MAINTAINING EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN MORAL IDEALS AND RECOLLECTED DISCREPANT BEHAVIOUR: AN EXPLORATION OF RESPONSES BY PEOPLE OF GOOD STANDING IN ANGLICAN CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

The question central to this research is how people maintain equilibrium between their moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour. This common phenomenon is considered from the perspective of moral psychology. It is carried out in the context of a faith community, and at points draws on concepts and findings from the field of psychology of religion. It forms part of a longer standing practical theology project on the part of the author, and takes place in the context of wider research into moral dissonance.

This is real world research. The principal data come from the transcriptions of semi-structured interviews with 56 people of good standing in Anglican churches in South West England. The central research question was approached obliquely, in the context of the articulation of each participant’s own moral ideals. The data-set was analysed using Thematic Analysis. The work is informed by a preparatory exercise in self reflection undertaken through a seminar with colleagues. It draws upon the author’s earlier research with chaotic heroin addicts in Pakistan.

Recently moral psychology has explored actual choices as well as hypothetical dilemmas, and common behaviour such as lying and cheating as well as serious events such as violent crime. The thesis adds to knowledge by focusing on the issue of recollection of behaviour of light moral gravity, and the construction of a framework for moral psychology which has received some preliminary road testing by application to the analysis of moral choices as remembered by real people.

This is particularly relevant to faith communities, where the morality of behaviour is an aspect of shared identity. The study suggests three ways in which people maintain moral equilibrium, which are labelled, Change & Commitment, Engagement & Environment, and Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition, linked to the moral perspectives
of Deontology, Utilitarianism, and Character-Ethics, and highlighting internal divisions within the person. These divisions were, respectively, past/present/future, internality/externality, and actual/ideal.
SCRIPTURAL QUOTATIONS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in this research question grew out of my work with chaotic heroin addicts in Pakistan who publically assented to the prevailing cultural mores whilst in practice regularly breaching many of these with their addiction-related behaviour. The rawness of their struggles, building on that of the convicted criminals with whom I worked as a probation officer, grounds my work in visceral human experience.

Serving as parish priest in and around Gloucester, Cheltenham, and Thornbury allowed me to meet church members and parishioners in the ebb and flow of everyday life, as well as during occasions of great hope and disturbing vulnerability. Such vicarious access, as fellow-traveller and confidante, to the life-stories of others has been a privilege which I trust I have honoured in this work.

Knowing that the foundational step for this PhD would be to locate a supervisor with the skills, knowledge, and willingness to accompany me on the journey, I had spent several months approaching individuals at universities and colleges across the UK. My formal and well-honed approach to Prof Peter Hampson was then met with the most delightful reply as I discovered he walked his dog past my vicarage door and worshipped at the Roman Catholic church up the road – we had just never talked about the nature of his employment. Peter recruited his colleague, Dr Joshua Schwieso, and between them they have been faithful friends and critical companions throughout this process – even continuing to support my supervision after their retirement in 2012. I had sought specialist advice from Dr Paul Redford early in this work, and so was encouraged when he agreed to be Director of Studies for the final stage of this research. His energy and timely insights have been most valuable. Dr Paul White’s statistical expertise was generously given at a critical juncture in these studies.
Stuart Taylor was my spiritual director when I embarked on this thesis, providing stability, compassion, and wisdom when required. His introduction to colleagues in a neighbouring diocese was an essential step in the process, as was their introduction to members of their congregations. Over sixty people were willing to talk with me about personally revealing matters; nine colleagues freely took part in a challenging seminar; and Howard Peskett and Kate Bruce gave me access to a wealth of their sermon material. For each of these, I am extremely grateful, and pray that this thesis does justice to the generosity of their contributions.

Colleagues and acquaintances, first in the Diocese of Gloucester, and now in the Diocese of Lichfield, have been both bemused by and supportive of the manner in which I have chosen to spend my leisure-time and will choose to use a sabbatical to popularise this material and that of wider studies of which it is a part. And over these seven years, my family have been wonderful. I was able to marry Ruth and Graeme, who are now settled in Melbourne with Jonathan and Samantha. Regular conversations with Andrew, now a permanent resident of Hong Kong, are stimulating, and he has lined up books for me to read post-thesis. And Alison, having shown me that a part-time PhD is possible, continues to have all of our best interests at heart, and I love her dearly.
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Chapter One - Introduction

1 INTRODUCTION

Issues of moral inconsistency have attracted considerable interest within psychology and other disciplines. This thesis begins with an introduction to my personal involvement with the subject matter to be investigated. This sets the context for the research and helps make explicit the assumptions which I, as researcher, bring to this work. The central research question is then explored, highlighting my earlier research which served as a platform for this study.

1.1 Personal Introduction

My interest in this research question is personal. For over 30 years, I have been challenged by the connection between good intentions and actual behaviour. During the mid/late 80s, I was working as a mission partner with heroin addicts in Pakistan. Commitments to give up drugs were readily made and sometimes acted upon. However, usually this was to be followed quickly by a relapse into drug abuse. Having previously, as a young idealistic probation officer, been there to ‘advise, assist and befriend’ criminals, I was familiar with the prevalence of recidivism, which seemed independent of the apparent sincerity of the commitments made by my clients. However, the situation which I encountered with heroin addicts in Pakistan was more extreme than that which I had routinely experienced with offenders in Britain. In Pakistan, at any one time, I would be in direct contact with scores of chaotic drug users, invited into their homes and welcomed into their extended family. On a frequent and explicit basis, neighbours and relatives would condemn the addicts for their drug use and its associated anti-social behaviour. The drug addicts seemed to give consent to the prevailing moral framework of the society around
them, thus acknowledging the validity of these negative judgements. Yet they continued to engage in drug-abuse and all the associated anti-social behaviour.

As a Christian, I could understand this behaviour as a manifestation of ‘original sin’, for example as discussed by St Paul in Romans 7:14-25, whereby a tendency to sinful behaviour was the default position for the human soul. However, at the time, without recourse to a retrospective imputation of insincerity, I found it difficult to make religious sense of the relapses back into drug abuse, which occurred even when there had been ‘personal repentance’ and ‘spirit-filled experiences of grace’. Moreover, the popular version of the surrounding Islamic culture confidently asserted (with Socrates, contra Aristotle; see Nucci, 2004a) that enlightenment would result in God-fearing behaviour, a conclusion which did not seem supported by the evidence around me. Mothers of addicts would plead with me to ‘cause their son to understand’ that what he was doing was wrong, with the expectation that such understanding would lead automatically to a change in behaviour. Such expectations did not match what I observed.

In 1987, I began to explore this quandary as an MPhil in the Psychology of Addiction, looking at how chaotic heroin addicts in Karachi were coping with their behaviour-attitude dissonance. A feature common to all these chaotic addicts was that their drug-related, anti-social behaviour was public knowledge and the subject of general condemnation. In their localities, these were all men known for their ‘wicked deeds’.

However, I recognised that the issue of a disjunction between intentions and action is not confined to ‘notorious sinners’. The media have been quick to publicise stories of individuals of apparent moral rectitude who were found nonetheless to have engaged in serious immoral behaviour. Accusations of hypocrisy always generate considerable public interest, with passionate judgements flowing freely. Moralizing politicians, and preachers
of a repressed temperament, are particularly prone to condemn in others that which they deny in themselves, and to which they themselves may eventually succumb (Barkan, Ayal, Gino, & Ariely, 2012).

Some individuals may later publically testify to a thoroughly immoral past which they have now rejected; others identify periods of time when immoral actions and moral commitments would co-exist. Almost all the testimony of both these groups is expressed looking back from the perspective of the reformed character, hence the story of the compromised past is told in a way which strengthens the current resolve to behave in an exemplary manner consistent with one’s ideals. Here past immoral actions are explicitly acknowledged, albeit with the assertion that the person has now changed, an example of the ‘redemption’ motif in life-stories identified by McAdams (2001) where bad events work through to good outcomes.

Of even more immediate concern was the situation of people of ‘good repute’, whose behaviour was generally perceived, by the company which they kept, to be commendable. Most mainstream members of church congregations were obvious examples, understood by their peers to be ‘of good standing’. I was myself a case in point, recognising in my early 50s that the pursuit of personal holiness could co-exist alongside the tolerance of one’s own persistent failings. As a church-leader, I knew that the situation was further exacerbated by the tendency of lay-people to demand of their church leaders a greater degree of moral rectitude than they would expect of themselves. Ministers of religion could collude with this psychological process of projection, encouraging an aura of clerical sanctity which obviated, for the laity, any obligation for personal discipleship. This was summed up as ‘project and be absolved – the secret of vicarious holiness’.
Whether serving as a minister of the church, or establishing a project for heroin addicts, or working as a probation officer, my professional focus was always on enabling change, and change for the better. Whether reducing re-offending, overcoming addiction, or becoming more ‘Christ-like’, these were all aspirations which specified a desired outcome. Indeed, my commitment at that earlier time was to accommodative ‘second-order change’ which requires transformation, rather than the assimilative ‘first-order change’ of this current research which is functional and temporary, and preserves the existing coping repertoire (Shults & Sandage, 2006). The assertion that such transformations were possible, achievable, and realistic governed my working life, and I developed a rich reservoir of skills and expertise which would facilitate change and consolidate positive results. Indeed, the extent and diversity of interventions at my disposal, combined with an eclectic approach, only compounded my dilemma as, prior to the finality of death, there was always another intervention which could be tried and which just might achieve the required result. As long as there was life, there was hope – an approach ill-suited to deal with the death of addicts and the suicide of clients.

My professional pre-occupation at that time with the achievement of change ensured that any examination of failure had had, as its underlying motive, the need to ascertain how failure might be turned into success. It was not until 2007 that I was ready to study ‘failure’ as a stable state, the resilience of a person to resist change and to perpetuate the status quo as a form of ‘moral equilibrium’. At this point, it became apparent to me that people were able to have moral aspirations as to how they would like to live, and also to know that, in practice, their lives did not match those aspirations; and for them to accommodate, in a sustainable manner, the apparent discrepancy between these two aspects of their self-understanding. The research question became, and still is, how to understand the way in which we hold together our aspirations as to how, from a moral

Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

perspective, we would wish ourselves to be, with our awareness of how we have been. The research question is about the handling of the discrepancies between ideals and behaviour; the resolution of the inconsistencies between morals and actions; the moral continuity of our past and our future; the integrity of our moral aspirations and our ethical behaviour; the maintenance of moral equilibrium.

