always choose to draw on it. The immediate perception of the participants, and what matters is what they do with this space.
alternative systems of meaning applied brought with them entirely different implications for authors ideological positioning. In this respect, Quasim and Josh's contextualisation of a stimulus image as 'making fake clothes' is illustrative, in that it brings with it an entirely different set of connotations about harm and help. In essence, the poles found in the usual 'fair trade' discourse are reversed, the 'ethical individual' is situated on the side of the transnational corporation, rather than the majority-world producer (I explore this more fully in the section beginning on page 246).

The dynamics of the Fair Trade discourse shapes the nature of moral engagements in also more subtle ways. As noted above, it is based on notions of ‘helplessness’ and ‘oppression’, and these conceptual markers tend to interact with features of other languages applied. Notably they act as foundations into which more evaluative moral discourses can be integrated. In this respect, one can draw on illustrations which rely both on justice and care voices:

**Interview 2**

Josh He probably works for a massive company

Quasim All of these ... um ... berries ... he gets hardly any money out of them because the owner ... the companies are just buying them for nothing. And he has to sell them because ... they'd shoot him or something otherwise.

... Mark And how would this be different if it was fair trade?

Quasim Right, well...

Josh He'd have more money

Quasim ... he'd do loads of, like, berry picking for little money, whereas if you've got fair trade, you get more money ... but, if somebody back here paid for it, you'd get more money.

Josh Yeah ... like, if a charity - like Oxfam or something - went in and helped him sort it out ... start his own business, so that he can make sure everything’s fair.

Mark Why does he need the charity? Can’t he just ... do it himself ...?

Josh I guess ... yeah ... but know cos he’s like

Quasim He’s powerless, init - and they might shoot him and that.
Interview 7

Niall Yeah, like, everything we do – you do, I do – like it has an effect on other people, and I think … um … I reckon its really wrong not to think about that sometimes

Ryan I agree with that, actually … cos you’re just having your brilliant time with your mates, and the things you’re doing are really hurting these other people – like, they’re getting really bad … standards of life … cos of the things you’re doing

Mark And what do you think they [gesturing ‘fair trade’ photo] think to all this.

Ryan Well, they don’t really know … they don’t know any better

Niall Yeah, they just think that’s the way it is … they don’t really know about the things we do and how that affects them.

Ryan And I guess, really, that means it’s even more important for us to think about what we do … if they don’t know, and they’re just having really rubbish lives but they don’t know why … we should really, um, pay attention.

In the first of these extracts, participants draw on a justice-centric evaluative language. However, this notion is ‘bedded’ in the particular meanings, and linguistic markers, of the fair trade discourse where notions of oppression and coercion enable a particular telling of that justice voice: one predicated on a sense of ‘liberation’. The second extract, in contrast, applies a moral language which runs more closely to discourses of care. Here too, though, the evaluative sense is partially a consequence of the contextualising discourses: notably, the sense of ‘helplessness’ which is established in earlier turns legitimates the moral position at which the individuals arrive, and the evaluative call to the necessity of ‘care’.

This line of analysis might suggest that the discourses participants use to contextualise their engagements influence their ideological positioning in relation to them. Further, these discourses serve to legitimise the particular evaluative languages which are used to justify that positioning, the cogency of which, when applied to the context of the engagement, has a reciprocal legitimising effect. In other words, ‘positioning’ within ideological constructions is based on at least two, mutually reinforcing, bodies of mediational means. In maintaining this argument, we might also begin to suggest that the authors ‘position’ within the construction is a direct product of mediational means: that the ‘fair trade’ discourse (or any other) implies a stance for the author. I would
suggest, however, that whilst such a conclusion seemingly ‘follows’ from this trajectory, such an allure leads to oversimplification, and should thus be problematised. With this in mind, it is possible to locate extracts of data that run contrary to this sense. In them the ‘position’ adopted by the participants is very much ‘outside’ of the specific, contextualising mediational means on which they draw:

Interview 8

John Well some people say that the war is right, cos they have weapons of mass destruction

Paul Yeah, but they didn’t actually find any, did they? I thought they’d said...

John Maybe you’re right, now I think about it

Paul I still think it was right, though ... like, Iraq and that ... cos of 9/11 ... um ... they had the terrorists there, what done it ...

John Yeah, but I think ... what was it ... that ... oh yeah: the reason they don’t like America is because they have bases in ... where Mecca is ...

Mark Saudi Arabia?

John Yeah ... and they don’t like it, and going and invading their country is hardly going to help is it?

Paul No ... it’s not is it. So ... um ... its complicated isn’t it - and then again, Saddam Hussein wasn’t a very good ... person / leader - so they are better off without him.

Here, then, the participants move beyond the application of a single ‘pure’ discourse, and its consequent prefabrication of moral positions. Rather, they allow a range of competing mythologies to intersect and overlap and these, in turn, disrupt is coherence and certainty. Where, in previous examples, the ethical ‘frame’ is clear and the implications for the preferred stance are overwhelming, here directions of help and harm are complicated, and the ‘correct’ position for the author is less available. This is not, however, to say that such positioning is entirely absent. In the example above, the authors straddle various positions in a way in which is perhaps appropriate to the context of engagement (where an absolute association with any given position might seem somewhat misplaced). What is most significant for me in these constructions is, however, the sense that positioning arises not from the particular discourses involved but from the act of construction itself. This is not, of course, to say that the mediational means are insignificant, they remain vital
in constituting the sense of reality and context necessary for engagement to occur and bring with them particular implications. However, it is the participants’ arrangement of these mediational means in relation to the stimulus that is crucial: and this process of arrangement implies an active agent at work amongst these discursive resources (a facet to which I return in the next chapter).

There remains, however, something fundamentally paradigmatic in this overall construction. The participants orchestrate an array of narratives on war, and on Iraq more specifically, which in many ways comprise different ‘poles’ of a debate on that particular issue. The positioning of the authors is, therefore, still situated within a particular discursive milieu. In this respect, one might suggest that their positioning thus still derives from the discourse itself (albeit a discourse consisting of multiple rehearsed narratives). Elsewhere, however, the ruptures from this are notable:

**Interview 6**

Aylish  
This one is a lot to do with a religion primarily, it's ... like ... people have said that it's the Muslims, and now people are saying about we should stereotype all Muslims and check them at the airports when they're coming, more than the Christians and Caucasians and Whites ... because that's what they've done ... well [nervous giggle] ... but ... em ... then the Muslims are saying that ... em ... it's very stereotypical and that it's not what their religion stands for ... it's just the extremists who take it to this level ... and that people now use the word Jihad in that context.

What is striking about this construction is that Aylish transposes the nexus of engagement, away from the original ‘issue’, and instead onto the discourse itself. Thus, her moral position here relates to a particular way of talking about groups of people and their position in the world, rather than the reality of those positions. In some respects there is a stronger sense here of an individual forging a position against a background of mediation means, rather than ‘within’ them. Arguably, however, to do so involves another set of languages: related to stereotyping and religions in particular. Regardless, this is not just a straightforward inhabitation of discourse, but also a person working ‘within’ them. Elsewhere, this sense is echoed even more strongly, again bringing different implications for the positioning of the author. Here, we return to Aftab and Iram:
Interview 3

Aftab So I visited home ... um ... Bangladesh /
Iram / I email my family all the time /
Aftab And it’s not really like this ... the pictures, I mean, that you see on the news and in lessons and that [pause]
Mark How so?
Aftab Well, it is ... people are poor there and everything but they’re not ALL poor - there are shopping centres just like here, and ... like ... my uncle is an accountant; he doesn’t work in a sweatshop ...
Iram Yeah, and my cousins, they just go to school like we do.
Mark You sound a bit put out by /
Aftab Well, it’s a bit like ... um ... what’s the word ... patronising - everyone reckons we’re ... my family ... are dead poor, and that we should all feel sorry for them, but they don’t need us to feel sorry for them - they’re just living their lives quite happily
Iram I think it doesn’t help - it’s good intentions and that but its counter ... um
Mark Counterproductive?
Iram That’s it - everyone looks down on Bangladesh and Pakistan and that, and its like no-one expects anything out of them except.
Aftab Terrorists and poor people

Again, the discourse itself (and its implications) is the subject of moral positioning, rather than the realities it encapsulates. Thus, in this extract, Iram and Aftab situate conventional discourses on the Majority World, particularly those relating to sweatshops and fair trade, against the context of meanings derived from personal experience. In doing so, the participants produce a particularly sophisticated construction, which echoes critiques of the patriarchal nature of international development discourse. The reflexive turn, which situates the discourse as an ethical subject, highlights the negative impacts of casting the majority world as 'helpless' and the minority world as powerful enablers. Even here, though, it is mediational means which allow a particular positioning to occur, both in terms of the conventional discourses against which Iram and Aftab react (but which, ultimately, they bring to the discussion), and in terms of the methods of conceptualising the majority world which have been developed through their particular experiences.
Closing Comments

In this chapter, I have suggested that Wertsch’s model of Mediated Action is useful in understanding moral and ideological functioning against backdrops of complex contexts. Further, I have posited that its application offers a useful framework through which to appreciate better the ways individuals accomplish engagements fraught with conceptual and emotive challenges. Mediational means, in this respect can be seen to operate in two distinct ways in. The first is in lending ‘context’ to experience, investing it with particular meanings and anchoring it within particular realities, so that a more confident and coherent engagement is possible. The varying strategies by which individuals might do this (subsumption, improvisation, induction and deduction) each situates that context in different ways, and thus contextualise not only the situated reality of that engagement, but also its scale. Thus, where some constructs work very much at the level of immediate and localized context, with rich ‘internal’ realities (as seen in Sarah and Emma’s response on page 158), others work at a more macro level of engagement, which situate the stimulus as just one facet of a richer ‘external’ reality. The second significance of mediational means explored in this chapter relates to the ways in which particular languages of ‘right and wrong’ (or evaluative discourses) are layered onto this context in order to give it a moral tone. Here, my suggestion has been that such a layering is fundamentally predicated on contextualising exercises, as ‘reasonableness’ derives not just from its logic but also its coherence of such an application in relation to the detail of reality onto which it is applied.

It is significant, though, that in this section we have also glimpsed another important dimension; there is a sense, here, not just of constructions built of discursive materials, but also of individuals orchestrating meanings in order to produce them. Such an observation is a timely reminder that Wertsch's model does not just emphasise cultural resources, but also the individual agency that engages with them, and it is pertinent to turn now attention to this facet of the model.
Chapter Seven

The Individual and Their Context

Introduction

My intent in the previous chapter was to introduce Wertsch’s model of Mediated Action as a theoretical framework capable of accommodating nuance and complexity in how individuals operate as ideological beings. In doing so, I have suggested that it is more capable than conventional theories of moral being of doing justice to the sophisticated ways in which young people construct ideological engagements with the complex contexts that surround them. In this treatment, I have dwelt on the fundamentals of the approach, and on the surface possibilities it offers. Beneath this is, however, Wertsch offers a further layer of implication on the nature of human consciousness, activity and cultural context. This, I would suggest, offers a further seam of usefulness: alongside a useful hermeneutic framework through which to understand moral encounters, is a deeper philosophical reconstruction that goes some way to resolving some of the tensions set out at the close of chapter five.

In particular, Wertsch’s proposals carry with them explicit implications for the ways in which we consider the human actor in situ, and the relationships between them and the social context that surrounds them. At the close of the previous chapter, we began to gain a sense of this: particularly, in the ways in which socially constituted meanings were conceptualised as both facilitating and constraining activity. It is this sense – the ways in which the theory reframes the structure-agency debate – that forms the basis of this chapter.

On The Nature of Mediational Means

At the centre of Wertsch’s image of the human actor is the sense that ‘action is mediated, and cannot be separated from the milieu in which it is carried out’ (Wertsch, 1993, p. 18). Thus, as I have illustrated in the previous chapter, culturally constituted sets of meanings are bound up in all activity, from the mundane to the more sophisticated. So far, though, the nature of these ‘cultural resources’, or as Wertsch refers to them elsewhere ‘mediational means’ (1993, p. 38), has not been interrogated. The allusion so far has been to
a general sense of ‘meanings’ with some reference to ‘discourse’. Wertsch’s model has, however, a more complete and penetrating conceptualisation of mediational means, and their integration into consciousness, a framework which it draws from its theoretical forebears. An exploration of this constitution is useful in contextualising the participants in this study.

**Vygotskian Foundations**

The roots of Wertsch’s model, in common with other ‘activity’ theories, lie in the earlier work of the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. It is his model of child development (and its consequent implications for human functioning) which sets out the foundations for a notion of ‘mediated action’. Vygotsky (1978, 1981) maintains that humans, like animals, are born with ‘lower mental functions’: those impulsive and instinctual capacities which enable us to survive in the world. These abilities are governed by a ‘natural line of development’, what we might otherwise refer to as biological maturation. Innate capacities such as these, however, represent only a small subset of human being. Whilst they might suggest consciousness (in the context of a nervous system, and the ability to draw basic perceptions from it) they fail to account for the complex range of human autonomy and creativity. Thus, Vygotsky suggests a further layer of ‘Higher Mental Functions’, which differ fundamentally in their origin, structure, method and relationships. Thus, these capabilities (of which moral/ideological being is one) are socially rather than biologically derived. They are mediated rather than direct, voluntary rather than impulsive, interconnected rather than isolated. In this distinction, we begin to see some of the key facets that would underpin Wertsch’s perspective, and his conceptualisation of ‘mediational means’.

The Vygotskian premise that higher mental functions have a social origin brings with it an implication that a ‘cultural’ line accompanies the ‘natural’ line of development. It suggests that development of more sophisticated processes of thought are acquired only through interaction with significant others. As such, Vygotsky maintains that the dynamic of individual development is characterised by interplay between two reciprocal ‘planes’ (his ‘genetic law of cultural development’):
Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological category and then within the individual child as an intra-psychological category... but it goes without saying that internalisation transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships

(Vygotsky, 1981, p. 163)

Vygotsky illustrates this process with the seemingly simple physical act of pointing (1978, p. 56), something that begins in babies with an impulsive grasping action without invested meaning. The adults who surround the child and react accordingly and thus invest this act with meaning. Through this process, the child itself begins to internalise the meanings associated with that action, and thus becomes able to deploy it to fulfil their intentions. Such an example illustrates the key dynamic at play in Vygotsky’s cultural line of development, and the beginnings of the concept of ‘mediation’. Here, then, is a sense of how a particular gesture gains an external reality because it is invested with a set of shared, culturally constituted meanings. Later in life, when the infant independently deploys the gesture to reach particular ends (to highlight that they want a particular object, for instance), they are thus very much engaged in a sense of ‘mediated action’.

Such a conceptualisation also goes some way towards anticipating how mediational means are deployed in everyday human functioning. This dimension is wrapped up in Vygotsky’s emphasis on the way human consciousness draws on ‘tools’ in order to expand and enrich its innate abilities. Technical tools (such as knives), for instance, are conceptualised by Vygotsky, and later by Wertsch, as expanding our physical and sensory capacity. The most oft-cited example of this (including by Wertsch) derives from Bateson;
Suppose I am a blind man and I use a stick. I go tap, tap, tap. Where do I start? Is my mental system bounded at the handle of the stick? Is it bounded by my skin? Does it start half-way up the stick? Does it start at the tip of the stick? ... these are nonsense questions ... the stick is a pathway along which transforms of difference are being transmitted ... to explain ... locomotion ... you will need the street, the stick, the man; the street, the stick, the man, and so on, round and round.

(Bateson, 1972, p. 465)

Influenced by this line of argument, Wertsch uses the concept of ‘mind’ as his analytic frame (1993, p. 14). In this discursive shift, he implies something which, in contrast to the internal process of ‘cognition’, extends beyond the skin and which can therefore incorporate interaction with ‘tools’ as a central feature. Crucially, Vygotsky maintains that such tools are semiotic as well as physical, that symbolic system of meaning can extend consciousness in the same way as technical tools. Here, Bateson’s illustration might be extended: the stick is not just a physical tool, but also a symbolic one. It is saturated with meanings that, in turn, mediate the ways in which the community surrounding the blind man interact with him. According to this Vygotsky-Wertsch line of argument, this kind of symbolic mediation underpins all of human activity. To illustrate with an example relevant to the context of this research: the concept of ‘fair trade’ only exists in so much as a symbolic system constitutes its meaning. This system mediates individual interactions with the world, whether these interactions are direct (in loading intent into the purchase of particular product) or abstract (in fostering a particular type of engagement with a stimulus image).

Discourse, Language and Meaning

In summary, then: Vygotsky’s cultural line of development involves the internalisation of meanings through reciprocity of intra-mental and inter-mental processes. These might then mediate the individual ‘mind’ as a set of symbolic ‘tools’ (in the context of the exploration so far, these might constitute both sets of ‘logics’ and details through which to contextualise stimuli). Amongst these principles, Vygotsky (1987) reserves a special emphasis for the importance of language as a system that most richly reflects the various semiotic and symbolic systems of culture. The linguistic system offers an array of mechanisms of defining, categorising and distinguishing the external world.
Thus, in acquiring it, we not only obtain a means of communication, nor just the substance of that which is communicated, but also the tools of intellectual adaptation by which our culture conceptualises and transforms its experiences. In other words, language acquisition involves not only the development of the ‘content’ of thought, but also the ‘means’ of thinking.

Ultimately, then, the process of cultural development revolves around language acquisition and with it, the semiotic ‘baggage’ of society. In Vygotsky’s approach, these processes culminate in an internalisation of an abbreviated ‘inner speech’ (contrasted with external ‘communicative’ speech) and an ownership of language within the individual’s personal psychology that enables it to operate in an anticipatory and autonomous way. A similar vein of thought is put forward by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), a contemporary of Vygotsky, and another key influence on Wertsch. Bakhtin proposes that, throughout their lives, individuals internalise the plethora of voices they hear and, with them, a range of utterances, languages and discourses. These, in turn, form an inner dialogue in conjunction with the individuals own ‘voice’, which constitute their psychological (and with it moral) functioning.

In this thesis, and in the explorations given so far, ‘mediational means’ are therefore considered akin to notions of 'discourse': as 'coherent systems of meaning' (Parker, 1992). In Foucauldian terms, they are conceptualised as ‘systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak’ (Lessa, 2005, p. 285). One should note that discourse as it is conceptualised here is not confined to language, as a strict definition might insist. Rather, echoing Vygotsky’s perception of the relationships between language and meaning, discourse is something supra-linguistic: organisations of meaning in culture, which are reflected most strongly through the linguistic system. Whilst acknowledging this, however, I should also recognise that the interview-driven methodology of the empirical aspects of the research tend to foreground language. As such, what occurs here focuses on the way in which language use signals the use of mediational means, but with a soft recognition

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20 Note, here, that there is remains ambiguity as to the nature of autonomy against a social context - the line by which the individual is distinguished as conscious and independent against the semiotic frameworks within which they exist. Space for further exploration of this dynamic is given later in this piece.
that it is broader structures of meaning which inhabit this language, and not necessarily a function of the ‘word’ itself.

**Materiality and Power**

Following Vygotsky, Wertsch therefore suggests that ‘tool use’, as a facet of human being, is not confined to the physical. Rather it extends to symbolic resources. Regardless of their abstract nature, however, he suggests that mediational means do have ‘materiality’ (a position drawn directly from Vygotsky and, in turn, from the Marxian frameworks that surrounded him). In making this assertion, Wertsch implies that discourse has an objective, or at least independent, existence ‘in culture’ distinct from any given individuals that use it. This notion, of mediational means ‘in circulation’ brings with it a number of further implications. Notably, it suggests that means can be ‘exchanged’: commodified, bought and sold, and that they have particular currencies. One might begin to implicate those discourses that surround ‘fair trade’ as a particularly pertinent and direct illustration of this notion. Such bodies of meanings exemplify not just a set of ideals and practices, but are also an exercise in ‘branding’, replete with particular logos and messages, and with them preferred readings. The tightness of this packaging, and the growing prevalence of its associated meanings in culture, can be easily appropriated by various social actors and agents, a process of which the participants demonstrate tacit understanding:

**Interview 1**

Alice Cos they’re all like fair trade now – Tesco and that

Olivia Yeah – with like logos and signs everywhere ‘Tesco likes fair trade’

Mark And what do you think’s going on there

Alice Well I’m a bit … um … cynical about it actually – I think they just do it to look good … cos they know that we’ve all … we all know to assume that fair trade is a good thing, and they want us to think they’re good, so they put the labels everywhere.

Olivia Um … it might be genuine, though, some of it – they might actually want to be part of the … fair trade .. um … gang … and if it means it makes things better, maybe it doesn’t matter if they’re only doing it to look good?

We see here an appreciation of the ways in which supermarkets ‘buy in’ to particular discourses, echoing social commentary elsewhere on the notion of
‘greenwashing’ amongst large corporations (Laufer, 2003). Accompanying this and its pragmatic reflection on the nature of that appropriation is an illustration of Wertsch’s claim, of the ‘currency’ by which mediational means operate. The supermarket’s engagement with the ‘Fair Trade’ brand, whether it is the official incarnation or its meanings appropriated and applied elsewhere, propagates a set of methods of interpreting the world, and the supermarket’s relationships within in. One could extend this analysis a step further to the consumers who interact with the supermarket, and the Fair Trade products offered within it. Perhaps, then, the individuals who visit the supermarket are being offered not just products, but also the meanings associated with products. It is through this that a particular form of ‘ethical consumption’ is constructed. I pose this possibility to participants:

**Interview 1**

Mark: So, you suggested that Tesco using Fair Trade, might be about ‘image’

Alice: Yeah - about trying to look like they’re not a ‘big bad supermarket’

Mark: But I wonder whether we’re complicit … um … I wonder whether when I buy a fair trade product, it’s partly about me … saying ‘look what kind of person I am’.

Alice: Well, I guess that’s partly the case /

Olivia: I think it’s true … and I don’t feel ashamed about that – I am that kind of person, and I want other people to be that too, so it’s good

Mark: How does that connect with being in eco-club?

Olivia: Well, it’s there too – doing the things we do, we all do it together, and we want the rest of the people to know we think the same things.

The materiality of the fair trade discourse is therefore complicated. It is at once a product of a particular group of NGOs (more on this shortly), an orchestration of meaning (or branding) of particular corporate body, and an exercise in meaningful activity and identity construction amongst a group of individuals. All of this comprises that sense of meaning ‘in circulation’ to which Wertsch alludes. It constitutes a self-reinforcing and mutually dependent relationship in which the meanings only exist (and attain value) in that they are engaged with and used - as would be true of any commodity.
The notion of mediational means as commodities with relative currency implicates a further dimension of Wertsch’s characteristics. He maintains that such systems are always constituted culturally, socially and historically – that they are a product of the institutional and relational structures of society. In short, mediational means do not just constitute ‘context’, they are produced in response to particular contexts, as methods by which culture might accommodate and encapsulate particular realities. Discourses of fair trade and the meanings they apply to the world did not arise spontaneously, but in response to a set of economic realities and a body of representations of the world present in popular culture (in this respect, in interaction with other mediational means). Similar observations can be made of those systems of meaning which arise around any number of issues relating to contemporary challenges, from terrorism through to global warming and patterns of migration.

During the previous chapter, a problem-solving dynamic emerged in the ways in which individuals use mediational means to respond to challenges of ideological engagement. Here, we have a similar sense, scaled up to the level at which society orients itself to shifts. This is, however, not a neutral act. That the production of mediational means is a product of socio-historical context also means that they are caught up in the power-relations of society. Thus, in an argument reminiscent of Foucauldian notions of discourse (Foucault, 1977, 1990, 2001), Wertsch argues that mediational means ‘...are always differentially imbued with power and authority’ (Wertsch, 1993, p. 65). As such, particular resources might be dominant over others: there may be 'marked resources' in particular contexts, and this might derive from their association with socially powerful actors (hence, for instance, there might be a socially preferred moral reading in relation to a given issue). There is, then, a background sense of ‘power’ implicit to which discourses are more legitimate and acceptable, a feature recognised by participants in relation to discourses of Fair Trade:

Interview 7

Niall: It’s all like Fair Trade now, everyone is well bothered about it – but, like, back in the day ... three or four years ago ... maybe people wouldn’t be that bothered.

Ryan: It’s like fashion, innit
Niall Yeah … fashion / it’s just cos all the celebrities are all about fair trade – and then the supermarkets they get on the band wagon … so people think ‘oh, we’ve got to be bothered about that too’

Mark So you don’t think it’s true … em … you

Niall No, I’m sure that its true and its important and that – I’m just saying, like, it’s a bit different / you just automatically think those things just because all the other people are.

The notion of ‘preferred’ reading is perhaps most notable where participants draw on discourses which are counter-hegemonic. Consider the following extracts, both drawn in response to the same stimulus image of a third-world ‘workshop’/’factory’.

**Interview 1**

Alice I think they work for someone like Primark. Loads of big companies use sweatshops

Olivia Like Yamaha … and they don't need to, cos they're getting so much money anyway from their products.

Alice Cos it’s cheaper for them, cos they can have it made … like … cheaply, and then they can sell it for more than its worth and they’ll

Olivia Get a bigger profit. And it’s cheaper for us

Alice Because, if you put a load of people in one place, it’s cheaper – like, if they had safety regulations and people came to check on them, it’d cost more money. But if you have the place like it is, it’s cheaper, cos you just have to build the place …

**Interview 2**

Quasim They make clothes … or it could be fake clothes

Josh They make, like, fake merchandise

Quasim Cos some countries sell fake clothes, fake stuff like Nike and stuff

Here are two equally legitimate moral constructions, each reflecting a particular facet of a much more complicated broader reality. However there is a sense that the first of these constructions is, if not more ‘legitimate’, ‘safer’ in terms of its political correctness (this, of course, situates it against a dominant liberal-left perspective on world affairs). The differing level of comfortableness that these two images provoke – for me, at least, as a reader – is suggestive of the ways in which some discourses are marked as ‘preferred’.
Before continuing, we should also note a further dynamic emerging through these extracts, the sense of fluidity in power that exists within them. Thus, whilst Wertsch emphasises that mediational means are wrapped up in the power systems and structures of society, he also suggests that they are not ‘fixed’: that differential power and authority are in no way ‘set’ within them. Again echoing a Foucauldian sense that power is something sinuous and exercised, rather than structural (Foucault, 1990, p. 93), Wertsch suggests that the dominance of particular meanings arises only from their use (and thus the inertia of convention). The emergence of new resources, or the intersection of counter-narratives, has the potential to disrupt power differentials. In this way, Wertsch’s model has the potential to accommodate ‘authority’, but also to recognise that this authority is transitory and contested. The significance of this is two-fold. Most immediately, it means that the framework can cogently accommodate the kinds of contrary responses to stimuli found in the extracts above. Beyond this, however, is a broader significance. It offers the capability to encapsulate the kinds of fluid and pluralistic epistemological arenas implicated by the postmodern turn in culture.

There is, then, a sense of ‘power’ in the legitimacy of different discourses. However, the relational nature of mediational means cuts much more deeply than this. Interpretation here must therefore be more penetrating than a simple sense of supermarkets ‘hijacking’ an otherwise ethical concept, or of celebrities lending legitimacy to others. Rather, the internal workings of discourses can also be seen as an exercise in power, and the realities they construct serve to situate social actors in particular ways and in relation to other social actors. Notions of ‘fair trade’, the meanings and implied meanings it embodies, are a good illustration of this observation. That particular organisations have branded themselves amongst this discourse represents an exercise of power. The ‘telling’ of a corporate story in relation to them has consequences for the positioning of individuals and organisations. Thus, people benefit from the legitimacy of the discourse and, of course, amongst these are the majority-world producers it sets out to support. Equally, a range of NGOs predicate their existence on a continued propagation of the discourse, and its perceived legitimacy in the public consciousness serves to justify their purpose and authority.
The fair trade discourse also situates its subjects (producers in the majority world) in particular ways and this, too, has consequences. Thus, it associates farmers and other such producers with notions of exploitation and helplessness. In doing so, it precludes the possibility of other meanings, most notably autonomy and self-reliance. In turn, the discourse serves to situate various social agents in particular ways: producers as victims, NGOs as saviours, Transnational Corporations as oppressors – and the consumer as complicit alongside one or the other (I will extend this line of exploration further in chapter nine). This analysis should not be read as a 'critique' of the notion of fair trade, nor should it be taken as a denial of the very real economic conditions in which producers find themselves operating, or the good intentions of NGOs. Further, we should recognise that other discourses are more problematic (most notably, in that they render producers invisible). This line of exploration is, however, illustrative. It enables us to observe that the allure of a seemingly coherent body of explanations of particular experiences in the world edits out some of the complexities that surround the issue. These editorial acts brings with them consequences for the viewer's conceptualisation of reality. As a mediational means, then, the fair trade discourse facilitates an engagement with the world, but at the expense of an appreciation of the detail of ecology that surrounds the subjects it frames.

Reclaiming the Individual

In all of this emphasis on the importance of culturally constituted meaning, there is a risk of drift towards the overly socialised image of the individual that I have rejected elsewhere in this thesis. Such a view treats mediational means as 'scripts' which inhabit the person as they 'play out' their experiential programming. It denigrates the individual to the status of 'cultural dope': puppets through which various discourses ventriloquise. In refrain to this drift, I would maintain that it is possible to nuance such a reading. On one level, we have already encountered empirical challenge to it. There is a sense emerging from the transcripts so far that individuals do not passively deploy discourse, but rather actively produce constructions in reference to it. Here, the individuals 'doing' that construction are central to the process. Admittedly, this has been troubled. Seemingly, each new layer of sophistication exposed in participants’ responses is facilitated only in reference to a new set of
mediational means. Fundamentally, though, a person (and an active person, at that) remains central to this process.

It is, then, necessary to confront the interplay between individuals and the mediational means they deploy more directly. In doing so, we can better expose that dynamic that we might call ‘agency’, and to accommodate the tensions it faces. On a theoretical level, the notion of culture as ‘resource’, as found in Wertsch’s description, perhaps goes some way to better encapsulate this. Even here, though, a tension remains over whether the resource, or the person, leads a construction. This contradiction remains at the heart of Wertsch’s conceptualisation. It is therefore instructive to explore how his model, and Tappan’s reinterpretation in relation to morality, begins to address it.

