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# Child on Child Killing: Societal and Legal Similarities and Dissimiliarities 1840-1890 and 1950-2000

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# CHILD ON CHILD KILLING: SOCIETAL AND LEGAL SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES; 1840-1890 AND 1950-2000

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## Abstract

This thesis contributes to research regarding social perceptions and legal responses to child criminality. It challenges existing preconceptions regarding the predictability of moral panic in such cases and the social perceptions of, and legal responses to, acts of child on child killing. It also challenges the efficacy of the moral panic model in successfully explicating the rise of moral panic. An in-depth study of two case examples, the Bulger case 1993 and the Burgess case 1861 is undertaken through the theoretical framework of the moral panic model. In order to establish conceptualisations of children at the time they are subsumed within the model an examination of the place of the child in socio-legal, criminological and historical discourse is undertaken to ascertain the dominant ideologies upon which the model has drawn. Resultantly, the rhetoric which has emerged from contemporary understandings of childhood, child victimisation and the child as threat is seen to fundamentally impact upon social receptions and legal responses to incidences of child on child killing. By undertaking a cross-historical interdisciplinary study this thesis addresses social and legal facets commonly overlooked in strict applications of moral panic theory. In doing such it allows episodes of child on child killing that have not resulted in moral panic to be explained in light of the social and legal factors that have contributed to this non-emergence, rather than dismissing non-emergence on the grounds of press disinterest or ineffective mobilisation of the moral panic model. The thesis then establishes that those factors the moral panic model is too rigid to accommodate: constructions of childhood, sentencing rationales and excusatory and justificatory rhetoric are those which ultimately dictate whether an incident of child on child killing will result in moral panic.

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## Introduction

There has been overwhelming public interest in acts of homicide, particularly the killing of a child when it has been a child who has also committed the act. The child who kills another child has raised a particular set of social and legal problems as the figure of the child has been one of the most powerful symbols of the modern age. The value of the terminology of child has meant it has come to represent not just a life stage, but also to carry symbolic significance, and as such children have been used to define the boundaries of both good and evil. In the child on child killing example both victim and perpetrator have been socially understood as 'inherently' innocent children and whilst the child victim has had his or her innocence confirmed through the act of murder the child perpetrator has presented a confused figure, being deemed capable of attaining adult reasoning for legal purposes yet being socially retained as a child with all the attendant connotations this carries.

It has therefore been recognised that challenges made to the space of childhood, particularly those by children, have been sensational, provoking significant public and print press interest. When these responses have been extreme, resulting in fevered press interest, moral outrage and commonly legislative change, they have been explicated by reference to the moral panic model. This thesis then seeks to address the paradigm of child on child killing, an act that by the nature of the actors has challenged both the textual and moral boundaries of childhood, through the moral panic model.

Although child on child killing has been a relatively rare occurrence particular cases have attracted unprecedented measures of press publicity and these cases have been primarily responsible for shaping social perceptions and legal responses to child on child killing. Such instances have been widely publicised as unique, not so much because they can be said to be unrepresentative of typical child criminality but because of the way they have been subjected to public and press scrutiny.

In the modern era the terminology of moral panic has been rife in press narratives and public debate concerning the 1993 murder of 2-year-old James Bulger by two

10-year-old boys. That society had viewed itself in a state of moral panic in the aftermath of the Bulger murder is clear. This emotive response may be considered predictable given the sensational media coverage given over to the perceived novelty of the case, the age of the offenders and the viciousness of the act. However, the 1861 vicious killing of 2-year-old George Burgess by two child offenders, an incident which was equally subject to press interest, did not evidence a moral panic despite the extensive and heightened print press debate of the case. Thus, to consider moral panic a predictable response to child on child killing is to misunderstand the historically mutability of what it is to be, and how the public and print press regard, children and childhoods, particularly the deviant child.

This thesis then seeks to challenge the assertion that moral panic is predictable in response to sensational cases of child on child killing. This is achieved through an examination of similarities and dissimilarities in the legal treatment and societal reception of child on child killing, by virtue of a case study based qualitative examination of identified examples across the periods 1840-1890 and 1950-2000. By utilising primary material, contemporary commentary, print press reporting and discourses from historical, criminological and legal disciplines a fuller picture of the structures and influences upon the emergence of moral panic in the field on child on child killing is to be acknowledged and contextualised.

## Thesis Aims

The core aim of the thesis has been to:

> assess societal and legal similarities and dissimilarities in the treatment and reception of child on child killing in the cross-historical context and place such within the moral panic paradigm to advance an understanding of the interaction between social perceptions, legal responses and the emergence of moral panic.

A central question for this thesis is then why a moral panic may arise from one case of child on child killing and not another. The moral panic model is used as a framework for an examination of print press presentations of cases, a process which necessitates some examination of the efficacy of the moral panic model in explaining the emergence or non-emergence of panic. Social and legal perceptions are implicitly imported into this model by its nature. However, the thesis aim

necessitates a broader consideration of social and legal backdrops in order to identify and address those historically mutable constructions imported into the moral panic model.

One issue must be raised at this point in relation to the thesis terminology of 'child on child killing'. The original aim of the thesis was an examination child on child murder through the moral panic model. However, the terminology of child on child killing has been used here instead in order to address incidences of murder and manslaughter due to two factors. Firstly, given the impact of the *doli incapax* doctrine children may be convicted of manslaughter when the indictment charge had been murder. Moreover, the success or failure of this doctrine has rested upon historical understandings of what it is to be a child, particularly a deviant child in the research periods, and to disregard manslaughter cases would be to disregard the mutable conceptualisation of childhood. Secondly, the availability of a defence may reduce a charge of murder to voluntary manslaughter, although such defences are outside the scope of this research. Homicide has then been disregarded as appropriate terminology, as such would suggest that the research embraces convictions for involuntary manslaughter.

The wider aims of the thesis have been broken down into a set of interrelated research aims and the following research aims then establish both the perimeters of the research and the explicit functions of the chapters. Firstly, the thesis seeks to articulate who the child is for the purposes of the research through the child's symbolic, social and legal construction. Secondly, these symbolic, social and legal constructions of the child are placed within their historical context to ensure an understanding of the historical mutability of the constructions of childhood and child criminality. Thirdly, the thesis seeks to address the place and presentation of the child in media narratives. Fourthly, the research will articulate and apply moral panic theory within and across the research periods to determine its efficacy in an understanding of legal and societal reaction to children as victims and as threats. Fifthly, it will note change or stability in conceptualisations of childhood in light of these perceptions and reactions. Sixthly, the thesis seeks to address child on child killing case examples through the moral panic model. Seventhly, in light of these contextual frameworks established, the thesis will assess societal and legal similarities and dissimilarities in the treatment and reception of child on child killing in the cross-historical context. Eighthly, the thesis will examine the importance of historical context through factors 'extraneous' to, but impacting upon, the moral

panic model. Finally, the thesis will address the efficacy of the moral panic model in effectively advancing an understanding of the interaction between social perceptions and legal responses in this field.