Abend (2013) has argued that there is more to morality than ‘moral judgements’ which have been the exclusive focus of much research. Whilst much attention has focused on individual acts, be they of commission or omission, this current research is often concerned with behaviour which extends over a period of time. Behaviour is commonly more than a single action. Behaviour may reflect an approach to a situation or relationship. During this period of time, there may be discrete actions consistent with a disposition, but the disposition endures even if no opportunity for action occurs. To illustrate, a person may regret aspects of his role as a parent, saying

‘I once lost my temper’ discrete act of commission
‘I used to lose my temper’ repeated act of commission
‘I missed his graduation ceremony’ discrete act of omission
‘I didn’t read their school reports’ repeated act of omission
‘I was impatient’ disposition

These are aspects of ‘character’, which may express virtue or vice. Such a cognitive understanding of behaviour reflects the ‘real world’ paradigm adopted in this current research (see Section 3.1), and extends to cover a thicker understanding of morality, in contrast to the thinner focus on moral judgements (Abend, 2013; Dueck & Reimer, 2003).
The implications of this research extend into all areas where ideology affects people’s behaviour. I am interested in how respectable people continue to behave in ways which fall short of the ideals they profess. Likewise, I am interested in how a community, which is characterized by an ethos of moderation, can tolerate amongst its membership extremist individuals, thereby giving tacit approval to (violent) actions at variance to its own (peaceable) norms and behaviour. My interest extends to the way in which communities have coped with divergent moral choices amongst their membership, for example those who opted for apostasy rather than martyrdom in the early church, or the fourth Century Donatist controversy, or in Tudor England.

Examples where one must choose between two evils have often been analysed from the perspective of situational ethics (Abend, 2013). Much recent research also focuses on the factors that increase the likelihood that a person will behave in an immoral way. However, my focus is not on ethical decision-making per se, but rather on living with the consequences of one’s unethical behaviour. In the context of people of good standing in their local community, more often than not, the concern is about falling short of one’s ideals, rather than the commission of any evil, immoral action. Indeed, rather than the commission of a singular immoral action, it can often be a negatively-valenced disposition which expresses the (im)moral behaviour being considered. Thus at this stage in the research programme, my research interest lies more clearly with the way in which apparently respectable people manage inconsistencies between their aspirations and their moral behaviour and maintain moral equilibrium.

In sharing my research interest with colleagues and acquaintances, I encountered much enthusiasm. Often people offered brief explanations as to why they thought that people (Christians) did not change to become better people, usually expressing their
response in a manner which emphasised a single facet. I methodically noted these responses (which are listed in Appendix A). It appeared to me that many of my colleagues and acquaintances had previously struggled with this question, most coming up with clear pragmatic conclusions which they found personally satisfying, and which obviated the need for them to explore the matter any further. When I invited members of my Action Learning Set to consider the issue, an animated discussion quickly ensued, with strong opinions being expressed. Likewise, a preparatory exercise in self-reflexivity run with colleagues was lively, with diverse contributions offered with much feeling. Also during the course of this current research, the participants themselves consistently expressed a high level of interest in the research question. Thus my interest in this research question resonated with many others around me.

I concluded that any insights gained in this area of research would be readily appreciated by others working in the field of pastoral ministry and, indeed, could be of wider interest. However, I also sensed that others, like I had previously been, were more interested in ways of inducing change through overcoming the stability of people’s behaviour, rather than understanding how that moral equilibrium was being maintained. Within the church, teaching and preaching were exhortations to greater commitment and to change for the better. However, although I felt that there was something healthily dynamic in an individual always aspiring to be better than they were, few others wished to view the static nature of this ideal/behaviour disjuncture in a positive light. I subsequently articulated this as a ‘dialectic of hope’ when a person (or community) is able to have a solid grasp on the reality of their current and on-going experience whilst retaining a clear vision of a new life-style to which they aspire.
My research question is about how people manage to hold together two conflicting views of themselves, the first being how they would like themselves to be, the second how they know themselves to have been, the former a future aspiration, the latter a recollection of the past. Expressing this in theological terms using traditional religious phraseology, Christians would say that we know God’s call to holiness, and His Sovereign Will is that we become more Christ-like. We rejoice that He reveals His Will to us, quickening our conscience and causing us to discern the difference between good and evil. He empowers us through His Holy Spirit, promising in Scripture that we would never encounter temptation without grace sufficient to resist. We regularly come to God in penitence and faith, repenting of our sins, receiving His forgiveness and the gift of grace to amend our ways. Yet, as in the opening penitential congregational prayer for Matins and Evensong in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, we continue to sin. ‘We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us.’

Various Christian traditions approach this issue emphasising different theological and doctrinal positions. At the extremes of the Wesleyan holiness movements, ethical perfection has been asserted as possible in this life. A strict Calvinist doctrine of predestination places the emphasis on the on-going sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit rather than any sustained focus on individuals’ intentions and free choices. A more Lutheran/Reformed approach would emphasise each person’s responsibility to repent of their sins, with faith in Christ leading to justification. Within the sacramental Catholic tradition, Christ’s on-going sacrifice brings atonement now and purification after death. The Orthodox Church’s doctrine of *theosis* teaches that the Holy Spirit works in a person from baptism through to death so that they might be drawn closer to God and become more Christ-like. It is the manner in which each of these doctrinal positions acknowledges the
problem of on-going sin which indicates the manner in which they address this problem. This connection between sinfulness, as a human disposition, and sins, as evil actions or immoral thoughts, is explored in the Gospels (Matthew 12:35; 15:19; Mark 7:21; Luke 6:45). In this current research, my own theological exploration will focus on the existence of the problem per se, hence the philosophical dilemma of enduring sin co-existing with prevenient grace.

A person’s ideals and their behaviour are two possible ways of describing who they are; and yet there is a general awareness of discrepancies between these two ways of representing what it is to be a person. I remember well the story told to me in Urdu, of the thief caught red-handed, who stopped the crowd gathered to administer summary justice, saying ‘you believe that God is almighty; that no-one could contravene His Will; and that I could not, but by His Will, have entered the house and stolen the money; hence how can you object to what happened according to His Sovereign Will?’ Then one man replied, ‘you believe that God is almighty; that no-one could contravene His Will; and that I could not, but by His Will, pick up this stick and begin to beat you now; hence how can you object to what is about to happen according to His Sovereign Will?’ I laughed then; I laugh uneasily now as I set out to explain how people maintain moral equilibrium in response to the gap between their ideals and their behaviour.

1.2 Research Question

Twenty-five years ago, I was investigating the ways in which chaotic urban Pakistani heroin addicts coped with the discrepancies between their addiction-related behaviour and the cultural norms to which they subscribed. Their experience of this inconsistency was on-going, resulting neither in the cessation of drug-use and its associated behaviour nor in the rejection of cultural norms so as to eliminate
behaviour/attitude discrepancies. My earlier research had approached the phenomenon through dissonance theory, though on the basis of this current research ‘living with self-discrepancies’ rather than dissonance may have been as appropriate a central concept to serve as an interpretive lens for that earlier research (Primrose, 1993; Primrose & Orford, 1997).

In the context of my earlier research, the behaviour/attitude discrepancies of those chaotic heroin addicts were manifestly in the public domain. Relatives and neighbours were well aware of the addicts’ behaviour and would often voice critical comments. Reflecting at the conclusion of that earlier study on the possibilities for further research, my initial suggestions centred around changes to the cultural context and hence researching behaviour/attitude dissonance amongst addicts in the UK. However, the research question which has now emerged for this current work is based on a different variant, namely changing the domain in which the discrepancies are manifest from public to private. Thus the question is now asked, ‘how do people ‘of good standing within their local church’ maintain moral equilibrium when there are discrepancies between the ideals to which they aspire and their awareness of how they have behaved?’ In this new situation, contrary to that of the Pakistani heroin addicts, immoral behaviour will be remembered, if at all, only by the individual, and will not be the subject of any popular gossip or communal discourse. In this new situation, the community affirms a positive public image of the ‘person of good standing’, who may have to deal with, internally and in private, behaviour from the past which would be contrary to that positive public presentation. Rather than the focus still being on any discrepancy between current behaviour and social norms as examined in my previous research, the discrepancy is now between past behaviour and aspirational ideals. So, for example, the Pakistani heroin addict would have been condemned for not respecting his parents who were telling him to stop taking drugs. In contrast the respectable
church-member, aspiring to be like her colleague who always has time for others, remembers that there were some people at work whom she used studiously to avoid. In the former case, there is explicit reference in the public domain to the issue of moral concern; in the latter case, the issue is being kept private.

In my earlier research (Primrose, 1993), I found the self-attribute of addiction to be a significant part of the narrative which accounted for the persistence of discrepant behaviour amongst a cohort selected because they were known as addicts! So what happens when there is no readily-named underlying compulsive habit? How do ‘respectable’ people manage the discrepancies between their behaviour and their ideals when they are not able to attribute this to addiction?

Techniques of neutralization (Skyes & Matza, 1957) and dissonance-reducing behaviour (Festinger, 1957) have been identified by which a person can moderate or eliminate the distress of ideal/behaviour disharmony. However, my earlier research (Primrose, 1993) suggested that, for chaotic heroin addicts, some experience of disharmony was on-going. Likewise, my own experience suggests that for ‘respectable’ people, one can aspire to high ideals whilst at the same time privately acknowledging one’s moral failures. Thus I aspire to the virtue of humility, exemplified in a particularly gracious work-colleague, yet acknowledge occasions when I have felt personally affronted and responded without grace. Generalizing from my own personal experience, the prevalence of such private ideal/behaviour disharmony amongst ‘respectable’ people will be encountered in the process of this current research.