The Interface with Mediational Means

The drift towards an over-socialised reading of the relationship between individuals and their culture might be located in Wertsch’s key influences. Thus, it is present in early versions of Activity Theory, and particular readings of Vygotsky, which have tended to play to the social component of this tension: focusing on cultural resources and social contexts above the individual actor. The Vygotskian notion of ‘internalisation’ (or at least the translation of his original meaning in reference to this term), has been particularly problematic in this respect. It implies that the individual is ‘filled up’ or programmed with external cultural baggage. Such a reading, however, misses the subtlety of the Vygotskian stance, which offers a more organic reading of the way in which individuals interact with both physical and symbolic tools. Here, there is a sense that whilst imitation can form a beginning point in the process of internalisation, it is only a rudimentary part of the process. Thus, in a rupture from more Behaviourist tellings of social programming (notably, contrasting with Bandura & McDonald, 1963), the perspective emphasises the way internalisation transcends passive imitation. Through processes of self-guided experimentation (associated with Vygotsky’s emphasis on self-narration), the individual comes to understand and deploy resources towards their particular ends. This might occur to the extent of automaticity, but fundamentally, this is not puppetry: the individual remains firmly ‘in charge’.
A useful illustration of this nuance can be drawn in relation to the use of more physical tools - the bicycle, for instance. We can each remember that initial interaction with this device, one in which the tool was firmly in charge. Through external guidance (our parents behind us, yelling instruction and feigning physical support), we gradually master that vehicle, internalising particular modes of physicality which exert control over it. Thus, we have a sense of those interactions between intra- and inter-psychologies which comprise the Vygotskian model of development, and the ways in which external and cultural-constituted understandings become part of an individual psychology. This, though, is by no means the end of the matter. Though we were initially slaves to our bikes, peddling and peddling in a straight line for fear of falling, they eventually set us free. Our newly acquired skills (and the cultural baggage that enabled them) facilitated the exploration and conquest of entirely new regions of our local geography. In this way, the internalisation of a set of processes and interactional expectations did not imprison us: we were not socialised into a behavioural cul-de-sac, as would be suggested by the notion of culturally programming. Rather, having internalised a set of socially constituted actions, we were able to deploy them in new and innovative ways, to turn them to our purposes and achieve our particular ends. Of course, the bicycle example is perhaps loaded towards a liberating outcome. Similar observations might, however, be extended any physical tool – from the pen, to the computer, through the dustpan and brush. What is significant is that the internalisation and deployment of particular social practices enable the individual to turn those technologies towards their own particular ends.

This same nuance, here explored in terms of 'physical' tools, might be applied equally to those symbolic tools that comprise mediational means. Here too, the process of internalisation is not just one of passive assimilation, but of a gradual internal domestication of those resources so that they might serve that individual’s purposes in acting amongst the word. Cast in this way, the individual’s agency is not compromised by the culturally constitution of meanings. Quite the opposite, in fact, for such agency exists only in that it is able to exercise these resources. Without shared meaning, there is no
meaningful action by which we might identify autonomy\textsuperscript{21}. It is this sense, I would argue, through which we can understand the relationship between the individuals in this study, and the resources with which they interact in order to produce engagements.

In recognition of this distinction, Wertsch (borrowing from Bakhtin) offers an alternative vocabulary through which to describe this process and its nuances. He replaces the notion of the 'internalisation' of mediational means with that of 'appropriation'. This semantic shift is useful in a number of ways. Firstly, it avoids the sense of ‘programming’ that might otherwise too easily be implied, and proffers more suggestion of an agentic act. More subtly, though, the shift in language also transposes the nexus of the process in a slight, but crucial, way. An 'internalisation'-driven model suggests that mediational means are 'taken in' by the individual, incorporated into their internal psychology and deployed when needed. Appropriation, however, implies more of an environmental model. It offers a sense that meanings continue to exist in the individual’s immediate and intermediate contexts, and that they might be drawn upon when needed from that environment. In short, the emphasis here is on interpsychological processes over intrapsychological ones. Further it implies a more dynamic, organic and on-going relationship between an individual and the mediational means which surround them. This kind of dynamic appropriation is reflected in the following transcript

\textit{Interview 1}

\begin{verbatim}
John  Like, the thing with global warming - with trying to address it - is that everyone needs to do something about it … if one person – or a group of people don’t do it … there’s just no point

Mark Like the Kyoto agreement

Paul What’s that?

Mark Well they all tried to get together, lots of different countries, and make some firm agreements … about reducing emissions and things like that … and everything was going well, but in the end, some really significant countries … America, and some others … weren’t prepared to commit to it, so it all fell to pieces.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{21} A parallel might be drawn, here, with compatibilist responses to problems of free will and determinism in philosophy (e.g. Hume, 2008): one which suggests that agency exists only as an non-coerced response to context.
John: Exactly ... so when big countries won't join in - and probably America has the most biggest emissions - then nothing gets any better.

Paul: And probably all the other countries look at that, and they think 'well, if they're not going to do it ... that Kyoto thing ... then I'm not either' - and things are actually worser, cos they might have done things if they didn't know that America wasn't.

The most simple interpretation of this interactional turn might cast it as a methodological problem of 'leading questions', that my questioning style and content has produced a particular set of responses. There is probably truth in this, but the Wertschian lens offers what I would suggest is a more precise alternative reading (and one that does less of a disservice to the integrity and credibility of participants). Here, we might view a co-construction of which I am an active part. The participants begin to develop a notional context for engagement, one that draws on a particular way of conceptualising the challenges of global warming in circulation at the time. I add to this, making available a set of additional meanings that I, in turn, have appropriated through my particular experiential universe. Interestingly, though, the participants then run with this notion, using the meanings I have supplied in order to develop further their sense making of the stimulus image and an interview context. Such a conceptualisation eschews the simple casting of monodirectional influence implied by the 'leading question', in favour of a more vibrant, complex interplay of meanings. Fundamentally, it also presents the achievement of shared activity. This dynamic, of the propagation of discourse in the immediate social sphere, also surfaces in the ways in which participants interact with one another:

**Interview 5**

Aylish: Because the government ... the way they control the money isn't the same as here / they don't get the benefits that we get if you don't work or if you have less money / they ... it's basically you have to survive for yourself - cos the government's money goes on paying debts to other countries and fighting wars.

Gemma: Yeah ... the countries are in debt ... so ... all the monies that they get are used to pay off the debts, in cases there's like interest and there's extra - they get into more debt to pay off the loans ... um ...

Aylish: And sometimes the governments are corrupt - but often that's because of colonialism and that, the ways we ... sort of ... set them up.
There is, of course, nothing particularly remarkable in this as an event; it represents a conversation between two individuals. The process of this conversation, however, is formed around a shared activity in the production of a particular reality. In this sense, the way in which meanings are produced, circulated and exchanged is interesting (and echo notions of the materiality of mediational means, as discussed on page 174, but in a more localized setting).

As in the previous extract, Wertsch’s sense of individuals and meanings offer a useful way of engaging with the complication of this process. It conceptualises the participants as introducing and exchanging meanings through which to facilitate the outcome of a shared understanding. One interpretation might therefore suggest that Aylish introduces a body of language (government, corruption, debt, etc), and a particular discursive paradigm. Following each of Aylish’s turns, Gemma then appropriated this, as part of both her sense making, and her participation in the on-going social event of the interview. It is, of course, equally possible (perhaps more likely) that Gemma already had a sense of these meanings, and that their introduction acted as the shared capital by which a co-operative activity could occur. Even here, though, Wertsch’s interpretative frame is useful, albeit in understanding the achievement of shared discussion, rather than a particular engagement. I raised these differing notions of how meanings are propagated within a paired interview with the participants themselves;

**Interview 9 (Follow Up)**

Mark So in this extract, it strikes me ... what I'm interested in ...
Gemma ... is the way in which you're bouncing meanings and ideas off each other ... so Aylish it looks like you introduce an idea, and then Gemma you pick up on it and /
Aylsh Oh yah - like she's started the thinking, and then I'm just going along with it
Mark Um ... but you're not just repeating what I said
Gemma So what's going on there ... to what extent is that you 'going along' with what is being said?
Mark No ... I guess ... well I've got my own thoughts and ideas ...
Gemma ... and I'm pretty much in agreement with Gemma on this ...
Mark but um ... the way she says it ... it's just a useful way of putting it.
Gemma So ... the words of other people are useful in order to express what you think?
Aylish: And then ... um ... I guess I've learnt these words - in fact I know I have - it's like what we've been saying in sociology.

Mark: So it's like a script?

Aylish: Not quite like that ... I was more making it up as I went along, but ... it's like the ideas and the arguments we'd done before were useful.

Gemma and Aylish's reflections, here, offer a clearer insight into some of the dynamics through which meanings circulate in both immediate and intermediate contexts. Firstly, there is a localised appropriation of meanings: Gemma from Aylish, and Aylish from her recent educative experience. In both of these cases, however, the participants are active in using those meanings in order to achieve their own ends. Their awareness of this act of appropriation is pivotal. Consciousness that meanings come from 'outside' brings with it a critical separation between self and idea, and thus distance from the sense that 'idea' might lead thought, rather than the other way around.

The reference, here, to conceptual resources in immediate circulation brings with it a new facet of nuance. There is an implicit tendency, when thinking about mediational means, to situate their 'socialness' at a macro scale and to envisage them as facets of 'culture' as it is played out by a society. Here, however, we are arriving at a sense that runs more subtly than this. It raises the possibility that such resources exist too in the micro-scale of individual interactions, not just as part of their circulation in culture, but also through an internal dynamic of meaning exchange between people in contexts. The implications of this observation might be expanded further. If such resources are interchanged in interactions between individuals, then perhaps there is also a level of circulation at the meso-scale of society, in those immediate communities within which individuals exist. These notions, of meanings in local circulation amongst communities of individuals, are reflected in participants' data:

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22 There remains an important caveat here. This might be a reflective consciousness, borne of looking back at existing data. In the reality of the moment, it is likely to be less distinctive and may be absent completely. To an extent, resolution of this problem is an intractable methodological problem, as it impossible to gain insight into the dynamic without asking about it, which provokes a reflective response.
Interview 7

Ryan  So like, when there was the Tsunami ... when we all came back to school ... we were all talking about it

Niall  Yeah ... everyone was really shocked at all that bad stuff that had happened ... we were like talking about it

Ryan  To be honest, I didn’t really know very much about any of it ... I didn’t know about the Tsunami and that ... and I didn’t really know about the countries what were involved ... um ... Sri Lanka and that

Mark  So how did people talk about it ... what kind of things were you /

Ryan  Shocked

Niall  Like ... we’d all seen different things on the news ... so we were all talking about it ... it was like the buzz thing of that week

Ryan  I picked lots up from that, actually. Like talking about ... um ... emergency aid and that, and what people send.

Niall  And the different views on how we should help

Mark  So when you talked about emergency aid earlier

Ryan  Yeah, I guess I’d picked it up from then

Niall  Really? Cos I thought we’d done stuff on that in citizenship

Ryan  Ok ... well not just from there then, but ... it was like, cos we were all talking about it then we got used to it

Mark  So maybe its about being confident that you can talk about it ... that you’re using that way of talking in the right way?

Niall  That kind of makes sense.

Though obviously littered with methodological artefacts (not least my influence in forcing connections between different facets of discussion), there is at least a sense here of meaning in circulation amongst a group of students. Further, there is also a taste of how that process of interchange serves to validate an individual’s confidence in a particular body of meanings, and thus facilitate its use in the exercise of their agency.

The Irreducible Tension

So far in this section of the chapter, I have articulated Wertsch’s sense of how autonomy exists in the context of mediational means: that its processes occur only in that they are facilitated by culturally constituted meanings. Equally, we have considered the dynamic nature of appropriation, and the ways it might occur against societal, community and individual/interactional contexts. Beyond this theoretical contribution, the excerpts of data have, I feel, given
glimpses of those agentic practices that underpin appropriation and some of the creativity inherent to it. Now, though, is an appropriate time for an additional critical refrain. There is, in all this, a risk that we cast the relationship between the individual and the symbolic tools that culture avails to them too loosely, and that we might over-emphasise the degree and extent of their freedom. Caveat to this has already been given, and I have already explored the relationships between culturally constituted meanings and social power, and the ways in which particular mediational means both facilitate and constrain action. Further, we might recognise that the array of meanings available to the individual within culture is finite (even given the complex ways that they might be recombined, and the creativity which be involved in that recombination). Ultimately, each of these observations implies a restriction in the degree to which individuals might exercise complete agency. Further, discourses exist amongst webs of denotation and connotation (as explored on page 133) - and, thus this process of making them 'one's own' implies a further struggle;

...the word, in language, is half someone else's ... it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts ... language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated ... with the intentions of others

(Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294)

Thus, the individual, in appropriating discourse must wrestle with the process of turning it to their purposes and intents. I am reminded, here, of the extract on page 138 - in which a participant draws on a school-centred discourse of conflict resolution in order to engage with the complications of the war in Iraq. Here, we glimpse both the sense of making that body of meanings work to a different intent and the uneasy nature of this, the struggle involved in porting ways of talking into new and distinct contexts.

All of this suggests an inherent contradiction in the notion of individual agency 'prevailing' over cultural constitution. However, I would suggest that this is a contradiction that theory should recognise, rather than resolve. Further, I suggest that this is inherent to any notion that agency exists only in that culturally constituted frameworks of action exist to make action meaningful. Indeed, Wertsch situates this as the core (and explicitly irreducible) tension at the heart of the theory of mediated action: that which lies between the
individual, their intentions and objects, and the mediational means available to them to achieve this. It a tension which, viewed through another lens, is at the centre of this research, and its attempt to account for the struggles participants encounter in orienting themselves to a complicated moral context. Here meaning is at once abundant, uncertain and contradictory. If an engagement with the world is to be formed, there is a necessity for agency to exist in appropriating one set of meanings above another. We must *make* sense out of those competing understandings that are available. Logically, this claim is analogous to the view that freewill is always compromised by pragmatic realities (given my biology, for instance, I will never have the freedom to fly, nor to play international rugby).

**From Ventriloquation to Ownership, Through Mastery**

Agency can, therefore, exist in a world dominated by cultural mediation. In many respects, the claim here is that the two are, in reality, inseparable. It is, however, simplistic to assume that the quality of this agency, and the qualities of its relationship with mediational means, is equal. In this respect, whilst I have previously resisted the notion that discourse always 'speaks through' individuals, it would be naïve to assume that this is never the case. Thus, we might, to draw on Bakhtinian terminologies, suggest that there is sometimes a sense of ventriloquation (1981, p. 293) in the relationship between participant’s responses and the mediational means that underpin them, something that the participants themselves sometimes recognise:

*Interview 10*

Ryan  Sometimes ... I think ... in some of these, I'm not sure that it's always ... me and my beliefs ... um ... like, when I'm going on about the environment here ... it's just what I'm meant to be saying

Niall  Yeah, about the environment and that

Mark  When you look at these snippets of data, how much do you ... recognise what you're saying

Niall  Well some of it, obviously

Ryan  But not all of it ... like the stuff on Iraq, I feel that strongly - that isn't just what I'm meant to say.

The sense of relationship between mediational means and individuals here runs close to that of ventriloquation, in that participants indicate a relative passiveness to their relationship with those discourses they appropriate. There
are, here, also methodological overtones of the ways in which particular responses might be performances for the interview event. In equal measure, this interpretation might suggest alternative strands of agentic mediated action, for whilst the participants may not feel compelled by their engagement with issues of ‘environment’, it serves to facilitate a different ends: their existence within an interview context. At the very least, this transcript demonstrates, that the relationship between the individual and the resources they appropriate is complicated, and that the substance of constructions may not be entirely driven by the compulsions of those ‘doing’ the constructing.

Even where the participants’ use of mediational means is both assertively and agentically exercised, the qualities of that use vary. Thus, when asked to reflect on the origins of the ideas used in given constructions and their commitment to them participants produced subtly different responses:

**Interview 9 (Second Wave)**

Aylish  
Ha … its like … I’m telling you a story – this, then that, then this then that – look at me going on with myself [laughs].

Mark  
But there’s a lot of … stuff … going on here, too?

Aylish  
Yeah

Mark  
Where’s it all coming from?

Aylish  
Hmm, now that I look at it … um … I guess this is all stuff we’ve done … I think we watched a video in citizenship.

Gemma  
Yeah, and these are some of the … messages … the things that the narrator was saying.

Aylish  
It’s not like I don’t believe it … though … um … I’m not lying to you and that its just maybe … I’m thinking … ah, I know what this is, it’s like in citizenship, and then I’m telling you about that…

**Interview 11 (Second Wave)**

Mark  
So here, you were quite … het up [heated] … about Iraq

Quasim  
Yeah … it makes me mad

Mark  
And I look at some of the ways you talk about it – language like ‘occupation’, ‘invasion’ and here ‘illegal war’ – and I wonder where it comes from

Josh  
You just pick it up don’t you … it’s in the telly and that

Quasim  
Yeah, and when we have debates in school, we use it then, and you just pick it up … and because I feel strongly about it, I pay attention to it and then I can use it when I want to make my point … um … so that I can make a better argument.
In both of these extracts, appropriation of ideas occurs in order to serve a particular purpose, though the degree of commitment to that purpose is variable. In the first, it occurs in a relatively functional way in order to satisfy an engagement that is called by the interview process. The second involves something more assertive. Quasim draws on a set of meanings in order to meet his purposes and intents, and to facilitate a point he strongly wishes to make. In relation to this kind of distinction, Wertsch offers further clarification to his concept of appropriation. He recognises that there can be different ‘qualities’ to the relationship between the individual and those cultural resources on which they draw. To this end, he distinguishes between ‘mastery’ and ‘ownership’ of mediational means. The former, as I interpret it here, represents a relatively utilitarian and functional relationship, such as that evident in the first of these extracts. This relationship is still one characterized by agency, but with a relatively lose commitment to the intricacies of the meanings it deploys. Beyond this, Wertsch suggests that ‘ownership’ of mediational means involves a more sophisticated and committed engagement in which the individual is more able to apply their appropriated resources to meet their own ends, innovating and modifying them accordingly. It is this sense, perhaps, that Quasim is communicating, in the notion that he uses meanings ‘to make my point … so that I can make a better argument’.

This way of conceptualising the process of constructions is interesting in terms of how we perceive participants’ original constructions (which I have intentionally withheld so far):

Interview 5

Aylish The governments, some of them, they have the money ... they manage the money in certain ways, so that it's not going into the health care and the benefits for the poorer people - and into education; the education you have to pay for yourself, whereas here it's all ... you get it for free, your education - unless you want to go into private ... so ... people aren't having the opportunities

Gemma They have ... like ... a different type of government to us ... like, it's more ... I don't know ...

Aylish They've probably, like, been colonised by the British, previously ... and then as we've given them the freedom, the governments have come in and the people don't ... haven't ever had as much rights as we've had, so they've not been able to vote for who they want, so they get more dictatorships - so
there's, like, fighting to do with that, because they want their freedom, but the dictators don't let them have it.

Interview 2

Quasim  The war on Iraq, that was just wrong … it was just … err
Josh    Yeah lots of people say /
Quasim  The thing is, it’s an illegal war – they hadn’t got any reason to invade, they just used excuses like weapons of mass destruction and 9/11 … but it really wasn’t about any of that … it was … um … just an excuse for an invasion. And now, they’re just doing an occupation – and they’re making Iraq the way they want it … so they / the Americans / can get at the oil and that … it’s just an occupation

Viewed through a conventional educational lens, the first of these constructions is apparently more sophisticated in both its articulation and the conceptual capital on which it draws, and against the evaluative framework conventionally applied within schools, it would be lauded. When placed in the context of the two earlier extracts, however, the superiority of this construct, and the processes that underpin it, is less certain. Such a reading brings with it interesting implications for curriculum and pedagogy, as explored further beginning on page 289.

Closing Comments

In this chapter, I have explored what is perhaps Wertsch’s greatest theoretical achievement: the ways in which he reframes debates over structure and agency in reference to an ‘irreducible tension’. Such a reframing is particularly useful, I have suggested, against a postmodern context, in which individuals must traverse multiple competing meanings, with little sense of absolute authority and certainty. As explored in chapter four, existence in this context allows for considerable freedom and autonomy, but it is an autonomy that exists against an uncertain background. The individual is thus left to construct senses of confidence about themselves, and the world around them, from fragments of socially constituted meaning. Following this exploration, I would suggest that Wertsch’s model of mediated action offers a potentially useful theoretical response to Bauman’s framing of the contradictions experienced by postmodern individuals: of freedom and uncertainty, mismatched supply and demand.
In short, I suggest here that Wertsch’s conceptualisation of the individual offers a crucial way of understanding the postmodern self. Beyond this, however, I would argue that the ability of his framework to blur the dichotomy between structure and agency also begins to address some of the tensions set out at the close of chapter five. Wertsch offers a model of activity in which an individual and a culture of meanings are central, but he leaves open the connection between the two. As such, and as illustrated in this chapter, the framework can allow ideological engagement to be both firm and committed, or loose and functional. Mediational means can therefore be drawn upon with rational intent, and with a passive usefulness. In order words, there is space within a Wertsch-inspired model of morality for processes of deliberation and impulse, of rationality and subjectivity – and these qualities can are apparent within particular constructions and not just between them.

This capacity also permits a further attractive quality to Wertsch’s approach. In beginning only with an irreducible tension, and permitting any manner of relationships within it, the model avoids a normative sense moral activity. Where other approaches privilege socialisation or rational autonomy, these are cast as inseparable here, and an emphasis on one above the other is rendered meaningless. This facet is reinforced by the framing of moral functioning as just one form of activity underpinned by a common tension. In this, moral/ideological being is cast as a part of the broader human struggle to exist meaningfully in the world.

In all of this, however, we arrive at a new problem. Where normative senses of morality exist, whether emphasising autonomy or compliance with social expectation, the boundaries of accountability and responsibility are clear. Here, these boundaries are blurred, and this is reinforced by an emerging theme in this chapter that troubles senses of authority – not just in the resources that individuals appropriate, but also in their relationships with resultant constructions. It is to this dimension which I turn my attention in the next chapter.
Chapter Eight

Reframing Accountability

Development and Telos

Over the past two chapters I have posited that Wertsch’s theory of mediated action offers a useful framework by which to understand ‘moral being’ in complicated times and contexts. In Chapter Six, I suggested that the approach offers a cogent method of appreciating how individuals orient themselves to a context of ‘missing information’, appropriating necessary meaning from elsewhere in order to anchor partial engagements in a coherent and stable ‘reality’. Chapter Seven considered the ways in which this approach reframed the relationship between the individual and their social context. Here, I have argued that the approach not only offers a useful riposte to traditional debates over structure and agency, but also results in a model of moral functioning that is tolerant to a mixture of rationality and subjectivity, deliberation and impulse.

The conceptualisation of moral and ideological functioning that has emerged through this treatment represents a radical departure from the conventions in the field of moral development. The recognition of a middle ground, between social determinism and notions of individual autonomous rationality, offers a resolution of some of the inherent and contextual tensions explored in the previous movement. In achieving this, however, the approach also troubles a number of additional notions surrounding moral being. Most notably, it complicates senses of ‘development’ and of ‘responsibility’, in ways that merit exploration here.

Put briefly, the socialised model of morality, with its emphasis on the acculturation of individuals into shared norms of values, sees development as a process that finds its end once the individual has internalised enough of society's culture to operate in a self-regulated way, without the need for coercive or overwhelming authorities to impose such regulation. In this conceptualisation, responsibility is therefore tightly bound with conformity (we take responsibility for our operation within society's expectations), and individuals are held to account when they willingly deviate from those socially constituted expectations. In contrast, the individualist tradition, passed
through the Piaget/Kohlberg cognitivist school of thought, emphasises the converse of this arrangement. Here, moral development begins with an orientation to culturally established ‘rules’ but progresses to a gradual independence from them. In this paradigm, the pinnacle of development is thus independence, and notions of responsibility focus on the capacity for the individual to account for those independent actions in rational ways.

As explored on page 117, both of these constructs are ultimately flawed. They can, however, claim at least to articulate a coherent and theoretically cogent representation of responsibility and development. The cogency of that representation pivots on a fundamental divergence on the nature of the exercise of free will. For the socialised model, agency is permissible in as far as it conforms with social expectations, whilst the individualist model preferences autonomy of action, in conformity only with the individual’s internal principles and rational considerations. The Wertsch/Tappan perspective on moral being, however, troubles such an easy distinction. Most fundamentally, it suggests that autonomy and social context are equal and irreducible components of human activity. Such a stance, and the underlying implication that agentic ideological being involves ‘doing things’ with cultural resources, troubles the ability to privilege one of these facets above another as the pivotal feature of moral ‘capacity’. Thus, it undermines the usual ways of constituting moral responsibility, and by extension accountability.

We might also draw a further layer of problematisation from the way in which the Wertsch/Tappan model of moral being resists the conventional sense of moral ‘development’. Such a notion is firmly inscribed with the discursive conventions of theories of moral functioning, which bring with them particular implications that shape theoretical thinking. Most overwhelmingly, ‘development’ implies linearity, something which is most strongly reflected in the Kohlbergian/Piagetian tradition, which explicitly sets out a series of cognitive ‘stages’ of moral progression through which it expects all individuals to progress. Though more subtle, it is also present in the alternative socialised model of moral being. The notion of ‘socialisation’ thus implies a ‘filling up’, and thus a point of ‘fullness’. The notion of development also implicates an endpoint, that thing that we are developing ‘towards’. The influences of this notion are more sophisticated than it might initially seem. The ideal image of
the ‘completed’ moral being also brings with it a backwash effect which validates the particular pathway that might leads to it (whether the vision of an independent, autonomous being, or a compliant and well-socialised one). In this respect (and following Mark Tappan’s lead), the philosophical notion of telos may be more useful, implying not just an ‘ends’ but rather a sense of purpose connected to path that leads to it.

This linear sense is, however, problematic against the theoretical context advocated here, which emphasises the essentially on-going nature of moral becoming and being. Here, the appropriation of mediational means is never-ending. Whilst habits and dogmas may emerge, new sets of meanings – and new resources through which individual facilitate ideological engagement – are encountered throughout life. At the same time, the shifting nature of context, and the corresponding nuances to experiences, necessitates the on-going improvisation of engagements in references to these mediational means. Set against this context, any sense of a ‘completed’ moral being dissolves in favour of a being in constant re-creation. With this dissolution comes a decline in any strong sense of telos through which to validate one particular developmental pathway. Development must occur – the dynamism of the theoretical portrayal given elsewhere necessitates this – but there seems, initially, nothing to give sense to those shifts, nor to recognise the legitimacy of one above another.

**Authorial Responsibility**

There are two interrelated tensions with which to grapple here. The first relates to the ways in which we might recognise (or reconstruct) notions of responsibility and accountability amongst a mediated model of ideological being. The second derives from a need to respond better to notions of ‘development’ without a corresponding sense of a finished moral being. A useful starting point in this analysis is provided by Mark Tappan, who suggests that an exploration of moral constructions as mediated action implies a sensitivity to the extent to which participants assert ‘authority’ over their constructions:

> To claim such authority means, for one thing, to clearly express and acknowledge one’s own moral perspective. It also means to honour this, and thus authorise what one thinks, feels and does in
response to a moral problem ... and it means to assume responsibility and accountability for one's moral actions.

(Tappan, 1991, p. 7)

There is, on the surface, allusion to a reworked virtue ethics here: in Tappan's suggestion that moral responsibilities and accountabilities might relate to the individual's internal sensibilities (rather than to external consequences or rules, as might be the case in alternative, deontic approaches). However, we might also observe something more sophisticated here. For this kind of moral engagement is socially practiced, both in relation to its construction (out of mediational means) and in relation to performance (physically, or verbally). Thus, we arrive again at that same irreducible tension that lies between the individual and their social context. Here we might make connections back to the discussion beginning on page 133, and the sense that moral justification arises in part from the ways in which moral languages are appropriated in talking about them. Justification, and by extension accountability, thus become an extension of the social domain, as it is only through a shared perception of a rationale (facilitated by the mediational means that underpin it) that it becomes 'real'. Connections might be fostered, in this, not only with Habermas' discursive ethics (1990, 2007), but also Macintyre’s (2007) reconstruction of virtue ethics which places strong emphasis on virtue as a body of moral 'goods' invoked by a given community in undertaking 'practice'.

Some degree of agency is, of course, necessary for any construct of accountability, and the Werstchian conceptualisation provides this as the exercise of 'doing things' with those mediational means available. As we saw in the previous chapter, however, there are differences in the quality of relationship between individuals and their mediational means, and a varied sense of ‘commitment’ to consequent constructions. It is to this variance that Tappan alludes as a pivotal notion in his senses of accountability, and the extracts explored so far illustrate this. Thus, Ryan (on page 188) competently produces a particular construction on environment, one which appropriately responds to the interview setting, but feels little to no commitment to that production and the perspective it represents. In contrast, Quasim (on page 191) is more clearly committed to the perspective he produces, with a stronger sense of ‘authorising’ its reading as representative of him and his stances.
This brings with it a second line of implication, one that provides a better sense of 'development' amongst moral functioning. Here, increased sophistication of engagement lies with the different degree of mastery/ownership of the mediational means that comprise it, and presents a potential telos through which to perceive 'developments'. Such a model, though, does not also imply fixed ends, but an on-going cyclical process as individuals wrestle with new meanings and ideas in order to shift from ventriloquation to ownership. This conceptualisation seems to sit nicely with Wertsch's irreducible tension, implying moral development to be a process by which the individual attempts to maintain some kind of equilibrium against the changing contexts in which they are embedded.

It is illustrative to set this conceptualisation of the telos and process of moral development against it theoretical alternatives, in relation to which there are both connects and disruptions. As in the socialised model, competence in society's frameworks of meaning is an essential ingredient; indeed no meaningful sense of moral action is possible without them. However, this competence is characterised by an autonomous and independent appropriation. The model shares this notion of agency with the alternative, cognitivist-rational model of moral functioning. However, where this is based on an independence from the external context, the Wertsch/Tappan portrayal is more subtle, alluding instead to independence constituted from a competence and integrity within those frameworks.