These research aims are addressed through a progressive and interrelated methodology, and in order to address the killing of children by children two theoretical strands must firstly be addressed. Firstly, the object of the research must be recognised. Thus chapters one, two and three establish the social and legal conceptualisations of children in the research periods. Building upon these conceptualisations of childhood as homogenous groupings chapters two and three also address theoretical conceptualisations of ideal and deviant childhoods in order to establish the conceptual framework for the research.

Secondly, the moral panic model, the theoretical framework into which the child will be placed, will be addressed. This framework provides the theoretical basis for both the contextualisation of the child as victim and as threat and the specific case examples of child on child killing. The discussion then moves forward to place these constructed children within the moral panic model in order to explicate social perceptions and legal responses to criminality by and against the child.

Finally, the case exemplars of child of child killing are appraised through this established framework. The moral panic model is used as a theoretical framework in order to trace the progression of child on child killing through its print press presentations. The conceptual framework for the research, the social and legal presentations of childhood, is implicitly drawn upon in this process. These social and legal factors will also be explicitly addressed as factors extraneous to the moral panic model in an examination of the emergence of moral panic and the efficacy of the moral panic model in advancing an understanding of the interaction between social perceptions, legal responses in the emergence of moral panic.

## Relationship with Existing Literature

Child on child killing, a socially visible crime in the modern day, has attracted little academic commentary.[2] Popular 'true crime' texts have exploited modern day

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2 For three notable exceptions see the work of Franklin and Petley, regarding the newspaper reportage of the Bulger case, Hay for an assessment of the panic raised by such and James and Jenks discussion of the eviction of Thompson and Venables from the conceptual class of childhood. B. Franklin, and J. Petley, 'Killing the age of innocence: newspaper reporting of the death of James Bulger' in J Pilcher and S

cases[3] however, outside of academic commentary on the James Bulger case, little attempt has been made to contextualise child on child killing in the cross-historical field.[4] Consequently there are no direct narratives upon which the research will be drawing, but a solid framework of socio-cultural, legal and historical discourse will provide the grounding for the fundamental issues underpinning the research.

In the field of socio-historical discourses of the child and childhoods Aries, Hendrick, Coveney and Gittin[5] provide a sound theoretical basis for the examination of childhood in its individual parts, both for comparison and critique. Particular credence will be given to Hendrick in his conceptualisation of the Victorian child, particularly in terms of the overlap between narratives of victim and threat and how, or whether, this analysis has translated into the modern period.[6]

Studies of the presentations of specific groups and their impacts upon criminality in socio-legal historiography also inform the thesis. The field of youth and criminality has been comprehensively addressed by Shore, Muncie and Hendrick[7] and particular forms of child victimology, including child abuse, paedophilia, infanticide and baby farming,[8] have attracted a wealth of research. In the modern period

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Wagg (eds.) *Thatcher's Children: Politics, Childhood and Society in the 1980s and 1990s* (Falmer, 1996); C. Hay, 'Mobilisation Through Interpellation: James Bulger, Juvenile Crime and the Construction of a Moral Panic' *Social and Legal Studies* 1995) 4(2) pp. 197-223; A. James, and C. Jenks, 'Public Perceptions of Childhood Criminality' *British Journal of Sociology* 1996) 47(2) pp.315-33

3 For example G. Sereny, *Cries Unheard: The Story of Mary Bell* (Papermac, 1999); Muriel Gardiner, *The Deadly Innocents: Portraits of Children Who Kill* (Hogarth Press, 1977); F Jones, *Murderous Innocents: True Stories of Children Who Kill* (Headline, 1994 )

4 Child on child killing has attracted some interest through European comparisons, explored in P. Cavidino, (ed.) *Children Who Kill; An Examination of the Treatment of Juveniles who Kill in Different European Countries* (Waterside in association with the British Juvenile and Family Courts Society, 1996)

5 P. Aries, *Centuries of Childhood* (Vintage Books, 1962); H. Hendrick *Children, Childhood, and English Society, 1880-1990* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); P. Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A study of the theme in English literature* (Penguin, 1967); D Gittin, *The Child in Question* (Macmillan, 1998)

6 H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England, 1872–1989* (Routledge,1994) pp.7-11

7 For example H. Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 1999); H. Shore, 'Home, play and street life: Causes of, and Explanations for, Juvenile Crime in the Early Nineteenth Century' in A. Fletcher, and S. Hussey, (eds.) *Childhood in Question* (Manchester University Press, 1999); H. Shore, '"Inventing" the Juvenile Delinquent in Nineteenth Century Europe' in B.Godfrey, C. Emsley, and G. Dunstall, (eds.) *Comparative Histories of Crime* (Willan, 2003); J. Muncie, *Youth and Crime: A Critical Introduction* (Sage, 2004); J. Muncie, M. Hughes, and McLaughlin (eds.) *Youth Justice; Critical Readings* (Sage, 2006); Hendrick, *Children*.

8 Hendrick, *Child Welfare*; C. Critcher, 'Media, Government and Moral Panic: the politics of paedophilia in Britain 2000–1' *Journalism Studies* 2002) 3(4) pp. 521–35; C. Critcher *Moral Panics and the Media* (Open University Press, 2003); A. Higginbotham, "Sin of the Age' Infanticide and Illegitimacy in Victorian London' *Victorian Studies* 1989) 32(3) pp. 319-37; L. Rose, *The Massacre of the Innocents: Infanticide in Britain 1800-1939* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); for a study of infanticide in the late Victorian period see C. Dyhouse, 'Working-Class Mothers and Infant Mortality in England, 1895-1914' *Journal of Social History* 1978) 12(2) pp. 248-67; D. Bentley, D. 'She-Butchers: Bay- Droppers, Baby- Sweaters and Baby-

child/youth delinquency has again attracted a great deal of popular commentary and historical parallels have been drawn in order to support the assertion that child/youth criminality is not a modern phenomenon.[9] However, by typically contextualising child criminality as a facet of youth delinquency this commentary has been lacking in any cohesive assessment of the criminal child in socio-legal narratives. By recognising that child criminality has typically been contextualised in this way this thesis will evaluate and broaden this field of research. A consideration of children as a specific 'group' through this theoretical framework will allow existing narratives to be taken into account. Furthermore, it will allow for a critique of the assumptions these narratives have brought, specifically that of a clear boundary between innocence and experience in social perceptions of childhood.