Guilt and shame are emotional responses to moral failure (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994). Self (2003) distinguished thus, “shame arises from a sense of alienation from God, from others, and from ourselves, whereas guilt arises from behaviour that is regarded by
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

society as wrong, a transgression against moral behaviour” (p. 165). Lazarus and Lazarus (1994) differentiated thus;

Anxiety-Fright, Guilt, and Shame are existential emotions because the threats on which they are based have to do with the meanings and ideas about who we are, our place in the world, life and death, and the quality of our existence. We have constructed these meanings for ourselves out of our life experience and the values of the culture in which we live, and we are committed to preserving them. What is specifically threatened in each of these emotions differs. In anxiety-fright the meaning centers on our personal security, our identity as individuals, as well as on issues of life and death, while in guilt it is about our moral lapses, and in shame it is about our failure to live up to our own and others’ ideals. (p. 41, italics original)

In the cultural context of communal Pakistan, I had identified shame, rather than guilt, as the dominant emotion in controlling moral transgressions, with guilt as the more dominant emotion in the more individualistic culture of contemporary Britain (Primrose, 1993). However, it is noted that this classic hypothesis, that guilt is more salient in individualistic groups than in collectivistic cultural groups, has more recently been inverted (Fontaine et al., 2006).

Within the Christian tradition, the proper response to sin (both sinfulness and sinful acts) is the full cycle of confession, repentance, absolution/forgiveness, satisfaction, and sanctification. This current research question explores the situation where there has been an acknowledgement of guilt followed by a hiatus within the subsequent penitential response. This thesis focuses on how the participant maintains equilibrium when there is a hiatus in dealing with the consequences of their bad behaviour, whilst those consequences are being concealed from public notice.
There are three distinct scenarios in which a person may recollect that they have behaved badly. Firstly, there are acts of commission where the person has intentionally done something wrong. Secondly, there are acts of omission, where the person has intentionally failed to do something right. Thirdly, there is an immoral disposition, when the person experiences a negatively-valenced state of mind. For each of these scenarios, rather than being a discrete single incident, the scenario may have endured over a period of time, and indeed acts of commission, acts of omission, and a negative disposition may have all featured within the one behavioural episode. As Abend (2013) observed, this extends morality beyond issues of contemporaneous moral judgement, which has been the focus of most research in the field of morality.

This current research concentrates on situations where, as the person reflects on past behaviour, they feel in some way responsible for what has happened. Without such a sense of responsibility, an incident may still be recognised as having had a bad outcome, yet one for which the individual acknowledges no personal moral liability, and indeed can attribute blame to others if required. The research question thus explores the issue of who a person thinks they are in the diachronic continuity of their past, their present, and their future. This is true for the penitent:

The concept of the ‘self’ is paradoxical in the context of thinking about repentance. To be truly penitent one must acknowledge that he who I am today is continuous with he who I was when I sinned, last week, last year, or decades ago. Only by acknowledging the continuity between my past, my present and my future can I regret my past, feel contrite about it, try to remedy to the extent possible its continuous effects on the present, and hope for future purification and reconciliation. On the other hand, when we repent we request that we be judged not
only or primarily by what we were, but by who we are now, and now we believe that we would no longer commit such a wrong. We want our victim or society to see us as discontinuous with the self of our past. Only then can we hope for mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation. The paradox of true repentance is in its assuming responsibility for the past while hoping that one will be freed of that past to start anew. (Schimmel, 2004, p. 19)

The research question will need to allow for the situation when this paradox of the self extends to the situation where one acknowledges behaviour contrary to one’s aspirations, yet does not respond with the process of repentance described above. A conceptual understanding of the person will be required which encompasses both ‘whom I aspire to be’ and ‘whom I remember myself to have been’. Within this overarching conceptual understanding, this present research will then explore how a person manages the discrepancies between the ideals to which they aspire and the previous behaviour which they recollect.
Chapter Two – Literature Review

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

An overview of the theoretical context of this research will acknowledge its epistemological stance and discuss core psychological concepts upon which it is based. The research is situated within the discipline of psychology, primarily in moral psychology, drawing on the psychology of religion and practical theology. Aspects of the theoretical context are developed from a descriptive rather than prescriptive perspective. The perspective of theoretical ecumenism fosters a holistic understanding on the basis that “there is often more than one ‘right way’ to view the causes of behavior” (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2005, p. 14).

The research question explores a common phenomenon, whereby people of good standing within their local communities maintain equilibrium between the moral ideals to which they aspire and their recollected discrepant behaviour. This phenomenon may be approached in several different ways; hence the rationale behind the approach adopted in this thesis is to be explained. A set of eight questions is posed, which allow for the narration of an orderly structure (see Table 2.1, p. 30). The staged construction of a conceptual framework introduces eight factors, which are described in a sequence which permits logical progression.

The preliminary stage of the thesis’ conceptual framework is a description of the epistemological approach being adopted (Section 2.1). The second stage considers paradigms by which to differentiate between good and evil, hence a discussion about ethics and morality (Sections 2.2.1 & 2.2.2). The third stage clarifies the manner in which a
person is responsible for their behaviour, which leads to a discussion of agency (Section 2.2.3). Because the focus is on recollected behaviour, the fourth stage is a discussion of how the autobiographical self handles memories which are, by definition, retrospective (Section 2.2.4). Then the fifth stage introduces the divided self as a way in which to understand the co-existence of incompatible self-understandings (Section 2.2.5). In order to provide a common focus for ideals and behaviour, the sixth stage discusses the development of moral identity (Section 2.2.6) as a dynamic way of expressing ourselves morally. Then self-concept maintenance (Section 2.2.7) is addressed in the seventh stage which indicates what needs to happen to preserve a good self-image. Finally, in the eighth stage, ethical dissonance is discussed as a way to describe maintaining moral equilibrium (Section 2.2.8). These eight stages, with their key questions and core concepts are shown in Table 2.1 (p. 30).

Table 2.1: The Eight Stages with Key Questions and Core Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Core Concept</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>How do we know what we are investigating?</td>
<td>Epistemology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>How do we differentiate between good and evil?</td>
<td>Morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>How are we responsible for our behaviour?</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>How do we handle our memories of past behaviour?</td>
<td>Autobiographical Self</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>How do we talk about self-discrepancies?</td>
<td>Divided Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>How do we understand ourselves morally?</td>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>How do we present a good image of ourselves?</td>
<td>Self-Concept Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>How do we maintain moral equilibrium?</td>
<td>Ethical Dissonance</td>
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</table>
These eight questions, from the preliminary epistemology through the subsequent conceptual development, are used to form a systematic structure for the conceptual framework adopted in this thesis.

2.1 Epistemology - How do we know what we are investigating?

This thesis falls within moral psychology, focusing on the way in which people of one particular faith community maintain moral equilibrium in the context of perceived discrepancies between moral ideals to which they aspire and the recollection of their behaviour. As morality is a universal aspect of religion, moral self-concept is embedded within membership of a religious community. Indeed, Graham and Haidt (2010) suggested how ‘religion binds individuals into moral communities’. Hence religion is a context for this psychological investigation of the interplay between moral ideals and (im)moral behaviour. The particular group of religious people considered was that of members in good standing of Anglican churches in South West England. The research was informed by earlier work with another group of religious people, namely chaotic heroin addicts in Pakistan for whom the dominant Islamic culture shaped their world-view despite their addiction-related behaviour being at variance with its religious dictates. Practical theology (Cameron, Bhatti, Duce, Sweeney, & Watkins, 2010) distinguished between four voices of theology, namely normative, formal, espoused, and operant. Moral ideals can be considered as part of the espoused theology of the beliefs articulated by the group. Moral behaviour can be considered as part of the operant theology demonstrated by that group’s actual practices. Within the study of religion, moral ideals and moral behaviour both feature strongly, hence the psychological investigation of these two aspects of the moral self-concept takes place within the overlap between moral psychology and the psychology of religion.
To examine these two co-existing psychological aspects of the moral self-concept, a critical realist perspective has been adopted. This epistemological perspective is ‘realist’ in that the psychological phenomena being investigated are taken to have an external and substantive existence. It is ‘critical’ in that all engagement with such phenomena is seen to be mediated through the particularity of the researcher, hence it is through mutual dialogue and repeated engagement that the academic community moves towards a better understanding. Putnam (1992) was a realist, asserting that for any meaningful engagement with the world, there is an assumption of a correlation between fact and truth. He allowed for multiple world-views, some of which are more correct than others. The merit of deconstructionism is to challenge the accretion of cultural overlap, causing a healthy individual scepticism which leads to good collective understandings of society (but, if taken to excess, such deconstructionism may lead to meaninglessness and open the post-modern door to extremism). Wright (1992) helpfully described his version of critical realism thus,

I propose a form of critical realism. This is a way of describing the process of ‘knowing’ that acknowledges the reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower (hence ‘realism’), while fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known (hence ‘critical’). (p. 35, italics original)

The metaphors of life then enable an understanding of truth to be expressed (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003, 1999), rather than any attempt being undertaken to define truth using precise terminology.
From the psychological perspective, the question arises as to whether conclusions can be generalised. The primary data for analysis in this present research come from interviews in which a social constructionist perspective would challenge the realist assumptions about the transferability of any conclusions from the context of the interview to the generality of the participant’s life. For example, my presence as a priest will have functioned as a prime, shaping the participant’s understanding of goodness and virtue which is expressed during the interview. Reflecting on a modernist version of social constructionism, Searle (1995) suggested how intelligibility presupposes external realism, so when people engage in meaningful conversation, they are implying the existence of an external reality. He then argued that people base their interactions on the assumption that the truth inherent within language corresponds with the external reality, and thus the social construction based on institutional facts corresponds with the brute facts of external reality. This can be the basis for critical realism.

In his glossary, Creswell (2007) defined epistemology as the philosophical assumptions about the relationship between the researcher and the material being studied. I, myself, am the research practitioner operating within a critical realist perspective. This research began whilst I was a parish priest with an established ministry combining pastoral care and community engagement. It has continued into my present role as Diocesan Director of Transforming Communities, helping other churches engage with their local communities. The research is thus central to my personal and professional life.

2.2 Conceptual Developments

Several core psychological concepts are used within this thesis. These concepts taken together with the epistemological approach adopted form a framework through which the research question can be examined. As itemised at the beginning of this chapter
this conceptual framework incorporates eight factors, each with its key question and its core concept. The first of these is its epistemological framework, which has already been addressed (Section 2.1). Now the argument of the thesis moves systematically through the remaining seven factors, thus from differentiating between good and evil (morality), to accepting responsibility (agency), to recollecting past behaviour (auto-biographical self), to understanding self-discrepancies (divided self), to being moral (moral identity), to preserving a good self-image (self-concept maintenance), and finally maintaining moral equilibrium (ethical dissonance). These and related concepts are each introduced briefly in this initial section, and then subject to more detailed discussion in the subsequent sections. The order in which they are considered facilitates the development of the thesis.