I would suggest that the beauty of this conceptualisation of moral autonomy and accountability is twofold. Firstly, it is sensitive to the multi-layered relationships between the individual and their mediational means. It is capable of recognising that any given construction might contain, in equal measure, both impulsively appropriated and intentionally evoked mediational means. It therefore suggests that we can only understand senses of responsibility by considering both component resources and the overall sense of the construction, and in reference to the individual’s relationship to that construction. Secondly, this approach situates responsibility and accountability as a quality of relationship that lies between an individual, and their mediational means, and thus achieves a proposal that can cogently incorporate both autonomy and social context as facets.
**Author-ity to Auth-enticity**

Tappan's call to consider 'authority' in participants' constructions is, then, semantically intentional. It implicates an 'author', and thus begs consideration of the relationships between that individual and the texts they produce. Author-ity therefore implicates a sense of self, and of intention, in connection to the data. Such a sense is also useful in considering moral development (or as I have framed it in this thesis ideological becoming). It suggests the emergence of authorial voice and of the gradual ownership of mediational means so that they serve that voice better. Such a development is more significant that it might first appear, for it implies not just the ability to assert one’s position and perspective to external audiences (and thus to ‘justify’ or ‘account for’ positions), but also to oneself, and in doing so one can come to trust that voice and thus in one’s own judgments and perspectives. To borrow again on Bakhtian terminology, the development of authorial voice brings with it the production of internally persuasive discourse and thus self-referential senses of right and wrong, in contrast to those which are externally authoritative (1981, p. 347). Autonomy, in this respect, cuts two ways. It is, on one hand, the quality of a relationship between an individual and their mediational means, but it also describes a reciprocal effect by which an individual, having mastered their cultural context, is able to operate autonomously within it, and to perform that operation of autonomy. Further articulations of these senses are present both empirically, and in the literature. Firstly, from Alice and Olivia;

**Interview 1**

Alice  I think .. em .. I’m not immoral or anything, but I think Olivia is much more .. um .. passionate that I am .. she’s much more principled .. she knows what she thinks is right, and she just goes for it.

Mark  Why do you think ..

Olivia  I don’t know about that .. it’s just .. you learn about the things and then you can make your mind up about them, and because you’ve learned about them – you can make your argument and that

Mark  But surely .. Alice, you’ve learned about them too .. about the kinds of processes and effects

Alice  Yeah .. I have .. but .. it’s different – Olivia like, lives them ideas .. cos they’re so important to her .. and they’re important to me, but .. um .. it’s a bit like your just caught up in what people are saying .. you know they’re important cos you’ve talked about them in geography.
Mark: And you don’t feel that?

Olivia: No … not really – I know other people are saying it too, but it feels more personal.

Mark: Like its your voice, not theirs?

Olivia: Yeah.

I am quick here to arrive at a particular interpretation, and this closes down the discussion. Prior to this point, however, are these senses of internally persuasive discourse (in the case of Alice), spurred by an agentic ownership of mediational means – and of externally authoritative discourses, which individuals must alternatively inhabit. The case of the latter is, of course, more complex when set against the contexts described in the previous chapter, where externally authoritative discourses are sparse, the need to produce internally persuasive ones is all the more terse, without them we arrive at senses of inertia and drift.

There are, I maintain, further ramifications to be drawn from this line of exploration and these can be unpicked from Bakhtin’s original treatment of the two forms of discourse:

Internally persuasive discourse – as opposed to one that is externally authoritative – is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with ‘one’s own word’. In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else’s. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition... it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts. More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a struggle with other internally persuasive discourses. Our ideological [becoming] is just such an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values. The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever new ways to mean

(Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346)

The notion of moral ‘author-ity’ – the capacity to sanctify an external performance of engagement, and to trust, internally, in its persuasiveness – offers one facet of moral accountability and the teleos of ideological becoming.

I would suggest, however, that Bakhtin’s proposals also implicate something
beyond that individual construction/performance, something more stable and coherent. There is an implied sense of a vessel, what I take to be ‘self’, within which a struggle occurs. This, in turn, might imply that the struggle is not just for dominance, but also for coherence: for cogency in terms of the other processes and meanings which inhabit that vessel. To this ends, I would suggest a further extension to Tappan’s call to the ‘author’, beyond the nature of author-ity in construction and to that of auth-enticity. Where the former concept implicates the participant’s immediate relationships to the construction (the degree to which they author-ise it, and take responsibility to it), authenticity implicates the legitimising of a given construction in relation to a broader and longer-term frame of reference: its congruence to broader notions of identity. The most obvious illustrations of this relationship can be found when a particular engagement resonates with broader significances to the individual, or where disconnect occurs in a position and an alternative given elsewhere. Illustrations of these two processes, respectively, are given below.

**Interview 1**

Olivia  Because of eco club ... the things I've started to believe there ... I’m like, always thinking about things like that ... in relation to the environment.

Mark  I’m not quite sure I ... could you maybe give me an example

Alice  Like you were saying about Iraq ... about the companies

Olivia  Um ... oh yeah ... like part of the reason for the Iraq war, I think anyway, is so that people ... companies ... they can get at the oil, without anything stopping them polluting as much as they like

Alice  Everyone was well impressed with that

**Interview 11 (Second Wave)**

Quasim  I don’t actually believe that ... em ... I don’t think we can make that much of a difference ... to the things that happen in Iraq and that ... global stuff, to do with politics ... I think that the leaders just go ahead and do it anyway ... but then i do, cos ... like I’ve said here ... its our responsibility to ... like ... protest and that to make them listen ... so ... oh, I don't know

This addition of ‘authenticity’ to the theoretical frame explored here, I would argue, necessary. Without it, the perspective can only analyse ideological engagements as atomized and isolated events. What is left has a strong sense of history in the way it conceptualises mediational means, but an implied
absence of this same contextual feature amongst the individuals it portrays. If we feel compelled by the claim that the individual-context relationship is irreducible, though, we must necessarily rebalance this facet.

There are, then, features of the theoretical framework that beg this addition. In equal measure, there are also facets of the context against which I base this thesis (and within the literature that described that context) which further support its inclusion. The addition of the notion of 'authenticity' thus brings with it a potential to incorporate, and better understand, a sense of the challenges faced by the self in operating in postmodern contexts (as explored in further depth from page 100). Most notably, there are echoes here, of Giddens' articulation of the hunt for 'ontological security'. He suggests that, in late-modern societies, the decline of absolute validating authorities necessitates that the individual not only seeks out their own personalised truths, but also the firmament that provides confidence in these truths and oneself in reference to them. Gemma expresses an interesting dimension in the mechanics of this:

**Interview 9 (Second Wave)**

Mark: In all of this ... I'm left wondering ... um ... how important are 'Aylish' and 'Gemma' making these kinds of positions ...

Aylish: Well, we all have principles ... um ... and they're important

Gemma: Yeah, its difficult to be all 'anti war' and then say ... well actually, I think the Iraq war was right

Mark: But then, in your interview, you did kind of say something like that ... Here; you talk about all the bad things to do with Iraq - not just its effects and that, but also that it was illegal to begin with ... but here, you talk about how, actually, there were good things that came out of that.

Gemma: Um ... but, then, that's just being realistic, isn't it ... Saddam was a bad man, even if the American's were wrong to invade

Mark: That's quite a complicated stance ... not exactly em certain ... how difficult is it to maintain ... is it not more secure to say one or the other?

Gemma: Well yes ... and no ... it's all very well to have your principles ... so I'm anti-war, generally and so I feel bad about the Iraq war, and why they did it ... but you see stuff on the news and in documentaries and that ... and you realise that there were some positives, and once you know that, you can either ignore or not
Mark: Isn’t it easier to ignore it?

Gemma: Yea ... no, I don’t think it is - there’ll always be some niggling thing ... um ...

Aylish: And other people will argue about it with you

Gemma: Yeah that ... but more about how you feel ... um ... I guess that my principles are not ... I wouldn’t feel better about them, if I ignored the other stuff - do I really want to say things would be better if Saddam was still there? - I’d just feel a bit like a faker

This extract merits unpacking because, for me, it represents a number of important processes. Most crudely, there is a sense of ‘principle’ here, and thus that allusion to a stable and on-going self, engaged with the world. Beyond this, though, there is a slightly more sophisticated articulation of the balancing act that must occur in or to engage with the complexities of external context and at the same time maintain a sense of internal, stable coherence. Further, there is perhaps a sense of the ways in which mediational means facilitate an internal activity, the production and reproduction of self, as individuals (or, at the very least, this individual) reconciles principles (or existing constructions) against experiential meanings. Finally, Gemma articulates something of the nature of ‘ontological security’ here and, indirectly, that turn away from absolute and authoritative truths, and towards a self-referential sense. There are, therefore, echoes in this excerpt both of the challenges posed to the post-modern actor, and some of the responses they foster. This sense of ‘security’ was also something I raised directly with Olivia and Alice.

Interview 1

Mark: I wonder ... um ... how that makes you feel in terms of how secure you feel ... that you know what right and wrong are.

Alice: Well I am moral ... even if I’m not as principled ... if I’m not as passionate about the one thing.

Mark: I think I might have said that wrong ... all of these things we’ve been talking about, they’re really complicated - and you’ve both done this amazing job of sorting right from wrong ... and of seeing that right and wrong overlap sometimes ... so I’m wondering, in all that complication ... what’s the impact of having a firm sense about some things.

Olivia: Well it does ... cos ... not everything is environmental, obviously ... but I think you can use the environment to think through lots of other things ... say ... we say you should boycott some big companies, cos of what they do with pollution and that ... but its not just the environment it hurts, its the people who live in them ... so it all kind of interconnects ... um ... at the end of the day, though - I
know that I've got my principles, and that means I'm fighting for what's right .... but only in the things I'm particularly passionate about ... I can't fight for everything!

There is a sense here of the relationships between ontological security and authenticity. For Olivia, this is a relatively direct connection. Whilst she inhabits a world of contradiction and complication, her firm commitments to a particular body of principles provides an interpretive lens through which to frame other issues and challenges. In turn, this lends a partial sense of immunity from the feelings of conceptual 'drift' described elsewhere in treatments of the postmodern condition. The significance, though, is that these are not principles inscribed through overwhelming authorities. Rather, they are freely constructed as a response to complicated experiences, and found amongst a particular community, eco-club, engaged in practice. Connections might be fostered, here, with the kind of articulations made not just by Giddens and Maclntyre, but also by Taylor and Habermas (see page 144). The sense of authenticity of self and engagement presented by Alice – who, unlike Olivia, did not orient her moral being strongly around a particular community (the 'eco club') – was very different:

Mark I wonder whether you've got a take on that, Alice

Alice Hmm ... yeah I'm not so sure ... I mean, I know companies are bad and that ... but I still go to Tesco and Primark and buy stuff ... I think I just deal with things one at a time ... I think it would be too difficult to just say 'this is right'.

Mark So how do you - not saying you're not - but how do you find confidence that you're a good person ... I'm assuming here that that's important /

Alice Yeah it is ... of course it is, nobody wants to think they're not a good person ... and I reckon, generally, I am ... but its not always that straightforward ... it's not like I have these things that are really important like Olivia ... big ... em ... issues ... but I like to think I treat people nicely ... I ... em

Mark So ... I can see how that might be something you carry around in everyday life, but does it have any relevance to the kinds of engagements I've asked you to make here...

Alice Yeah ... when we were looking at the sweatshop ... to start with, I was just talking in general terms ... but then later, we started talking about us and what we do and that - and I was a bit, 'what do I do?' and then this thing about treating people right was more important.
Where, Olivia could find authenticity in terms of an issue and a body of ideologies and meanings appropriated from a particular community, Alice does not approach the world with such an apparent point of central moral gravity around which to arrange her engagements. This is, of course, not to say that she does not seek a sense of moral integrity, indeed she actively resists this possibility. There remains a notion of individual attempting hold together a notion of ‘being a good person’ with some sensibility to the virtues that such a person will exhibit (being kind). Viewed in this way, Alice does orient herself around a particular sense of moral gravity, but her construct of this is virtue, rather than issue, based. There is, here, also a glimpse of the ways in which this ‘self’ interacts with engagements: that line through which authenticity is composed. Further, there is a methodological insight that suggests that whilst ‘engagements’ produced here are not always directly significant to the individual, they are also never entirely divorced.

**Closing Comments**

In previous chapters of this movement, my focus has been with the general usefulness of Wertsch’s theory of mediated action in reference to ideological ‘being’ in the complex contemporary context – and with the way in which such a reframing offers a useful reply to conventional debates over social structure and agency. This chapter offers a more personal reading of this process and, in particular, a partial reconstruction of notions of moral development and responsibility in reference to it. It has suggested that we might consider the degree of authenticity which participants ascribe both to the production of their engagements, and the products of this process. This addition encourages us to consider the on-going project of the ‘self’ in moral engagement: how participants’ notions of the type of person they are/intend to be might underpin the degree to which the can ‘authorise’ a particular engagement. With this process comes the reciprocal action that forging particular engagements might have on their ever-reconstruction senses of self. In this, I have suggested that we might represent mediated action equally as an internal process (something entirely cogent with Wertsch’s portrayal): that identity production and reconstruction can be facilitated through the appropriation of external meanings, used to render sense into lived experience.
The next chapter, offers a final theoretical connection: suggesting that these principles and processes can usefully be connected to a distinct theoretical school of thought that emphasises the narrative constitution of human consciousness. In it, I suggest that this theoretical turn offers a framework which is intimately compatible with the assertions so far, and which provides a useful description of the various reciprocal actions between internal constructions of self and production of sense in the external world.
Chapter Nine

The Narrative Turn

Introduction

In the main part of this reconstructive movement, I have suggested that Wertsch and Tappan’s model of ideological being and moral functioning as ‘mediated action’ offers a useful theoretical perspective. In the first case, this usefulness derives from the theory in and of itself, from its capacity to overcome some of the limitations inherent to dominant alternative theories. More significant to this thesis, though, is that this theoretical reconstruction also enables a toolset through which we might better understand how individuals overcome (or at least respond to) some of the moral complications associated with globalisation and postmodernity. In the penultimate chapter of this movement, I suggest that this theoretical reconstruction can be taken further into a final wave, which makes connections to an emerging ‘narrative turn’ in social theory.

I begin the process by establishing the broader theoretical context of this emphasis on narrative, drawing out some of the general significances of the role of ‘story’ (and the production of story) in human consciousness and meaning making, identity and culture. I then move to posit that these theoretical articulations of narrative have useful resonances in the context of this chapter and this thesis. If we find persuasive the notion that consciousness is partially narratively constituted, then ideological being (as a subset of that consciousness) might also be reasonably be supposed to be partly mediated through narrative. As such, I outline a number of features through which the process and form of ‘story’ resonates in ‘moral being’. Having established a general intimacy, I move to suggest that such a theoretical integration is also useful in accommodating the complexities posed by globalisation and postmodernity. In particular, I suggest that story plays a role in ‘filling gaps’ in a context of missing information, and that it is useful in accommodating postmodern identities. In the penultimate section of the chapter, I attempt to move full circle and return to the earlier substance of this movement. As such, I suggest that there is an intrinsic compatibility between a narrative
conceptualisation of human being, and those posited by the theory of mediated action. Finally, in closing the chapter I offer illustration of the analytic potential of a narrative-centred approach in facilitating paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis, focusing on ‘character’ in the context of the participants’ constructions.

**Theoretical Context**

In developing this aspect of the theoretical framework, I allude to a sense that both human consciousness and social context is saturated with narrative, that

\[
\text{Man (sic) is always a teller of stories, he lives surrounded by his own stories, and those of other people, he sees everything that happens in terms of those stories and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it.}
\]

(Sartre & Cumming, 1972, p. 58)

The application of narrative in this way (first proposed by theorists such as Bruner, 1990, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricœur, 1984; Sarbin, 1986) represents a fundamental paradigm shift across a range of disciplines in the social sciences. For some, the turn has been fundamentally significant, 'one of the more prominent currents in late 20th century intellectual life' (Neisser, 1994, p. vii). This is a position I share here, particularly in that narrative offers a mode of thought that is not just compatible with the theoretical position set out previously, but which actively enriches it. Before attending to this compatibility, though, it is relevant to examine first some of the key dimensions that constitute this emergent field (these dimensions become significant throughout this chapter). These congregate around three distinct significances: around the relationships between narrative and consciousness, between it and senses of identity, and the broader function of story for cultures and societies.

**Narrative and Consciousness**

The shared premise of the narrative wave of theory is that we are born into a storied world, and quickly learn to make sense of our context through the medium of story. This is a position within which two propositions inhere. The first suggests that stories saturate culture, and the connections that individuals forge to it. As such, narrative permeates consciousness. The second proposition is more subtle. It suggests an internal significance to narrative, that stories are
so ever-present in culture because narrative urges actually drive consciousness. In developing this assertion, advocates of the perspective have attempted to situate ‘the narrative urge’ as a by-product of fundamental perceptual and cognitive processes, what Polkinghorne calls our ‘orders of meaning’ (1988, p. 4), those indispensable orientations and processes through which 'sense' is produced out of raw experience or sensory data.

A recurrent notion in this field is that consciousness is fundamentally relational. Meaningful existence in the world is only possible insofar as the various streams of experience can be organised and connected together. Thus, narrative theorists see consciousness as a phenomenon driven by the need for association. Beyond this, they note the human desire to understand the causalities (or at least influences) which interconnect the happenings in our immediate universes, and the people and events within these happenings. The need to reconfigure raw experience in this way is, for Polkinghorne, the fundamental driver of narrativity:

Narrative is a kind of structuring that uses the configural properties of emplotment to organise actions and happenings into temporal wholes. This process gives meaning to events by identifying their role in and contribution to an outcome.

(Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 5)

Consciousness therefore prefers positioning and interconnection to isolation. Further, though, Polkinghorne’s reference to temporality here adds another layer of significances. It reminds us that consciousness also tends towards senses of movement over stasis, and holds as important notions of 'time' and 'sequence'. Following this notion I would suggest, in brief, that perception exists only through the experience of changing states. Without such contrast in sensory data, we would find ourselves in a strange dark sameness almost indistinguishable from nothingness. Within this perceptual line, 'consciousness' involves the imposition of meaning on those changes by organising various components of raw experience relationally. In this, we begin to stumble on a constitution of consciousness that overlaps with key organisational characteristics of 'narrative'. There is an echo in this working notion with some of the outcomes of the Russian formalist attempt to master an understanding of the underlying building blocks that comprise 'story' (Propp, 2005; Todorov,
Here too we find an emphasis on notions of transition in state, and the role that causes and relations play in rendering sense into those transitions.

The chronological bias of consciousness also produces a further association with narrative: both prefer the rendering of experiences in linear ways. The hunt for immediate causalities implies this tendency. A sense of this-came-first is prerequisite to an understanding of this-was-connected-to-that. Of course, temporal coherence branches beyond immediate experiences. We exist amongst a continuity of experience and not a series of entirely isolated events. As such, broader linearities run through individual emplotments of experience, as we contextualise amongst our understandings drawn from outside of the immediate context. Following this strand of thought, Carr (1991) notes the ways in which consciousness seeks to arrange current experiences in a ‘retentional-protentional’ trajectory. Events, he suggests, gain their significance in that we situate them against a contextual backdrop (our memories of things past, and our knowledge of processes beyond the immediate perceptual frame), and reference them against our anticipation of possible futures. Without such a process, and the narrativising tendencies on which it rests, events would seem both meaningless (without the experiential anchor to lend them sense), and purposeless (lacking any aspirational/anticipatory trajectory).

We have arrived, then, at a sense of two levels through which consciousness renders sense into experience through ‘emplotment’ (to borrow Polkinghorne’s language), and thus produces narrative. The first relates to the organising and ordering of elements within the individual context of experience. The second focuses on the production of meaning achieved by situating immediate experience in a broader set of processes and linearities. At both levels, a preference for ordering, chronology, relationship and causation might make narrative fundamental to human being (and, as I explore later, its subsequent central relationship with morality). Viewed through this lens, then, ‘the story’ is not an end in itself, not an incidental package and convenient mechanism of external communication. Rather, narrativisation has an internal significance as a means towards the production of ‘sense’, what Sarbin calls ‘the organising

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23 There are, of course, instances of non-linear narratives. Here, though, I would suggest that such a rendering works only as a reactive deviation: asking the recipient to reconstruct its contents accordingly. Fundamentally, then, a linearity is necessary but offloaded to the end-perceiver.
principle for human action' (1986, p. 9). In short, narrative offers a structure (and 'emplotment' a conduit towards shaping that structure) through which to organise experiences in meaningful ways. Without it 'we would be lost in a murk of chaotic experience' (Bruner, 1990, p. 56).

There is, then, an emerging position in the field that consciousness operates through emplotment, and that the richness and ever-presence of narrative in human culture are signifiers of this, and not just incidental artefacts. This is not, however, to suggest unanimity in the field, for discord exists around and amongst this general orientation. Debate exists, for instance, around the relative supremacy of narrative as a mechanism through which perception and understanding occurs. For some, emplotment represents one set of conceptual tools in human psychology, complementing others such as logical structures and empirical processes (Bruner, 1991). For others, narrative is much more fundamental, the overarching structuring device for thought, within which all other processes are subsidiary (Fisher, 1987). Incorporating a post-modern turn, then, such a perspective maintains that 'logic', 'science', 'religious belief' and any other form of epistemology are ultimately just alternative and competing stories of the world. In the context of this thesis, I offer a slightly more mercenary orientation. In line with the broader sense of this movement, of a focus on strategies that achieve ends, I hold narrative here to be a useful conceptual device, regardless of its broader significances (A position developed further as this chapter unfolds).

Further disagreement surrounds the origins of narrativising tendencies. Some emphasise its genesis in acculturation (MacCabe, 1991), whilst others see storying as an ‘innate and primitive disposition’ (Bruner, 1990, p. 90) on which culturally-specific tools, processes and content builds. A similar line of debate around 'origins' centres on whether the narrative impulse represents an imposition of sense making, or whether the qualities of raw experience invite it. For advocates of the latter of these positions (e.g. Howard, 1991), experience is presented to the consciousness in a fully developed narrative structure (they emphasise, for instance, that the world is inevitably encountered in a linear way). Proponents of the latter stance, by contrast, suggest that this structure exists only in that we impose such order on essentially fragmentary sensory data (White, 1973).
Between these two extremes lies a middle ground of theory which recognises that raw experience, with its temporal nature and directed actions, ‘has an inchoate narrativity ... that constitutes a demand for narrative’ (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 73). Such a sense suggests that experience as we received it natively has a ‘pre-narrative’ constitution, one that begs to be completed and thus appeals to the narrativising urge. Indulging this appeal involves the investment of reflective (or at least reflexive) response to the pre-narrative quality of experience, and the production of an ‘articulated’ story. In this lies a distinction between inhabitation of raw sensory material, and consciousness, and what Polkinghorne (2006, p. 6) refers to as ‘narrative knowing’ (a concept with significance to be explored further in this chapter).

**Narrative and Identity**

In part, then, the emerging narrative turn in social science has focused on the way in which emplotment renders organisation and sense into otherwise chaotic external events. This interest has been matched by a corresponding internal concern: that we author and deploy stories about ourselves in order to produce localised coherence and stability, in the same way that narratives give consistency to the outside, chaotic world (e.g. Linde, 1993; Ricoeur, 1984; Taylor, 1989). Here, identity is cast as a product of personal narrative, or at least as something fundamentally supported by stories of self. In Bakhtin’s terms, ‘our ultimate act of authorship results in the text which we call ourselves’ (in Holquist, 1986, p. 67).

Perhaps the most simple reading of this position is that identity is buttressed by a sense of autobiography. Who I am is inseparable from what I’ve done, where I’ve come and what I’m caught up in:

> I understand my past by following it up with a future which will be seen after the event as foreshadowed by it, thus introducing historicity into my life

(Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 346)

Self, then, feels reasonable and with foundation only in relation to those stories that serve to establish the ‘reality’ in which it is embedded. However, this relationship is neither linear nor simple. It would be naïve, for instance, to suggest that one’s autobiography ‘produced’ identity. Rather, our narratives of
self are themselves ‘productions’. They are not complete and impartial histories, but authored collections of stories. The habits established through retelling augment or diminish particular details. Narratively constituted identity, then, is not an internal, private phenomenon (or at least, not entirely so). Rather, it gains its internal legitimacy through both public telling, and public ‘doing’ of activity that is cogent with its narrative trajectory. Narrative conceptualisations of self therefore beg a performative sense, an emphasis which finds parallels in both classic Interactionist treatise (Goffman, 1990), and more recently in Queer Theory (Butler, 1990).

This conceptualisation offers an important warning against imagining some form of ‘finished’ internal narrative which ‘plays out’ to external being, most simply because of the emphasis on the ways in which different ‘tellings’ provoke internal revision and redraft. Beyond this, though, we might note that external performance does not occur in a pliant and neutral space. Rather, it occurs in real-world contexts, which are unpredictable and unstable. Context modifies the formation of that telling, and both its internal and external reasonableness/persuasiveness. The conditions that surround us do not always behave as we (or our narratives of self) would expect them to. As such, we are not ‘free authors’ of our narratives. Life is characterised by a plethora of unexpected twists and chance encounters that disrupt and interfere with internal coherences. Set in this way, construction of self-narrative is not just an internal phenomenon, but exists in interplay with external experience:

Life stories are eroded as people are confronted with ... changes and challenged by modifications in the social demands made on them ... the passage of time erodes a person's narratively constructed identity, making it necessary to reconstruct it time after time

(Polkinghorne, 2006, p. 14)

In this sense, I would note reciprocity in the processes of narrative knowing of both internal and external events. To occupy experience 'meaningfully' means to be positioned in relation to it, whether as a direct and committed participant, an incidental presence or interloper, or as a distant observer. Framed in this way, the emplotment of experience necessitates activities around 'self'. Internal/personal narratives either stand in cogency or contrast with the broader narrative, and their positioning in relation to it. As such, they
serve to legitimise (or otherwise) the individual's position and perspective in the external narrative, and thus its persuasiveness or otherwise. Conversely, the successful or unsuccessful inhabitation of a narrative understanding of external experiences either consolidates and strengthens a narrative telling of self, or disrupts it and begs redraft or revision\textsuperscript{24}. McAdams neatly surmises this dynamic as such,

Speaking directly to the modern problem of reflexively creating a unified and purposeful configuration of the Me, life stories reside ... as internalized integrative narrations of the personal past, present and future.

(McAdams, 1996, p. 295)

The notion of narratives as a constant work-in-progress in this way has proven useful in understanding processes of readjustment and restabilisation. It is perhaps most notable in a range of studies which explore people's responses to crisis (e.g. Crossley, 2000; Linde, 1993). It is, though, perhaps most resonant in its more mundane form, in the sense of narrative redraft as process of life as we integrate and inhabit new experiences. Its usefulness as a conceptual tool is, in this respect, most notable in its capacity to 'live in the middle' of notions of self which emphasise socialisation and formative experience as 'fixing' influences on self (or, more often, 'personality'), and those more post-structural senses of self as transitory and in constant flux (I return to this later in this chapter). Here, though, we have a model that is able to incorporate 'dogma' in a person's sense of who they are. As an individual matures and ages, a narrative of self can acquire central themes and motifs. Equally, though, this core stability is situated on the uncertain eddy and flow of experience, and forced to reorient itself to and integrate those provocations which life holds up to it.

The uncertainties of external experience therefore compromise the authorial omnipotence the individual holds over their narrative of self. This is further limited in that narration does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it is developed in conversation both with a perceived audience, and with a broader social and cultural context. As such, narratives exist within universes of meaning. They are

\textsuperscript{24} I ask, at this point, a little tolerance of my lack of illustration. I intend, here, to give a sense of theoretical backdrop, before returning to the specific focus of the thesis, and the data on which it pulls, shortly
negotiated and renegotiated with others, and dependent on those to whom they are told (Day, 1991). Further, they occur with a web of broader folklore and mythology. Narratives produced at community or societal levels intersect with personal narratives. These culturally constituted stories offer preferred meanings and define default statuses. They validate particular hopes, aspirations and virtues. The constitution of self-narrative, then, is subject to Taylor's sense of interlocution:

I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners which are essential to me achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of languages of self-understanding.

(Taylor, 1989, p. 36)

What emerges in this line of exploration is a triad of interaction: between narrativisation as it occurs as a facet of understanding self; as a mechanism to render sense in the external world; and as a communal and communitarian practice. In the final section of this aspect of chapter (which dwells on the theoretical context of narrative), I turn my attention to the last of these facets.

**Narrative and Culture**

The emphasis so far in my treatment of the theoretical context of 'narrative' has been with its importance as a facet of individual psychologies, and of consciousness. Within this, however, a further strand of significance is also emerging; that 'stories' are also significant as mechanisms that operate at a socio-cultural level. An anthropological lens might offer useful perspective on this facet of narrative. Drawing on the existing work of narrative theorists, I have already suggested that the abundance of stories is not incidental but a side effect of the fundamentally narrative urges of perception, consciousness and meaning making. Here, I extend this sense, viewed from the opposite direction. Whilst individual consciousness drives the production of stories, their continued circulation in our social context reflects a fundamental communitarian importance – their status as semiotic currency. As such, the 'story' (in general as a medium, and more individually as packages of meaning) is significant as a part of the dynamic described by Taylor's 'web of interlocution'. The process of telling, experiencing, appropriating and retelling
story, in this context, represents a form of cultural participation. Through it, individuals connect with and reaffirm underlying meanings and principles.

Within this academic treatment of story as a fundamental social device, it is possible to distinguish a range of different tones of emphasis. One treatment effectively casts the medium as an effective and efficient transmissive device. It sees narrative as a means of embodying cultural expectations, norms and values. Such packages are an accessible means for the acculturation of younger generations. This kind of emphasis is age old: in Republic, for instance, Plato calls that,

We’ll persuade nurses and mothers to tell stories we’ve selected, since they will shape their children’s souls with stories much more than they will shape their bodies by handling them.

(Plato, 2003)

There is, then, a sense that the social function of stories is in articulating and thus transmitting common values to individuals. This line of argument has been reasserted by contemporary theorists (notably, Bettelheim, 1991; May, 1992) who emphasise the significance of traditional childhood stories in communicating a sense of ‘the good’ as it has been conceptualised within their culture. Explicit note has been made of the centrality of stories in the formation of morality in childhood,

It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but make their own way in the world, and eldest sons who waste their inheritance on riotous living and go into exile to live with swine that children learn, or mislearn ... what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are.

(MacIntyre, 2007, p. 55)

This strand in the analysis of the social significance of stories therefore dwells on their transmissive function as bodies of meaning. Beyond this, however, a more subtle reading exists in the literature, one that emphasises the production of stories over their retelling. This perspective therefore sees narrativisation as a tool through which cultures produce meaning and sense.