The theoretical framework for the thesis, the moral panic, has been a sociological construct subject to significant examination. Here the dominant model will be taken as Cohen's moral panic model,[10] with the work of the later theorists particularly those of Hunt,[11] Critcher[12] and Kitzinger,[13] considered in order to update the model. The work of Hay regarding the emergence of moral panic in the wake of the murder of James Bulger will also be drawn upon to address those socio-cultural facets that are excluded by the case specific structure of Cohen's moral panic model.[14] Hunt's thesis will allow periods of panic to be addressed as possible upsurges in real social concern and Kitzinger's work in the field of the media will be used to illustrate the power of prior social concerns to print press reporting and the emergence of moral panic.

## Methodology

### *The Moral Panic Model*

Preliminary research has established that the child on child killer has differed in his/her societal reception in the research periods, with national panic arising in certain incidences, yet no panic evidenced in factually similar cases. The theoretical

Farmers in J. Rowbotham, and K. Stevenson, (eds.) *Criminal Conversations: Victorian Crimes, Social Panic and Moral Outrage* (University of Ohio Press, 2004)
9 See comments by Franklin and Petley regarding the James Bulger case and its precursor the Mary Bell case. Franklin, and Petley, 'Killing the age of innocence'
10 S. Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (Routledge, 2002)
11 A. Hunt, *Governing Morals: A social history of moral regulation* (Cambridge University Press, 1999)
12 Critcher, *Moral Panics*
13 J. Kitzinger, J. 'Media Templates: Patterns of Association and the (Re) Construction of Meaning over Time' [The Cleveland and Orkney sexual abuse intervention scandals] *Media, Culture and Society* 2000) 22(1) pp. 64-84
14 Hay, 'Mobilisation Through Interpellation'

framework of the moral panic model has therefore been chosen to explicate this divergence and to seek to revise and redefine the moral panic paradigm in light of case examples of child on child killing.

This thesis takes the moral panic model as its primary theoretical framework, and looks, in particular, to the classic Cohen model, for a number of reasons. Essentially, it is difficult to get away from the model as the examples utilised in this thesis have commonly been viewed by theorists through the lens of moral panic and consequently, it was felt to be important to explore it as a key element in the interpretation of the research into both the Victorian and the modern eras.

Moral panic was a term introduced into criminological theory by Young in his work *The Drugtakers* to explain and contextualise how social agents, particularly the media, took discrete periods of social concern and distorted and amplified these concerns to 'create' a moral panic.[15] Young suggested deviancy amplification occurs when a normal condition becomes labelled as something more invasive, a process that comes about through increased attention by the media, attention which in turn leads to increased arrests and the public perception that a condition (in Young's study marijuana use) is out of control. Consequently the moral boundaries of society become challenged and the deviants become a homogenous mass against which social distaste and ultimately panic is directed. Stanley Cohen took this model further in his seminal text *Folk Devils and Moral Panic* and outlined a number of interrelated processes through which a 'condition, episode, person or group of persons' moves to become defined as a threat to social interests.[16] The moral panic model has thus commonly been used in modern day narratives to conceptualise social anxiety concerning child criminality and responses to the child as a victim and as a threat.[17]

By setting out the features or stages which define a moral panic, those elements which coalesce to render a condition apposite to panic, moral panic discourse therefore presents an effective interdisciplinary framework through which to explicate social and legal responses in this cross historical field. The moral panic model demands recognition of individual features which may render a 'condition,

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15 J. Young, *The Drug Takers* (Paladin, 1971)
16 Cohen, *Folk Devils,* p. 1
17 Addressed in detail at chapters five and six.

episode, person, or group of persons'[18] a threat, but also fundamentally recognises that these features are relational. Of particular value to this field of research is the moral panic paradigms efficiency in interdisciplinary research, as social reactions and legislative responses to child criminality cannot be understood to operate outside the broader social and historical schemata. By utilising theoretical concepts set out by the moral panic theorists these social and legal strands that have come together to render child on child killing a subject of a moral panic can be unravelled.[19] Consequently, by placing case examples of the child on child killing into the moral panic paradigm there is an opportunity to effect a deeper examination of both the efficacy of the moral panic paradigm and to enhance an understanding of the complex social perceptions and legal responses in the field.

### *Cohen's Model*

As a theoretical concept moral panic has been the subject of considerable adaptation and debate over its features and processes. However, when theorists speak of moral panic they are invariably citing the Cohen example and this provides a clear theoretical framework for the thesis. The language and concepts of moral panic, particularly in the Cohen sense, have been readily utilised by the press and commentators concerning the child of the modern and Victorian era. The moral panic model chosen to provide the framework for the research then comes from the work of Cohen. This model has been chosen to provide the framework for the research as Cohen's work has been that to which theorists have primarily turned in seeking to locate and explicate periods of moral panic. The models particular benefit is that it provides a process by which terminologies, particularly by way of stereotyping, social and media preconceptions and legislative responses can be taken into account in a clear, if not altogether linear, model. While this method of analysing concern through stage progression has opened the model up to criticism by scholarship from many disciplines it has provided a very clear way of both unravelling a number of discourses. Crucially, given the central aim of this research, the moral panic has also been the primary tool used by theorists in assessing how the media has drawn upon social norms and social fears in presenting 'stories' to its audience.

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18 Cohen, *Folk Devils,* p.1
19 The manner in which the moral panic theory is of particular use to childhood research is set out at chapter three.

The limitations of Cohen's model have spawned a number of alternative models and processes by which a social concern may come to emerge or be defined as a moral panic. Notably Goode and Ben Yehuda have suggested an alternative to linear modelling through their attributional theory in which a moral panic is a condition which bears the hallmarks outlined in their study (and expressed at chapter four).[20] This approach has not been adopted as the primary methodology as it negates an examination of stages and processes through which a condition may pass, a facet integral to understanding how constructions of childhood and historical periods of concern impact upon how a condition is orientated through the print press.

Risk society analysis was also considered at the inception of the research as a lens through which to view periods of social concern. However the classical form of risk analysis, from the work of Beck, is concerned primarily with scientific risk and resolution.[21] Although Mary Douglas has extended risk society into the cultural, arguing risk is a process that has established cultural boundaries, with dangerous individual groups or activities posing risks to society or community, this approach was disregarded as the body of research upon which this thesis was built already stretched across a number of disciplines.[22] To embark upon translating an untested thesis (in terms of juvenile criminality) into this interdisciplinary approach would have taken the emphasis away from the looking at the primary research question and into an examination of adapting this methodology for this use.