The research explores the phenomenon of the maintenance of the stasis of the moral self-concept when there are discrepancies between the moral ideals to which people aspire and the behaviour which they recollect. The first stage was to make explicit the critical realist epistemology adopted (Section 2.1). The second stage is to recognise that the ideal/behaviour discrepancies manifest ethical features, with the ‘good’ located in the ideals and the ‘bad’ located in the behaviour (Section 2.2.1). Theories of morality offer differing frameworks in which to evaluate the distinction between good and bad. Three of these theoretical frameworks are particularly relevant, namely deontology, utilitarianism and virtue-ethics (Section 2.2.2). Each of these will illuminate a different aspect of the psychological phenomenon under investigation and be used by participants to explain their behaviour.

The theories of morality to be considered all assume that the individual is, at least partly, responsible for their behaviour (Section 2.2.3). This leads into the third stage, that
of moral agency which links action with person, through moral judgements and intentions. However, in the situations being examined, the events occurred in the past, and hence they are being considered retrospectively.

Retrospective recollections are an important aspect of the working self, drawing on past experience in a way which equips a person to handle contemporary challenges. This is addressed in the fourth stage. The autobiographical self retains memories of failures which will help a person to address similar situations in the future (Section 2.2.4). Yet there is also a tendency to think well of oneself (Section 2.2.6.4). Hence there is an implicit distinction between who people would like themselves to be (whether in their own understanding or as they understand others to perceive them) and who they know themselves to have been. These two self-understandings may be discrepant, which is the reason for investigating this phenomenon. The social construction of autobiographical memories and the development of ethical self-understanding (Section 2.2.4.3) place this in context.

Divisions within the self have been expressed in many different ways. The fifth stage introduces various formulations of the divided self which offer distinctive interpretative insight into the way in which people maintain moral equilibrium between their ideals and their discrepant behaviour (Section 2.2.5). These include the self-schemata by which a person organises different aspects of who they understand themselves to be.

Identities are self-schemata by which a person organises themselves, amongst these being one’s moral identity. This is discussed in the sixth stage. Moral identity allows moral constructs to be operational in responding to situations encountered. Increasing the salience of moral identity increases the centrality of its influence on decisions made (Section 2.2.6).
These decisions reflect a desire to maintain an acceptable concept of the self, both in one’s own opinion and in the opinions of others.

Self-concept maintenance shows a cyclical nature, with moral cleansing alternating with moral licensing. This is explored within the seventh stage. It is expressed both in the moral credits which one accrues for oneself and the moral credentials which are accorded by others. Moral disengagement and motivated forgetting are common techniques used to mitigate immoral behaviour’s negative impact on the self-concept (Section 2.2.7). The eighth stage then explores the way in which people maintain moral equilibrium in the context of self-discrepancies.

Self-concept maintenance allows for some residual self-discrepancies, and, in the case of this current research, these are between the ideals to which one aspires and one’s recollected behaviour. The maintenance of moral equilibrium in the context of these enduring residual self-discrepancies is the primary focus of this thesis (Section 2.2.8). Such stasis may appear contrary to classic dissonance theory, which would predict that, over time, cognitions would have been altered to eliminate any discrepancies. Moral dissonance applies this to the juxtaposition of conflicting cognitions in a moral context. A discussion of ethical dissonance is the eighth and final stage. It extends this to the situation where the immoral behaviour is not public knowledge. This present research addresses the situation when the behaviour is indeed not public knowledge, having occurred some time in the past, and perhaps referring to a negative disposition, or the omission to do good, as well as to the commission of one or more bad actions. The thesis explores how people maintain stasis when there are discrepancies between their ideal self and their autobiographical self.
2.2.1 Ethics - How do we differentiate between good and evil?

The second stage is the differentiation between good and evil. The key question is, ‘how does one differentiate between good and evil?’ Now theology provides a context for the ultimate good, and that teleological focus becomes the pivot for the formation of an ethical framework. Ethical frameworks are fundamental to the manner in which a society provides a coherent distinction between good and bad. Blackburn (2001) listed seven threats to the efficacy of ethics which may need to be addressed. Three of these are not immediately relevant to the context of this present research, these irrelevant three being Nietzschian ‘death of God’, cynical ‘egoism’, and Dawkinsian ‘Evolutionary Theory’. However, the other four threats have potential relevance for this current research. Firstly, ‘relativism’ legitimises a selective approach to ethics which can undermine the applicability of using a single ethical framework. In this current research, this is addressed in the primary data collection of the principal study by working with the ethical framework proposed by the participants themselves (Section 5.3.2). Secondly, ‘determinism and futility’ requires a thorough consideration of agency, and the extent to which participants perceive themselves to be in control of their behaviour (Section 2.2.3.5). Thirdly, ‘unreasonable demands’ identifies situations where the absolute application of a (deontic) principle would result in a perverse outcome, hence two other approaches to morality are also considered (Sections 2.2.2.2 & 2.2.2.3). Finally, ‘false consciousness’ reflects an erroneous understanding of the world, which it is acknowledged can particularly affect the veracity or otherwise of memories of past events (Section 2.2.4). Thus within the approach adopted for this current research, each of the four potential threats to the efficacy of ethics is adequately addressed. Attention may now be given to the more personal content within the ethical frameworks under consideration.
The emphasis of my research is more about aspiration rather than prescription, hence ‘how do I want to live my life’ rather than ‘what must I do and not do’. Blackburn (2001) placed the context of such broader ethical concerns within the ‘meaning of life’, that is telos. As Abend (2013) noted, this is a broader understanding of morality than moral judgement alone. An approach to morality is required which expresses a personal understanding of how one should live one’s life.

2.2.2 Morality

After introducing as part of the second stage of the conceptual framework, aspects of morality drawn from philosophy and from empirical psychology, there are discussions on deontology (Section 2.2.2.1), utilitarianism (Section 2.2.2.2), and virtue ethics (Section 2.2.2.3), examining how each offers a scheme through which to differentiate between good and evil. In the conclusion of the thesis, it is noted that participants make use of each of these three approaches to morality (see Sections 5.6 & 6.5).

Morality has an inner and an outer aspect. First morality describes part of the inner world which helps to structure and give meaning to daily decisions. Second morality describes an important aspect of how people relate to one another, whilst also being an aspect of self-understanding.

Firstly, morality is partly a practice in which persons give and demand reasons of one another; yet this implies that it is also a practice in which persons give and demand reasons of themselves or hold themselves accountable for their own attitudes and actions. Morality is, in part, an ongoing activity of thinking about what is important in life, trying to make good choices, and taking responsibility for one’s choices and for the person one is becoming partly through the choices one is making. Exercising this sort of reflective moral agency prepares one to answer to
the inquiries of others; yet much of the activity of morality does not involve answering expressly to others’ demands for the reasons for one’s choices, particularly if most of one’s choices are not obviously off the mark. (Cates, 2009, p. 23)

In looking at how respectable people maintain moral equilibrium between the ideals to which they aspire and their discrepant past behaviour, a personal moral framework is required to evaluate the implications of a distinction between good and bad. This will enable a meaningful conversation linking good moral ideals to good moral actions, contrasting the good and the bad in moral actions, and identifying what would be an immoral disposition. Such frameworks are part of morality.

Such frameworks go further than the dichotomy between self-serving and prosocial, which can lack moral clarity. Indeed, Gino, Ayal, and Ariely (2013) noted an example of such moral confusion; namely, if others benefit from unethical behaviour, its prosocial quality can displace its self-serving aspect, thus benefit to one’s family can be used to justify self-serving choices, or the sharing of spoils used to justify cheating (Wiltermuth, 2011). So the present research requires the moral application of a distinction between good and bad, which goes beyond a descriptive framework based on whether the beneficiaries are oneself alone or others as well as oneself.

Considering the philosophical context of morality, from Darwin onwards, morality’s biological and evolutionary basis in reciprocal altruism and kin selection has been recognised (Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, McShane, & McShane, 2006). Smith (2003) went further and argued coherently that morality is of the essence of what it means to be a human being, whilst Benson’s (2001) cultural psychology of the self asserted the centrality of morality. This has a direct link to religion where (teleological) beliefs provide an ethical
framework which leads to a distinction between moral and immoral behaviour. For the Abrahamic faiths, such a framework begins with the tautology that God is good, and hence that an understanding of the will of God, mediated through natural theology and through revelation, is a sure foundation for morality. This goes beyond the relativist understanding of morality offered by secular humanism. Indeed, basic text books on psychology of religion (such as Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009) explore how religion can give meaning to all aspects of life.

The Kohlbergian renaissance in moral development addressed the relativism of secular humanism, and held moral reasoning to be the basis for moral excellence. Values were identified as being moral as well as conventional, prudential, and personal. Kohlberg (1969; see also Gilligan, 1982) was then able to put forward his staged theory of the development of moral maturity. As noted by Abend (2013), this emphasis on moral reasoning has contributed to a disproportionate focus on moral judgement to the detriment of a wider study of morality.