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25 rather, it focuses on story, over narrative, for the emphasis here is on the ‘product’ rather than process
One might draw direct parallel, here, with notions explored earlier of emplotment as an individual-psychological mechanism of meaning production, but worked at a societal or community level. By producing and circulating stories, societies are able to produce communal meanings, whilst participation in the production and telling of these stories by individuals underpins solidarity between them.

The work of Claude Levi-Strauss (1995, 1996) is perhaps the most immediately significant in this line of argument. Working within a structural-anthropological frame of reference, Levi-Strauss compiles an array of rich and divergent mythological stories in order to suggest that their significance lies not in their surface content, but in their underlying structures and the function that this structure exists to perform. He points to the structural similarities between myths and folk-tales across cultures, arguing that this is indicative of an underlying attempt to articulate and master fundamental problems with which societies, cultures and the individuals must grapple.

In this structure, he suggests, we find that myth is an attempt to articulate fundamental binary oppositions that societies face. In the most simple of instances, then, myths tackle notions of life and death, or of good and evil, civilised and wild: tensions that breed ontological and institutional insecurities within societies, and thus threaten their stability. The production of narratives around these binaries thus serves to occupy the space between, offering a sense of reciprocity and resolution and a cogency by which existence in this space might be meaningful and coherent. One need only look towards the salving tendencies of religious narratives as illustration of this, in relation to the uncertainties and anxieties surrounding death.

In short, Levi-Strauss suggests that the abundance of mythology across cultures (and the strange correspondence in the content and structure of this mythology) reflects a common societal struggle to overcome the fundamentally insecure foundations of cultural meaning. Left unaddressed, the conflicts between binary oppositions would undermine social cohesiveness. In this sense, the production of narrative represents a cultural attempt to overcome this anxiety by communally articulating and thus facing those conflicts. This collective impulse, he suggests, is as much a feature of modern societies as it is
tribal ones, the only differentiating feature is the skill and meanings available. Early societies act as 'bricoleurs', who must produce meaningfulness out of scarce resources, and thus to 'modern' eyes and ears, their responses might seem crude and simplistic. Levi-Strauss suggests, however, that precisely the same impulse, to address those binary conflicts that underpin all human experience, is present in our own society. The key difference is that the physical and semiotic tools available to us in addressing this task are more sophisticated. As such, our responses are akin to those of 'engineers', furnished by the technical support of notions of logic and science (though, I would suggest, mythology in its traditional sense is equally present in the moral panics and common media representations).

The significance offered by Levi-Strauss therefore suggests something more subtle than stories as 'cultural transmission'. Rather, he hints at a process of narrative production as an attempt to resolve underlying cultural tensions. As such, he gives as much emphasis to the genesis and creation of 'story' as he does to the product and its reception. In this, though, Levi-Strauss retains a focus on the function of narrative at a macro-level. As such, he situates his understanding at a societal (or at least a communal) level. A similar emphasis is found on a meso-scale. Here, we might observe a more subtle and subjective 'bottom up' process of socio-cultural affirmation, caught up in the everyday artefacts and 'doings' of life:

The family photograph albums proudly displayed: you when you were two in the sea at Bridlington – holding dad’s hand; you with your brother in the house where you lived as a child; all of ‘us’ together at Christmas ’76 – ‘do you remember?’; ‘our’ wedding, ‘us’ with ‘our’ first baby … this is all about articulating and reaffirming commitment to a moral good, in this case the importance of being a ‘we’, of family, love, loyalty and connection

(Crossley, 2000, p. 16)

Thinking of the narrative in this way inverts the transmissive function, whilst retaining its communal one. Here, production and retelling remains in the remit of individual agency, but also in a sense of individual agency engaged in social activity. 'Communality' is therefore a product of the external telling of stories, but this is not its only significance. It is also a quality derived from the intertwinement of individual stories amongst a cultural fabric.
A more subtle reading still might recognise (as in previous sections) that culturally constituted stories also serve to add meaning to those individually improvised stories. As such, 'you when you were two in the sea at Bridlington' works as a social device only in that it overlaps with a broader cultural construct of the family holiday. In this sense,

Narrative structuring results in narrative products that make use of cultural plots and characterizations in their compositions

(Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 5)

As such, we might cast the production of narratives (whether as part of personal 'sense making', or in external communication) as a form of social participation. Individual emplotment is, therefore, a process that both references and reaffirms broader cultural narratives.

Conclusions, and Fundamental Reciprocities

The intent of the opening section of this chapter has been to orient the reader to ways in which the literature articulates the general relevance of narrative to human being. I have structured this exploration around the three distinct areas of focus: on consciousness and meaning making, identity and social/communal significances. Such ordering allows some compartmentalised analysis of the role of narrative, but it is ultimately artificial. It serves to tame some of the reciprocity that lies between the triad of significance. This interoperation is, however, precisely what makes it useful. The production and reproduction of stories finds a parallel and inseparable significance at all three levels.

Emplotment of external events necessitates the positioning of a narrator within them, in ways that both legitimise internal stories of self and begs redraft of them. At the same time, these internal and external events draw on the momentum of prefabricated cultural stories as sources of both meaning and stability. The act of drawing upon these social narratives in turn serves to reaffirm their continued circulation at the communal level.

Interplay between internal and external manifestations of narrative matches this significance at individual and communal levels. Individuals, cultures and communities use narrative to produce sense out of external experience. Equally, though, narrative sense making exists through its external performance: the telling and retelling of stories about selves, and about
experiences serve to affirm and reaffirm both internal constructs and shared ones. In short, we can only understand the internal significance of narratives by considering narrativisation as a participatory practice. In the section that follows, I attempt to articulate why these qualities of a narrative conceptualisation are useful in the context of this thesis: and the ways in which narrative responses are cogent against the challenges posed by globalisation and postmodernity.

**The Usefulness of Narrative**

The opening section of this chapter served to situate the 'narrative turn' amongst a theoretical context. I now move to demonstrate more directly the usefulness of this to the specific project of this thesis. I attend to this in three distinct ways. To begin, I suggest that there is a long-standing and deep intimacy between narrative and morality. I assert that this is something that stems not just from social convention, but also from the fundamental characteristics of what constitutes 'moral activity'. I proceed to posit that the challenges of the contemporary context heighten such an association. Here, I note the parallels which exist between the language of narrative theorists (set out above), and the observations of commentators on globalisation and postmodernity. Further, I assert that the connection between morality and narrative is particularly acute where a context of 'missing information' invites improvisation of detail. In the close of the section, I bring this exploration back to the theoretical reconstruction explored so far in the thesis, to suggest that the theory of mediational means can cogently incorporate these observations.

**The Intimacy of Narrative and Morality**

My initial case for an allusion to narrative in this thesis is located in the significant socio-cultural association (intimacy, even) between story, both as artefact and as medium, and morality. Evidence of this association is abundant at the experiential level. One only needs to look to the traditions of fable and parable to see story as a culturally resonant mechanism through which to explore and communicate moral issues. This thread of emphasis emerged at the theoretical level in the discussion above. In particular, it is at the fore in the suggestion that narratives and narrativisation allow societies and cultures to explore, articulate and transmit senses of value and virtue. The prevalence of
narrative in moral domains is also present in the empirical aspect of this study. As such, at the most basic of levels participants tended to rise to the moral challenges of the interview context with the production of stories. For example;

*Interview 6*

Emma: So every day he has to get up really early ... and he has to walk all that way to the farm and ...  
Sarah: ... like twenty miles or something ...  
Emma: ... yeah ... um ... and then he has to work all day without any breaks and that  
Sarah: And he probably has to work, because he's got his children and his wife to look after...  
Emma: ... so he needs the money, like, really bad ...  
Sarah: But he gets ripped off, doesn't he ...  
Emma: Yeah, like, the people he works for, they don't really pay him very well ... only, like 10p  
Sarah: So he just has to work harder and harder, for longer and longer hours, just to earn the same amount of money - and he goes home exhausted ... he can't even spend time with his family.

This excerpt illustrates most clearly a prevailing trend across the dataset, in which the telling of stories enabled responses to be meaningfully packaged. It may well be this was a performative, communicative tendency, rather than a perceptual/internal one: that the story offered a medium to render meaningful interaction, rather than as a mechanism to produce meaning. I would suggest, however, that one might blur the line between these two conceptualisations. As a communal event, the production of meaning in the interview was inevitably reciprocal. It occurred as the interaction between individuals, and thus on mutually dependent internal and external planes (note the echo, here, of the Vygotskian foundations to this thesis as set out on page 170). As such, 'story' here is a mechanism to facilitate meaningful communication but through this to enable co-construction and co-cognition.

In the next section, I will locate the impetus for this narrative urge amongst the particular demands of context. First, though, I make a more general case. We might situate narrativisation around moral things as an extension of the wider narrative tendency explored in the opening of this chapter. That we make sense of the world by casting experience amongst personal and communal
stories, might therefore lead one to suggest reasonably that moral encounters are also subject to the urge to emplot.

There is, I would argue, a further layer of significance here: that those experiences we invest with a 'moral' flavour have particular qualities that reinforce narrative conceptualisations and renderings of them. I have offered a degree of indirect substantiation of this claim already in this chapter. I have noted, for instance, that the narrative urge in consciousness pivots around the needs for relationship, causality, linearity. I would suggest that each of these qualities, whilst necessary to comfortable existence in itself, is even more necessary in moral articulations of that experience.

Reference to the minimal features necessary for experience to enter the moral domain can facilitate elaboration of this claim. Most fundamentally, a change in states, or the potential of such change, is a predicate of experience entering the 'moral' domain. In this is a direct parallel with some of the early formalist work on the fundamental principles of narrative structure (Propp, 2005; Todorov, 1977), which envisages the same basic building block of transitions in state. Expression of the qualities of these transitions does not draw on an explicitly moral language. Todorov, for instance, talks of all narrative as constituted of movement between 'equilibrium' and 'disequilibrium'. This surface vocabulary, however, exposes an underlying semantic structure that constitutes both narrative and moral events. Todorov's language implies judgement of value: that 'disequilibrium' is unsatisfactory, and that a drive to correct this is what produces the impetus of narrative progression. I would suggest that the same is true of 'moral' experience, drawing parallels between the binary oppositions of 'equilibrium' and 'disequilibrium' and the more directly ethical languages of help and harm, good and ill. In short, narrative works because it appeals directly to moral sensibilities, and in turn, offers a structure to render them. Conversely, the encapsulation of experience in narrative allows the production of moral sensibility.

These transitions are notable in Sarah and Emma’s response. It produces a moral impetus through the juxtaposition of resting equilibriums, and unsatisfactory disequilibrium; the presentation of a kind of ‘normality’ (having a family, going to work) contrasting with features that jar with this (long hours,
low pay). The result is a feeling of incompleteness in the presentation; it begs action to rectify the situation. As such, its overall feeling of disequilibrium produces the ethical drive of the extract. Further, the narrative rendering of the extract encapsulates this in relation to the tale of an a single day, enabling a synecdochal treatment of the broader issues which is more amenable to engagement (as a specific set of experiences, rather than an abstract form of processes).

The shared fundamental principle of transitions brings a series of further interconnection between narrative and morality – which echo the exploration given in the opening to this chapter. Thus, whilst consciousness prefers linearities and senses of causality, the rendering of morality relies on them. Like any other storied artefact, moral experience has a ‘plot’ that establishes directions of travel, and through this, notions of culpability/responsibility. As such, Sarah and Emma’s response renders processes in time (in this case, within a confined linearity of a day). In doing so, they are able to establish how influences within that single linearity affect its central protagonist, and thus establish moral culpabilities.

This is not, of course, to say that these plots are always clear and inherent. Indeed, the business of Movement Two of this thesis alluded to the murky complication amongst which such engagements occur. The emplotment of external moral experience is, then, not necessarily straightforward. In itself, though, this does not preclude the connectivity between narrative and morality. Rather, I would draw a parallel with the discussion on page 214: experience presents itself in a form that invites narrativisation, rather than in a pre-narrativised one. In this sense, in constructing moral engagement the individual might be seen to be involved in an untangling, in order to establish plot and thus an ontological security - akin to Polkinghorne's 'narrative knowing'. Sarah and Emma (and the other participants in this study) accomplish just this kind of narrative knowledge in constructing cogency around their partial encounters.

In the presentation of abstract 'moral dilemmas' (see, for instance, the example of Kohlberg's interview stimuli on page 146), this untangling is relatively simple. Stripped of complications and ambiguities, a limited range of plots is possible.
The ecology of real life encounter, however, is more slippery and interweaving. Here too, though, the challenge is in securing plot, responding to the ‘inchoate narrativity’ of experience in order to establish something more stable and emploted. We might read the following data through this lens:

**Interview 4**

Sophie  
What’s that?

Chelsea  
Is it a hospital?

Sophie  
Oh…they’re sewing

Chelsea  
Oh, are they? ... oh, it's like a sweatshop

Sophie  
Yeah and there’s children - are they children? In a third world country again

Chelsea  
Working ... hard ... for the money

Sophie  
It must be hot, cos they’ve only got their trousers and that ... so it must be warm ... it’s a small room, they’re all cramped in aren’t they

Chelsea  
They've got children working as well, so they're starting work young

Sophie  
It’s danger ... are they like under the machines, picking stuff up and that - it’s dangerous ... it’s not very safe is it ...

In this extract, which by now is familiar from elsewhere in this thesis, we see a moment of narrative ‘click’. After initial grapplings with uncertainty, a stable starting point is established (‘oh ... they’re sewing’) from which a linear trajectory – founded on equilibria and disequilibria - can be produced. Its definition is somewhat looser (initially, at least) than that of Sarah and Emma, but it is still the presence of that narrative structure which renders concrete sense into a partial and contradictory stimulus.

My initial justification in a connecting narrative and morality therefore lies on a foundational level, in the sense that both narrative and morality rest on fundamental defining features. As such, whenever the individual engages with the world amongst a moral domain, I would suggest that there is a tendency towards narrative form. Transitions in state constitute both, and it is the organisation and arrangement of these states in ways that produce 'sense'. As individuals emplot ‘raw’ experience to foster moral engagements, then, they produce a form of ‘narrative knowing’. We should note, though, that this justification operates as the level of morality in general, whereas this thesis dwells particularly on the moral challenges generated by contemporary
existence. It is to this dimension that I now turn my attention, for it too offers further justification for an allusion to narrative in this thesis.

**The Contexts of Globalisation and Postmodernity**

I would therefore contend that narrative is process embedded in the very constitution of moral functioning. It forms a key mechanism not just in ordering experience, but also in producing a form of order that is amenable to evaluations of right and wrong, and of the self and others in producing impacts. This fundamental connection becomes all the more relevant when placed in context and, in particular, when set in the context of movement two of this thesis. The intent of this section is, therefore, to attend to the notion that a reference to 'narrative' is particularly relevant in considering how people operate against a backdrop of postmodernity and globalisation.

It is possible to substantiate this claim in reference to each of these two sources of context, resulting in a rationale that is, in turn, broad and specific. Here, I attend to each of these. I begin the section with the former, noting the general overlaps that exist amongst the language used by postmodern theorists, and those exploring the narrative constitution of human consciousness. I then move to a more specific frame of reference, exploring how narrativisation offers a useful conceptual response to the particular demands of globalised living.

At the general level, I would therefore suggest that there are strong parallels between commentary on what it is to 'be' in a postmodern culture (as set out in Movement Two) and the processes described by advocates of a narrative conceptualisation of consciousness (established in the opening of this chapter). It may even be useful to consider the two as a theoretical pairing, particularly in that they have emerged in parallel as a focus of academic theory. Viewed in this way, where the former body of work establishes the structural, conceptual and material tensions that frame the individual in contemporary society, the latter offers a useful description of some of the perceptual and cognitive processes by which that individual occupies those tensions.

It is useful to briefly review some of these interconnections, and situate them amongst the context of this work. However, I do not wish to imply this to be a unique contribution of this thesis. As noted above, there is a vague temporal
association in the emergence of the two bodies of commentary, and thus overlaps that are both implicit and articulated. In particular, narrative inhabits the core vocabulary of descriptions of postmodernity, which renders the decline in absolute truth systems as a collapse of ‘metanarratives’. In this language, we therefore imagine the individual shifting from a universe of existence structured around common core ‘stories’ of the world (whether offered by science, religion or politics), to a more disrupted and multiplicitous context. Here, they occupy, and face the challenge of navigating, a universe of meaning constituted of multiple interweaving and juxtaposing stories.

Such a conceptualisation of experience sits comfortably amongst the discourse of narrative theory set out in the opening of this chapter. For instance, we might read the postmodern description of contemporary conditions as an intensification of the sense that narrative is a central currency of culture. On one level, this might be simply the sense that stories offer coherent bodies of meaning, and thus a useful and coherent ‘packing device’ through which to conceptualise a pluralistic epistemological context. The story is useful, here, as it allows us to think about truth systems not just as external knowledges or understandings, but entire realities that the individual occupies and transgresses. It is, however, possible to move further in understanding the usefulness of this interconnection. Useful nuance is offered by the sense of narrative as a form of cultural participation (see page 217). It allows us not just to imagine pluralistic truths, but also as to envisage some of the dynamics that propagate and maintain those multiple competing ways of knowing. Individuals are not just consumers of narrative, they are active authors who dip in and out of those pre-existing stories of the world (more on this later), and in doing so retell them. This collective action provides the inertia necessary to maintain epistemological pluralism.

The shared language of these theoretical perspectives therefore establishes common ground, as is their imagining of the external context as something saturated with ‘story’. There is also the potential, in combining the two perspectives, of better understanding of how the engagement of individuals’ action reproduces this saturation. Further to this, the narrative sense of identity as a productive of emplotment offers a further useful strand of overlap. As explored on page 93, ‘the postmodern condition’, casts self as
something which is fluid and fluctuating, rather than fixed and constituted of monolithic meanings or characteristics given by overwhelming authorities. Embedding a sense of emplotment as an internal response to these conditions offers a useful enrichment. It allows for (indeed, it expects) a sense of self which is subject to redraft and refinement. Whilst it does not deny a sense of stability it recognises this as an achievement, rather than a given. As such, an individual's core narrative of self must constantly accommodate and orient itself to external experiences, and the sense made of them. Giddens' articulates the usefulness of narrative in relation to understanding self in contemporary society explicitly:

A person's identity is ... [to be found in] ... the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events that occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self.

(Giddens, 1991, p. 54)

A more thorough treatment of this quotation, in the context of postmodernity, is given around page 110 - and echoes of this in discussion of participants' data in the section beginning on page 200. Here, it relevant simply to note both its explicit reference to narrative, and the function of that reference in relation to the complexities set out as the 'postmodern condition'.

As a contextual dimension of this thesis, the conditions referred to as 'postmodernity' lend broad appeal to narrative theory. The second contextual element of the thesis amplifies this, for the peculiarities of moral engagement generated through globalisation accentuate a need for narrative as a perceptual and cognitive tool. In particular, I have noted throughout this thesis that the contorting effects of globalisation create a context of 'missing information'. The vast distances of place and time create uncertainty about the implications of our actions, and our culpability in relation to possible effects. More than making evaluative judgements of right and wrong, the individual agent is left needing to first 'fill the gaps' in experience in order to make that evaluation reasonable. Against this complication, narrative offers further contributions to the theoretical repertoire of this research: it presents the capacity to 'story together' the gaps in this experience. Here, I am reminded of
the citation from page 83, in which Ulrich Beck described the contemporary condition as one in which causalities “...must always be imagined, implied to be true, believed”.

As I have suggested earlier in this chapter, the narrative quality of moral forms of experience derives from interconnecting 'starts' and 'ends' through transitions in state. Such a process is present in extreme forms against the context of globalisation, with a heightened awareness of distant happenings, and the nagging sense of our own culpability in them, but uncertainty about what lies in between (here, I remind the reader of Bauman's observations, explored on page 78). Emplotment is therefore a functional necessity in such encounters, bringing with it not just the capacity to story together beginnings and consequences, but to embed necessary detail in the 'in between'. In forming cogent orientations to global existence, narrative, in this sense, offers a conceptual bridge.

Throughout this section, I have focused on the contextual setting of this research in providing rationale to the reference to narrative. In one strand of this context, postmodernity produces a pluralistic epistemological setting. Here, narrative is useful in appreciating the 'structure' of that experience (which emplotment might offer a device by which to understand how individuals engage with and maintain it). In the other strand of context, globalisation generates moral uncertainties, a 'gappy' set of engagements. Here, emplotment offers the potential to 'story together' gaps in understanding.

Over the process of this chapter so far, we have imagined a narratively constituted model of moral being. Such a conceptualisation creates distance from the overly rationalised view of the moral actor without resorting to an overly socialised alternative, which is apt in relation to the key tensions identified in the close of movement two. In this, there are echoes of Walter Fisher's emphasis on Narrative Paradigm (Fisher, 1984, 1987, 1994), a perspective which explicitly sets out to trouble the 'scientised' view of human consciousness as reasoned and empirical. In a disruption to the view that the alternative is entirely irrational operation in the world, Fisher suggests the concept of 'Narrative Rationality', to encompass the kinds of processes that
replace scientised rationality. Here, the pure logic and evidence might not be the sole source of 'reason' but reasonableness is still established. It exists in relation to the workings of narrative conceptualisations of the world, particularly the qualities of fidelity, probability and coherence.

In itself, then, narrative is a useful response to the problems and challenges set out in Movement Two of this thesis. It is, however, not an isolated theoretical perspective in the broader work of this research. Rather, the prior body of this movement has proposed a broader means of understanding how individuals orient themselves to these complexities. In the final segment of justification for the use of narrative, I therefore return to this body of work, and posit it can cogently integrate narrative.

**Cogency with Mediated Action**

In this chapter, I have made the case that narrative offers a useful mechanism through which to understand moral being in general, and that this is particularly pertinent in relation to the focal context of this thesis. Where this has essentially connected narrative to the work of Movement Two, I now shift to consider its relevance to the earlier work of this movement, which has established a reconstructed theoretical framework based on the work of Wertsch. My position here is that the narrativised model of human experience is fundamentally compatible with that of mediated action. In this section, I intend to lay out some of the key compatibilities. As in the previous sections, I approach this on two separate layers of exploration. The first casts narrative amongst the more general processes of 'mediated action', noting that culturally-constituted stories might be viewed as a form of mediational means, which offer both 'content' and 'structure' to participants' engagements. The second layer exposes a deeper interconnection, examining the theoretical resonances which exist amongst narrative theory and that espoused by Wertsch, focusing in particular on their conceptualisations of the relationship between structure and agency.

The simplest interconnection between this chapter and the broader movement views 'narrative' as a form of mediational means. Story thus becomes significant as a resource through which individuals might appropriate meaning and thus facilitate meaning-ful action. Elsewhere (see page 169) 'mediational
means' have been conceptualised as a coherent body of meaning, akin to discourse. Narrative, in this sense, is one device through which to achieve that coherence. In producing their engagements, the participants in this study are therefore able to call upon an array of socially significant 'stories' of the world. In doing so, they are able to embed partial experience in particular realities, with histories and with trajectories. Elsewhere in this thesis, a gesture has already been made towards this end. It is particularly resonant in the discussion (beginning on page 145) of the ways in which responses are ‘wrapped up’ in existing narratives in order to produce meaningful engagement. Securing a context in this way is illustrative of the ways in which ‘stories’ might act as semiotic carriers, offering pre-integrated (and thus logically coherent) bodies of meaning on which an individual might draw.

In exploring the status of narrative as mediational means, we might therefore focus on 'content', and view the story as a packet of meaning. I would suggest, however, that we could expose further depth in this line of exploration. The narrative conceptualisation of human consciousness goes beyond a sense that individuals simply inhabit or appropriate external narratives. They are also producers of stories. The making of meaning involves the emplotment of experience, the authorship of narrative. This observation leads to a slightly more subtle perspective on the mediational nature of narrative. It suggests that we might view the structure of story, as much as its content, as a form of cultural resource around which to facilitate engagements with the world. Again, the analysis offered previously makes gestures towards this sense. In particular, this claim finds connections with the exploration (on pages 133) of the ways in which procedural logics are constructed in participants' responses.

We can therefore view narrative as a form of mediational means in two ways. Firstly, it operates both as a mechanism for the distribution of coherent bodies of meaning, from which individuals might appropriate in whole or part. Secondly, it offers a genre, and set of structures at various levels around which the individual might organise the meaning in the authorship of their own engagements. In both cases, the significance is the integrative powers of narrative structure in organising meanings into something that is internally persuasive and appealing both to the cognitive and emotive faculties: for its persuasiveness arrives not just of its 'logic', but also of its general 'feel'. This
observation again finds resonance in Fisher's shift from scientised to narrative rationality (see page 230). Here, he suggests that the power of narrative in ideological engagement lies in its capacity to facilitate judgements around probability, coherence and fidelity. As such, rationality acquires qualities beyond 'logic' (though this is implied by 'coherence') scoping too whether a given reality feels identifiable against personal experience and other narrative renderings.

This line of argument echoes the observations drawn from page 145 of this thesis: that the construction of an ideological position is as much an accomplishment of producing a coherent reality, as it is imposing an evaluative framework on a given reality. However, Fisher's framework, and a broader reference to narrative, offers further dimensions to this. My implication in earlier chapters has suggested that participants must seek realities which are internally persuasive (i.e. in which details are coherent), and position themselves in ways which appear authentic (that is, which is cogent with their own self-narratives). The body of work here, though, reminds us that all of this is fundamentally inter-textual; that the reasonableness of narrative engagements rests also in the gamut of socially available and experienced stories that act as reference points.

In integrating narrative to the general theoretical project of this movement, then, we might view the 'story' as a form of resource, or mediational means, lending both meaning and structure to the individual's activity in the world. However, I would also note further, deeper and more general resonances in the principles of Wertsch and those of narrative theory. Most notably, there is a significant overlap in the resolution of structure and agency at the heart of both perspectives. In the opening discussion of this chapter, this centred on a notion of fundamental reciprocity: that sense that we both produce and consume narrative in the process of making sense of experience, and of ourselves. Narrativisation is a form of socio-cultural participation, by which individuals appropriate, retell and revise broader social tales, and in doing so propagate them. In this is a useful echo of Wertsch's irreducible tension. As such, we might wonder the degree to which our narrative meaning making is agentic, or the inhabitation of broader stories. Ultimately, though, this is a contradiction at the heart of being human (whether conceptualised from a
narrative perspective, or that of Wertsch), and thus to be recognised in theory, rather than resolved.

So far in this chapter, I have therefore begun to suggest that a reference to narrative is triply useful: in relation to morality in general, in specific application to the contemporary context, and in connection to the broader theoretical overtures of this thesis. Beyond the conceptual value of this turn, though, is a further analytic potential.

**Illustration of Analytic Potential**

As a framework, the theory of mediated action encourages an exploration of participants’ constructions that emphasises the socio-cultural origin of meanings, and the nature of the individual amongst these meanings. This approach recognises the exercise of agency in relation to these resources and, drawing on its Vygotskian heritage, that some internal transformation and 'arrangement' of these external structures is involved. However, it offers only a tentative sense of what this might actually comprise. The recognition that both the structure of narrative and the content of stories are significant as mediations offers a useful riposte to this. Treating participants’ responses as storied constructions invites a deconstruction of the internal meanings and dynamics that comprise them. It implies an analysis of the production and communication of a meaningful plot, and the positioning of the author in relation to it. I would suggest that this analytic contention brings further value to the reference to narrative in this thesis. In the final segment of this chapter, I intend to offer the reader an illustration of this analytic potential - with a specific focus on one facet of narrative construction: that of character and, more specifically, the archetypes of victim, villain and hero.

**Analytic Orientation**

In drawing narrative into this thesis, I therefore suggest that it is useful to explore the ways in which participants’ responses are ‘storied’. A strategy to realise this draws heavily on the analytic principles set out in the methodology section of this thesis (see page 34 onwards). As such, the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of each response can be considered, paying attention to both their ‘syntax’ (in terms of how meanings are arranged to produce ‘plot’).
and 'vocabulary' (the notions and ideas that are drawn upon in order to 'flesh out' that sequence of events).

In this basic analytic framework, we might draw a direct parallel with some of the more theoretical conclusions drawn in the previous chapter (see page 206), and intimated at the close of the last section. In particular, there are echoes of the notion that appropriation of meanings allows participants to invest both a sense of logic into their constructions (analogous to syntagm), and to lend that logic weight and reasonableness by adding detail (connected to paradigm). This particular approach to narrative also borrows heavily from some of the analytic conventions of formalist approaches, which attempt to understand narrative constructions in reference to the fundamental 'building blocks' from which they are produced (Barthes, 1977; Greimas, 1983, 1987; Lévi-Strauss, 1995; Propp, 2005). Such overlap is motivated, however, by strategic reasons: in order to produce a mechanism through which to locate a ‘way in’ to participants’ construction. It is not my intent, here, to allude to the same grand theoretical aims as the Formalist project. Thus, I do not make claim to the possibility of reducing narratives to a simple ‘deep structure’, and certainly not one that is any way universal or stable. It eschews the attempt ‘to master the infinity of utterances [paroles] by describing the language [langue] from which they can be generated’ (Barthes, 1977, p. 80).

In this sense, I do not intend to suggest a shared underlying genetic structure to narrative, nor less that the possibility of reduction participants’ constructions solely to these ventriloquising structures. Equally, though, I maintain that the responses are not entirely products of personal creativity. Rather, I would argue that meaningful and internal coherence is co-dependent on existing structures and bodies of discourse within the individual's cultural context. This context does not ‘structure’ narrative, as such, but provides a repertoire of resources on which participants may draw in their constructions. In Bathes terms, the ‘language’ of narrative is, at the same time, an active construction of the individual and a product of their cultural context. Its stability extends only as far as habit, and specificity to a particular time and place limits its universality. In other words, those irreducible tensions located between the individual and their context that feature heavily in Chapter 7 form
the theoretical backdrop for analysis of the internal mechanics of narratives of engagement.