While alternatives to Cohen's model have then been suggested the primary motivation behind modern critiques of Cohen's model by criminologists has hinged upon those discourses he left unexplored such as the modern multimedia environment,[23] social constructionism,[24] risk society[25] and the sensitive ideological frameworks that underpin social and media responses.[26] Clearly these omissions are, as theorists have asserted, problematic in terms of the models application if the model is taken as a definitive paradigm through which to explicate all social concern. This is not the case here as the thesis draws upon complementary studies in order to bring Cohen's model up to date. Cohen's model has been adaptable, as modern

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20 E. Goode, and N. Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Blackwell, 1994)
21 U. Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (Sage,1992)
22  M. Douglas, *Risk And Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory* (Routledge, 1992)
23 A. McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (Routledge, 1994)
24 P. Jenkins, *Intimate Enemies; Moral panics in Contemporary Great Britain* (Aldine de Gruyter, 1992)
25 S. Ungar, 'Moral panic versus the risk society: the implications of the changing sites of social anxiety' *British Journal of Sociology* 2001) 52(2) pp.271-92
26 S. Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, Aids and the Media* (Methuen, 1987); S. Watney, *Practices of Freedom: Selected Writings on HIV/AIDS* (Rivers Oram Press,1994)

theorists have illustrated that Cohen's model provides a framework for deeper analysis.[27] More, both lawyers and historians still look primarily to Cohen's model of moral panic theory when invoking moral panic theory. Theorists such as Jewkes, Thompson and Critcher have taken Cohen's model as the archetypal moral panic model.[28] Although these theorists have critiqued some aspects of Cohen's methodology, his model has continued to provide a sound framework for analysis, subject to the adaptations outlined at chapter four. It is also recognised here that to generalise from proclamations of moral panic in the print press would be to both ignore moderate societal reactions, and impart too much importance into the emotive language of individual reports. So to speak of moral panic in every case that has utilised the terminology may be misleading. Modern narratives, specifically Hunt's, then provide a basis for examination of child on child killing by way of societal concern. As Gary Moses work also shows, it can reveal the local roots of panics, and suggest why some local incidents do, and others do not, achieve a national prominence in terms of national alarm.[29] The ability to address such is integral when case examples are being examined that may not raise a moral panic.

## Cross Historical Comparison

The periods chosen for comparison, 1840-1890 and 1950-2000, are those which present suitable case examples and a historical time frame in which the socio-economic change and the legal system can be effectively viewed. A suitable portion of time on either side of the case examples has been chosen to contextualise these periods in order to demonstrate sound understanding of the way the legal system is functioning at the time and the way in which contemporary society understands these structures and the societal construction of the child and childhood. The primary cases upon which the thesis is built, that of the killing of George Burgess in 1861 and the factually comparative case of the killing of James Bulger in 1993, provided the initial time span, augmented by further case examples as the research expanded. For these purposes the time span 1840-1890 and 1950-2000 has been delineated, although earlier and later cases examples may be utilised for comparative purposes.

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27 This is illustrated at chapter four by way of the revisions that theorists have made to the Cohen model and applied at chapter seven, eight, nine and ten.

28 Y. Jewkes, *Media and Crime* (Sage 2004); K. Thompson, *Moral Panics* (Routledge 1998); Critcher, *Moral Panics.*

29 G. Moses, 'Religion, Rural Society, and Moral Panic in Mid-Victorian England' in Rowbotham, and Stevenson (eds.) *Criminal Conversations*:.

### Case Study Approach

A qualitative rather than quantitative approach, which does not attempt to look at every incidence of murder, allows apposite cases from both time periods to be used as representative samples. As this is not a statistical enquiry the exclusion of cases is formed upon the basis of the way in which the cases were handled, not only by legal processes but also by the press. Thus, those cases which have not attracted significant print press commentary have not been explored in detail; however, they have been used to advance an understanding of the processes which have rendered cases newsworthy.

### Press Mediums

The press medium upon which social concern will be primarily based in this research is *The Times*, recognised as the primary mouthpiece of the Victorian period and an influential vehicle today. Further, the national availability of *The Times* has lent it a position as a primary resource material, readily utilised in socio-cultural and criminological research.[30] Other national newspapers have been considered to support *The Times*, primarily the *News of the World,* the *Independent,* the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail*. The provincial press has also been utilised as examples of popular press vehicles in both periods.

The print press has been chosen as primary source material as it is under utilised as a primary resource. The role of the print press in disseminating and/or influencing socio-cultural perceptions provides a contemporary resource comparable across the time periods, providing greater insight into the impact of socio-legal changes that have governed the concepts of children and childhoods. This thesis then exploits this primary resource to build comprehensive interdisciplinary constructions of both childhoods and child on child killings. The theoretical framework for the research, Cohen's moral panic model, was also crafted through reliance upon the print press. Thus, while the concepts integral to moral panic theory may translate into the multi media field this is not a tested methodology, and unanticipated problems are avoided by preserving this print press focus.

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30 For example, in the criminological field, see the work drawn upon in this thesis regarding the print press selection of cases in K. Soothill, M. Peelo, B. Francis, J. Pearson, J. and E. Ackerley, 'Homicide and The Media: Identifying The Top Cases In The Times' *Howard Journal* 2002) (41)5 pp. 401-21. In the field of socio-historical criminology see the essays within the *Criminal Conversations* text, many of which draw upon *The Times* as a primary source.

### *Interdisiplinarity*

The primary aim of the thesis demands an examination of social perceptions and legal responses to child on child killing in the interdisciplinary environment. Thus, the resources drawn upon come from the fields of law, history, sociology, criminology and literature. It is asserted here that undertaking an interdisciplinary study in this field will promote a greater understanding and appreciation of the situational variables and limitations imposed by singular discipline research. Hence the presupposition in texts including Hendrick's *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880-1990* is that they are social history texts, while Coveney's *The Image of Childhood* as commentary upon literature is conceptualised as commentary upon literature and Postman's *The Disappearance of Childhood* as media research.[31] However, each text borrows terminologies, themes and commentary from one another, and shares common narratives with legal and historical disciplines. To compartmentalise these texts as singular disciplines is to suggest that the theme of childhood and its features are advanced from a defined perspective, not that complimentary perspectives are overlooked or ignored. However, such a singular discipline approach rather negates an overt examination and understanding of the impact of these disciplines upon an understanding of the relationship between social, media and legal spheres. This thesis then attempts to surmount this approach by drawing upon legal, historical, sociological and criminological texts, contextualising them within the moral panic model, an overtly media/criminological construct.