Building on this empirical foundation, Walker and Pitts (1998) approached moral maturity using everyday language and seeking to capture the virtues identified in people’s choice of moral exemplars. Amongst these moral exemplars, family and friends were frequently mentioned; seemingly it was easier to trust them than famous people. They noted that exemplars were selected for their moral character and actions, rather than their sophisticated moral judgements. Whilst not part of their research design, religious motivation was noted as a common feature amongst those admired. This current research has employed a similar technique in using moral exemplars to access participants’ perception of morality.
Walker and Pitts (1998) questioned whether moral maturity was a singular concept, and suggested that it is better understood through a cluster approach including distinctive if not incompatible attributes; indeed, many saints and heroes have had their moral failings (see also Walker, 1999; Walker & Frimer, 2007; Walker & Hennig, 2004). Their work “is descriptive and exploratory in its attempt to map naturalistic conceptions of moral maturity” (p. 404). They summarised their resultant conception of moral excellence thus:

Obviously, a central component is that the highly moral person has a range of strongly held values and principles and maintains high standards and ideals, ones reflecting both external moral guidelines and internal workings of conscience. This acute and evident sense of morality is joined by a strong sense of self and personal agency that may contribute to the integrity that people regard as essential to moral excellence— that the highly moral person is committed to action based on these values and ideals and has the personal fortitude to do so. This sense of personal agency is balanced by, or perhaps is in tension with, notions of communion. Certainly, the highly moral person is characterized by an other-oriented compassion and care that entails helpful, thoughtful, and considerate action and the nurturing of relationships through faithfulness and reliability. (pp. 414/15)

Hirschberger and Pyszczynski (2012), working with Morality Salience, suggested how morality is adapted to enhance coping behaviour, challenging the ideas of univocal moral maturity and development. Linville (1987) applied her self-complexity-affective extremity hypothesis to say that when self-aspects are distinct, then adverse experiences in one self-representation have less effect on other self-representations. This indicates that a person’s moral functioning is a dynamic process, which is compatible with the concepts of the divided self (see Section 2.2.5), and multi-vocal moral maturity.
Kohlberg’s Kantian emphasis on absolute values had been an important corrective to the reductive secular utilitarianism popular fifty years ago. However, as Lapsley and Lasky (2001) noted, there is now a growing interest, both academic and popular, in virtue, character, and moral identity (see Section 2.2.6). There are thus three main candidates for a moral framework which would accord with a Christian (theistic) understanding of ethics. These are deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue-ethics, each of which is considered in turn in the following sections. These offer distinct approaches to understanding the moral conundrum of how people maintain equilibrium between their moral aspirations and discrepancies within their autobiographical self. In this way, the participants’ own perception of morality is central to the thesis.

### 2.2.2.1 Deontology

First, a deontological morality requires a clear set of principles and an absolute sense of right and wrong. It is more readily applicable to acts of commission, and to acts of omission, than to a negatively-valenced disposition. This approach fitted well with the influential religious-cultural context of my earlier research on behaviour/attitude disharmony amongst Pakistani heroin addicts (Primrose, 1993). The language then was of duty and obligations, of what one should do, and of how others expect one to behave. This was in accord with Higgins’ (1987) dilemma of the Actual Self vs. the Ought Self. However, the current research question can be better framed as Higgins’ other dilemma of the Actual Self vs. the Ideal Self, with the focus on one’s aspirations to be a good person and an awareness of when one has failed to live in accordance with those aspirations. For this, a richer understanding of morality is required than that provided by deontology alone.
2.2.2.2 Utilitarianism

The second of the three forms of morality to be considered is utilitarianism. A utilitarian morality requires a method by which one calculates the relative costs and benefits of particular actions. This is applicable both to acts of commission and to acts of omission, but is difficult to apply to a negatively-valenced disposition which, as a state of mind, may have no direct outcome. The approach of utilitarianism, and the previous deontic approach, fit well when moral reasoning is applied to dilemmas designed to test moral judgement. Moreover, with utilitarianism, there usually are protected values, also known as sacred values or taboo values (Tanner, Medin, & Iliev, 2008). These protected values override the calculus and effectively act in a quasi-deontological manner. Indeed, many of the classic Kohlbergian moral dilemmas either were framed using conflicting deontic imperatives, or posited one protected value either against a utilitarian cost/benefit or against another protected value. Their application was to specific situations, often artificially created. However, neither deontic nor utilitarian morality is easily applied to the full generality of behaviour to be investigated in this current research, to the role of disposition, and to the understanding of what it means to be a good person as expressed through moral exemplars. Deontology and utilitarianism are more readily used to differentiate between good and bad actions, rather than between good and bad people. A richer understanding of morality is required than that provided by the moral judgements of deontology and utilitarianism alone (Abend, 2013).

2.2.2.3 Virtue-ethics

The third and final form of morality to be considered is that of virtue-ethics. The richer approach of virtue-ethics places the emphasis upon the character of the person. This is readily applied to situations of an immoral disposition where the experience of a negatively-valenced state of mind expresses an aspect of the person’s character. Actions,
and failures to act, can also be evaluated as good or bad, and the attribute of goodness or badness becomes applied to the actor associated with those (in)actions. There is a cumulative effect, whereby past behaviour, and the person’s subsequent response to that behaviour, contribute to a current evaluation of virtue. Lakoff and Johnson’s metaphor of Moral Essence suggested the reciprocal interplay between character and behaviour, thus “if you know how a person has acted, you know what that person’s character is [and] if you know what a person’s character is, you know how that person will act” (1999, p. 306). To be of ‘good standing’ in a community is to have fulfilled all one’s obligations to that community. Thus people are held in good standing by their local community on account of that community’s understanding of how they have behaved in the past. In a community, ‘respectability’ is accorded to some-one who is esteemed worthy of honour. A ‘respectable’ person is respected on account of previous behaviour about which others know. Therefore, one way to identify who is in good standing within a community, who is respected, is to ask members of the community to identify such individuals themselves.

2.2.2.4 Three Approaches to Morality

This research accesses the ideals held by ‘respectable’ people, that is those people held in good standing by others in their community. In the main study (Chapter Five), those qualities are considered which respectable people admire in those whom they personally hold to be moral exemplars. On the basis of the observation that what one admires in others is what one would aspire to in oneself, this would cause the participants’ own moral framework to become salient (see Section 2.4). Social Comparison Theory describes how people “seek out similar others to validate their perceptions and attitudes, which can, to some extent, be read as meaning that people anchor their attitudes and self-concepts in the groups to which they feel they belong” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005, p. 124). Insomuch that moral behaviour is about ‘doing’ rather than ‘being’, it would be better
understood with the situational variability of virtue rather than the predictability of trait. Whilst both deontology and utilitarianism have substantial explanatory merit, virtue ethics is the approach to morality which includes this situational variability and hence has a particular relevance to the context of this current research. However, taken together, all three contribute towards an overarching structure of morality, with some responses most readily understood within each of the three constituent frameworks (see Sections 5.6 & 6.5).

Since the pioneering work of Anscombe (1957), there has been much recent attention on the listing of virtues (eg. Blasi, 2005; McCloskey, 2008; Shults & Sandage, 2006); however, the seven classic virtues, as formulated by Aquinas (1225-1274) suffice for this current research. Likewise, whilst Graham et al. (2011) have identified five universal moral domains, this current research will proceed with the participants’ own categorization of moral domains. This completes the exploration of morality as the second stage of the conceptual framework.

2.2.3 Agency - How are we responsible for our behaviour?

Having introduced agency as the third stage of the conceptual framework, there are discussions on commission and omission (Section 2.2.3.1), disposition (Section 2.2.3.2), timing (Section 2.2.3.3), moral emotion (Section 2.2.3.4), intention (Section 2.2.3.5), and moral agency (Section 2.2.3.6).

In moral situations, it is necessary to consider how a person is to be held responsible for their behaviour, which is the key question for this third stage. Higgins-D’Alessandro and Power (2005) raised the fundamental issue:
Reparative responsibility addresses the issue of how one should respond to the hurt that occurred as a result of one’s action or inaction. How should one respond to one’s past? Underlying this question is an even deeper one: how does one understand oneself as an agent, whose past reveals as well as conceals one’s conscious control over one’s actions. (p. 113)

Narvaez and Lapsley (2005) distinguished between the judgement of evaluation and the judgement of choice, both of which pertain to the time when a moral decision is made. The initial judgement of evaluation uses moral considerations to decide as to the ethically correct course of action. However, consideration of other factors causes ‘considered deviation’ which may result in a different personal intent for the final judgement of choice.

According to this model, when a person confronts a situation in which he identifies a moral problem, he carries out two judgments – one regarding the right behaviour in this situation, from a pure moral standpoint relying exclusively on moral standards, and the other an all things considered judgment that he will actually adopt. (p. 148)

Narvaez and Lapsley (2005) continued to suggest how the former evaluative judgement has an objectivity, whilst the latter judgement of choice was linked to the presentation of oneself as a good person, and linked directly to moral identity (see Section 2.2.6).

Now most theories of behaviour (e.g. theory of planned behaviour, Ajzen, 1991; theory of reasoned action, Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) have focused on the occasion when the action (or choice not to act) took place. However, in the situations encountered in this
current research, the individual is reflecting back on their previous behaviour at some
temporal distance. It may therefore be necessary to consider how contemporaneous
findings morph when accessed retrospectively; indeed, one remains alert to the
realist/discursive difference between the recollection of past events, and the presentation of
oneself in the immediacy of the interview context. But first the difference, if any, between
omission and commission is considered, and then the negatively valenced state of mind of
immoral disposition is addressed.

2.2.3.1 Commission and Omission

Gilovich and Medvec (1994) investigated the difference in regret experienced
retrospectively for acts of commission and for acts of omission. They identified several
psychological mechanisms by which acts of commission resulted in greater discomfort at
the time of their occurrence. However, they noted that, after a period of time, much of this
discomfort had dissipated, whilst the discomfort caused by acts of omission endured, and
even if it did not increase, it was recollected with greater frequency. They found that, when
people were asked about past events which they regretted, acts of omission were
mentioned more frequently than acts of commission. This was qualified by their
observation that the former tended to refer to missed opportunities for self-actualization
whilst the latter often had a clearer moral dimension. Thus they concluded that looking
back distorts the memories of regret towards acts of omission. Hence acts of omission may
be more likely to be mentioned than acts of commission in the data-collection of the
principal study (Section 5.3.3). Consideration is now given to situations where behaviour
does not express itself in action.
2.2.3.2 Negatively-valenced Disposition

As well as to acts of commission and acts of omission, moral judgement may also be applied to a person’s disposition, that is to their predominant state of mind. Cornelius (2006) attributed to Magda Arnold (1903-2002) the reintroduction of the significance of emotion in the understanding of morality, with her Thomistic framework which followed from perception through to action. She had observed that people are active in their emotional response. Thus she suggested that as people admire others who are virtuous, they see in them qualities of virtue which give rise to virtuous action, moral emotion leading to moral action. Similarly, when we reflect on our own experience, we can also identify immoral emotions which would lead to immoral actions. For example, we may recognise situations when we have been angry, or envious, or impatient in a way which could have led us to behave contrary to our ideals, even if the opportunity to do so did not actually occur. We may look back on negatively-valenced states of mind which we perceived to have been wrong, even if no wrong action was forthcoming. Thus states of mind which are negatively-valenced dispositions may feature in the data-collection of the principal study (Section 5.3.3), as well as acts of commission and acts of omission. Having considered the nature of the behaviour, consideration is now given to the effect of timing.