**The Significance of Character**

A full and detailed exploration of the narrative constitution of participants’ responses is well beyond the scope of this chapter. Whilst useful, narrative is essentially an enriching adjunct within the broader theoretical frame of the research. As such, I avoid any attempt to attend to the complexities of the intra- and inter-textual features of the data here, in favour of a more focused exploration of 'character' as a specific aspect of narrative. In part, this decision is a functional one. As a discrete and meaningful aspect of narrative, exploration of characterisation offers a flavour of the usefulness of this analytic approach that, whilst partial, is nonetheless coherent. Beyond this, though, lies a further, doubled-levelled significance. Characterisation has a fundamental role to play in narrative construction, and existing theory reflects this. Further, I would suggest that this focus has a specific contribution to make in extending the connections established previously between notions of narrative consciousness, and the specific context of moral being. However, in forging this focus, one should recognise that it represents only one aspect of narrative: that such forms are rich in feature and process, and what I present here is merely a taste of their analytic possibilities.

There is a sense amongst the literature, then, that characterisation forms a fundamental component of narrative, and analytic frameworks reflect this. In part, this significance is located in the meaningful reception of story. As Barthes puts it, 'characters ... form a necessary plane of description, outside of which the slightest reported 'actions' cease to be intelligible' (Barthes, 1977, p. 105). In fostering a connection with narrative, then, characters are helpful to the audience. They generate empathy or revulsion and thus the emotional foundations on which we 'experience' story. As such, this take would treat characterisation as detail (albeit vital and indispensable detail) which lives 'above' the more fundamental structures of plot and logic. Elsewhere, however, the significance of character goes further. Propp, for instance, suggests that
The functions of characters are stable constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by who they are fulfilled. They constitute fundamental components of a tale.

(Propp, 2005, p. 21)

Such a stance begins to draw a distinction between the 'detailing', ornamentative status of the character in narrative, and a more fundamental structural feature. As such, it views characters as occupying an underlying functional position in plot, one that actively enables its progression. In doing so, it suggests an analysis that dwells not just on the detail of how stories are 'cast', but also how that particular component functions as an element of plot. Analysis in this respect might not just consider characters in terms of 'what they are', but also 'what they do' amongst the syntax of plot (Barthes, 1977, p. 106). To couch this in language used elsewhere in this thesis, I would suggest that characterisation is therefore amenable to both paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis: in terms equally of the detail it lends to constructions, and to its functional effect. These parallels in illustrative potential offer further rationale to my focus on characterisation here.

'Character', then, functions within the logical mechanics of narrative. Exploring these functional contributions yields a further layer of significance. As noted above, there are particular qualities of narrative that forge an association with consciousness and with moral experience in particular. I would suggest that two key qualities of characterisation are particularly significant in realising this. Firstly, it offers a source of relational 'glue' through which narrative might be held together. In this sense, where Todorov suggests that movement between equilibrium and disequilibrium constitutes narrative, it is 'action' that lies between these states and exerts transformative pressure. In turn, any sense of action might reasonably pre-suppose an actor.

The Actantial Model of narrative analysis (associated particularly with Greimas, 1983, 1987) most directly expresses this transposition from a focus on states in the progression of plots (as in the Todorovian tradition) to one centred on 'action'. The suggestion here is that systems of binary oppositions between pairs of 'actants' (which have 'role' within the plot) establish momentum and impetus. That a villain (subject) is intent on acquiring the treasured diamond (object), for instance - or that a hero (opponent) is set to foil this scheme -
create tensions in an established reality, and thus the potential for Todorov's disequilibrium. Binary oppositions therefore invite activity ('action') which produces transitions in state. These transitions are, however, not haphazard. Rather, the relation between two underlying binaries frames them.

Actants therefore establish the relational nature of narrative, facilitating transitions in state and thus producing the senses of linearity and causality necessary within a narrative. Narrative rendering of experience in consciousness, and more specifically ethical dimensions of this consciousness, might inherit the same import. As noted previously, a sense of transitions in state and the relational natures of these transitions compel a narrative rendering of moral experience. To this, I add that binary agents constitute these structures in moral reasoning and recount, in ways that echo the Actantial model of narrative. Put simply, a process acquires an ethical dimension where one agent causes a transformation in state, for good or ill, in another. Binary relations between objects and subjects therefore typify 'moral experience', and introduce a necessary a fundamental structure shared with that of narrative.

Greimas' model views actants in broad ways. They may be human characters, or equally an inanimate or anthropomorphised objects. Actants are, however, always more than 'props' to the story: they are structural components that serve to shape the narrative. Where characters are invoked, however, I would suggest that they bring with them intentionality, another quality fundamental to morality. This is not a quality inherently necessary to narrative form (one could tell a tale of random events), but its presence is preferred in reception. It brings with it a very particular sense of overt causality, the absence of which problematises the extent to which a story feels meaningful.

In this analysis, I draw focus specifically on characterisation amongst Greimas' broader sense of actants because in the context of ethics, I would argue that invoking consciousness amongst key poles of influence is crucial. A simple interpretation of this claim might highlight that consciousness implies

26 I have, of course, noted that globalisation problematises this sense of simple binary relationships, throughout chapter three. This, I would suggest, does not serve to challenge the observations raised here. Narrative rendering of experience allows the individual to cast these complexities amongst a binary structure, and thus secure realities.
intentionality, and that this in turn is critical in moral constructions. Without intent, constructions might tend towards notions of 'accident' or 'misfortune' rather than overtly ethical framings. There is, though, something not quite subtle enough about this articulation, for even where experiences lack this intentionality, they might still have a broadly moral flavour. To illustrate, the harm caused by habitual Western consumption patterns is hardly calculated, yet its implications are undeniably moral in nature. Reframing the need for consciousness in moral narratives in terms of ‘culpability’ might better accommodate this nuance. No accountability, and no lever for moral evaluation, is possibility without the implication of a free agent, and by extension ‘character’.

In summary, then: characterisation offers a convenient 'in' to narrative renderings in participants’ data, but it also has a deeper theoretical significance. It represents an actantial structure that not only facilitates the progression of plot, but also constitutes a fundamental component in defining the moral/ethical qualities of storied experience. In mobilising this orientation to analysis, I am concerned both with the actantial nature of characterisation (the syntagmatic sense of how characterisation facilitates particular logics in the response), and the casting and detailing of these roles (the paradigmatic sense of embedding these logics in a given reality) - and here I will deal with each of these dimensions in turn.

**Syntagmatic Structures**

Initial treatment of the data therefore focused on its syntagmatic dimensions; its structure and the logics established therein, with a particular concern for the actantial nature of ‘character’ within this. Inspired by the processes of Propp and Greimas, the first phase was to attend to the ‘deep’ structure of narratives: stripping detail from the construction in order to expose its most simple processes and relationships. These underlying structures were broken into core ‘units’ of logical progression of plot: mythemes, in Levi-Strauss' terms, on in the language of this thesis, sytagms. By far, the most common underlying structure was a two-syntagm process, summarised below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntagm 1</th>
<th>Syntagm 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X – Causes harm to Y</td>
<td>Y’s – Situation is improved through the intervention of X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would suggest that this syntagmatic pattern is notable, in that it is illustrative of many of the principles introduced in the course of this chapter. It echoes principles from both the Propp/Todorov model of narrative and that of Greimas. It is a narrative structure constituted of transitions between equilibrium and disequilibrium. In turn, these transitions are realised through the binary opposition between actants (the characters of 'X' and 'Y', 'Y' and 'Z'). Perhaps more importantly, however, it is illustrative of how the narrative structure realises moral dimensions of this engagement by establishing lines of influences and culpability amongst the overall logic of the production.

This basic structure was ubiquitous in the data, and occurred in nearly all of the responses produced. This is, however, not to say that it occurred in a universally straightforward way. In some, it was present in the manifest, surface chronologies of participants’ responses:

**Interview 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Josh</th>
<th>He probably works for a massive company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quasim</td>
<td>All of these ... um ... berries ... he gets hardly any money out of them because the owner ... the companies are just buying them for nothing. And he has to sell them because ... they'd shoot him or something otherwise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>I just think he's one of the pickers ... there's like, loads of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>And how would this be different if it was fair trade?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasim</td>
<td>Right, well...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>He'd have more money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, there is a straightforward correspondence between participants’ telling of events, and the structure given above. More commonly, though, this association was less direct. Consider, for example, the following:

**Interview 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aftab</th>
<th>Ooh, it's like in comic relief, innit ... and like, we do all this sponsored</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iram</td>
<td>/ Yeah I did a silence /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aftab</td>
<td>/ stuff and then we give them money and they can be better off and that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iram</td>
<td>Yeah, they can um ... but machinery so that they can be .. work for themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aftab</td>
<td>Cos without that, they ... have to do things by hand and that doesn't ... it's not very .. its hard work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here, the participants’ response did not follow the structure given above overtly. Indeed, the two syntagms are reversed, with the telling of ‘help’ preceding that of ‘harm’. I would suggest, however, that the structure, and its particular process, remains important in constructing the logic of the response. Thus, even where it participants do not present it as a surface chronology, it is present sub-textually. The logic of the narrative depended on that subtext, which constitutes a sense of ‘before-now-and-after’. As such, the presence of syntagm 2 as the leading movement of the narrative presents incompleteness (a movement to equilibrium, with no disequilibrium to resolve), which begs the telling of ‘history’ to contextualise it, a history which syntagm 1 provides. As such, whilst the two logics need not occupy a set sequence, they imply that sequence in an underlying chronology.

The ordering of syntagms is immaterial to the overall function of this narrative structure, and in the definition of moral shape in an engagement. However, it does have a subtle bearing on the tone and emphasis of the resultant construction and, in particular, the nature of moral evaluation imposed upon it. The leading syntagm served to establish a kind of ‘modality’ of the narrative. Where the structure led with syntagm one, as in the first of the two extracts above, a ‘harm-oriented’ construction was produced and hence a weight of emphasis on negative moral judgement. Reversal of these syntagms tipped the weight of the construction in favour of ‘help’ and positive moral implications – as illustrated in the second of these extracts.

The second-position syntagm tended to offer a detailing function in support of that which it followed, offering necessary reality, rationale or completion to the narrative. The ordering of syntagms therefore established the positive or negative ‘charge’ of the construction. As the ‘detail’ of the narrative proximate to the reader, the lead syntagm also served to begin to position the audience and author in relation to that charge, whether directly or by association with other agents in the piece. Similarly, the inclusion of the audience as a direct actor, or as an associate to a different social actor brought with it implications for the connection and culpability in the narrative.
Towards Victims, Villains and Heroes

I have, then, identified a prevalent common structure underpinning many of the participants’ responses, and begun to suggest that the ordering of this structure is significant. It is possible to take the structural analysis of this section a step further. The syntagmatic structure outlined above gains definition through a system of common actants situated in key binary oppositions. Syntagm one occurs through the opposition of x and y, whilst syntagm two is realised through the opposition of y and z (see the diagram on page 239). The observation of core actants invites the production of a typology of characters through which to organise analysis. This form of project is found in the traditions of both Propp (who identifies eight 'archetypes', realising thirty-three common functions), and of Greimas (six actants, arranged into three key 'poles' of opposition). Reference to these typologies intends to provide a mechanism against which to understand how a given reality is realised. This is an intent which is mirrored in this chapter, though the syntagmatic structure present here necessitates only three distinct archetypes: an object (who is acted upon), and two forms of acting subject who cause harm and help respectively. This actantial framework is, of course, a lengthy description of something already familiar in everyday consciousness: these are, ultimately, tales of victims, of villains and of heroes.

This trichotomy of character archetypes is marked both as a feature of the data explored here, and amongst culture more generally. It is prevalent as a motif in broader literary and narrative theory, and a range of texts highlight its significance. They are present, for instance, in analyses of traditional religious texts, through myth and folk-story (Lévi-Strauss, 1996; Propp, 2005), to novels of high culture, comics and pulp fiction (Phillips & Strobl, 2006). Stories of contemporary media also make central use of these characters, they occur in television and film, and in news reporting (Anker, 2005; Connor & Wesolowski, 2004; Conway, Grabe, & Grieves, 2007; McQuail, 1994). Neither is the trichotomy constrained to traditional 'storytelling', for it can surface too as a narrative device in formal academic discourse, particularly in subject domains where content lends itself to storying. The impulse to author narrative, for instance, is particularly strong in the study of history, with a parallel impulse to author moral trajectory and to cast victims, heroes and villains (Ford, 1991;
Michel, 2003). Similarly, political discourse, as a form of history-in-the-making lends itself to an allusion to these characters, whether in the conventional senses of governance (Anker, 2005) or more inter-personal politics (Synnott, 2009). Narrative theorists have also highlighted the prevalence of talk about victims, villains and heroes in personal narratives, as individuals attempt to render sense into complex personal event. As such, they occur both in response to dramatic life events such as rape (Wood & Rennie, 1994) and experience of war and civil conflict (Zdravkovic, 2006). Similarly, they occur in personal narrative on more mundane experiences, such as work (Whittle, Mueller, & Mangan, 2009), and the everyday politics of interpersonal interaction (Karpman in Berne, 1996; Gray & Wegner, 2011).

The archetypes of victim, villain and hero are therefore prevalent, and I would suggest this is no simple quirk of convention. Rather, they exist because of their actantial power within narrative structure. In simple terms;

> Narrative requires an evaluative framework in which a good or bad character helps to produce unfortunate or happy outcomes

(MacIntyre, 2007, p. 456)

The genealogy of the villain-hero-victim trichotomy therefore lies with its capacity to structure this 'evaluative framework', as I have begun to explicate in this section. It not the surface labels which are significant here, but the underlying ability of this framework to establish key binary oppositions. These facilitate transitions in state amongst plot (in Greimas' intended interpretation), and also establish a framework against which notions of right and wrong can be articulated. They are, in short, key in structuring experience in ways against which moral evaluation is possible. The binary oppositions they establish are fundamental in ethics. They constitute senses of good and bad, help and harm, heal and hurt and so on.

I noted earlier in this chapter that a moral rendering of experience necessitated some form of 'culpability' in affecting a change in 'state' elsewhere. As such, moral engagement necessitates a concept of an acting subject and an object that the subject's actions affect for good or ill. A neutral, or absent, shift would not only preclude moral overtones, but also produce a stasis which runs contrary to the constitution of narrative as transitions between equilibrium and
disequilibrium. As such, we arrive at a basic framework of narrative morality, comprising an affected object, and an acting object - the specific activity of which shapes the nature of the narrative, and the specific nature of the moral engagement.

The victim-villain-hero trichotomy therefore offers a mechanism around which to structure ‘moral’ evaluation into a narrative by constituting poles of influence and responsibility. We should also note, of course, that this structure also defines binaries of ‘active’ and ‘passive’, and thus constitutes notions of power within the narrative. Where the hero and villain are actantially dynamic (that is, they exist to exert influence on the transitions in the narrative), the victim is actantially receptive. As such, it exists as a passive object that is acted upon. This is not to say it is any more important in shaping the narrative, for it is the necessary opposition to the positively charged elements. However, the relationships between these components do have implications for the power structures of the piece, and thus produce not just moral dynamics, but also political ones.

As such, the triad of actants on which I focus here constitute both moral and political dimensions of the narrative. However, it is worth dwelling on a point of nuance for a moment. As actantial structures in the piece, defining the logics of plot, these archetypes need not appear in literal form. Indeed, it is common in the narratives here, and in those more broadly, to author ‘character’ in a way which troubles clear delineation. For illustration of this, one only needs look to the anti-hero, or the underdog: to the victim who becomes ‘hero’ against all the odds. The lines between hero, victims and villains can be precarious within and across narratives. Their ‘casting’ may vary within those tales told by a single author, and a hero told in one story, may appear as a victim or villain elsewhere. Without drifting too far into paradigmatic analysis (this is the function of the next section), we might note that the casting of this trichotomy does not necessarily have to implicate single actors in each role. Nor is it a necessity to cast humans; one can be a ‘victim’ of ill fate, of circumstance, context or environment. None of this variance, however, detracts from the significance of this structural triad. Rather, it is illustrative of their actantial nature; literal presentation is not a functional prerequisite of their capacity to underpin narrative logic.
In all of this, we might make a connection back to the assertion that as a mediational means, narratives offer not just bodies of meaning. They also offer general and specific structures against which individuals might cogently arrange distinct meanings into a coherent whole. In confronting ambiguous stimuli, then, the participants in this study draw on a culturally useful structure (the ‘fairy-tale’) in order to impose meaning and stability on an otherwise partial context of engagement. A world of villains and heroes is more certain and thus one which is easier to occupy.

Some of the debates surrounding narrative and consciousness (introduced on page 213) intersect with this perspective. Notably, we might debate whether the victim-villain-hero structure is resonant because we arrange morality around it, or whether we draw on it as a structure because it is culturally resonant (the quote from MacIntyre on page 218 is relevant here). Such a debate is, however, diffused by the broader theoretical stance of this research, and in particular its emphasis on the reciprocal relationship, and irreducible tension, which exists between the individual’s agency and the cultural context that they occupy. The victim-villain-hero trichotomy is, then, not a static resource but a participative one. Multitudes of agentic actors, drawing upon it as a set of meanings through which to facilitate activity, sustain its prevalence in culture. Such a stance enables us to pay service to the many facets of experience within which this framework of character occurs (see page 242), without resorting to a sense that this prevalence is a mere fact of socialisation.

In this section, I have begun to illustrate some of the potentials of narrative analysis of participants’ responses. In particular, I have suggested that a syntagmatic analysis of resultant constructions can fruitfully expose the establishment of logics in moral engagements. In turn, these constitute directions of effect and orders of culpability, together with the overall ‘tone’ of the construction. This is, of course, not the full extent of the potentials of this process. The participant’s responses are not ‘empty’ logics: not simple and neutral descriptions of processes. Rather detail populates the plots of their narratives, with given realities produced by the selection of particular bodies of meaning over others. It is to this dimension that I now turn my attention.
On The Casting of Character

Syntagmatic analysis focuses on the structural aspects of narrative, on ordering and logic. In contrast, paradigmatic analysis is more concerned with the ways in which internal meanings give that logic life. A rough parallel can be drawn with some of the earlier assertions of this chapter, particularly the sense that participants achieve engagement with the stimuli of this research through the production of both moral evaluation and a stable reality against which that evaluation seems. In the particular focus of this section, where syntagmatic analysis was interested in the actantial function of character in plot, paradigmatic exploration is concerned with who those characters actually are. It therefore focuses on how participants ‘cast’ their narratives: on whom they situate in each of the key actantial positions. This connects the otherwise empty moral/political logics of the narrative to a particular outside reality.

Such a process obviously has an implication for the orientation and nature of the response, and the positioning of the author/audience in relation to it.

In offering some illustration of the use of paradigmatic analysis, I offer a brief and focused treatment of participants’ responses to the two specific images (one of a farmer, and one of a workshop, both in a majority-world setting). Here, a particular palette of ‘actors’ emerged, though were degrees of convergence and divergence in how these actors should be situated in relation to actantial triad of the piece. The resultant combinations produced constructions of slightly different ‘mythologies’ of the world: each with a unique ethical orientation, pinning the currents of help and harm to different origins. Importantly, in authoring these characterisations, participants also positioned themselves in relation to the narrative, with a sense of connect or disconnect with the issues.

Of the two stimulus images, the first produced responses with the highest level of convergence, and in particular the casting of ‘workers’ in the majority world in the ‘victim’ position. This is illustrated in the extracts below:

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27 In a more narrative-centric expression: specific characters offer the conduit for intertextuality. They enmesh the particular narrative amongst the gamut of broader, socially situated stories of the world.
Interview 1

Alice I think it might be quite hard, because it looks quite sunny and he looks quite sweaty

Olivia He might have been out there for a while, maybe picking berries – so it'd be quite hard work – he'd wake up, like – but then he'd go straight out to work cos he needs more money to live

Alice So he's got to pick as many as he can, even though he's tired, because he needs the money

Interview 2

Quasim All of these ... um ... berries ... he gets hardly any money out of them

Interview 4

Sophie He's probably not getting a lot of money for what he's doing – he looks quite poor cos his clothes are a bit dirty and everything.

Chelsea Looks like he's been working hard

Sophie Yeah, he must have been working all the time because he's got, like, loads – a whole basket – so its long hours and everything.

I would suggest that one reason for the stability of the victim role in response to this stimulus relates to the weight of two dominant discourses in the cultural milieu of the respondents. The pervasiveness of these particular tellings of the world have a gravity which draws the casting of responses in a particular way. The first is a general patriarchal/post-colonial concern for the 'third world' that tends to construct individuals in the majority world as passive, powerless, destitute and desperate. This surfaces most directly in the futility of a life in which ‘he’s got to pick as many as he can, even though he’s tired, because he needs the money’ – but is buoyed by other discursive markers, such as references to climate (interview 1) and poor quality clothing (interview 3). The second dominant discourse underpinning this construction is associated more specifically with representations of ‘farmers’ in the context of trade, and has saturated the media (and citizenship/geography curriculums) due to successful fair-trade campaigns. It is notable in the conjunction of a sense of ‘trappedness’, with manual work, primary resources, and the need to work long hours for low yields of profit.

As a brief aside, we should note here that the stimulus image is complicit in the dominance of this discourse. It is a photograph drawn directly from fair trade publicity, and thus itself contains many of the discursive cues of the broader
discourse. As such, beads of sweat on the subject’s forehead reference notions of both ‘toil’ and ‘climate’. Similarly, the prominent foregrounding of the coffee cherries, held in a wicker basket (and the backgrounding of crops) denotes a focus on both manual work and simple, primary produce and technology. However, as noted in previous discussions (see page 61) the leading nature of the stimulus images does not necessarily detract from the analysis here. Rather, it acts as another ‘source’ of appropriation, against which the participants exercise their particular agency in responding.

A similar level of consensus was present in the idea that NGOs (usually explicitly named as ‘Fair Trade’, though sometimes implicating charities) should be cast in the role of hero:

**Interview 1**

Alice  
Fair trade’s where, em, where the person gets a fair amount of money for the things they’re selling instead of paying them, actually, not much money.

Olivia  
‘Fair’ ‘trade’

**Interview 2**

Mark  
And how would this be different if it was ‘fair trade’?

Quasim  
Right, well ..

Josh  
He’d have more money

**Interview 4**

Sophie  
It’s like the fair trade stuff, like, he’s happy cos he’s working for fair trade or someone like that, and he’s getting a decent wage maybe - and it’s just, like, representing that.

An internal cogency connects the castings of victim and hero; both belong to the same paradigm, the same external narrative on Fair Trade organisations. To court controversy, one might even argue that this represents a discursive power game. As part of their daily publicity, Fair Trade organisations are, themselves, primarily responsible for propagating this particular narrative, and their internal identity, and external legitimacy, rests on their casting as hero. The notion of a helpless victim to ‘save’ is necessary to this casting, establishing a power-relationship amongst the internal coherence of the narrative, with the hero itself having inordinate control over its own mythology. This is not to
imply malign intentions amongst these organisations – either in the educational work, or in their work with producers. It does, however, bring to the fore the unintended ramifications that these mythologies breed: here, in propagating a view in the popular consciousness of the helplessness of the majority world citizen.

Where the victim and hero roles were relatively stable, two castings vied for dominance in the casting of the villain role. In one, workers are a victim of circumstance:

**Interview 1**

Mark  And why would they not get enough money without fair trade?

Alice  Cos they wouldn’t have enough money even to buy simple stuff like food and stuff

Olivia  In Africa and stuff and … like … loads of people and stuff used the diamonds and, so, they don’t have much money and, like, it’s dead expensive.

**Interview 4**

Mark  And why do you think that is?

Sophie  It’s just the way it is, isn’t it.

Chelsea  Cos they don’t have a lot of money in third-world countries.

In these cases, the underlying message is that ‘things are as they are’, and that the types of predicament described by participants in their constructions of ‘victims’ are causeless. This echoes the mythologies of early development theory (e.g. Modernisation Theory), which see poverty as the default starting state of pre-developed countries. Again, I would suggest a connection, here, with dominant stories about the majority world, and Africa, in particular. Such stories surface most often in the idea that climatic events such as droughts cause poverty and inequality. Interestingly, the participants eschewed this particular telling in favour of a more subtle ‘cycle-of-poverty’ construction.

Elsewhere, the participants cast transnational businesses in the villain role, for instance:

**Interview 2**

Josh  He probably works for a massive company … the owner … the companies are just buying them for nothing. And he has to sell them because … they’d shoot him or something otherwise.
Participants tell this syntagm with a confidence which contrasts with that of the previous extract. In part, I would suggest that this is further illustration of the difference between ownership and mastery of mediational means (see page 197). Equally, though, it occurs because in referencing transnational corporations, the participants tap into a more sharply defined broader social narrative. The weight and gravity of this discourse lends internal legitimacy to the construction; the villain construction appears much more like its own sub-story, with internal logics, processes and syntagmatic structures.

In all interviews, the participants articulated their personal connection to the central issue in terms of their roles of consumers. This generally occurred, however, as second- or fourth-order culpability, by which their involvement occurs as associates of a more central actor. Further, in some cases, it took prompting from the interviewer to raise the connection. It is possible to read this as evidence that the participants felt ‘disconnected’ from the contexts of the stimulus. I would suggest, however, that in equal measure it could be a consequence of the focus of the stimulus, which very much frames the discussion in terms of ‘over there’ rather than ‘over here’. In this context, the participant’s ability to wrap themselves up amongst the emerging story in response to a prompt evidences the process of redraft and re-narrativisation which occurs through active sense-making.

Crucially, the ways in which the participants cast the villain role shifted the moral weight of their narratives, with a direct impact on the sense of their connection to the issues and actors involved. Where they implicated only circumstance in the villain role, consumer roles were essentially benevolent, capable of only neutral and positive impacts. For instance,

**Interview 1**

Mark   | Ok, still thinking about this bloke but also us as well. Do you think that there are any ways that people in this country might have an effect on him?

Alice | There’s the big charity stuff … like sport relief’s just gone, where if you sponsor them, it’s going to make a big difference to how their lives are.
And if we buy from fair small fair trade people, then they’ll get big too and there’ll be more out there, helping them and stuff – and so, we should buy fair trade products.

Here, the consumer therefore plays a hero role through their association with NGOs. In part, this outcome can be associated with the narrative trajectory established earlier in the discussion. By casting ‘circumstance’ as the villain of the piece, and implicating that these circumstances are causeless, there is no authored hook on which consumers can be complicit in the origins of trade inequalities. The notion that farmers are poor ‘because they don’t have a lot of money in third world countries’ draws on a sense of cycles of poverty, and the (generally neoliberal sense) that internal markets cannot promote development because of they lack the necessary capital. As such, it represents all external trade as positive intervention, as it provides the notional possibility of a less limited inward investment.

In contrast, implicating corporate actors as villains brings an agentic cause to inequality, and a direct bridge between local and distinct contexts. As such, the consumer role can be complicit in the cause of negative situations. Here, the role becomes more ambivalent, capable of acting as both hero and villain with other agents in the narrative (second/fourth order culpability): from whether they ‘side’ with the absolute roles played by NGO or corporation.

Yeah cos … if we’re buying it … [PAUSE] … I don’t know, cos if we’re buying it … if we bought things that weren’t fair trade … we’re kind of helping the companies in making him work all that time for nothing …

The sort of stuff they buy – fair-trade, or if they buy stuff that isn’t then they won’t get a decent wage

In his analysis of mythologies, Levi-Strauss highlights the presence of this kind of ‘mediator’ role who exists in between binary oppositions, and struggles to resolve them. He notes, of the ‘trickster’ character in Native American mythology that,
Thus, the mediating function of the Trickster explains that since its position is halfway between two polar terms he must retain something of that duality, namely an ambiguous and equivocal character ... endowed with contradictory attributes ... to be good and bad at the same time.

(Lévi-Strauss, 1955, p. 441)

The parallel here is not entirely comfortable. Levi-Strauss’ analysis focuses on the function of a particular character type within a narrative, whereas here we are concerned with the ambiguities of the author/audience relationship with that narrative. Regardless, though, the sense of ‘duality’ and the ambiguity it breeds is recognisable in the ‘consumer’ construct in these two extracts.

In practice, the ambiguity associated with the place of the consumer role produced a degree of unresolved moral uncertainty. Consider, for example the following extract:

**Interview 2**

Josh ...If we bought things that weren’t fair trade ... we’re kind of helping the companies in making him work all that time for nothing ... [PAUSE] ... but if we don’t buy the juice, he doesn’t get paid.

Quasim Like ... cos if it’s not fair trade, he’s getting paid even lesser, but the company’s getting even richer

Mark So should we stop buying the juice?

Josh No ... cos he’s not getting any money at all

It is easy to underestimate this passage as simple confusion, but this does an injustice to the sophistication of processes occurring. Having established a narrative with a particular set of rules, the Quasim and Josh are now disrupting its coherence. Thus, they highlight that the actions of NGOs – the heroes of the piece – can have a negative effect whilst those of corporations (elsewhere cast as Villains) can have positive impacts. There is, of course, truth in this kind of ambiguity (and Josh and Quasim’s grasp of it demonstrates impressive critical refrain). However, if villains can also be heroes, and if heroic acts can have villainous outcomes, who are we to ‘side’ with? How do we mediate the two and resolve the underlying conflicts, and how do we decide what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’?

We have arrived, here, at the sense of contradiction that is set out in Movement Two of this thesis. An exploration of the mechanics of
narrativisation in participants’ responses, however, gives us some insight into the ways in which individuals might inhabit that complication. The appropriation of a narrative structure defined by victim, villain and hero enables participants to render a fragmented and partial context in a more structured and absolute way. In doing so, they render that context amenable to moral evaluation and position themselves as author in relation to it. They do not, however, passively inhabit that narrative structure, they remain firmly ‘in charge’ as an appropriating agent. As such, they are able to disrupt it, with counter-perspectives. As such, I would suggest that the participants are engaged in a two-dimensional of negotiation. The first is paradigmatic, as they negotiate their associations with various stable characters in the narrative (and thus, their moral connection with it). The second is a reflexive, supra-paradigmatic negotiation. Here, the participants position themselves in relation to investment in a narrative that offers stability and moral certainty, and one that disrupts this certainty by recognising the complexity that it edits out.

The discussions generated in relation to the ‘fair trade’ stimulus were relatively simple. Whilst they contained a degree of variation in the casting of characters, they exhibited a high degree of convergence, perhaps because of the clear dominant discourses guiding narrativisation. A greater degree of divergence was present in relation to the image below. In relation to this, two seemingly contradictory features emerged in analysis of the overall data set. The first was that they had a higher level of internal coherence. That is, when participants established a casting and consequent reality, they were less likely to disrupt it. The second feature was a higher level of difference in the casting of characters, with the net result of two competing narratives.