## Originality of Methodology

The originality of the research methodology lies in this overt interdisciplinary approach, primarily within the law and history disciplines, but incorporating interdisciplinarity where necessary. The importance of this interdisciplinary approach has been recognised in the modern period, both as an adjunct to traditional academic disciplines and as a method of academic study in itself. In terms of this thesis this methodology will allow the child to be studied in context and promote a better understanding of social perceptions upon the legal sphere.

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31 N. Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (Vintage Books, 1994)

Using empirical primary resources driven by qualitative methodology narrows the wide perspective this interdisciplinary approach opens up, and also permits a deeper examination of the primary substantive issues and the fields of study in which the case examples are placed. The significance of the interrelation between law and history in this area are their complementary approaches. Whilst each has, in isolation, important contributions to an understanding of children, childhood and child on child killing, a study that recognises the impact of one cannot be considered without reference to the other to get as full a picture as possible. Situating law into its political and socio-legal setting, with a historical examination of legal ideology and institutions, allows a fuller examination of these primary identified issues. In such, history and law share common research features concerned with the interpretation and analysis of documents, primary resources and narratives in the wider context and the critique of political and social influences upon social historiography.

The theoretical framework for the thesis, the moral panic paradigm, also allows an original approach to the assessment of child criminality. This methodology permits a deeper examination of the efficacy of the moral panic paradigm, and its constraints in terms of historical application. Continuities and discontinuities in social perceptions of, and legal responses to, child on child killing are central to this research and as this thesis relies upon individual case studies, it is important to be able to identify and explicate discrete differences in cases. By addressing these features both individually and as interrelated elements the moral panic paradigm allows for the recognition of these subtle differences in incidences which, in turn, allows for a deeper examination of why panic did, or did not, arise. The moral panic paradigm therefore presents a flexible framework, one which can accommodate a number of entwined narratives.

## Contribution to Existing Knowledge

Prior to this thesis, a cross-historical study of factors which have impacted upon the emergence of moral panic in the field of child on child killing has not been undertaken by researchers.[32] In undertaking a cross-historical analysis of child on child killing this thesis then seeks to fill this gap in addressing the social and legal factors which have led to the emergence, or non-emergence, of moral panic. However, in seeking to address the emergence of moral panic the thesis also challenges the efficacy of the moral panic model. By placing case examples into this framework the print presentations are made explicit and the social and legal ideologies that underpin responses are implicitly raised. However, preliminary research has established that 'extraneous' matters demand further attention in light of the research aim and this thesis then contributes to existing knowledge by addressing the wider social and legal ideologies existing at the time of the child on child killing, those sensitive ideological principles commonly overlooked by a strict application of moral panic theory. In so doing, it will address gaps in the moral panic model and moreover, illustrate the need for a moral panic or social concern to be viewed in its full historical context. While the focus of this thesis is child on child killing the narrative themes that emerge from the print press and the socio-legal backdrop to the cases draw upon discourses regarding the child and criminality in the research periods. Thus, the rationales that will emerge regarding the emergence or non-emergence of the moral panic in the cross historical field will also be pertinent to discussions of lesser forms of child criminality.

## Thesis Structure

### Chapter One: Defining the Child: Symbolism, Boundaries and Phraseology

This addresses the meaning(s) of childhood and the boundaries to such in the research periods. It firstly traces the historical construction of the symbolic child. The purpose of establishing the symbolic characterisation is not to render a 'true'

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32 At its initial stages the research undertaken for the thesis formed part of a journal article regarding the social and legal responses to child on child killing in the cross historical field. A chapter for a text also explored the historical dimension of child on child killing. However, these publications were not concerned with in-depth research regarding the emergence or non-emergence of panic. Rather the emphasis was upon the similarities in cross historical case examples and their narration in the print press. J. Rowbotham, K. Stevenson, and S. Pegg, 'Children of Misfortune: The parallels in the cases of Child Murderers Thompson and Venables, Barratt and Bradley' *Howard Journal* 2003 42 (2) pp.107-22; S. Pegg, 'Murderous Children' in S. D'Cruze, S. Walklate, and S. Pegg, *Murder: Social and Historical Perspectives* (Willan, 2006)

character of the child but rather to set out the dominant symbolic characterisations of children in the research periods. The chapter then establishes societal expectations of what it is to be a child and those expectations which impact upon the moral regulation of the child within the moral panic paradigm.

Secondly, this chapter seeks to establish the boundaries of childhood through 'non-adult' explication: mentality, sexual physiology, chronological age and phraseology. These physical and biological explanations for delineating those within childhood have been historically mutable and based upon, not only physiological development, but social need. This assessment of phraseology will highlight the difficulties inherent in providing an effective description of one within childhood.

**Chapter Two: The Legal and Social Construction of the Child**

This first assess those legal provisions that have sought to officially delineate and defend boundaries to the space of childhood. Concentration here will be upon legislative provision in the criminal realm, through protectionist legislation regulating the child as a victim of sexual criminality and the child as a perpetrator through the rebuttable presumption of *doli incapax*.

The chapter then moves on to place these constructs into two primary ideological states of childhood, the idealised childhood, namely that form of childhood which nurtures and cherishes the 'inherent' characteristics of childhood, and secondly the deviant childhood, the form of childhood suffered by those children outside of the idealistic construction. This discussion then begins to introduce stereotypes and themes regarding innocent and deviant children and childhoods which are contextualised at later chapters.

**Chapter Three: The Media Presentation of the Child: The Child in Literature and the Print Press**

This begins to locate these social and legal constructions of childhood within popular literature and the print press. Firstly, it briefly places those conceptualisations of childhood from chapters one and two into the broader social context through literary presentations. The literary presentation of the child in the Victorian period is addressed here primary through the novel *Oliver Twist*. The modern period is then addressed by reference to a number of texts in order to trace continuities and discontinuities in the literary presentation of the child. The chapter then moves on to introduce the role of the media in presenting the child to wider society. As this issue

is comprehensively addressed at chapters five and six this chapter firstly seeks to establish the dominance of the media in distributing crime narratives. The child will then be brought within this analysis to explicate the oppositional terminology used in the print press in presenting children in crime narratives.

**Chapter Four: Constructing the Moral Panic**

This sets out the theoretical framework for the thesis: the moral panic model, examining the variant 'models' of panic developed by theorists. The emphasis, and the structure of the chapter, is upon the dominant model of moral panic, Cohen's 'processional model', with those models developed by contemporary and later theorists utilised to articulate advantages, limitations, omissions and adaptations to Cohen's model. The chapter concludes with the theoretical framework that will be used for chapters five, six, seven and nine.