2.2.3.3 Timing

Time affects the process of moral recollection in two distinct ways. First, at the occasion when a moral decision is to be made, there are limitations on the duration of the period of time available for deliberations. Second, there is the chronological shift in time from contemporaneous to retrospective.

Considering first the limitations on time, Kohlberg’s (1969) six-stage theory of moral judgement provided insight into how an individual might address a contrived and
complex moral dilemma, with ample time allowed for moral reasoning. Moreover, usually a single act of commission or omission is to be considered in such situations. Yet the situations anticipated in this research will usually have necessitated more immediate responses, without the opportunity for extensive moral reasoning. Often the recollected behaviour will have referred to repeated actions or to a general disposition. The work of Mazar and Ariely (2010) suggested that repeated temptation results in a capitulation to bad behaviour in a way which is different from the occasional event; in their research, participants who had been restrained in their cheating when opportunities to cheat were originally presented, began to cheat maximally when such opportunities were presented on numerous consecutive occasions (see also Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008a; the work of Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998, on ego depletion; and Duhigg, 2013, on willpower). A theory of moral behaviour is required which is more intuitive at the moment when decisions are made, and which also applies to the response of a disposition without any associated action.

The second aspect of timing is that allowance is made for the interlude between the occurrence of the event and its subsequent recollection. During this extended period of time, the memory of the original response(s) can continue to be processed. The original decision can have had the immediacy of emotion, whilst subsequent reflections on the event may have developed cognitively over a period of time. Indeed, Haidt (2001) argued that whilst moral judgements are primarily intuitional, moral reasoning follows to provide post hoc rationalisation. Nisbett and Wilson (1977) observed:

*Removal in time.* Perhaps chief among the circumstances that should decrease accuracy in self-report is a separation in time between the report and the actual occurrence of the process. In almost all the research described above [sic], subjects
were asked about a cognitive process immediately after its occurrence, often within seconds of its occurrence. While the present viewpoint holds that there may be no direct access to process even under these circumstances, it is at least the case that subjects are often cognizant of the existence of the effective stimuli at this point. Thus subjects have some chance of accurately reporting that a particular stimulus was influential if it happens to seem to be a plausible cause of the outcome. At some later point, the existence of the stimulus may be forgotten, or become less available, and thus there would be little chance that it could be correctly identified as influential. Similarly, the vagaries of memory may allow the invention of factors presumed to be present at the time the process occurred. It is likely that such invented factors would be generated by use of causal theories. Thus it would be expected that the more removed in time the report is from the process, the more stereotypical should be the reported explanation. (pp. 251/52)

Thus the passage of time can have a substantial impact, changing the significance of moral emotion.

2.2.3.4 Moral Emotion

Before exploring the responsibility for behaviour which is associated with agency, the role of moral emotion is assessed. The pioneering work of Magna Arnold (1903-2002) on moral emotion (see Gasper & Bramesfeld, 2006) highlighted the impact of moral desire on the perception-to-action sequence. This desire is towards a person’s telos, their goal in life (Harter, 1999). A person responds at the time on the basis of both knowledge and appraisal, as usefully differentiated by Cervone’s (2004) model of Knowledge and Appraisal Personality Architecture.
For Cervone, “appraisals are proximal determinants of emotional experience.
Knowledge is a distal determinant” (2004, p. 187). Knowledge consists of the beliefs about ourselves and the world around us, both in general and in particular. Knowledge provides an enduring structure to the personality.

Appraisals, in contrast, are not beliefs about isolated features of oneself or the world. They are relational judgments, that is, evaluations of the relation between oneself and occurrences within particular encounters. Specifically, appraisals are relational judgments that concern the meaning of encounters for oneself. (Cervone, 2004, p. 186)

Whilst knowledge will give the situational context in which events occur, the focus of this thesis is on the participant’s appraisal of the event(s). However, this appraisal is not a static occurrence. It can change over time to provide a recollection of the event(s) more acceptable to the individual’s self-understanding. This can include additional information which subsequently became available, but which had not been available at the time the event(s) took place. Thus the retrospective account of an individual’s actions or disposition can include references to information which would not have been accessible to the individual at the time the event(s) occurred. For example, in referring back to events, people may include mention of the actual rather than intended outcome as part of their initial reasoning (Blasi, 1995). Thus the moral emotion engendered at the time of the event(s) may no longer determine the manner in which events are subsequently recollected. Indeed, recollection of the original intention itself may also be modified retrospectively.

2.2.3.5 Intention

Moral behaviour presumes the currency of agency. In the context of this research, agency is both retrospective, accepting responsibility for the outcome of intentional
behaviour, and forward-looking, anticipating future self-efficacy. In both situations, responsibility is accepted for the behaviour reasonably believed to be within one’s control. Johar, Sengupta, and Mukhopadhyay (2009) were able to differentiate between the focus on process and the focus on goal which varied according to belief in self-mastery and outcome saliency. The focus on both process and goal has moral significance, as expressed by Rokeach (1973) who identified instrumental and terminal values. Looking ahead to self-regard (see Section 2.2.7 on self-concept) the moral focus can be on the behaviour or on the end-state.

Thus, all of a person’s attitudes can be conceived of as being value-expressive, and all of a person’s values are conceived to maintain and enhance the master sentiment of self-regard – by helping a person adjust to his society, defend his [sic] ego against threat, and test reality. (Rokeach, 1973, p. 15)

Instrumental values refer to modes of behaviour and terminal values refer to end-states. Rokeach (1973) suggested two types of instrumental values, moral values and competence values.

An attitude differs from a value in that an attitude refers to an organization of several beliefs around a specific object or situation. A value, on the other hand, refers to a single belief of a very specific kind. It concerns a desirable mode of behaviour or end-state that has a transcendental quality to it, guiding actions, attitudes, judgements, and comparisons across specific objects and situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate goals. (p. 18)

To say that a person has a value is to say that he [sic] has an enduring prescriptive or proscriptive belief that a specific mode of behaviour or end-state of existence is
preferred to an opposite mode of behaviour or end-state. This belief transcends attitudes toward objects and toward situations; it is a standard that guides and determines action, attitudes toward objects and situations, ideology, presentations of self to others, evaluations, judgments, justifications, comparisons of self with others, and attempts to influence others. Values serve adjustive, ego-defensive, knowledge, and self-actualizing functions. Instrumental and terminal values are related yet are separately organized into relatively enduring hierarchical organizations along a continuum of importance. (p. 25)

Anscombe (1957) had hypothesised that, in the moral domain, intention precedes action as people are the agents of their intentions, which are shaped towards their desires. However, the empirical cognitive neuroscience and cognitive psychology literature is much more undecided on the nature of the psychological priority (see, for example, Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Haggard & Clark, 2003).

Discussing the social foundations of the mind, Harré (1983) emphasised the importance of agency, identifying as the three central aspects of human psychology, consciousness, agency, and identity, and above all their reflexive forms, self-consciousness, self-mastery and autobiography, tying all this together in one, very general, empirical hypothesis. For [Harré], a person is not a natural object, but a cultural artefact. (p. 20, italics mine)

Focusing on actions, whether of commission or omission, Harré (1983) continued,
If actions are ascribed to persons, the evaluation of actions can be transferred to persons if we can introduce the concept of ‘responsibility’. To put it in psychological terms, persons are those beings who act intentionally. (p. 85)

This intentionality allows a link to be established between the person and their actions. Thus a ‘bad’ action is linked to a ‘bad’ person, thus generalising from actions to character. However, Morojele and Stephenson (1992) suggested that the variable of perceived behavioural control has a profound impact on the operant level of intentionality, suggesting that the more a person thinks they are in control of their behaviour, the more far reaching will be the decisions which they make. Self-efficacy has been suggested as an important factor, with the internal attributions of locus of control and internality/externality (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1977; Carlisle-Frank, 1991; Haynes & Ayliffe, 1991). Moreover, the manner in which material is recollected may show a self-serving bias.

There is a range of biases that are quite clearly self-serving, because they seem to protect or enhance self-evaluation. People tend to attribute internally and take credit for their successes (a self-enhancing bias), or attribute externally and deny responsibility for their failures (a self-protecting bias). Although initial explanations for success and failure may be relatively modest, dispositional attributions for success and situational attributions for failure become more pronounced with time. (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005, p. 98)

The greater the sense people have that the choices are theirs, that external factors are weak, and that they have the capability to follow through with action, the more they may believe that they are responsible for what does occur. For example, the self-enhancing triad may arise because “people normally overestimate their good points, overestimate their control over events and are unrealistically optimistic” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005, p.
Indeed, as a form of self-reflection, self-enhancement may be stronger than self-verification (consistency) and self-assessment (validity). “Because self-enhancement is so important, people have developed a formidable repertoire of strategies and techniques to pursue it. People engage in elaborate self-deceptions to enhance or protect the positivity of their self-concepts” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005, p. 131). This may result in considerable variation in the extent to which a person is held (and holds themselves) responsible for their actions. Here both the individual and the collective aspects of decision-making are important while people are maintaining moral equilibrium between their ideals and their discrepant recollected behaviour. (The theme of self-concept maintenance is further developed in Section 2.2.7.)

### 2.2.3.6 Moral Agency

The third of the eight stages of the conceptual framework is completed with a discussion of moral agency, in response to the question as to how a person is responsible for their behaviour. Moral agency, as developed by Harré (1983), provides an important balance between the excessive individualism of the cognitivists and the excessive collectivism of the social constructivists.