All interviews responded to this image with a common core. In each, ‘workers’ were cast in a victim role. For instance:

**Interview 1**

Olivia: Yeah, they get, like, minimum wage and they have to, like, make things
Alice: There’s a lot of people all crammed in so that they can get as much done as possible.

Olivia: They … I don’t know … they don’t have very much space to live – they have a very big factory space and very small rooms, where … like … people and their families can live.

Interview 2

Quasim: You’ve got kids there.

Josh: It looks like … I bet they get paid, like, quite less. It’s just, like, the same as te other picture, because … they’re making stuff but they’re probably not going to get paid that much.

Interview 4

Chelsea: Working … hard … for the money.

Sophie: It must be hot, cos they’ve only got their trousers and that … so it must be warm … it’s a small room, they’re all cramped in aren’t they.

Chelsea: They’ve got children working as well, so they’re starting young.

Sophie: It’s danger … are they like under the machines, picking stuff up and that – it’s dangerous … it’s not very safe.

Once again, this casting deploys dominant narratives within western countries about ‘sweatshops’. In addition, we should also note that the image involved is also notably loaded, and observe that the participants’ responses here begin with direct cues drawn from that photograph. Hence, features such as ‘cramped conditions’ feature highly. Whilst the common core of worker-victims was present in all responses, beyond this, the paradigmatic dimensions of the narratives took two distinct forms. In one, the participants cast external businesses (often named) in the role of villain. For instance:

Interview 1

Alice: I think they work for someone like Primark … Loads of big companies use sweatshops.

Olivia: Like Yamaha … they don’t need to, cos they’re getting so much money anyway from their products.

Mark: So why do they then?

Alice: Cos its cheaper for them, cos they can have it made … like … cheaply, and they they can sell it for more than its worth and they’ll /

Olivia: / Get a bigger profit. And its cheaper for us.

Alice: Because if you put a load of people in one place, it’s cheaper – like if they had safety regulations and people came to check on them, it’d cost more money. But if you have
the place like it is, it’s cheaper cos you just have to build the place

Interview 4

Sophie A company … a clothes company or something like ….
Chelsea Ooh, it’s like /
Sophie / it’s like they’re making /
Chelsea Like Nike or something – and then they’ll sell it over here, and they’ll hardly get anything for it … because they lack – they can get away with paying them … little money for big jobs
Sophie And they’ll do long hours, won’t they, for more money.
Mark And what do Nike … the companies … do they just not notice the conditions?
Sophie Well I can’t imagine … they’ve got to go over there – but the big bosses who run it all … they’re not going to go over to Bangladesh and be like ‘oh…this isn’t right’ … em … they’re not going to be bothered are they

Participants therefore express a degree of certainty over the villain role in the narrative, and begin to add depth to that character by inferring motives (‘profit’ achieved by cutting wages, working conditions and environmental protections).

In contrast to the responses to the farmer image, however, characterisation did not reach much further an archetypical, conspiring and uncaring villain.

Participants avoided adding depth that might trouble their constructions (particularly towards the end of the final interview). Despite this, villainy in this narrative and multi-layered that in discussions of fair-trade, and participants implicated other social actors – notably, internal governments and families – as complicit in the actions of corporations:

Interview 1

Mark So you talked about children working
Alice If it’s a big family, and there’s only the father working, that’s not going to bring in enough money, so … if the children are to work, then that’s more money and they can all live better. But … em … that’s not really fair on the children cos they’re not getting an education.
Olivia And they can’t like … they wouldn’t know how to … how to be safe with water and stuff – they couldn’t tell if its dirty or if its normal.
Alice And they could end up with that job when they’re older, because if they went to school, then they could get qualifications and then they could get better jobs. But because they’re missing out on school, they’re not going to get the qualifications and they’re going to get these types of jobs
It is notable that other stories about the majority world intersect with the central narrative, particularly that of ‘overpopulation’ and its connections to life-chances. It is also interesting that the fracturing of the villain role only really occurred in relation to participants’ discussions of children. These subjects, of course, beg consideration of a duty and burden of care — that other actors are responsible for protecting children, and thus failure to do so represents a neglect of duty. When focused on adult subjects, this duty is less weighty.

As was the case in discussions of fair-trade, participants expressed authorial connection to the issue of sweatshops through the consumer character. As in the previous discussions, in attributing human causes in the context of the image, consumers could be cast simultaneously in the roles of villain and hero. However, in this case, there was no clear alternative ‘hero’ character (the position occupied by NGOs in the previous analysis). As a result, modulation of the consumer’s impact pivots not on association with two other actors, but through association and disassociation with the villain of the piece. For example,
money and more sweatshops will be made to make more products.

Olivia Yeah, because ... if you know that something is made in a sweatshop, they you shouldn’t buy it.

Whilst the casting of consumer as potentially either villain or hero mirrors that explored in the previous analysis, its nature here is subtly different. It is notable that there is less ambiguity over ‘right action’ in this context. In part, this might be linked to the comparative stability of the villain role (and that this is a discursively strong construction), and that other potential villains are complicit – rather than directly responsible – for outcomes in the narrative. There is, for instance, no articulation that ‘circumstance’ is a direct cause. Equally, the lack of a clear hero has a direct impact on the consumer role, which no longer plays a mediating role between two other actors. Instead, it either takes up the hero role itself, or it because complicit in the villain role played by corporations.

This first form of response to this stimulus image was therefore relatively stable, producing a casting that was faithful to a generic ‘sweatshop’ discourse. As noted earlier in this section, however, a second distinct counter-narrative was also present, encapsulated in the following extract:

**Interview 2**

Quasim They make fake clothes ... or it could be fake clothes
Josh They make, like, fake merchandise
Quasim Cos some countries sell fake clothes, fake stuff like Nike and stuff
Josh Cos if it was, like, a proper Nike company, they'd be working in a proper factory with, like, bathrooms and toilets and things like that.
Mark So who do you think runs this? What kind of person
Quasim Quite rich
Josh It could be criminal ... probably from the same country, but a richer ... background.

For me, this extract is fascinating in that it deploys the same syntagmatic structures as other responses to this issue, but with paradigmatic transposition. In casting the key actants differently, the participants arrive at a very ideological stance, with very different ethical consequences. Here, participants place internal businesses in the ‘villain’ role, shifting external corporations to a somewhat uneasy casting of simultaneous victim and hero. Again, this kind of narrativisation keys into broader socially-constituted stories of the world,
which underpin both neoliberal perspectives on the role of Transnational Corporations in spurring development, and more nationalist perspectives on the outsourcing of labour.

Transformation of the narrative in this way has a direct impact on the moral weights placed on consumers. On one hand, it divorces them from the immediate causes of sweatshop labour, at least as long as they are acting legally as consumers (here, of course, is an interesting contrast; as this default behave implicated negative consequences in the prior constructions):

**Interview 2**

Mark  And one last question on this picture ... again, do you think that there are any ways in which people in this country might affect those people’s lives?

Josh  No ... cos you don’t really get fake clothes over here like ...

Quasim  What about Longsight market and stuff?

Josh  Yeah but ... you could a bit, but not the same - to the same extent - as the other one.

Mark  So if you’ve a fake pair of jeans and a real pair which should you buy?

Josh  The real ones

Quasim  The real ones

Mark  Because

Quasim  The fake ones are, like, illegal because it’s not actually copyright.

Josh  It's not actually made by actual companies, so it might not be as good

Quasim  It might rip or something.

Josh  It’ll encourage more people to ... keep making fake clothes.

In practice, the narrative urges the same type of action on the part of the consumer – boycotting sweatshop produce. However, it changes the ways in which these actions should be realised. In avoiding ‘fake merchandise’, the individual is compelled to actively seek to consume the produce of ‘legitimate’ corporations who might then bring better working conditions to the subjects of the image. Once again, the decision becomes one of association, this time with either villain or hero (rather than one of association or disassociation with a villain, as in the previous narrative on sweatshops).
There are moral certainties to this narrative, and its stability is therefore alluring. As in previous examples, however, the participants were able to disrupt this coherence as agentic authors,

Josh: It’ll encourage more people to ... keep making fake clothes
Quasim: But they might get paid more, the people making them, if we buy fake clothes.

Again, then, we find that same sense of individuals inhabiting and drawing on broader mythologies or discourses on the world, but doing so only in that it facilitates meaningful action. The sense making which is achieved does not occur solely ‘within’ the reality which that discourse produces; rather, there is present a supra-discursive mechanism of evaluation, by which critical and agentic actors are able to disrupt cosy realities. The substance of resultant constructions is very different, and in this section, we have seen how the casting of realities produces very different positions and implications. Equally, though, we have also seen how, by disrupting these realities, the young people involved in their production are able to exercise an autonomy and criticality. They are, in short, capable of anchoring the partial and contradictory context they encounter into something more concrete, and then to inject a pragmatism and controlled complication into what otherwise would be a simplistic positioned narrative.
Conclusions
In this chapter, I have set out to demonstrate both the usefulness and the compatibilities of the broader narrative turn in the social sciences to the project and focus of this thesis. Having established the general shape of the existing literature on this facet of theory, I have established a conceptual usefulness of three distinct levels.

- In the most general of terms, there is an association between morality and narrative. Interrogation of this habit can suggest a shared genesis. Narrative tends towards ethical evaluation of its domains of interest, whilst moral engagement in the world can tend towards narrative rendering of experience.

- More specifically, the contradictions of partialities of experience generated through globalisation make narrative all the more relevant. It brings the capacity to ‘story together’ missing details. Further, the qualities of narrative responses sit comfortably amongst the kinds of fluidity and hybridity described through notions of postmodernity.

- Finally, there is a theoretical compatibility between narrative senses of human being, and the notion of mediated action. In particular, the relationships between social structure and individual agency offer powerful common ground.

In the closing segment of the chapter, I have advanced a further usefulness of narrative, stemming from the analytic potential it offers. Previous chapters in this movement have proposed a sense of the ways in which individuals engage with external experiences and the universe of meaning offered by their cultural context in order to facilitate meaningful engagements with complex contexts. The reference to narrative furthers this with an inward turn: it offers an analytic framework through which to unpack the internal mechanics of those engagements in reference to both the syntagmatic/structural and paradigmatic/detailing facets of responses.

The intent of this movement has been to offer a theoretical reconstruction capable of better accommodating the complexities and contradictions set out in prior movements. This penultimate chapter marks the close of this
theoretical project. I have suggested that it is useful to foster interconnections between Wertsch’s model of mediated action and a field of literature that emphasises narrative. Such a project overcomes many of the key limitations of conventional theories of moral being, and reconciles a number of the important tensions set out in close of the last movement.

Beyond this contribution of interconnection and theoretical reconciliation, though, this movement has offered a further contribution. Where, movement two set out some of the problems and complications that confront individuals in the globalised and postmodern world, here I have offered a taste of the sophisticated ways in which they respond to these challenges. In this respect, the theoretical project of this research offers a mechanism through which attend better to this activity. Moreover, in relation to the political genesis of the project, we have encountered an array of moments of interaction with the world amongst the participants of this study. They have demonstrated sophistication, intelligence and a passion in the ways that they engage with the complex world in which they live. In doing so, they offer a firm rebuttal to the sense of a disinterested and apathetic youth, unwilling to engage in politics, and unable to orient themselves morally.

This chapter marks the close of the reconstructive elements of this thesis, and its major substantive contributions. What remains of this thesis, its final chapter, represents an attempt to draw these aspects to a close. In it, I will set out to summarise the key contributions of this thesis (and the caveats which should be imposed around them), in relation both to its initial intents, and to its broader theoretical movements. In doing so, I will provide a sense of the key implications it raises, in relation both to further research and for pedagogy.
Chapter Ten

Conclusions

The previous chapter marks the close of the reconstructive phase of this thesis; the drawing together of distinct elements of literature with data from participants in order to better understand their ideological being in context. In this final chapter, my intent is to offer a sense of end to the thesis, bringing together some of the main theoretical, empirical and methodological themes which have run throughout. In doing so, I focus on three distinct, broadly ‘conclusive’ strands of observation, which serve to structure the chapter into three sections. In the first, I focus on the contributions that I offer in the research, identifying the key facets that I see as lending it academic credibility and significance. I begin with a focus on the specific and stated research aims of the research, but move also to suggest that addressing these has generated broader substantive, theoretical and methodological contribution. In the second section of this chapter, I recognise that these contributions are not simple and unproblematic. I grapple with some of the recurrent methodological and theoretical tensions that have occupied the work. In the third and final section of the chapter, I offer some tentative directions for future implication. Here, I focus specifically on the pedagogic significances of the thesis, and some of the consequences it promises for future academic work. In doing so, I draw on both the strands identified as contributions of the thesis, and those which constitute its tensions.

Contributions

At this point, it seems pertinent to draw together some of the key contributions that this thesis has offered, and highlight its significance as an academic work. I begin this task by focusing specifically on those intentions and aims that I set out in chapter one of the thesis, revisiting both the key questions of the research, and the general socio-political orientation from which these stemmed. In doing so, I account for the ways in which these aims enrich and augment existing fields of inquiry and commentary. Part of the significance of this research is therefore conceptualised as the response to its initial intents. Equally, though, the pursuit of these aims has also generated
ideas and understandings of a broader utility. As such, in this section, I intend also to explore some of the broader contributions that have arisen from this research: the substantive, theoretical and methodological observations that also form a part of its significance.

**Intended Aims Revisited**

As established in the opening chapter of this thesis, a broader political motivation underpinned my specific research aims. The work itself arose of my dissatisfaction with a popular misrepresentation of young people as apathetic and disengaged from personal morality and public politics. More specifically, the research took its impetus from a nagging sense that such a view failed to attend to the complexity of the contexts against which these individuals operate.

Over the course of this thesis, I have set out to offer at least partial redress to this misrepresentation. The sixteen participants whose voices comprise the empirical data in this research are unremarkable, everyday young-people. However, in many cases what those voices have said is remarkable in both its substance, and the sophistication and persistence of the strategies on which it draws to achieve this. This thesis is replete with committed selves, with reasoned and reasonable engagements with the world, positioned yet reflexive and not over-invested.

This is not to say that the result was a series of formed and perfected perspectives, robust and anchored in a particular stance. However, neither were these kinds of response *appropriately* to the kinds of demand and context that I asked the participants to occupy (and here, the importance of attending to that context is clear). Resistance to the kind of absolute and vocal positioned argument that we might otherwise identify as ‘morally committed’ thus made way for a more sensitive and nuanced outlook. This was cogent with contexts presenting multiplicity, instability and ambiguity. Even where engagements ‘failed’, where participants lamented their inability for arrive at senses of right and wrong, this was not an empty abandonment of ethics. Rather, it evidenced a valiant and intelligent attempt to foster engagement, and an explicit recognition of the complexities that confound it.
The theoretical contributions of the research (to which I give fuller treatment below) have enhanced this political aim. They have enriched appreciation of the voice of participants, providing a framework through which to better recognise its sophistication and the ways in which it occupies context. The epistemological foundations of the thesis have been crucial in ensuring that the academic project of the thesis sits together with its political one. It has offered a mechanism that fosters interplay between the voices of participants and those of theorists. This ensures that theory enriches, rather than overwhelming, data (though I problematise this later in the chapter) and provides the necessary sense that the voice of young people is able to talk back to those more powerful cultural discourses that might otherwise lament their deficits.

In these ways, the research has made a particular socio-political contribution – a counter-representation of young people, actively engaged in context – and this is cogent with its underlying intents. A series of more conventional research aims stemmed from these foundations, which offer contributions specifically of an academic quality. It is to these questions, and the significances they have generated, to which I now turn my attention.

The initial question of the research set out to explore the extent to which young people’s talk about global issues reflected the conceptual challenges associated with processes such as globalisation and postmodernity (as established in an abstract sense in the literature). This aim is most clearly addressed through chapters three and four of the thesis (though, by the very nature of the structure of this thesis, other sections tend also to leak into areas of relevance). Through these chapters, I offer my first key contribution, in the form of a systematic exploration of literature. This activity enabled a drawing together (and synthesis of) the ways in which the material, cultural and social conditions of the contemporary era present distinct ideological challenge.

Of course, these observations exist prior to this writing; I do not propose them as my key contribution. What I do offer, though, is two layers of innovation. Firstly, the bringing together of this content has enabled me to draw out some key thematic assertions running through otherwise disparate writings. Secondly, as they have existed previously in the literature, these observations
have tended to have a quality either of a philosophical constructs of ethics, or of a social commentary. In other words, they have tended towards an abstract treatment. As such, an important offering here has been to connect these normative senses to lived ecologies and life experiences.

As such, the thesis has illustrated some of the ways in which prior postulation on globalisation and postmodernity relate to *experienced* tensions, and not just purported ones. The likes of Bauman and Beck refer to particular dilemmas and contradictions, and there is a validating correspondence between the qualities of these and the nature of participants’ talk. At its very basic level, I am therefore offering evidence, here, that a set of normative proposals are valid at the level of individual experience. However, this has not been a straightforward validating process. Not all of what participants have said in their interviews has corresponded or neatly complied with broader proposals. Indeed, the very epistemological mechanisms of this research set out to trouble this cosy relationship – and this was formally enshrined in the second key aim of the research. Here, I set out to explore the ways in which the worldviews of participants might add to broader theoretical understandings of contemporary moral existence.

Throughout the second movement of this thesis, I have therefore attempted to use data in a way that not only illustrates existing theory, but also suggests nuance, enhancement and challenge to it. As such, the thesis makes multiple contributions that call for a more subtle theoretical telling of the individual experience of these ideological contexts (for illustration, see the development of notions of disparity of scale offered at the bottom of page 85). Elsewhere, I have offered data that actively troubles some broader assumptions in theory. Senses of struggle against fragmentation and plurality, for instance, and the preservation of forms of authority offer a counterpoint to usual tellings of what postmodernity ‘is’. This is not to say that this data offers ‘evidence against’ such tellings – this implication would be equally as crude as suggesting that it offers blanket validation. What it does remind us, though, is that the individual experiences social, cultural and material realities at subjective level (an echo of Weber’s call to reduce understanding to the level of meaningful action). I would suggest that attention to this facet, and the sensitising outcomes it produces, are an important contribution here.
Where the first research questions set out to understand the complexities of context, the second aimed to examine the participants’ responses to it, the strategies and processes on which they rely. Movement three of the thesis most directly set out to address this intent. I began by rejecting many of the conventional theories of moral functioning, which tend to rest on a modernist assumption of a rational individual engaging with a knowable world, or one socialised into a structurally stable system of norms and values. I have suggested that the partial and contradictory nature of contemporary ideological existence necessitate a strategic response in which the individual is not just exercising moral evaluation, but also seeking to impose some stability and coherence on to the experience that confronts them. Such a strategy is only possible by securing meaning from elsewhere, importing ideas and concepts and imposing them on experience in order to reduce degrees of partiality. In proposing this framework, my contribution is a move from a description of the challenges that presented to the ideological being in late-modern society, to a more articulated sense of the strategic responses that these merit. Again, this represents a new addition to the field, where focus has tended to dwell on the former of these aspects.

Throughout this movement, I have drawn on the voices of participants in order to enrich and explore this dynamic. The achievement of this drew in a response to the third key research question, in which I set out to demonstrate that a socio-cultural approach to moral/political being – and, in particularly, Tappan’s application to moral functioning of Wertsch’s theory of mediated action – has utility as an alternative approach. At its most basic level, I have demonstrated that notions of mediated action offer a useful vocabulary through which to describe the strategic responses outlined in the previous paragraph. In this sense, the frameworks offered by Tapan and Wertsch have been productively applied to the data generated by participants, in order to better appreciate the sophistication of their responses. Beyond this, I also contribute an extended exploration of the how the existing qualities of that body of theory work to address some of the inherent tensions of conventional theory (reconciling, for instance, the necessary minimal features of an individual with agency and a social context).
Where the third aim of this thesis set out to demonstrate the usefulness of these pre-existing frameworks in making sense of the contexts and data presented, the fourth aim intended to foster the converse process. As such, here my intent was to use the voices of participants, and the interplay of theory, in order to contribute back to this growing body of theory with illustration, nuance and refinement.

The most direct contribution in this category has been the accomplishment of demonstrating that these proposals have utility, both in general terms (in understanding moral being), and against a context previously not explored. Tappan’s work very much presents a work in progress, a tentative exploration of the application of Wertsch’s notions of mediated action, and a simple proposal that this is helpful. Here, then I take up the baton offered by Tappan to offer further validation that these notions are useful, exercising that utility amongst contexts not previously explored. On one hand, this contextual shift is simply a case of applying them to new data amongst new participants (minor, on the surface, but significant as a contribution to the development of theory).

More substantially, Tappan’s work has dwelt primarily on inter-personal functioning (for instance, disputes amongst friends), and of the moral flavours of the telling of life history. Here, I move beyond this, and on to a stage of application which is both global, and which encompasses the political and ideological alongside the more directly moral. As such, I have offered a useful testing of the boundaries and capacities of these proposals.

I have also offered a number of refinements to the ways in which Tappan’s model describes moral functioning. These do not step outside the paradigm previously established, however they do sensitise the analytic frame that it applies. Most notably, in its original incarnation, Tappan focuses purely on moral languages as the mediational means that constitute moral functioning. Here, I have suggested that this can enriched as a perspective, casting appropriation as something which is a little more multi-layered. As such, I suggest that what Tappan talks of as ‘moral languages’ might equally be cast as the means of ‘moral evaluation’ and rationale. Such a shift makes space for senses that a moral engagement is more than just this dimension. I have evoked the need to secure context as a further dimension (whether of conventional moral challenges, or the kinds of specific interest in this thesis),
and that the ‘reasonableness’ of any given engagement with the world rests on the coherence established by this dimension as much as the logic and rationale which is imposed around it.

Finally, I have contributed a distinct theoretical interconnection between Werstch, Tappan and a broader narrative turn in the social sciences. This contribution arose most directly from the data, and the observation that participants’ tended to story their responses. From here, I have articulated the theoretical cogency that exists between the fundamental principles of theories of the narrative constitution of human consciousness and experience, and those of Wertsch’s mediated action. In integrating these two approaches, I have also suggested that they offer a very particular, and particularly valuable, way of understanding how individuals operate amongst globalisation and postmodernity. I have offered proof-of-concept illustration that demonstrates that wrapping mediated action around a narrative sensibility provides a profound and useful way of appreciating the mechanics by which ideological engagements are constructed.

**Broader Significances**

Central to the contributions offered in this thesis, then, is the responses generated from its central research questions, and its underlying rationale. However, its significance is not entirely contained amongst this remit. Throughout the writing, I have offered explorations and observations that have a broader significance, both to academic audiences, and beyond on to a broader socio-political stage. In offering an account of the value of this work, it is therefore fitting to incorporate also a treatment of these dimensions. It is to this that I turn my attention next, offering an exploration structured around the broader substantive, theoretical and methodological significances of my research and its exploration. Before continuing, though, I wish to offer a point of clarification: the intent of this part of the section is to anticipate significances in the work that escape its stated aims. As such, what I offer here will inevitably tend towards conjecture and the imagining of possibilities. In this, I beg the reader’s tolerance, for whilst it is difficult to offer firm assertions in this context, the potentials it illustrates are worthy of consideration.
On one level, we might structure a treatment of the broader significance of this writing in relation to its substantive findings; those aspects of its conclusions and findings that have relevance beyond the immediate remit of its execution. In this research, I have focused on young people – specifically, on sixteen young people from the North West of England. Throughout, I have attempted to understand their context and the ideological complications it presents to them further, in reference to a range of social commentary on the nature of late-modern society. I also set out to offer a sense of the nature of the strategies on which these particular individuals draw in generating a response to that context. My focus on this group has a particular political motivation (one which is exposed in depth in several other places in the thesis), but I would also suggest that amongst this specific application, there will be ideas of a more general significance. The young do not experience these complications of moral supply and demand alone; I merely focus on this group here. Rather, the contradictions and challenges set out in this thesis are those that we all face as we orient to a globalised existence, and to internal cultural pluralisms. The function of this thesis was to disrupt a deficit telling of youth that is conveniently blind to these tensions and dilemmas. The consequent observations may, however, be mirrored in the kinds of tensions experienced by people in general.

One may take this potential for generalised understanding may further. If the context of our moral being is shared with that of young people, if face the same challenges and complications, then perhaps the forms and strategies of our responses might also be shared. As such, the theoretical frameworks articulated through this thesis may offer further utility in understanding ideological being and becoming in a more generalised way. In all of this, it is worth reminding oneself that the frameworks in literature have not focused specifically on youth. Rather, I have applied them as such to particular contexts and specific individuals. Given this, it is not an excessive leap to return the application here to the original generalised theory, and raise the possibilities that the sensitisations I offer here can find application that is more widespread.

The possibility of understanding better the nature of public engagements with the issues explored in this thesis, and the context that surround them, is timely. It arrives at a point at which political orientation to sustainable development
requires greater understanding of the natures of consumer behaviour, of the
barriers to, and capacities of, individuals to incorporate into their thinking
behavioural consequences beyond their immediate experience. Elsewhere,
political scientists such as Taylor and Habermas have attempted to express how
Western Social Liberalism might reorient to the contradictions that it faces in
orienting to increased internal pluralism. Similarly, theorists such as Held have
examined how similar challenges exist in positioning liberal culture in a
globalised existence, testing the normative possibilities and natures of a global
'civil society'. To each of these debates, the findings and conclusions I put
forward in this thesis offer useful insight. They present a foil to the more
abstract understandings and proposals, demonstrating potential insight at the
level of the individual psychology, and the contexts that contains it. More than
this, they are a signal of hope. They demonstrate that the kinds of social
readjustment that Taylor, Habermas and Held crave are, indeed, possible; that
the individual is capable of negotiating seemingly disruptive ideological
contexts in order to reclaim decency, principle and commitment, albeit in
transformed ways.

It is easy to allow these kinds of possibility to carry one away, an impulse that
one should curtail. I cannot go so far as to assert this generalisation - nor do I
make any apologies for this. The origins of the research established a particular
political remit that placed import on a specific focus on a particular group.
Equally, though, I have established this political case around the dangers of
viewing youth as a 'rupture' in culture, and not a form of continuity of it. As
such, whilst I would not assert generalisation, I would at least allude to its
possibility.

I would also recognise that whilst young people and adults are fundamentally
the same in major respects there are also key differences between them, and
that this might modulate and sense of generalisation. Degrees to which dogma
fixes particular orientations and perspectives might, for instance, generate
consideration – as could the ways in which a mediated theory of moral being
might orient to this. Even here, things are not as simple as they might initially
seem. A default interpretation might suggest that orientations become more
dogmatic as the individual ages and acquires a weight of expectation. Equally,
though, we could trouble this by examining how individuals might abandon
taken-for-granted and hand-me-down views through the journey of their experience. These are not questions for now, but they are pause for consideration.

This research therefore generates broader significance in relation to its specific substantive findings, about ideological being in the context of a globalised and late-modern society. I would also suggest that the frameworks that I have explored and produced in tackling this focus also generate broader contributions. They talk to existing theoretical debates and tensions, reframing and developing them in productive ways.

Perhaps one of the more notable theoretical strands that run through this research relates to the natures of structure and agency: the degree to which one can claim the existence of individual autonomy amongst a broader context of social regulation. Conventionally, the literature represents this as a debate defined by antithetical perspectives, implying that the existence of social regulation will always compromise agentic freewill. In this thesis, however, I have presented a more complex relationship between structure and agency. It not only reconciles these aspects, but sees them as mutually interdependent, as ‘irreducible’ components in understanding any particular human activity. In brief, and to paraphrase chapter seven, this framework notes that agency can only ever be ‘performed’ – and that performance implies a context. Further, it suggest that for action to be meaningful, there must exist in that context a systems of ideas and understandings that invest it as such.

Expressed in this way, the separation of agency and social structure is a spurious one, for the exercise of the former is dependent on the latter (and, the latter only exists through the collective outcomes of the former). This is not to say that the two exist in harmonious balance. Rather, they often exist in tension, wherein individuals must foster meaningful action amongst a discursive milieu which offers partial meanings, and which both enables and constrains particular possibilities. What results is a more subtle reading of the nature of freewill, and a useful sophistication of its theoretical telling.

I do not intend to claim here that this resolution is the particular innovation of this thesis. Indeed, credit for the production of this particular argument must go to Wertsch, and one must acknowledge that similar kinds of compromise
exist elsewhere in the literature (in, for instance, Gidden’s concept of structuration). What I do contribute here is twofold. Firstly, I offer illustration of the workings of these ideas in practice. As elsewhere, this contribution appears modest against the grander theoretical gestures on whom I draw, but it remains significant. It offers a way of rendering meaningful these macro observations at the level of the individual, exposing both their mechanics and the complications that this involves. Secondly, I offer a degree of theoretical reconciliation between Wertsch and Narrative theory. Here, I have drawn on the notion of participation as a fundamental mechanism in the social currency of story (as both structure and substance), noting that this offers a fundamentally similar portrayal of the human actor in context.

My substantive work in this thesis therefore generates significances that go beyond its initial stated scope – and which generate interesting contributions to broader theoretical work. I would also suggest that the methodological level of this research, the ways in which it explores particular logics and paradigms of research and scholarly activity, generate similar useful offerings.

I structure this thesis around interplay of literature and data – fostering a kind conversation between of the voices of theorists and of participants. This was more than just an aesthetic decision, though it succeeds in generating a lived feeling in an otherwise abstract debate. Rather, it also set out to occupy a cogent space between inductive and deductive processes, between nomothetic and ideographic forms of understanding. In articulating the epistemological logics which underpin this (which I do in more detail from page 30) I offer contribution to a body of debate and theory on what it is to ‘do research’ in the social sciences. In particular, this segment of the thesis offers a rationale for this kind of compromise embedded in ontology and epistemology. It recognises the internal tensions that are established when such work is pulled equally in the direction of ‘big theory’ and personal understanding, and goes some way towards a reconciliation of these tensions. Having established a case-in-principle for this logic, the rest of the thesis serves of illustration of the power and potential of this kind of dynamic as a process in academic enquiry. In this, I have demonstrated that this offers a genuine methodological mechanism by which theory can both be developed and proposed, and which offers an important bridge between grand description of social conditions and the
experience of the individual. It has not done so in a perfect way, and I review some of the challenges that persist in relation to this approach below, however it is still a productive contribution.