**Chapter Five: Press Representations of Children: The Child as Victim in the Moral Panic Model**

This recognises that challenges to the character of the child may have come about as a result of threats directed toward the ideal childhood space. Social concern may, in extreme examples, have resulted in moral panic and shifts in, or the substantiation of, innocent perceptions of children and childhoods. This chapter then seeks to address the child through print press narratives regarding victimisation in the field of private abuse, homicide and public abuse through the theoretical framework established at chapter three. These victimisation narratives clarify both the moral boundaries of society and the regulation of the childhood space that has emerged from periods of panic or social concern. Particular attention will be given to the source of the threat and the justificatory and excusatory rhetoric that has sprung from these victimisation narratives.

**Chapter Six: Press Representations of Children: The Child as Threat in the Moral Panic Model**

This recognises challenges made to both the ideal space of childhood and wider society, and here these threats originate from the child itself. In this chapter the child is appraised as a threat through two related discourses, the child as a member of the dangerous classes and the child as a criminal. This chapter will therefore address episodes of social concern and/or panic in response to the child who has been conceived as a threat. Consequently the chapter charts shifts in, or the substantiation of those conceptualisations of childhood addressed at chapters one,

two and three. As in chapter five, incidences which have not given rise to moral panic will also be addressed and particular emphasis will be given to the reasons for this non-emergence as the chapter draws upon those narratives of child victimisation addressed at chapter five.

### Chapter Seven:  The Bulger Case 1993: The Press Narrative and the Moral Panic Model

This sets out the print press narrative of the murder of 2-year-old James Bulger by two 10-year-old offenders. It goes on to on to place these print press presentations within the moral panic framework set out at chapter four in order to plot the emergence of a moral panic.

### Chapter Eight: The Bulger Case 1993: Testing the Moral Panic Model

This imports the conceptual underpinnings set out chapters one, two and three, and the conclusions reached regarding the conceptualisations of children as victims and as threats, into an appraisal of the social perceptions and legal responses to the murder of James Bulger.  The chapter therefore sets out to align the constructions of childhood and criminality in the research periods with the moral panic model to explain the emergence of moral panic. The importance of the social and legal conditions which impacted upon the print press presentations, those extraneous factors outside of the moral panic model, will be addressed here in depth to explicate the emergence of moral panic in 1993.

### Chapter Nine: The Burgess Case 1861: The Press Narrative and the Moral Panic Model

This follows the same structure as the previous chapter in placing this historical case example into the moral panic model. The murder of 2-year-old George Burgess by two 9-year-old boys will be set out through the print press reportage. The case will then be appraised through the moral panic model in order to address the non-emergence of moral panic.

### Chapter Ten: The Burgess Case 1861: Testing the Moral Panic Model

This  follows the same structure as chapter eight in aligning the moral panic model with the social and legal backdrop in an appraisal of the non-emergence of panic in 1861. This chapter draws upon chapters five and six in illustrating how the dominant discourses and print press rhetoric of the Victorian period avoided a moral panic in this case.

**Chapter Eleven: The Moral Panic Paradigm: Constructs of the Child on Child Killing, the Bulger Case, 1993 and the Burgess case, 1861 – Conclusions**

This narrates the conclusions for chapters seven, eight, nine and ten. As the thesis has been undertaken as a cross-historical comparison these conclusions must be read together to effectively highlight the similarities and dissimilarities in social perceptions and legal responses to child on child killing. These are then brought together in this chapter to effectively address the impact of the social constructions of children, childhood, child criminality and the broader social understandings of the criminal justice system upon the emergence or non-emergence of panic in child on child killing cases. In narrating this socio-legal backdrop the chapter also seeks to challenge the efficacy of the moral panic model in effectively contextualising these features.

**Conclusion**

The thesis concludes with an assessment of the rhetoric that has coalesced to create, or dampen, moral panic in response to incidences of child on child killing. The deficiencies of the moral panic model in addressing these discourses and how these can be surmounted are also addressed. The chapter also focuses upon alternative methods of research and offers suggestions for further research in this area in light of the thesis findings.

# Conclusions

This thesis was undertaken in order to explicate social perceptions and legal responses to cross historical examples of child on child killing. However, in order to effect an examination of the social responses the moral panic model has been used as theoretical framework through which to trace the contemporary presentations of child on child killing. The research has thus given rise to two interconnected contributions to knowledge. Firstly, it has offered justifications for the disparate social perceptions of, and legal responses to, incidences of child on child killing. Secondly, it has identified limitations to the moral panic model in this field of research, although as discussed below, it is suggested that these can be surmounted.

This concluding chapter draws out the key themes of the thesis to address how this research has contributed to an understanding of child on child killing and its

explication through the moral panic model. The thesis has not sought to address every incidence of child on child killing, two cases have been addressed in depth here and a number of less sensational incidences have been used to substantiate assertions. The findings here are then not definitive, as an in-depth examination of all cases of child on child killing in the confines of this research would have been impracticable. The research has only sought to be definitive in accomplishing the research aims and the parameters, set out at the introduction, of addressing sensational cases of child on child killing. However, it is suggested here that these findings do also offer wider implications for research regarding both child on child killing and child criminality in the cross historical field.

The following discussion then concludes this thesis by setting out the key themes that have been validated through this research and the contribution this thesis makes to knowledge in the fields of children, child criminality, cross historical research and the moral panic paradigm. Limitations to the research, particularly in terms of the methodology adopted, will also be raised and finally, suggestions for further research in this arena will be considered. This discussion will conclude with a personal reflection upon the effects of the conceptualisations of childhood upon social perceptions of, and legal responses to, child criminality.

## Addressing the Research Objectives

The object of the thesis was to assess societal and legal similarities and dissimilarities in the treatment and reception of child on child killing in the cross-historical context. To successfully explicate similarities and dissimilarities these were placed within the moral panic paradigm in order to advance an understanding of the interaction between social perceptions, legal responses and the emergence of moral panic. The first issue that must be addressed here is whether these objectives have been met.

A summary of the key findings from the conceptual and theoretical frameworks established at chapters one to chapter six will not be undertaken here (specifically research aims one to five set out in the introduction), as this has already been undertaken at chapter eleven. It is sufficient here to address whether the overall objective of the thesis, an understanding of the

interaction between social perceptions, legal responses and the emergence of moral panic in the treatment and reception of child on child killing in the cross-historical context, has been met.

An examination of interactions between social perceptions and legal responses was undertaken in the initial thesis chapters through an examination of the child in society, in legislative provision and in the print press. These were contextualised in light of media presentations of criminality by and against the child at chapters five and six to establish the place of the child in criminal narratives. Particular relevance was afforded here to the media templates that had emerged from periods of social concern and moral panic. Social perceptions and legal responses to specific case examples of child on child killing were then traced through the moral panic model at chapters seven and nine.