For individualists, the deepest problem is how intersubjectivity is possible and their great philosophical problem that of our knowledge of other minds; for collectivists, the deepest problem is how individuality is created and sustained in so thoroughly social a world. For the former, individual being is given and social being constructed; while for the latter, collective being is given and personal being is an achievement. (p. 8)

A person’s understanding of themselves as moral beings embraces both the social and the individual dynamic. Furthermore, choice is fundamental to moral agency.
To be an agent is to conceive of oneself as (hold a theory that one is) a being in possession of an ultimate power of decision and action. A pure agent is capable of deciding between alternatives, even if they are equally attractive or forceful. A pure agent is capable of overcoming temptations and distractions to realise its plans. (Harré, 1983, p. 29)

Self-responsibility – acknowledging and holding myself accountable for the consequences of actions initiated by myself – seems to lie at the heart of moral agency. (Benson, 2001, p. 132)

However, in the situations to be studied in this research, as anticipated above by Gilovich and Medvec (1984; see Section 2.2.3.1), participants refer more often to occasions when they failed to behave according to their ideals rather than occasions when they deliberately committed what they would understand to be immoral actions. Jordan, Mullen, and Murnighan (2011) noted that “previous research suggests that failing to engage in moral behavior is not synonymous with engaging in immoral behavior; moral and immoral behaviors are not opposite ends of a single scale but rather two, distinct dimensions” (p. 703). Hence for most participants, their intentions, when recounted retrospectively, were virtuous, with which their subsequent actions were not consistent. ‘I never intended any harm’ would be the prevalent plea of mitigation. Such retrospective memories are fundamental to self-understanding.

2.2.4 Autobiographical Self - How do we handle our memories of past behaviour?

Having established agency as the third stage in the conceptual framework, the autobiographical self is introduced as the fourth stage. The question to be addressed is, ‘how does one handle memories of past behaviour?’ There are sections on the working
self, on the social construction of the autobiographical self, and on ethical aspects of self-understanding.

As mentioned earlier, in this current research the engagement with behaviour is retrospective. It is therefore necessary to consider the relationship between the event(s) as experienced and the event(s) as recollected. Moreover, the recollection of the event is itself a self-presentation which, from a discursive perspective, will belong to the immediacy of its context. The tendency to attribute meaning \textit{post facto} to life events is acknowledged (O’Doherty & Davies, 1987; Haidt, 2001). As Bem (1967) had suggested, self-reported attitudes may be the consequence rather than cause of attitude-related behaviour, an approach taken further by attribution theory. Brewin (1988), investigating the limitations of self-reports, had found a poor correlation between people’s reported attitudes and their subsequent behaviour; and then considering people’s retrospective explanations of their behaviour, he put forward the four cognitive functions of labelling/interpretation, causal attribution, moral judgement, and self presentation. Of these four, the first, labelling and interpretation, included misattribution and relabelling; the second, causal attribution, included both internal and (importantly) external causes; the third, moral judgement, was based on values, mostly as learned preferences arising through culture and experience; and the fourth, self presentation, was that public activity designed to enhance one’s appearance in the eyes of others. Whilst Brewin’s work had been developed for discrete events, I successfully applied this to the on-going process of addiction-related behaviour (Primrose, 1993; Primrose & Orford, 1996). Hence caution is exercised in equating people’s retrospective recollection of what occurred with their contemporaneous understanding of what was occurring at the time of the original event. Moreover, not everything is recollected.
The totality of one’s life experience exceeds that which one has the capacity to remember, hence one is selective in the memories which one will retain, both in current awareness and as available for recall. There are three aspects to that selective retention to be considered, firstly meeting the challenges of life, secondly the social construction of autobiographical memory, and thirdly preserving one’s understanding of ethical aspects of the self. Each of these will influence the material recalled during subsequent conversations along with the context of the conversation itself.

2.2.4.1 Working Self

First, the selection of material to be remembered is made by the working self in response to the challenges of life which are anticipated. The autobiographical memories selected are practically focused and essentially social, both relational in expression and cultural in content. Thus the autobiographical self, according to Conway (2002) is grounded in life-goals. He suggested that it draws on three types of data - lifetime periods, general events, and event-specific knowledge, each of which may contain behaviour of moral significance. For example, a commitment to environmental matters could be linked to memories of the ‘lifetime period’ of being at university, the ‘general events’ of writing letters to members of parliament, and the ‘event-specific knowledge’ of joining a protest against fracking. All this information may be of value as one considers how to respond in an environmentally sensitive way to current issues.

The self-memory system (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000) retains data which are pertinent to the tasks which one is likely to encounter. Memories which assist towards goal-achievement are recalled and memories which would distract from goal-achievement are discounted. For Aquino, Freeman, Reed II, Lim, and Felps (2009), the working self was the basis for life choices. Other than in pathological situations, memories serve to
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

constrain to within realistic boundaries the scope of goals which can be adopted by the working self. Thus people’s memories approximate to reality to a sufficient degree so as to deter them from embarking on a course of action likely to end in failure. People actually do ‘learn from their mistakes’. The research question asks, ‘how do people hold together an understanding of themselves which acknowledges these mistakes along with an understanding of themselves which matches the ideals to which they aspire?’

2.2.4.2 Social Construction of Autobiographical Memory

In considering the social construction of autobiographical memory into a life-story, Pasupathi (2001) had highlighted the role of coconstruction and consistency. The former refers to the role of the listener in the shaping of autobiographical memory, and the latter to the significance of repeated recounting of the event. For the events narrated within the main study of this current thesis, whilst many will not have been previously recounted to others, the participants may have frequently rehearsed the events in private to themselves, especially during the period following on immediately from their occurrence. Likewise, while in this current research there was no on-going relationship between researcher and participant, and the interview manner was attentive yet detached, the researcher did represent the ‘church’, and in this manner will have been party to the coconstruction of the memory whilst it was being recounted. McLean, Pasupathi, and Pals (2007) suggested how writing or talking about negatively charged emotional events decreases the associated negative emotion, but does not make any difference for positively charged emotional events. This would indicate that narrating discrepant events as part of one’s life-story, as occurred in the interviews of this research, could have cathartic benefits. Pasupathi, Mansour, and Brubaker (2007) investigated self-events, events which confirm the identity of the self. In particular, they observed the function of dismissal.
People sometimes narrated experiences in ways that explicitly raised (typically negative) implications for the self, and then dismissed those implications. … Often, the dismiss connection was established by attributing the behavior to exigent circumstances, and by emphasizing the fact that the behavior occurred once and was not repeated. … Another example of a dismissal employs mitigating circumstances, and minimization. (p. 96, italics original)

2.2.4.3 Ethical Self-Understanding

The third aspect of this fourth stage in our conceptual framework is the manner in which people think of themselves as good people. Shu, Gino, and Bazerman (2012; see also Haidt, 2006) suggested that not only do most people want to be considered by others as ethical individuals, they actually see themselves as more ethical than others. Everyone is better than average! Their research described individuals as curators of their own collections of memories, acting as revisionist historians when recalling the past. They found that people recall features selectively in ways which support their actions, engaging in choice supportive memory distortion for past decisions by selectively over-attributing the positive features of options chosen, while simultaneously over-attributing the negative features of options overlooked. This is further developed in the discussion of the psychological concept of moral identity (Section 2.2.6) which is introduced as the sixth stage of the conceptual framework, leading into the discussion on self-concept maintenance (Section 2.2.7).

Thus the fourth stage of our conceptual framework, that of the autobiographical self, contains an intrinsic dilemma. There is a tension between the need to recollect failures from which to learn, and the need to forget failures in order to enhance self-image. Two self-understandings coexist whilst manifesting discrepancies. And these socially
constructed autobiographical memories are held within a ‘situated story’ (McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007).

### 2.2.5 Divided Self - How do we talk about self-discrepancies?

The fifth stage in our conceptual framework acknowledges the split identified by the fourth stage. The divided self is introduced as a concept through which to understand self-discrepancies, and to help answer the key question about how one can talk about self-discrepancies. There follows a section on the singularity of the self, and on the multiplicity of the self.

Personhood has served as an over-arching concept within which several distinct understandings of the self may be contained. This will prove of considerable significance as the research focuses on the endeavour to reconcile apparently inconsistent self-understandings, central to which is the ability to hold together one’s ideal self with recollections of how one has behaved.

Harré (1983) distinguished between person and self, writing, “By ‘person’ I intend the socially defined, publicly visible embodied being, endowed with all kinds of powers and capacities for public, meaningful action. ... By ‘self’ I mean the personal unity I take myself to be, my singular inner being, so to speak” (p. 26). For Blasi (2004a), the self is “that aspect of personality that underlies consciously subjective and agentic processes, in particular, processes of mastery and self-control, of ownership and appropriation, of conscious self-definition, and of internal organization and coherence” (p. 342). The language of personal unity and internal coherence suggests a singularity to the self.
2.2.5.1 Singularity of the Self

Strawson (1997) provided a clear résumé of such an understanding of the singular self, writing

that the mental self is ordinarily conceived or experienced as: 1) a thing, in some robust sense; 2) a mental thing, in some sense; 3) & 4) a single thing that is single both synchronically considered and diachronically considered; 5) ontically distinct from all other things; 6) a subject of experience, a conscious feeler and thinker; 7) an agent; 8) a thing that has a certain character or personality. (pp. 407/8, italics original)

Such an understanding of the singularity of the self accentuates the dilemma of discrepancies between a good self-image and a useful recollection of past bad behaviour. In contrast, the conceptual solution may lie in embracing an understanding of the multiple self.

2.2.5.2 Multiplicity of the Self

The singularity of the self was challenged by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) who suggested that all metaphors of the self are versions of the Divided Self. To this they added the metaphor of Essence, whereby every object is held to have a quality which is the cause of its natural behaviour. They thus referred to the symbiotic pairings of the real self with other versions of the self.