This thesis has also generated and confronted some particular ethical dilemmas, and in this way offers contribution to fields of methodology. Most directly, it rearticulates a broadly feminist framework for thinking about both the internal moral dimensions of research activity, and the indispensability of the external politics that motivate them. Again, this kind of account in general pre-exists this thesis, however the specific expression of it here is unique, both in its context and in some of its substance. In particular, I offer my treatment of the problems of deontological, rule-derived ethical practice as part of my contribution in this work.

Beyond this, this thesis offers further understandings of the nexus of ‘being a teacher’ and ‘being a researcher’, and the ethical dimensions that this raises. It is not, of course, a piece of action-research, the framework within which we would often meet such a treatment. Rather, it is an account of a more general empirically oriented enquiry, undertaken by a teacher in contexts of his sites of practice. This looser framing is, I think, interesting in generating new understandings, enabling consideration of a number of different dimensions. Some stem from research event itself – from, for instance, the nature of power in interactions between a researcher/teacher and participant/student. Elsewhere, the juxtaposition has enabled me to confront other, more loosely focused ethical dilemmas; most interesting, perhaps, is where the informal codes of practice of researcher and teacher fall into conflict (for instance, when understanding is sought by a participant).

The ways in which I have responded to these tensions, the compromises and reconciliations involved, represent part of my contribution here (though I haven’t quite finished with these complications, and I raise them again in the tensions section to follow). Fundamentally, though, I would contend that the decoupling of teacher-researcher from the paradigm of action research is more significant than it first appears. It represents a conceptual realignment that I think is important in reconstituting the nature of teacher as researcher. Though not intrinsic to the action-research paradigm, too often such treatments
explore the ways in which the teacher’s practice might be modified in order to become more ‘researcherly’. Intrinsic to this is a methodological power game, by which the epistemological and ethical concerns of the academy are situated as more significant than those of the practitioner. The orientation I communicate here, by contrast, gives equal status to these two platforms and, in doing so, begins to recognise some of the productive exploration that can ensue from this.

Over the course of the first section of this chapter, I have offered a sense of the key contributions that this thesis offers, and with this a case for its academic merit. These offerings have been generated both directly and indirectly by the focus of the research, and have encompassed substantive, theoretical and methodological contributions. Many of these contributions take the form of a call for sensitisation and refinement of existing theory, illustration of that theory in context and interconnections between ideas. This set of outcomes are entirely cogent with the original intents and proposals of this research, and are important in their own way in situating theory in ecology. It would be erroneous, however, to present these as simple and unproblematic validated conclusions. There remain tensions in the research and its findings, and it is to a brief exposition of these to which I now turn my attention.

**Tensions**

I would therefore contend that this thesis offers a range of both intended and secondary contributions, and that these facets give it merit as a Ph.D. thesis. As with any work with a human focus, however, there exist key tensions in relation to its methodology, and its theoretical substance. In this section of the chapter, I offer a very brief overview and discussion of these tensions. Of themselves, they do not negate the broader value and contribution of the work (rather, they are inevitable consequences of the messy nature of research that orients around people and society). However, they do affect some of the claims made in the thesis, and the lens through which the reader should now reflect on it. In this sense, I present them here in order to trouble a fallacious sense that the writing is tidy and complete. More importantly, though, these tensions are, in themselves, interesting. As such, I offer them to the reader here as part
of the provocation that the thesis presents and hence as a form of its contributions.

**Methodological**

In part, the tensions that remain in this thesis stem from its processes and epistemologies, from its overall methodology. In exploring these dimensions here, I do not intend to rehash work done already within the methodology chapter, or to dwell on well-worn treatments of the strengths and weaknesses of various research methods. Rather, I intend to draw out distinct themes that, at this point of conclusion and summary, I might highlight as having developed a greater significance. They focus on the natures of performance, and the spaces amongst which those performances occur. Throughout this section, I will make the case that these tensions pivot around the problems of studying ideological being in created contexts (something which sits in direct tension with the overall tone of this thesis). I offer reconciliation in that, whatever their distortion, the interview event is a form of context demanding action, and thus the observations here remain relevant.

The most direct complication surrounding my methodology is, therefore, that interviews are essentially performative events. They require and generate a level of conscious participation that may otherwise be absent. They make calls for one to account for oneself, and thus invite a pre-deliberation and a reflection on expression. On one hand, this might manifest as a defensive portrayal, which ‘holds back’ truths in order to portray a more desirable image. At the same time, the interview ties into a ‘confessional’ strand in culture and with it a form of honesty that is contorted by the need to account for oneself (perhaps a more complex expression of the sense of ‘demand characteristics’).

As such, the degree to which I claim to have explored ideological being ‘in the wild’ is limited. In particular, I recognise that there is, unavoidably, a ‘forced’ quality to the engagements, in that I am orchestrating an event that draws together individuals in response to stimuli that I present. Further, the interview exists in times and spaces of my deriving (we finish when the interview runs out of steam, or we run out of time, the participants cannot absent themselves of it easily). Whilst recognising all of this, and encouraging the reader to temper their reading of my work in relation to it. I offer two kinds of response. The first
is that articulated in more depth on page 61; that ‘forcedness’ may heighten
the performance of moral engagement, but it does not distance itself
completely from the ways that these kinds of issue are encountered in day-to-
day life. Here too, they tend to intrude into experience.

The second response that I have fostered to this problem throughout the thesis
is to draw it directly into my analytic frame. The models of Wertsch and Tappan
are oriented towards ‘action’, to the ‘doing’ of human being. Indeed, this
practical focus is what offers them utility in this thesis. In the first instance, I
have asserted that, in the case of this research, ‘activity’ is the fostering of
ideological engagements with the world. As the thesis has progressed,
however, I have increasingly recognised something more subtle – that the
more direct activity here is the achievement of participation in a group
interview context, one that happens to have a moral/political tone. Whilst this
recognition sacrifices the claim to a ‘pure’ understanding of my focus, it also
facilitates some broader appreciation. The lens of mediated action has
therefore enabled a more sophisticated appreciation of the interview event
(see, for instance, my discussion of the nature of ‘leading questions’ on page
183). This is more than methodological grappling. Rather it is a tentative
recognition whilst this research situates ideological encounters in a broad
context (i.e on a global and socio-cultural stage), we must also recognise their
more immediate framings. These framings not only impose pressures and
constraints, but also avail particular mediational means to the individual in
achieving their action.

The performative aspects of the data presented here therefore merits
consideration. In doing so, we might also recognise that the performances
elicited in this particular research occurred on a specific stage. Each took place
within a classroom environment, with participants who were schooled, as it
were, in particular roles and expectations. Of course, the ‘participants’ in this
sense were not just the young people involved, but also myself. As a practicing
teacher, I too had history with the classroom environment and the
expectations of behaviour that it implies. Throughout the interview process we
walked a thin line together between two forms of performance, those of an
interviewer and interviewees, and those of teacher and pupils. In some ways,
the use of a paired approach – a decision intended, in part, to minimise my
involvement in sustaining the interviews – compounded this dynamic. It tapped into a further expectation of the arrangement of pupils to teachers in classroom contexts.

In the methodology chapter of this thesis, I try to set out some of the ways in which I have attempted to mitigate this pull (see page 58 onwards) – through, for instance, an opening interview structure that invites participants to take critical co-ownership of the process. It remains, however, a dogged feature of the analysis and the writing. There remains a nagging suspicion that, in some places at least, what was being offered was in part a performance of ‘right answers’ as one might expect within a the context of a lesson. With this in mind, we might revisit the extract on page 61. I have previously seen this as evidence of a successful start to an interview. Now, however, we might equally read it as deployment of particular cultural capital in order to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the context of a teacher-pupil relationship. I could offer similar applications against any number of extracts in which participants ‘evidence’ understanding of a concept or process (for instance, see page 183).

On one level, we might begin to interrogate this dynamic in relation to the terms established previously. ‘Teacherly’ and ‘studently’ behaviour is itself a form of mediated action, replete with discursive underpinnings. As such, incorporating it within this analytic frame offers more validation to the sense that Wertsch’s model provides a powerful way of understanding the complexities of action in contexts. In claiming this benefit, of course, I distance my findings further from a claim of observing ‘pure’ ideological engagement. In this, however, I feel no great loss. Beyond this level, I would also allude back to the discussion on page 274 of this chapter. It is easy to fall into a trap, here, of both over-emphasising the ‘researcherly’ nature of my professional identity, and of portraying the ‘teacherly’ aspect of antithetical to it. In disrupting this tendency, as I have attempted to do in this chapter, a more productive way of conceptualising the relationship between these two facets is possible (as evidenced in the kinds of discussion on ethics offered around page 52).

In relation to the question of ‘being’ a teacher and a researcher, there remain ethical tensions. Whilst I address these in the methodology and substance of
the thesis, I cannot claim to have achieved a satisfactory resolution of them. Indeed, I have situated ethics in such a way here as to negate any notion of a resolved case, only the on-going process of grappling with dilemmas situated against a background of principle. In relation to this, though, two key dimensions occur to me as particularly significant, both stemming from the complications of power (and hence, both wrapped equally in the researcher/participant, teacher/student dilemma).

In the writing, I have set out a case that the need to hear the voices of young people is as important as the need to protect them, and drawn from this a necessary presumption of competence. Such a stance would maintain that the focus of the research event should be with providing a neutral and uninhibited space within which participants can exercise their own autonomous voices – and that such a strategy will ensure both a more valid form of data, and a more ethical framework in its production. When set against the dynamics established here, though, this feels naïve. Power relations are not just produced by the organisation of a research event. They run through it, borne of particular social conventions (they are embedded, perhaps, in the mediational means that we deploy in facilitating that action). As such, the power dynamic of the teacher/student relationship, however softly it occurs, problematises some of the ethical assumptions of the research. To the best of my capacities, I have addressed these in the conduct of the empirical work, but I recognise here that this tension remains.

This concern with representing the voices of participants is, I suspect, further compromised amongst the broader logic of the thesis: the interplay of those voices with theory. The intent, here, was to empower personal perspectives against the perspectives of academics (who, of course, tend to be innately more culturally resonant), and broader discourses on youth which permeate society. Such an aim is cogent with my underlying ethical orientations, though two key processes distort its execution in practice. Firstly, the cultural resonance of ‘theory’ remains and, despite best intention, when it is presented neutrally alongside the voices of participants, it tends to overwhelm them (here, there are echoes of the ghosts of the teacher/student relationship, which are not eradicated through simple neutrality). Secondly, the interplay of theory and data as a textual feature fragments a focus specifically on the
participants. As a product of this, they feel only ephemerally present in the text, as theoretical concerns interrupt and fragment them. Such an issue is, of course, a partial product of the structural design of the thesis (in turn, derived of its epistemological basis); a more conventional structure would impose some physical distance between data and the theoretical frameworks that underpin its analysis.

A similarly stubborn challenge persists in relation to my discomfort in the analysis of data. In particular, I set out that there is something uncomfortable in relation to the micro-level unpicking of meaning which occurs within the kinds of discourse analysis undertaken here (see the section beginning at page 50 for further exposition of this). This remains one of my most pressing tensions at the close of this thesis, for precisely this kind of exploration has been necessary in achieving its ends. The process of actually producing and communicated the analysis has generated two key strategies of reconciliation. The first is a practical, procedural one; balancing any attention to the micro-detail of responses with a corresponding concern for their surface message. In doing so, I was able to offset that sense of ‘catching participants out’ with a genuine presumption of their competence. Further, such a strategy fosters dialectic between the two levels of analysis that is productively reciprocal.

The second response to this dilemma has been more theoretical, availed by the particular application of Mediated Action in the research. This approach pushed the more ‘critical’ senses of the analytic process towards the nature of discourse and ideology: on the assumptions embedded in the cultural constitution of ideas. Unpicking therefore occurred from an oblique angle, whereby uses of the participants’ data around which I felt an ethical sensitivity were couched in a broader social analysis. The more direct analytic focus, by contrast, could dwell on the ways in which the participants actually construct responses and achieve engagements. Such an arrangement not only alleviated some of the ethical tension in this dimension, but also felt more cogent with the actual questions I set out for the research. Equally, however, it accentuated some of the perceived ‘distance’ of participants in the final write-up as the context of their talk, rather than the talk itself, became the focus of the more critically involved (and thus more intimately oriented) analytic processes.
Amongst this general discussion of the performative aspects of the interview process, I would also draw attention that it has occurred through a particular medium. Throughout this thesis, I have focused solely on talk as an aspect of ideological being and becoming. In itself, this is unproblematic, and I offer a justification that talk has its ideological dimensions from page 49 of the methodology chapter. Further, I sit in good company in this focus. The mainstay of research on ‘moral development’ has focused on talk (and on responses to hypothetical dilemmas) as a way of understanding cognitive processes. Equally, however, it is important to recognise that this focus raises particular methodological issues. On one hand, these are relatively well-worn issues, of the problem of demand-characteristics and image-management, for instance. Whilst I recognise these kinds of tension, I would argue that I have at least partially addressed them in the procedures of the work, and negated them through its ethical orientations. More interesting are the ways in which a methodological focus on talk intersects with the substantive focus of the research. In its usual everyday sense, we would expect treatments of morality to implicate a sense of action or inaction, of physical activity in the world. In this thesis, I have reframed this issue, transposing the focus to one on ideological, rather than moral, being (though this, in turn, is problematised below). Such a shift creates space in which conceptual activity, at the level of ideas, are as relevant as actual practical engagement with the world (in other-words, talk about a fair-trade chocolate bar is as relevant to the research as the act of buying it).

Further, the orientation I offer earlier in this section also generates a partial response. Wertsch predicates his theory on activity in the world, rather than dwelling solely on the cognitive process of human existence. As such, it pulls analysis in this direction, and the recognition that participants are very much engaged in activity, here – albeit that of participating in an interview event. This reframing is interesting, and productive in relation to the data in this research. It remains the case though, that what we observe and hear of participants in their talk in this study correspond very loosely to the kinds of activity that comprise their everyday lives.
Theoretical

A series of methodological tensions therefore run through this thesis, stemming from its procedures and its philosophies – but these are not the only source of problematisation worth confronting here. They also exist within a set of more theoretical complications that arise from the conceptual framing and languages in the thesis, particularly those on which I draw in order to establish its foundations. It is to these dimensions to which I now turn my attention.

Perhaps one of the most direct and apparent theoretical tension running through this thesis is a degree of conceptual fluidity surrounding my central focus. Early on, I eschew the language of ‘moral functioning/development’ because each of its terms implicates unsatisfactory conceptual baggage. As I have suggested in the discussion of methodology, above, the term ‘moral’ implies something too limited in the context of the engagements we have seen in this thesis. It too closely intimates physical action in the world, and excludes talk. Further, though, it alludes to personal rights, wrongs and duties and many of the responses offered here escape this. Whilst they have an ethical tone (they centre on judgements of right and wrong), they escape the level of the individual, and engage instead at a social level (a remit that one might otherwise perhaps refer to as ‘politics’). Notions of ‘development’ and ‘functioning’ were also problematic in the context of this study. They imply something linear, mechanistic and finished, and tend towards an atomised portrayal of human cognition and consciousness that responds to the world without being a part of it.

Such qualities do not sit comfortably in research primarily concerned with the complexities that occur when we situate internal psychologies in the demands of contemporary contexts. Here, there is a need to recognise that processes of engagement with the world are organic, messy and always bound-up amongst the context in which they operate. In response to these demands, I opted to replace these notions with that of ‘ideological being and becoming’, a notion drawn directly from Bakhtin. In turn, this allowed me to encompass the individual and the social, and to recognise the broadly ethical dimensions to ideas, thought and talk alongside action. It also allowed me to imagine my focus as something organic in flux, rather than as something gradually developed.
In these ways, I maintain that my early shift in vocabulary is conceptually justified. This is supported further by the ingress it allowed both in relation to sense making of the data, and to the inclusion of theoretical frameworks used to understand them. Whilst this shift in vocabulary was crucial to the conceptual basis and execution of the study, I would also recognise that it introduces complications. Notably, ensuring that the language of my research is encompassing enough to contain my particular concerns, there is a potential of convenient 'over-scoping'. There is an inherent flimsiness to the notion of 'ideological being': in injecting necessary and productive breadth, it would be legitimate to question what such a remit does not encompass.

A flippant response is possible, here. I could suggest that all existence in the world is ideological (a stance that would be cogent with Wertsch’s sense that all activity is socially mediated). I wonder, though, whether such a reply is inconsistent with the thesis’ actual focus, on responses to globalised dimensions of existence. Without care, there is risk of implication, here, that whilst all activity is ideological, some is ‘more ideological’ than others are. Further, there the potential over-scoping of the research leads to a threat to its socio-political aims: that I have exposed engagement amongst participants only by shifting the goalposts as to what constitutes as legitimate in such activity.

These represent very genuine questions, and must of course frame a reading of this thesis. However, I do not think that they are intractable failures of the work, merely observations of context. A focus specifically on globalisation and postmodernity has current social relevance. They represent particular shifts of the contemporary age, and insight into how individuals orient to them is valuable. Further, even if they do only encompass a fragment of what constitutes ideological being, they are a fascinating fragment, replete with particular contradictions and challenges. Given this, a forgiving definition of what constitutes legitimate engagement seems appropriate. Further, these issues do not merit simple evaluation, but grappling and reflexivity. I allow for these qualities in understanding the existence of young people, in the same way that I hope others would recognise them in my moral/political orientations to the late-modern world.
In this, we arrive at a further insistence of the thesis: that any understanding of ideological being requires attention to context. Herein lies a further layer of theoretical tension, for context – by its very nature – is always shifting. Over the (admittedly protracted) lifespan of this thesis, various events have occurred on local, national and global scales that have relevance to this thesis. Through the course of the data, we meet controversies surrounding the Kyoto accord, the execution of Saddam Hussein, the South-East Asian Tsunami of 2004, amongst many others. In a sense, this thesis is a product of its particular time and place (as its insistence on an attention to context would compel). This time and place has, however, inevitably shifted since the end of data generation and the decision to call this writing ‘final draft’, and these shifts have brought with them innumerable significant occurrences in the world. We might legitimately question what happens when we situate a contextually insistent work against this kind of shifting backdrop.

In response to this particular tension, I wish to offer a key point of clarification. The concern of this thesis has been to contend that context is always important in understanding moral and political being, and to illustrate this in relation to contemporary existence. As such, I have not set out to master an understanding of that context in every facet of possibility it presents. My analytic frame has been both broad and specific. It has focused equally on the general qualities of contemporary contexts, and the specific responses of individuals amongst it. It has not attempted, however, to attend to the nature of particular issues within that context (such an aim would be a step too far out of scope). As such, the fundamental messages of the research remain valid, but along with the proviso that the specifics of its application are ever shifting – and the invitation that there is further work to be done in understanding this.

A Drawing Together

Across the course of this section, I have suggested that significant tensions still exist in relation to this study. Further, I have maintained that its reading should occur through a lens that recognises that these impose substantive limitations. Equally, however, I maintain that the existence of such tensions is both inevitable, and a productive feature of the research. They level a series of provocations that frame not only this study, but also the general field of
enquiry with which it grapples. In essence, I would draw out two key overwhelming themes.

Firstly, the tensions identified here tend to describe the challenge of context in understanding moral existence. Where previously, I might have communicated this in terms of problem of removing behaviour from a natural ecology, what emerges here is more sophisticated. It flips this concern: rather than focusing on what is absent from an interview in a piece of research, it views such events as strongly framed by both social significance and operational procedure. Hence, it begs an alternative exploration that asks what that context does supply. Running through this section of the chapter is a sense of the outcomes of interrogating this type of question, and I would argue that it is productive in relation to the internal mechanics of the theories on which this thesis draws. In this sense, Wertsch’s theory of mediated action has been useful not only in understanding ‘data’ in this research, but also the interview context by which it has been produced.

Where this transposition is useful, I also recognise that every step taken in understanding ideological function in this specific context is a step away from a claim that these notions are naturally amenable to transposition elsewhere. In other words, they raise again the problematic status of combining ideographic and nomothetic understandings amongst a single logic. Here, I suggest, is the second overarching theme in the discussion in this section. In particular, the ways in which human presence is situated amongst the representation of this logic now strikes me as at odds with its original ethical orientations. In fostering on-going interplay between voices and theories, albeit with good intent, there is a tendency for that process of interaction to be take the foreground, in ways that can obscure both the author and the fullness of participants. The fragmentary nature of our encounters with the data compounds this, as on-going theoretical business tends to interrupt the voices in the data. Such a dynamic is necessary in the overall methodological foundation of the research, but it regardless leaves me with key challenges as a researcher.

**Implications**

In the first two segments of this chapter, I have offered what I see as the key contributions of this thesis, and the tensions and complications that inhabit
them. Together, these frame not only what the thesis has achieved, but also its potentials for further achievement; its implications in theory, research and practice. In this section, I begin to account for the future trajectories that might stem from ideas generated in this thesis. I first consider this task from a scholarly frame of reference, with a particular focus on the concepts that merit further development, and new directions that the theoretical frame established here might take. In the second segment of the segment, I return to the educational foundations of the research, in order to consider some of the direct implications of this work for practice, curriculum and pedagogy.

**Scholarly Implications**

On one level, then, the contributions and limitations outlined in this chapter serve to establish foundations for further scholarly activity. Here, I offer a brief overview of some of the directions that these might take, examining equally theoretical and methodological dimension. It is not my intent to develop these in any depth here – nor would it be appropriate to do so – merely to establish future trajectories of travel.

On one level, this thesis frames up some interesting substantive questions that merit exploration. Most apparent, is that which interrogates whether the observations offered in this thesis have utility beyond the specific group of individuals involved. As noted previously in this chapter, the orientation of individuals towards the kinds of complexities is a key challenge in both politics and governance (i.e. the abstract construction of notions such as ‘liberalism’, and in the practical management of human opportunity and behaviour). The notions posited here are useful in this context, and a testing of the utility of the frameworks offered here amongst adults would therefore be productive.

Such work could also offer further internal development to that framework, particularly in addressing notions of dogma and habit and their relationships with age and experience. In this sense, a longitudinal examination of the individuals’ on-going relationships with mediational means would be potentially fascinating. It would also offer a way of addressing some of the fragmentary glimpses of selves offered within this thesis. Having done the work of establishing the theoretical basis in this research, a focus could lie more specifically with individuals in a sustained way.
Throughout this chapter, I have noted that my writing in this thesis has hovered around the level of thought and talk about ideological being within an interview context. As such, it has not explicitly attempted to interrogate the relationships between this and action in everyday existence. This also frames potentials for further inquiry in two ways. Firstly, it begs interrogation of the relationships between thought, talk and action, and the ways in which a Werstchian framework can better express this. Such a focus would not only address the substantive question posed here, but also generate further theoretical contributions – refining the application of Mediated Action to moral functioning.

This direction of exploration also brings with it the possibility of better understanding this kind of functioning in the context of everyday life, with its alternative framings and its tendency towards spontaneous, rather than overtly reflective responses. Quite how, for instance, mediational means operate amongst the activity of a shopping trip if potentially fascinating. It offers to the capacity to understand such processes ‘in the wild’, and to reframe a focus on global issues out of the specific context of an interview, where these concerns will be more pronounced as a product of the methodology.

This research also establishes a theoretical framework that one might pursue in interesting ways in relation to ideological functioning in contexts other than its current focus. In part, this might be in considering ‘moral functioning’ directly in different contexts (a move already established by Tappan), but it also offers broader potentials. This direction has particular relevance to me as, since beginning this particular project, I have made a transition from classroom practice to initial and continuing teacher development. This shift has placed me amongst new contexts in which the ideas first set out here have found different resonances. In particular, I have become interested in ‘teacher development’ as a process of ideological being and becoming, with qualities and processes similar to those set out here.

As such, I wonder whether it may be productive to think of the performance of professional self as a form of mediated action. Trainee teachers exist amongst a cacophony of other voices that write on to them meaning about professional self: the voices of the university tutor, the government minister, the classroom
mentor and so on. There is, here, a sense of discursive negotiation that is reminiscent of the kinds of processes described throughout this thesis. Trainee teachers must learn to appropriate the mediational means that their cultural context offers to them, in order to talk of practice in ways which move beyond ‘ventriloquisation’ and in to qualities of both authority and authenticity. This strand of exploration seems to be rich in potential, and is thus one that I personally intend to pursue in further work.

Beyond the direct substantive and theoretical matter of this thesis, it also establishes the basis for further methodological work. The project of reconstructing ethics that I begin in this thesis, and its wider dialogue with feminist theory in relation to this, remains an on-going task, as does my continuing unease with both the power-relations inherent to the research event, and the passively aggressive nature of analysis. These all remain platforms for further development. Similarly, I remain interested in both the political and the epistemological project of giving status to voices amongst a broader theoretical concern, the practical means and complications of achieving this.

Beyond all of these continuing focuses, I have developed a renewed interest in the nature of teacher as researcher. There are provocations in this chapter that beg further articulation. I intimate, for instance, a methodological power-game in the habitual orientations of action-research, which give status to the ‘researcherly-ness’ over ‘teacherly-ness’. Such a claim remains underdeveloped and there is useful work to I am yet to undertake around it. Elsewhere in this conclusion, and in this thesis, I have offered an alternative reconciliation (in for instance, the recognition that the ethical demands of my teaching identity are as valid as those of imposed around that of me as researcher). Here too, there are questions and developments to be made, in further exploring both the contexts of teacher-ethics (an easier task) and the potentials for an epistemological foundation that arises as much from pedagogy as conventional methodological matters (more challenging).
Educational Implications

In executing this research, I have therefore established a number of interesting directions for further scholarly work. These relate both to advancing the substantive findings of this research, and in exercising its theoretical and methodological currents against other contexts. In the final segment of the thesis, I draw together one final dimension of its implications, those that it holds in relation to educational policy and practice. As I have already stated in this chapter, and at the onset of the thesis, this work does not originate from an action research paradigm. As such, I make no claims towards conclusions of a directly practice-oriented nature. Equally, however, the beginnings of this work – and its consequent ethics and methodology – were inseparable from identity as an educator. This suggestion brings with it a sense of trajectory, which compels me to examine how that professional self might orient to the findings contained here.

Perhaps the most significant concept of this whole thesis is the notion of appropriation. It is offered throughout in order to describe the both the mechanism that sits in between the socio-cultural milieu of ideas, and the individual agent, and the qualities of relationship fostered by that mechanism. Its attraction for me, theoretically, is that it lends itself to a sense of ‘play’ with ideas; of engagement, manipulation and creative utility. In the context of morality, it shifts us away from a sense of gradual internalisation of capacities or norms – and this lends it analytic power in the broader context of the thesis.

When mapped onto an educational context, the concept of appropriation brings with it a similarly important provocation – one that frames equally the natures of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. Situating appropriation as a central facet of human activity implicates a model of learning which is constituted not of the internalisation of ideas (ultimately, the fundamental default pedagogic assumption), but of the nurturing of a capacity to utilise and deploy those ideas with increasing ownership and mastery. As such, it compels us to facilitate spaces for learning that encourage this kind of open experimentation. This thesis also offers further appreciation of the mechanisms by which we might facilitate this. In a number of extracts, the triadic nature of the interview context – myself, and two participants in interaction – feel significantly pedagogic (in particular, see the series of transcripts and
interpretations which begin on page 82). They represent this sense of introducing, toying with, and exploring the nature of ideas, and their utility in deployment in a collaborative context.

In many ways, the qualities of these particular interactions are shared with those sought by proponents of dialogic teaching and learning (Alexander, 2008; Mercer, 2000). As such, they are open-ended, exploratory and interrogative. What makes them shine, I think, is the process of negotiating an engagement, rather than the product of a finalised ‘argument’. Such a parallel is not as incidental as it might seem, for the work of Alexander and Mercer stems from those same Vygotskian foundations as that of Wertsch. It also operates in interesting ways with some of the negotiations I have made around the nature of teacher-researcher (see the section beginning on page 52). It corresponds with the Frierian-inspired sense of teacher as a facilitator and co-constructor of understanding, and not just as a transmissive authority.

Of course, pedagogy does not exist in isolation – and these kinds of call have related implications for the nature of both curriculum and of assessment. Most directly, a dialogic pedagogy – one that supports learners with their appropriative capacities – demands a curriculum that allows flexibility. It cannot be one predefined by certain outcomes and products – certainly not as an audit-list of key knowledges and facts. Viewed through a Werstchian lens, such a convention offers a stilted and constrained platform for appropriative learning. It is one in which the genuine development of mastery and ownership of mediational means is distorted by the need to deploy particular notions in the performance of a right answer. As such, a curriculum that facilitates appropriative learning must place process above product. This is not to say ‘content’ is to be stigmatised, for the curriculum must still establish a platform for interactions amongst otherwise unfamiliar mediational means. However, that it has the status of platform from which to progress, and not end in itself is significant.

In all of this lies a message about assessment and in particular the problems of assessment that simply evaluates the production of a right answer. In a Werstchian sense, this would constitute a very strange form of learning, one based not on mastery of mediational means, but on the ventriloquisation of
sanctioned forms of talking about content. There is a very real risk, in this, that the least genuine forms of learning appear, on the surface, to be the most creditable (this reminds me, particularly, of the contrasting extracts on page 190 of this thesis).

The theoretical matter of this thesis might therefore begin to generate some general educative significance. It also, of course, dwells on a very particular subject matter: on what might, in institutional terms, be referred to as ‘global citizenship’. Within my own practice, I have encountered this focus under two guises: in the KS3 Citizenship Curriculum, and elsewhere in A-Level Sociology units on Global Development. These are, of course, very different articulations of the same focal content – the former proposes to set out to develop civic participation, whilst the latter is oriented towards an ‘academic’ treatment of theory and evidence.

Fundamentally, however, they share a similar underlying problem in their constitution, and in the learner’s experience of them. A syllabus-oriented curriculum underpins both of these areas of provision, based around the understanding of particular bodies of theory and fact. In this, I would suggest – on the grounds of this thesis – that both sets of provision miss the opportunity to facilitate and support a more enriched and developed engagement with the world. In emphasising that learners should understand the ‘structure’ of debates, and the array of evidence, something is lost in the sense of mobilising these notions amongst meaningful action. Rather than developing a capacity to appropriate mediational means towards particular productive purposes, students are encouraged to do so for circular reasons: because the curriculum demands of them this performance.