Chapters seven and nine clearly illustrated that the print press had presented these child offenders, and the acts perpetrated by them, in terms that clearly reflected Cohen's inventory stage. The acts and the offenders were also oriented in similar terms through homogenous print press presentations and stereotypical terminology and rhetorical frameworks employed to swiftly distinguish the offenders as members of the 'underclass'. However, it was established that tracing this mediation through the moral panic model was insufficient in explicating the dissimilarities in the social receptions and legal responses to these incidences of child on child killing. Chapters eight and ten then imported the conceptual frameworks into the moral panic model to address the social perceptions of children, social norms and legal processes which were too sensitive to be incorporated within the linear moral panic model.

While the moral panic had then been central to charting these print press responses, the thesis has proven that the emergence of moral panic has not rested solely upon press interest in a case and the stereotypical narration of its offenders. The emergence of moral panic is then complex; it is not a process solely attributable to print press mediation of an incident but a

condition that can only be understood by reference to features *external* to the linear model Cohen conceived. Social understandings of children, and particularly child criminality, have been central to understanding similarities and dissimilarities in the treatment and reception of child on child killing. This has advanced an understanding of the interaction between social perceptions and legal responses to child on child killing in three broad ways.

Firstly, it has been established that social perceptions and legal responses to child on child killing are predicated upon the social and legal ideologies in place at the time the incident occurs. These social and legal facets have been mutually reinforcing and children have been seen to be both socially and criminally legislatively regulated. However, surprisingly, this research has demonstrated that social governance has been more significant in shaping print press responses and social reactions to child on child killing than criminal legislative provision. It is suggested here that criminal provisions set to deal with deviant children have had very little influence upon the social responses to these incidences child on child killing. Separate methods of disposition, the *doli incapax* provision and the trial of the offenders in an adult court had provided for recognition of the child as criminal in both periods. However, it was the social ideologies that underpinned these provisions that impacted upon the social reception and print presentation of these offenders, and consequently the emergence, or non-emergence, of moral panic. The socially constructed innocence of modern children has dictated that the child who deviates from the ideal space (through criminality) has breached moral boundaries. These children have then been passed to the criminal justice system, a system which society has had little confidence in to reform the child offender. This evaluation directly conflicts with the Victorian social conception of children as those who may be within a deviant class and malleable once they are passed to the criminal justice system.

Secondly, it has been illustrated that these social ideologies have been heavily influenced by preceding periods of moral panic or social concern. A complex relationship exists between social perceptions of victimisation and deviancy and the creation of print press conceptual frameworks. In accessing

these conceptual frameworks it became evident that contemporary understandings of victimology have been as important in shaping social and legal responses as social constructions of child perpetrators.

Finally, it has been established that the moral panic model does provide insight into how incidences of child on child killing have been mediated, the primarily aim in utilising this methodology. However, the deficiencies of the moral panic model in contextualising the ideological setting has illustrated that further attention must be given to the social and legal landscape to understand how similarities and dissimilarities in social and legal responses have arisen. More specific inferences in the field of child on child killing and moral panic theory have also emerged from this research and these are addressed below.

### *Child on Child Killing*

Firstly, the thesis has established that moral panic is not a predictable response to an incidence of child on child killing. The criminological explanation as to why particular cases (in this thesis, the Bulger case) have become subjects of panic appears to be twofold. Firstly, the child has been rendered an innocent in sociological understandings, a construction supported by the legislative provision that has enforced this 'inherent' innocence. The act of killing has broken down this moral boundary and left the issue of what it is to be a child and the capacity of children for deviancy open to question. Secondly the child on child killing has been *understood* to be a singular occurrence; it has been shocking as it was unexpected.

However, the thesis has illustrated that those cases that have failed to raise panic have been similarly narrated as singular. Thus, it has been demonstrated here that, contrary to claims by researchers and the press, singularity alone has been insufficient to render an incident a subject of moral panic. Where a challenge has not been made to moral boundaries clearly there cannot be mobilisation of moral panic. The central issue to understanding the rise of panic is an understanding of the ideological backdrop that has shaped contemporary understandings of the moral boundaries of childhood and child criminality.

Secondly, the research has substantiated, and extended, Hendrick's assertion that the Victorian lower class child was understood and responded to as both victim and threat. The thesis has taken Hendrick's well founded argument and illustrated the impact this ideology has had upon child on child killing. Thus, it has been illustrated that in the most extreme paradigm of child criminality, the Victorian child, was still approached as a social victim.

Finally, one theme that has come through very clearly regarding the child as threat in the modern period has been the child as one drawn into the narratives of problematised youth. The media drew upon youth narratives in the Bulger case to illustrate the threat posed by the child to society, but juxtapositioned this stereotypical narration against innocent childhood, heightening the emotional and moral impact. This conceptual confusion has been compounded by theorists who have utilised cases of child criminality as exemplars of problematic youth. Hay noted this approach in the media as he discussed juvenile delinquency 'mapped together and 'narrated' under the all-encompassing symbolic cloak' of the Bulger case.[33] In light of this research it can no longer be said that the Bulger panic was strictly one concerning *child* criminality, the focus of concern was the child, but that child class had included those socially understood as youths. This confused narrative had stemmed from the difficulties in effectively delineating the space of childhood, but was exploited by the print press in the Bulger case.

### *The Moral Panic Model*

Social perceptions and legal responses to child on child killing are then predicated upon the dominant social and legal ideologies upon which the print press has been bound to draw, or orient the audience toward, at a given time. This was an approach adopted by Hay in his examination of the mobilisation of concern in the Bulger case.[34] However, this thesis has also demonstrated the efficacy of the addressing the socio-legal backdrop in the historical perspective.

While Cohen's emphasis was upon print press mediation and the manipulation of the audience it has been demonstrated here that the emergence of moral panic has been dependant upon the historical context in which the incident has occurred. The research here drew upon incidents separated by 150 years, but the

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33 Hay, 'Mobilisation Through Interpellation',  p.206
34 *Ibid.*

conceptualisations of childhood (and threats to that space) and the ideological underpinnings to the legal system have continuously been shifting. Thus, it is suggested that any condition which has resulted in moral panic must be carefully appraised in order to address why that panic emerged. The answer to why a moral panic has emerged in this field can no longer be simply attributed to the fact that the print press have given significant attention to a condition, or related it in a stereotypical and homogenous manner. This thesis then supports the need for a more detailed examination of the social and legal backdrop to periods of moral panic, as suggested by theorists, including Watney, Miller and Kitzinger, Hay and Critcher.[35] However, while these theorists, particularly Watney, plus Miller and Kitzinger, have suggested the moral panic model is deficient, in that it cannot account for the sensitive ideologies that have underpinned periods of social concern or social apathy, it is suggested here that the moral panic model can still provide a useful tool.