A more genuine development of engaged global citizens therefore begs a more genuine degree of openness. It begins, perhaps, with a sentiment that the issues with which children and young people must grapple do not occur solely in the curriculum. Rather, they are spontaneous happenings in the media and on the internet that gain social currency amongst their subcultures. Such an approach proceeds to avail the spaces to explore and interrogate these experiences in ways which attend to their competing meanings – and which are sensitive to the relationships which individuals foster with them. It necessitates
that kind of dialogic relationship that both Alexander and Habermas evoke: rationality based not on the end fact, but on an attention to the detail and articulation of things.

In this sense, we might revisit the young people with whom I started this thesis, and their pent up frustrations centred on fostering meaningful engagements with the world. These were, I suggest at the onset and throughout this thesis, borne of contextual complications – of the challenges and demands of postmodernity and globalisation. However, they were also borne of the educational context within which I encountered their frustrations, from its failures (and my failures) to allow them to stretch those capacities in ways that might facilitate these engagements. They, and I, were caught amongst a particular curricula experience, which made space for the global but which taught them debates and structures of argument, rather than providing more genuine spaces for meaningful action within the world.
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Organization, 16(3), 425–442.


Appendices
Appendix A: Letter of Introduction

Mark Peace
c/o Dr Andy Howes,
School of Education, Ellen Wilkinson Building
The University of Manchester
Oxford Road, Manchester
M13 9PL

Dear Participant and Parent/Guardian,

Thank you very much for indicating that you would be willing to be involved with my research. The purpose of this letter is to give you a bit more information about the study, what we will be doing and how the data that you provide will be used. I would be grateful if you could read this letter, and return the consent slip at the bottom (you can give it to your teacher, and they will pass it on to me).

The research is part of my PhD in Education, this involves a three year research project which is written up as a long essay called a ‘thesis’. My interest in the research is the ways in which young people engage with complicated ethical and political issues, such as wars and conflict, environmental damage and poverty and inequality. In the research, I would like to talk to young people, such as yourself, in pairs. I will be asking you to look at some photos depicting ‘global issues’ and asking you simply to talk around them. The interviews will last around an hour – though I may ask some of you to have a chat with me at a later date. I will then be looking at the data you have given me in order to better understand how you have ‘constructed’ your responses—the strategies and resources you use to make engagements with the world. The result of this will be written up in my thesis, which is then submitted for examination, and finally placed in the University library. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and to have your contributions removed from the data – simply let your teacher know, and they will pass the message on to me.

I am grateful for your time in helping with this – and look forward to receiving your signed consent slip.

Yours Sincerely

Mark Peace (PhD Student).

Consent to Participate in Mark Peace’s Research

Name: ___________________________ School: ___________________________

I understand the focus of your research, and what it entails, and I am happy to participate within it.

Signature of Young Person: ___________________________ Date: _________________

Signature of Parent/Guardian: ___________________________ Date: _________________
## Appendix B: Summary of Participants/Fieldwork

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<td>1</td>
<td>3/11/2005</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Year 8, White British, Female</td>
<td>Fully comprehensive school drawing from areas of a range of affluence and ethnicity in the Manchester Suburbs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Year 8, White Polish, Female</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30/11/2005</td>
<td>Quasim</td>
<td>Year 9, Bangladeshi, Male</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>Year 9, White, Male</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1/12/2005</td>
<td>Aftab</td>
<td>Year 7, Bangladeshi, Female</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Iram</td>
<td>Year 7, Pakistani, Female</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>23/1/2006</td>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Year 12, White, Female</td>
<td>A semi-rural Church of England school on the borders between Manchester and Lancashire.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chelsea</td>
<td>Year 12, White, Female</td>
<td>Drawing mainly white pupils from affluent areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30/1/2006</td>
<td>Aylish</td>
<td>Year 10, White, Female</td>
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<td>Gemma</td>
<td>Year 10, White, Female</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6/2/2006</td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Year 8, White, Female</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Year 8, White, Female</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>3/5/2006</td>
<td>Niall</td>
<td>Year 9, White, Male</td>
<td>An inner-city academy, drawing mainly white and Black Caribbean pupils from a ‘deprived’ catchment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Year 9, White, Male</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3/5/2006</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Year 7, Black, Male</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Year 7, White, Male</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>20/9/2007</td>
<td>Aylish</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>12/11/2007</td>
<td>Ryan</td>
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<td>11</td>
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Return interviews – see characteristics set out above.
Appendix C: Stimulus Material
Appendix D: An Example Transcript

Mark: Ok, so a little bit about this … thing that I’m doing. I’m interested in how you engage with big moral and political issues … part of it is I hear people whinge about ‘the young people today’

Aylish: Yeah … that’s dead annoying

Mark: I thought so … cos when I work with people … like you … I don’t think they’re like … politically disinterested, or morally apathetic

Gemma: What’s apathetic?

Aylish: It’s like when you don’t care … I think we care about stuff … about the environment and that

Mark: So I’ve decided to get people like you together in a room and to talk about these kinds of issues, and show people how you actually talk about them.

Aylish: Sure … like … um … a focus group?

Mark: Yeah, you know about them?

Aylish: We done them in sociology

Mark: Well that’s useful … I think … perhaps, if you know about some of the problems that researchers face … in their data and that … you can keep an eye on how these things are unfolding … maybe offer some constructive criticism of the process

Gemma: Ooh, like you’ll have to avoid leading questions and that …

Mark: Yeah I’m thinking … about things just like that. So what I’m going to do, is just give you these pictures … there’s not necessarily a logical connection, though there might be a theme, but they don’t necessarily follow on from each other … um … and if you could talk about as many or as few of the pictures as you feel you want to … so if I show you …

[Pause, whilst the participants sift through the images]

Aylish: These two … one, two [indicates the image of the farmer, and of the workshop] … they both live in a … em … less … economically developed country … they both look like they have to pick their own food …and even though you’d think it wouldn’t be such a good thing to have to go out and work on the fields … they both look happy; like, the man’s smiling … and the little boy’s smiling … and they both look like they’re in similar areas of the world …

Gemma: Em … I don’t know … it’s about the same as what she says

Aylish: The boys parents will be less … I don’t think they’ll have as much money … and he is at the age where – in our country – he would have to go to school – but he’s not got the opportunity to go to school because his parents don’t have as much money

Gemma: So he has to work

Aylish: Yeah and he has to pick the food to … not just to eat, but he has to sell it as well to get money for the family to help them survive

Gemm: And he too [the farmer] has to do that to survive … and he probably wouldn’t have had a good education

Aylish: He’s, like, carrying on how everybody before him has lived … and he’s not had the chance to break out of the poverty of the world / well not of the world, of his country … and you can see all the fields around him, and it looks like something lush and like a really nice place / but it’s probably not such a good life for him as he’s not got enough money.

Gemma: The country … it’s like in debt

Aylish: Because the government … the way they control the money isn’t the same as here / they don’t get the benefits that we get if you don’t work or if you have less money / they … it’s basically you have to survive for yourself – cos the government’s money goes on paying debts to other countries and fighting wars.

Gemma: Yeah … the countries are in debt … so … all the monies that they get are used to pay off the debts, in cases there’s like interest and there’s extra – they get into more debt to pay off the loans … um …

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Aylish And sometimes the governments are corrupt — but often that's because of colonialism and that, the ways we sort of set them up.

Gemma So they're ... the politicians ... they're just in it for themselves, really.

Aylish They had to ... say ... if there was a natural disaster, or something like that ... they had to borrow the money to be able to work with that to help it get better, but then ... it's from more economically developed countries, and they put interest on it ... so then they have to pay ... to be able to pay that loan they have to get loans from other countries — and it all spirals out and they get more and more in debt

Mark OK, and anything else you'd like to say...

Gemma Well ... um ... there's like more famines and that out there, the weather's more extreme than here ... which means, um, there's more bad stuff going on than here ... that means they get even more in debt as well cos they ... have to ... get help

Aylish And because we buy the raw materials off them ... so they don't get a lot of money, cos the raw materials are cheaper than the actual finished project ... um ... object ...

Gemma Product

Aylish Yeah, product ... so they don't get enough money from that to go further and make more from the raw materials ... so then they don't earn the money, they stay in debt and have less money

Gemma And also, we do cheap labour so we don't pay them very much for the job

Aylish But this man's smiling, so it might be that he has the fair trade, where they get more money for it so he's got a better life and he has a chance to break out of the poverty that he faces.

Mark And what were you saying about governments a minute ago?

Aylish The governments, some of them, they have the money ... they manage the money in certain ways, so that it's not going into the health care and the benefits for the poorer people — and into education; the education you have to pay for yourself, whereas here it's all ... you get it for free, your education — unless you want to go into private ... so ... people aren't having the opportunities

Gemma They have ... like ... a different type of government to us ... like, it's more ... I don't know ...

Aylish They've probably, like, been colonised by the British, previously ... and then as we've given them the freedom, the governments have come in and the people don't ... haven't ever had as much rights as we've had, so they've not been able to vote for who they want, so they get more dictatorships — so there's, like, fighting to do with that, because they want their freedom, but the dictators don't let them have it.

Mark OK, so we're now talking about

Gemma The picture of the people ... making clothes or material ... OK, like, cheap labour because they get paid not very much to make loads of clothes which then go ... like ... get sent over to richer countries, so they can be sold cheap, so that we can buy them. But they look ... happy ... probably because they're getting money so they can live

Aylish Yeah, it's like a sweatshop and all these people, they're all young ... men ... and they have to work in them to provide for their families ... but, even though they might look happy it might not, necessarily, depict how they're feeling — because there's a camera all be

Gemma Yeah they might just /

Aylish Posing for the camera

Gemma They're all boys, I think

Aylish And, even though they're probably producing these clothes that we buy ... that are of higher quality, their clothes are like old rags that have been probably passed on, because they can't afford the clothes that they make for us.

Mark And why's that?

Gemma Because they're not really being paid a fair amount to make it ... so ... they don't really have as much money to buy clothes, because they have to spend their money on food

Aylish Yeah, they're paid, like, minimum wage

Mark And whose fault is that?
Well, the government doesn't have laws to say what the minimum wage is

Like ours do

So, like, people from other countries come here and ... um ... go there so that they can get cheap labour, and, they can make more profit ...

It's a number of people's faults ... it's ... the big companies primarily, because they promote this, cheaper labour by paying the wage - but we buy the clothes

Yeah, so it's also our fault

That ... um ... pays the wage, that encourages the companies ... if we, like, um ... maybe ... if we stopped buying them, then

Like, if we bought things that were fair trade

That you can buy, then they might stop and pay fairer wages

They'd probably look at our lives and think how much better off we are than they are and

Cos we have, like, food, and loads of clothes to wear ... so ... we have TV and stuff, where as they don't ... and they, like, have to work really hard for a living and we don't ... where as kids, there, work, where as we just get an education ... so they'd think, like, we were really lucky.

They probably think we're quite spoiled, like, that we take things for granted ... because they, have, like, bear minimum ... they barely have enough to survive, but we complain about things when we don't ... we don't have the best car, the best clothes, don't go on holiday all the time - whereas to them, they're luxuries, they're not necessities - we have all the necessities and more, we just want more material possessions

Why do you think that is?

Because we're selfish

Because we can get the things, and we look at other ... when we look at the magazines, and we see the celebrities ... we think we want them - and we aim to get that. Their main focus in life is to be happy and healthy and having their family - and they look at ours and think its material possessions.

Ok. And do you think there are any connections between your lives and these people's lives in any way?

Yeah ... like ... cos we buy things that they would have made ... or ... harvested ... so ... we're, like, giving them money, but not in a direct way ... so ... yeah

Because we buy the things that they make - like, he makes the coffee and we buy the coffee from the suppliers who buy the beans off him, and then we buy the clothes that the people in the sweatshop make ... and buy what the little boys harvested ... and they all go into our shops, and we pay the money for them, which they get / well they don't get a lot of it, but they get some of it.

Are they grateful for that?

Yeah ... yeah, they probably are grateful for what we do give them as without it they wouldn't have any jobs ... but they'd probably like to have a bit more / but as they don't know they can have more, they probably don't realise how little they do get compared with what they should get.

Ok, we've talked a lot about the stuff that 'we' do there, I wonder if I can be a little bit mean and push you to talk a bit more about the stuff that 'you' do?

I don't, I don't drink coffee

I don't know ... I don't decide myself what coffee we get at home; but I do drink that coffee, and if I said to my dad "can we have fair trade coffee" we probably could ... but, it's that we don't think of it. So ... I guess ... maybe I have a responsibility ... um ... to people like this ... that I don't always think about ... probably some of the clothes that these people make, they probably go into some of the shops; Topshop, Primark, New Look, River Island ... and we do buy the clothes from them

I don't, I don't drink coffee

And if you do buy ... like ... you can get certain brands who do fair trade ... but we don't buy from them ... we go to Primark where you can get a dress for £15 ... whereas they probably only get a few pence from that and
so … we do affect how much they get by what we buy … and with the coffee, certain brands … I do drink coffee …

Mark Oh, and why is that?

Aylish When we're busy in our day-to-day lives, we don't think about how what we're doing is affecting other people … we think about what is … what we're doing for our gain … not what other people … which is selfish, but we automatically do it - I think it's the way we've been brought up

Mark Is it easy to be aware of these things?

Aylish Well, it's in the news sometimes, so it is - but it depends, like … cos in the news at the moment, it's about the government, so you don't really think about it - but when it's in the news you do, you feel like you should do something

Mark And then you walk away from the news?

Aylish And you do think about it, but you get too busy

Gemma Doing something else in your life

Aylish And the poverty of other countries is played down at the moment, because we're in a recession

Gemma A credit crunch

Aylish And a credit crunch, and the way that we're affected with money - we're less fortunate than we were … even though we can still have all of the things that we need

Gemma Yeah, we can still buy extra things as well

Aylish The media still makes our … how much we are suffering / even though we're not suffering / they ignore other countries, how much they're suffering - to make it seem much worse than it actually is.

Mark Ok, so talking about you again, and putting judgements to one side - I'm wearing Next trousers and a top from Topman - can you tell me about those moments, and your connection to these places.

Aylish We think … when you go shopping, you don't think about how its made or where it's come from, you just think 'I'll buy it'

Gemma Or you think: where can I get the biggest bargain from!

Aylish Its probably because, if not mainly, as children or teenagers, you don't have as much money to freely spend … you want to be able to make the most of whatever money you do have … and buy as much with whatever money you've got, so you do go to the cheaper stores like Primark where you do get a lot for less

Mark So, then, do you think that when you earn more money this will change?

Aylish No

Gemma No

Aylish I think you get into the cycle of even when you're older

Gemma You've got more money so you think … you can buy more things then

Aylish You buy more things, and you think; well I've got the bills to pay and this to do, and this to buy and so you don't buy the more expensive things because then there's VAT on it, which is then added to make it even more expensive, so you still do the bargains … You just don't think about it when you're there, you're locked in to whatever you're doing in that moment … and you don't take into account what other people do / well, not everybody does - some people actually do - when they go out, they go out to actually buy things that will help people … like … they do go out to buy fair trade stuff

Gemma But most people … like … don't think about what effect it has on other people … like … if they buy certain things.

Aylish You go out and you've got a certain image of what you want to buy … if you're buying, say you're going to a party, you have the image of, say, the dress you want to buy, and you don't think about the effect that that could have on other people, because, you want that

Mark Ok, ok … hmm … just thinking about a different moral encounter … so that dress you're going to buy … say your best friend really likes it and would be upset if you bought it first

Aylish In reality, even though it seems a big issue - whether or not you buy the dress - two friends arguing over a dress, in reality, a dress is a dress, its not that important, but at the time it seems important
because it'll affect the relationship between you and your friend, so you're thinking about your direct relationships and the morals regarding that, you're not thinking outside of that and how it's indirectly affecting other people who we .. who we don’t know.

Gemma Yeah, you think about people who, like, you see often, because those are the people who you might see then a lot, whereas you don't really see people from other countries, so you don’t think about them that much.

Aylish And you think that, by buying the address, it effects you - it'll effect how you're thought of by your friend in your relationship so .. as .. it doesn't really effect you directly, with other people, it's pushed to the back of your mind, and you don't really think of it.

[Pause]

Mark Great. What shall we … talk about next

Gemma We've not really talked about the teenagers shopping.

Mark Oh, go ahead then.

Gemma Well, you can immediately see the big brand at the front is JD Sports and they sell the clothes and shoes - the trainers particularly, like Nike - that are made in the sweatshops of these .. they buy the .. Nike pays these people, like, very very minimum

Aylish Yeah

Gemma To make them, and then they sell them .. cos of the brand name

Aylish Even though its not a lot to make them, they sell them more expensive than what they should be to the retailers who then sell them even more expensive to us to make a profit .. so, it's like everybody's out to gain .. it's like the Nike manufacturers want to make a profit from this, but then the retailers also want to make a profit, so they have to sell it more expensive to us .. who then wants the shoes because they've got a brand name .. we want them to make ourselves look good really.

[Pause]

Mark Ok, so tell me about rights and wrongs in that process

Gemma Um, well, we're in the wrong for buying them, if we know it’s been made in a sweatshop .. cos we know we shouldn't buy it, because those people should be paid more .. so we shouldn’t buy it .. but then, retailers are also in the wrong, because they shouldn’t make so much money on it when they hardly make anything and they do most of the work

Aylish Yeah, it depends what you see as your morals and values .. some people would say that the manufacturers who pay the people in the sweatshops are wrong for paying the minimum wage, but then they'd also say that the retailers are in the wrong for buying them off the manufacturers .. but also then, that we're in the wrong for buying them off the retailers .. but then other people would say well, everybody wants / the manufacturers aren’t in the wrong because they want to make a profit as that's how they're going to go further, and how they're going to get the profit .. and the same with the retailers, that's how they're going to get the money .. and we're not in the wrong for buying them, even because .. because by buying them, it's like, we want them, we need them, and if we've got the money to be able to spend how we want, then we should be able to - it's just conflicts of arguments with different people

Gemma Different stuff that we need .. it's not just stuff that we need

Aylish You'd think if they thought about it, they'd realise that the don't really need it, they just want it

Gemma But then, they think that they do need it, when you're buying it at the time, it feels like you do need it; I do need this - but you actually don't need it .. you don't have to have it, but you want it .. you think you need it to look good.

Mark So tell me a bit more about these people's values

Aylish I think the teenagers, their values are .. they may have their values that they want to help people, but from how we see them in the picture, it looks like their main values might be their friends and the impression that their friends have about them .. and possibly family as well, if they've got brothers and sisters who have it - and they want to look good next to their brothers and sisters, they may go out to buy the clothes / to look good about the people who are surrounding them

Gemma I think they just want to look good in society, to be accepted in society .. so they think they need to buy things
Mark And where does that come from?

Aylish Em, well it can be ... em ... socialisation ... like, you learn from people around you ... if you've got older brothers and sisters

Gemma Or your friends

Aylish Or at school with your friends ... or even the media, you see all these celebrities, who have all these brand labels and you think ... if you've seen them with them ... you think it's what's important, where it really isn't

Mark And what about the other end of this chain

Gemma Probably family, and being able to support themselves so that they can actually, like, live

Aylish Yeah, and getting money to be able to support the people they want - and probably health as well ... any spare money is probably used to make themselves better ... say if they've got sick relatives, they'd probably rather spend the money getting the healthcare for them than on clothes

Gemma We'd probably do that too

Aylish Yeah ... but in our country you don't have to do that ... most of the time / the majority of the time, you get your healthcare for free ... you don't have to pay for treatments unless in a drastic case.

Mark Ok, and what about the people in the middle, the companies?

Gemma To get as much profit as they can

Aylish Money, yeah

Mark And that's...

Aylish Well, that's what you get the impression of immediately, they probably do hold other values as well

Gemma Cos they're still people

Aylish But from what we get the impression of them, money seems to be the main motive

Mark How do you think the companies think about these people?

Aylish They probably don't ... I think they see them as ...

Gemma Ways to get more money

Aylish Money, yeah ... they know that they can

Gemma Exploit them

Aylish Exploit them, yeah and get the money off them, they only have to pay a little bit because the government doesn't have any laws

Gemma They don't do anything to stop it

Aylish They know they have to pay them, otherwise they're not going to get anybody to do it for them - but they'd rather pay the bare minimum, say, so that their profit is larger

Mark So ... should we stop buying these products?

Gemma Well I think that ... if noone ... if everyone paid people fairly, you'd get used to paying more and it wouldn't be, like, a big deal - but because there are things that cost less and things that cost more ... you're gonna go for the things that cost less.

Aylish On a basic level, we should stop buying it because ... if we stop buying them, then they're going to have better lives if we buy things that are going to help them more ... but deeper, we can't ... or ... its difficult to stop buying it because we're not getting the things / well, not necessarily - in some cases we're not getting what we need - like certain foods we're not getting what we needs, cos they're very very difficult to come by. But we really should do

[Pause]

Gemma The melting ice-caps in this one, with the polar bears with that one the factories

Aylish The factories burn certain fossil fuels which comes from the trees on this one, which creates pollution such as carbon dioxide and sulphur

Gemma Oxide, is it?
Aylish: I think so
Gemma: Yeah, from chemistry; creates acid rain
Aylish: Yeah, and then the carbon dioxide creates global warming, it creates a layer in the atmosphere
Gemma: The atmosphere
Aylish: Which lets the heat in, but it doesn't let it escape
Gemma: Escape
Aylish: So it's slowly increasing the Earth's average temperature, which causes things such as the ice-caps melting, so the polar bears have less habitat to live, which is
Gemma: Yeah
Aylish: Slowly making them become more and more endangered before they become extinct
Mark: So tell me a bit about the morality of this
Aylish: Right, well … we should stop, we should try and look for
Gemma: Renewable
Aylish: Renewable resources instead of just using the fossil fuels, but people use the fossil fuels because it's easier, and - even though it's not overall cheaper - its cheaper to begin with ... like ... if you have a windfarm, to make a windfarm its very expensive to begin with, it takes a lot of land up and it ... it's not very efficient.
Gemma: Yeah and you have to have a lot of windfarms to match the amount of energy produced by, like, power stations.
Aylish: So the companies would rather...
Gemma: Spend less money
Aylish: Spend less money, produce more energy - then that's more money for them when they sell it on to the consumers ... which is us
Mark: Ok, keep going
Aylish: I think we should recycle more
Gemma: That's what we do, we reuse our carrier bags
Aylish: And other companies, like, ASDA, you can't just have the carrier bags any more, you have to buy bags that can be reused again ... but we should think about it and we should try and recycle more ... people are just going for convenience; buy things and throw it in the bin - because its easier and people want to just get things done quickly ... they don't think about things and how they affect the environment, even though they see things like the ice-caps melting on TV - you don't think about it affecting your life daily.
Mark: Ok, and why's that?
Aylish: Again, it's because ... even though we worry about it ... and it's all over the news
Gemma: You think about things now, rather than things as they're going to happen in the future.
Aylish: And because you think its not going to affect our lives daily, you don't think about future generations to come - what we do today is going to affect them ... yeah ... um ... and we should think about things ... like ... we should switch lights off when we're not using them and ... because its affecting the global warming, but you don't think about it ... you walk out the room, and you're generally thinking about what you're doing and what you want to do, rather than ... I mean, its not hard to switch off the light ... you just forget and ... like ... you just become complacent ... like ... because we can afford the electricity and the energy, we just, like, automatically leave it on - it doesn't matter to us, but it does matter to us because its affecting the world we live in
Mark: Ok. Anything else
Aylish: Um, yeah - like ... these trees that are being cut down - that's affecting the environment and the habitat of certain species which, um ... And also polar bears, they're losing their environment and their habitat because we're then using these trees that are being cut down, em, and we're burning them, which creates global warming, which ... is destroying their habitat.
Gemma: Yeah, and by cutting down the trees, we're destroying other habitats as well, cos animals live in the trees.

Aylish: Yeah because other countries don't have it... like... trying to produce it... new power plants every few seconds - every three seconds or something... and the increasing population - as our population increases, we need more resources, which is why more pollution is created as we needed more energy, which makes the, um, ice caps melt quicker... and that could be in this country, as we have big waste plants... and so could the trees... as... it looks like a deciduous forest - so it could just be around the corner really.

Mark: I hope you realise that in the transcription I've now got to spell deciduous.

Aylish: Sorry.

Gemma: DECIDUOUS.

Aylish: CIDUOUS.

[Pause]

Mark: Ok... do you want to move on...

Aylish: Em... these all to do with wars and conflicts in countries... these I would immediately link together... that one (the child soldier) even though its the same theme, its different... these look to do with the current war in Iraq... which... is being fought by US and England against them... this first picture looks like the Al Qaeda bombings / not the bombings... the twin towers... and this... this looks like the people in Iraq burning the American flags... they.

Gemma: They're not happy.

Aylish: They're not happy with the way they've been treated during the war and this looks like the soldiers.

Gemma: The troops.

Aylish: In Iraq, in the streets... and there's the civilians in the streets that its effecting their day-to-day lives... and then this little boy, it looks like one of Africa where possibly there's civil wars where the gangs take the children from the villages to... enrol them, to train them up as soldiers... as... they aren't as hesitant to do it as they don't know what they're doing.

[Pause]

Mark: Ok, go on.

Aylish: This one is a lot to do with a religion primarily, it's... like... people have said that it's the Muslims, and now people are saying about we should stereotype all Muslims and check them at the airports when they're coming, more than the Christians and Caucasians and Whites... because that's what they've done... well [nervous giggle]... but... em... then the Muslims are saying that... em... its very stereotypical and that it's not what their religion stands for... it's just the extremists who take it to this level... and that people now use the word Jihad context.

Gemma: Yeah, to what it actually means.

Aylish: It's meant to be a great struggle, which... in their language is against committing the sins that they know they shouldn't commit... but people have taken it to mean a war against... English and America.

Gemma: England and America.

Aylish: Christians and... these people... even though we went to stop the dictator in their country, which is why we've still got the troops there... like Saddam Hussein... on crimes against his country... and... these people, who are burning the American flag... even though the US did help get rid of him, they've not helped in a way that they can get back the lives that they wanted to have.

Gemma: Cos they've like, started a big war and... there's fighting in the streets where they live... and... innocent people are getting killed... so... like... some of their own family could have died... because of the US.

Aylish: And they're just civilians who, like, have died... even though there's soldiers from our country have gone to fight, it doesn't directly affect the lives of us - even though people do know people who are fighting in Iraq... um... it's like... houses have been bombed there... we've not been affected in that way here.

Gemma: Um, yeah, not everyone's affected... in the US... whereas... everyone in Iraq is.

Aylish: And it borders between political and religious... like... people in our country campaigned against Britain going to help America, cos we weren't the ones being affected by it... but... then... people have said that...
em ... Britain only went because they didn't want to fall out with America ... as America is such a powerful country - its better to be on their side than to say no, we don't want to help you

Mark And what do you think?

Aylish I ... don't like ... I don't think we should have done the Iraq war ... I understand why we went to do it, but I don't think we should have stayed so long and handled it in the same way ... Like, you just don't know who to trust - they say that they need to invade to /

Gemma Cos of the weapons of mass destruction

Mark Who's 'they'?

Gemma The Americans ... The government.

Aylish But then some people say its all about the oil ... 

Gemma But there weren't actually ... they didn't actually find any there ... cos the EU checked, they went and didn't find any - but we still went

Aylish Well I think its all about religion anyway

Gemma about people believing different things ... cos like the Muslims say ... em ... well Iraq is their home /

Aylish But Bush is like, reaaallly Christian - so they're as bad.

Aylish and its probably .. and we have helped in a way, cos we've got rid of Saddam Hussein, but that happened ... a long time ago ... and they've got a new government in now that are ... I don't think ... its bad like that, cos we've helped them, and we've controlled them - so it should really be the new governments position to help route it out

Gemma Yeah, to help regenerate the country ... [pause] ... and they killed Saddam

Aylish We watched about it on the telly and ... like ... we were all shocked

Gemma We were all talking about it the next day ... like ... I think capital punishment is right, but /

Aylish I don't - we're always having debates about it

Mark Really? So are these things that you talk about amongst your friends...

Aylish Um ... yes and no ... I mean, we're not, like always talking about it - but if we see something on the news that's, like, dramatic or something, then we'll all be talking about it before lessons in the morning.

Gemma Yeah, you were really into it

Aylish Cos like, I'm really against capital punishment.

Gemma Yeah, you get really wound up about it when people talk about it in the common room.

Mark So the common room is a hotbed of political debate...

Aylish But most of the time I'm not like that /

Gemma Yeah ... you're um not always like 'no to capital punishment!' [giggles]

Aylish Most people are like ... just normal ... you hang out with your friends and that.

Gemma And all the blah blah blah in politics just washes over you
Appendix E: An Illustrative Page of Coded Data

Quasim: They make clothes ... or it could be fake clothes
Josh: They make, like, fake merchandise
Quasim: Cos some countries sell fake clothes, fake stuff like Nike and stuff
Josh: Cos if it was a proper thing, they'd be working in ... like ... better conditions
Mark: What do you mean by proper thing?
Josh: If it was, like, a proper Nike company, they'd be working in a proper factory with, like, bathrooms and toilets and things like that.
Mark: So who do you think runs this? What kind of person?
Quasim: Quite rich
Josh: It could be a criminal
Quasim: Probably from the same country, but a richer ... background
Quasim: You've got kids there.
Josh: It looks like ... I bet they get paid, like, quite less. It's just, like, the same as the other picture, because ... they're making stuff but they're probably not going to get paid that much
Quasim: Because ... it might be because all of their family works there and there might be no-one to look after them ... or they could be forced into working there.
Josh: The country's law might saw that kids can work or somet
Mark: Anything else...
Quasim: The kids might be there to help out so that /
Josh: They might be little, like - not slaves - but doing the more rubbish jobs like cleaning the floor or somet
Quasim: Or giving out the tea or something.
Mark: And what were you going to say?
Josh: I was going to say that they might be there to help out - and still get paid, but a bit, to bring extra money to the house.
Quasim: Because ... it might be because all of their family works there and there might be no-one to look after them ... or they could be forced into working there
Mark: And one last question on this picture ... again, do you think that there are any ways in which people in this country might affect those people's lives?
Josh: No ... cos you don't really get fake clothes over here like ...
Quasim: What about Longsight market and stuff?

28 It is difficult to represent all of the coding stored in NVivo in a single document – here, I have filtered some of the codes in order to demonstrate their layering.