In light of this thesis it is evident that, where cross historical research is undertaken using the moral panic model, the moral panic methodology is clearly in need of refining in order to effectively address social concerns, particularly failed moral panics. However, it is suggested that this enhancement should not take the form of revision to Cohen's processional stages. While a significant omission from moral panic theory has commonly been understood to be its inability to account for the 'failed moral panic' it has been demonstrated here that the model can effectively deal with the failed panic. As a theoretical tool the moral panic model offers a structured framework through which to address individual elements of conditions that may otherwise be ignored. In the Burgess case the social backdrop to the case and the social understanding of the children of the poor as those deficient in social provision could easily be contextualised within the moral panic model as a method of explaining why the print press had oriented concerns in a particular manner, and how the populous had received such reports. A failed moral panic may then merely be one that has drawn upon discourse which has moderated social concerns. As such, any incident can be explicated through the moral panic in order to draw out the dominant discourses of the period.

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35 S. Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, Aids and the Media* (Methuen, 1987) cited in Critcher, *Moral Panics*, p.41; J. Kitzinger, and D. Miller, 'AIDS, The Policy Process and Moral Panics' in K. Williams, J. Kitzinger, D. Miller and P. Beharrell, *The Circuit of Mass Communication: Media strategies, representation and audience reception in the AIDS Crisis* (Sage, 1998); Hay, 'Mobilisation Through Interpellation; Critcher, *Moral Panics*, pp.41-42

## Issues and Limitations

This thesis required a framework that could draw within it the features of childhood, historical change and print press analysis. The moral panic model was used for this purpose, however it is recognised that this methodology brought its own limitations to research.

Firstly, the moral panic model constrained the research through its linear formulation, addressed at chapter four. The restrictions imposed by the model had, as discussed above, excluded sensitive ideological concepts that were integral to understanding the emergence or non-emergence of moral panic. However, as addressed, this problem was surmounted.

Secondly, by relying solely upon this methodology the research was constrained through the exclusion of other discursive tools, particularly risk society analysis. Risk society analysis was dismissed as appropriate methodology here as the Victorian aspect of the research demanded that the print press was utilised as a primary resource. While risk society analysis may have provided an effective tool for examining responses it does not have the established grounding in media analysis. However, an examination of social responses to child on child killing through risk society analysis would undoubtedly be instructive, particularly in light of the ready identification of risks to children and the space of childhood in the modern period.

Finally, in a related proposition, the research has also been constrained by its reliance upon the print press. Again, in light of the historical aspect of the thesis this methodology was a necessity. However, modern theorists have recognised the constraints of the moral panic model in the multimedia environment.[36] The reliance here upon the print press excluded any deeper analysis of the effects of the multimedia coverage given over to the Bulger case in crafting a moral panic. It is suggested that this did not constrain the cross historical analysis in this thesis in any way, but further research regarding the multimedia and the emergence of moral panic in this field would clearly be instructive.

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36 For discussion of the moral panic models inability to take account of the modern day media environment see the work of McRobbie in the field of moral panic and postmodernity and Ungar for a comparison of the moral panic model with risk analysis. McRobbie. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*; Ungar, 'Moral panic versus the risk society: the implications of the changing sites of social anxiety' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 2001, 52(2) pp. 271-92

There are of course other caveats which could, perhaps should, be raised in taking this kind of research to a further stage. To dwell on them here however would inappropriately lengthen this thesis and divert attention from the main conclusions.

## Suggestions for Further Research

The research has then raised a number of questions which could not be addressed due to the necessary restraints imposed by the thesis structure and its consequent focusing of the research aims. Firstly, in terms of the utility of the moral panic model itself, it is suggested pre-existing danger narratives have been facets largely ignored in the development and treatment of contemporary moral panic theory. Therefore, it is asserted here that more attention should be given over to these media templates and reliance upon contemporary concerns in moral panic theory, both in terms of the development of the model and its deployment when accessing incidences of social concern and panic. It is suggested that the relevance of these template to the creation and negation of panic in all fields of moral panic research deserves further consideration.

Secondly, one issue which was initially addressed as a part of this research but abandoned in light of the focus of the thesis was the eviction of criminal children from the conceptual class of childhood. In light of the innocent conceptualisation of children in the modern day it is surprising that a moral panic, such as the Bulger murder, has not disturbed the conceptual space of childhood. This has been attributed by theorists to the conceptual eviction of such murderous children from the space of childhood, rendering murderous children 'non-children'. However, in light of this thesis, it is suggested that more attention should perhaps be paid to whether these deviant children have, in the modern period, simply been repositioned as examples of problematic youth.

Thirdly, in undertaking the identification of relevant case examples it has become clear that there has been geographical disparity in the prevalence of child on child killing. It has become evident that, in both the modern and Victorian period, child on child killing cases have been clustered around the North-West. Given London was the Victorian centre of industry, a centre that had attracted the most commentary regarding the desolate lives of the dangerous classes it is surprising no cases of child on child killing can be located. In the modern period this geographical disparity

has continued, with no clear rationalisation. The cluster of cases in this area is significant and deserves further investigation.

## Concluding Comments

This thesis has necessitated an in-depth study of the moral boundaries to childhood in the modern and Victorian periods. The research has demonstrated that these moral boundaries have been firmly established in the modern day. While this modern conceptual space afforded to (or prescribed to) children has provided homogeneity it has failed to account, or allow for, deviant children. It is suggested here that these moral boundaries may then have been too strictly established. We may have too readily delineated children as innocents. This conceptualisation has afforded a large and disparate group of individuals an unwieldy conceptualisation and one they themselves may be incapable of ascribing to.

As has been established such a prescriptive concept of childhood has rendered any child who has moved outside of the innocent space a subject of, if not moral panic, conceptual confusion. Any threat from within the idealistic conceptual class of childhood has become a breach of moral boundaries. It is asserted here that the Victorian social structure, specifically the recognition that children may have been living lives that had not afforded them the opportunity to conform to the ideal of childhood and the discourse which flowed from this, was manifestly more realistic.

The loss of this recognition in the modern period has provided for extreme reactions to child criminality, the Bulger case was the heightened exemplar of this social response.  The loss of recognition of a deviant or dangerous class has also led to the loss of confidence in rehabilitative measures; as such deviant children are perceived as unnatural and all the more pathological. This inability to accept child criminality as banal has clearly sprung from the social governance which has sort, with good intentions, to protect childhood as a homogenous ideal space. However, it has unfortunately provided for an unrealistic ideal vision of childhood, one which has no place in light of the realties of life for many modern children. This recognition then signals the way forward for further research in a range of fields, including history, law and criminology.