This division within the self has been expressed by others using a wide variety of terms. It is striking to note the number of different typologies used to describe this phenomenon. For example, Galin (2003) used Lakoff and Johnson’s (1993) typology to explain how the Real Self is contained within the False Self. Harré (1983) introduced the
concept of a ‘file-self’, as distinct from the ‘real-self’, where the file-self consists of biographical records, and each person may have several. Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler (2000) have a model of dual attitudes, where beneath the (desirable) explicit attitude may lie another implicit attitude which can, on occasions, reassert itself. Indeed, Social Psychology (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005) has commonly compared and contrasted the Private Self with the Public Self, the former being the internal schema, which is the mental conceptual organization of how one relates to oneself, whilst the latter is the external schema of how one relates to others. For Higgins (1987), the Actual Self was the schema predicated on real experience in contrast both to the Ideal Self, which was the schema of one’s aspirations, and to the Ought Self, which was the schema of the expectations of authority figures. Blasi (2004b) wanted to reclaim the original Jamesian distinction of the subjective ‘I’ experiencing the objective ‘me’, and asserted the representational (or cognitive) Self to be contrasted with the lived, experiential, nonrepresented, subjective Self which is essential to conscious and agentic processes. Harter (1999) put forward the motivational aspects with possible selves representing both the hoped-for and the dreaded selves, thus serving as incentives which clarify those selves which are to be approached as well as those to be avoided. Thus she explained, “Closely related to the concepts of real and ideal selves is another distinction between the real and possible selves. Here we can appreciate the legacy of James (1842-1910), given his characterization of ‘immediate and actual’ selves as well as ‘remote and potential selves’ ” (p. 146, italics original). In McAdams’ (1996, 2001) development of the storied self, he used the concept of ‘imagoes’ as distinct characters in one’s life-story which are idealized personifications of the self, hence multiple imagoes allow for several ‘possible selves’. Thus considering all these examples, it is suggested that the singularity of the self subsumes an internal multiplicity, which has been described in many different ways.
This thesis adopts a critical realist approach to the self. However, it is acknowledged that there are also debates on the social construction of the self. Gergen (2011) noted ideological, rhetorical, and epistemological critiques identified with postmodernism. His approach focused on the relational self, with “the self as discursive action … discourse of the self as performance [and] … discursive action as relationally embedded” (Gergen, 2011, p. 113). Turner (2008) put forward the Plural Self, exploring the social discourse of post-modernity then suggesting that the self is essentially representational.

It is the formulations discussed in the second paragraph of this section which provide a structure to consider the Divided Self. This serves as the fifth stage in our conceptual framework. With a language to enable talk of self-discrepancies, the next question is about moral self-understanding.

2.2.6 **Moral Identity - How do we understand ourselves morally?**

The sixth stage in our conceptual framework discusses how people understand themselves to be good. In the second stage (morality), and the third stage (agency), reference has already been made to moral identity. In the fourth stage (autobiographical self), the idea of ethical self-understanding was introduced (see Section 2.2.4.3) which leads directly to the concept of moral identity. This is now discussed in full, with sections on public/private, self concordance, self consistency, and self concept.

Identities are self-schemata around which a person organises themselves. Moral identity is one amongst several identities, being one’s understanding of ethical aspects of the self (see Section 2.2.4.3). It is rooted in trait-based conceptualization (Aquino et al., 2009) whilst also having a social referent. Examples of social reference would be membership of a real group, alignment to an abstract ideal, or reference to an individual,
known or otherwise (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Aquino et al. (2009) reported evidence consistent with the theory that when the accessibility of moral identity within the working self increases, so does the motivation to behave morally. Moral identity is about having a self-schema of moral constructs around which information is processed which leads to dispositions towards moral behaviour. This is contextualised in the particularity of the situation (Weaver, 2006). As discussed below (see Section 2.4) in the conduct of the interviews, participants were invited to construct their moral identities with reference to their self-selected moral exemplars (Reed, 2002) who were fulfilling the role of self-guides for the Ideal Self (Higgins, 1987).

Moral identity, as developed by Blasi (1995, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; see also Hardy & Carlo, 2005) combined the insights of appraisal, intention, and emotion, to provide a useful tool for discussing the operational ethical understanding which a person has of themselves. These identities may be best understood as narrative (Blasi, 2005; Turner, 2008). “A moral person, or a person who has a moral identity, would be one for whom moral schemas are chronically available, readily primed, and easily activated for processing social information” (Lapsley & Laskey, 2001, p. 347). Such moral identities have both an internal and an external focus. These twin foci can be expressed as private and public.

2.2.6.1 Private and Public

As with the self, moral identity can be divided into the private and the public. The former is described as the dimension of “Internalization [which] appears to directly tap into the self-importance of the moral characteristics, the [latter] Symbolization dimension taps [into] a more general sensitivity to the moral self as a social object whose actions in the world can convey that one has these characteristics” (Aquino & Reed, 2002, p. 1436). Barkan, Ayal, Gino, and Ariely (2012), working with cohorts of students in the USA,
suggested how Symbolization was closely linked to self-presentation, which is about how people wish others to perceive them, as distinct from how they perceive themselves. The bifurcation of moral identity into Internalization and Symbolization allows for an understanding of moral identity as the dynamism of self-ideals, rather than the rigidity of principles.

2.2.6.2 Self Concordance

According to Sheldon and Elliot (1999), goals are self concordant when they match personal values. Pursuing self-concordant goals has enduring motivation, and their achievement increases well-being. Within this theoretical perspective, basic human values are competence, autonomy and relatedness. Self concordant goal achievement brings the experience of well-being, which is the base-line for the next phase of striving (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001; Sheldon et al., 2004). Considering the perceived locus of control, Sheldon (2002) concluded, “Despite their conceptual separability, the data shows that goals with intrinsic content are usually pursued for self-concordant reasons. Thus the ability to focus on healthy content areas can also be viewed as a skill that conduces to self-concordant goal-selection” (p. 77). Thus self concordant goals shape moral identity.

2.2.6.3 Self Consistency

Nucci (2004b) argued “against the [simplistic] notion that it is the goal of maintaining self-consistency that motivates individuals to act morally” (p. 50) and posited a more nuanced self-understanding.

The basic idea here is that from moral identity derives a psychological need to make one’s actions consistent with one’s ideals. ... The motive for moral action is not simply the direct result of knowing the good, but from the desire to act in ways
that are consistent with one’s own sense of self as a moral being. (Nucci, 2004b, p. 117).

Likewise, Bergman (2004) succinctly articulated how this proposition differentiates between Kohlberg’s and Blasi’s theories of moral motivation. Thus,

for Kohlberg, moral motivation to act comes from one’s fidelity to the prescriptive nature of moral principles. ... Hence not to act is to betray a principle. For Blasi, in contrast, moral motivation is a consequence of one’s moral identity, and not to act is to betray the self. (p. 34)

Bergman (2004) concluded with this rhetorical question, “Is all moral action motivated predominately, even exclusively, and self-consciously by a determination to maintain one’s own sense of moral integrity?” (p. 41). Dixon (2003) put forward moral desire as the response towards the achievement of one’s life-goal which gave rise to moral emotion. The motivational function of moral identity is thus an aspect of the teleological role of moral identity which goes beyond a static self-consistency towards a more dynamic self concept.

2.2.6.4 Self Concept

To have a moral identity is to have a theory about oneself (Moshman, 2004) which includes agency, rationality, singularity, and continuity (though regarding singularity, see Sections 2.2.5.1 & 2.2.5.2). Moral agency focuses on who one is rather than how one behaves. Doing, then, expresses being, hence moral agency provides positive feedback, from oneself and from others, and thus further strengthens moral identity (Weaver, 2006). The urge to maintain moral identity enhances moral motivation when moral identity is threatened, and decreases moral motivation when moral identity is consolidated (Sachdeva,
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Iliev, & Medin, 2009). The cyclical nature of this phenomenon is explored further below (see Section 2.2.7.4).

Moral identity is a core part of self-concept. It is by reference to moral identity that one is able to respond immediately to situations as they occur. However, the retrospective nature of the memories which are the focus of this research is a significant feature of this thesis, displacing the point of engagement from the time that the event occurred to its subsequent recollection and presentation. At each stage, the maintenance of a positive self-concept is important.

2.2.7 Self-Concept Maintenance - How do we present a good image of ourselves?

Having introduced self-concept maintenance as the seventh and penultimate stage of the conceptual framework, there are sections on ego defences, motivated forgetting and moral disengagement, motivational dissonance, moral credit, moral credentials, and moral reasoning.

Psychoanalytical understanding of the self identifies ego defences both internally, and relationally. The former addresses the Freudian repression of anxiety-inducing unconscious desires, whilst the latter belongs to the sense of identity derived from one’s relationship with significant others.

Mazar, Amir, and Ariely (2008b) have used self-concept maintenance to incorporate both internal and external constraints to moral behaviour. Reflecting on the way in which Festinger’s original work on cognitive dissonance had been developed (see following Section 2.2.8), Perloff (1993) observed, “according to self-esteem theorists, dissonance can usefully be viewed in the larger context of the need to preserve a positive self-concept” (p. 245). As shown above (Section 2.2.6.3), this goes further than avoiding
inconsistencies, and instead addresses the expression of one’s moral identity. Through the work of Blasi (1983, 1995, 2004a, 2004b, 2005), self-concept has become more central to the understanding of moral behaviour. Not untypical are the findings of Fischbacher and Föllmi-Heusi (2008) who found that when Swiss students participating in experiments were presented with a single opportunity to cheat in secret for modest financial gain, 39% were totally honest, no more than 22% cheated maximally, whilst at least 39% cheated to a limited extent. When students at an American university were required by Hao and Houser (2011) to be honest and/or to appear honest, 44% were committed to be honest, whilst 95% were committed to appearing honest; and those who, having secured the appearance of honesty, were prepared to cheat, chose then to cheat maximally. Batson and Thompson (2001) suggested, amongst people aware of the moral issues, the existence of both moral hypocrisy and overpowered integrity, with the former being where one intends to deceive, and the latter where one’s original intention was to be honest, but subsequent events made dishonesty the more attractive option.

Haidt (2006) argued that there is a need to present oneself to others as better than average, and believe oneself so to be (see also Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2012). Epley and Dunning (2000)

found that, in the moral domain at least, people were much less accurate when predicting their own behavior than when predicting others'. Participants consistently, and grossly, overestimated the likelihood that they themselves would act in a selfless and altruistic manner, whereas the predictions made about others tended to converge more closely with reality. (p. 873)

This was caused by the tendency to rely on case-based information for self (or known other) whilst relying on generally distributed information when referring to the
wider population. Case-based information was resilient to generalised facts. One can be selective in what one emphasises, thus self-affirmation theory suggests “how people who have been derogated on one dimension of self will publicly affirm one or more other positive aspects of self” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005, p. 130). Self-concept maintenance is about remaining accepted by (and acceptable to) the community.

2.2.7.1 Ego Defences

In their psychology of the self, Kohut and Wolf (1978) identified the role of ‘responsive-empathic selfobjects’ in the psychological environment of the developing child. It is through the process of differentiation from these selfobjects that the integrated self emerges. This facilitates an approach to psychoanalysis which embraces internal and relational challenges to the ego. Referring to Social Identification Processes, Reed (2002) observed that “Early in life, identification is considered an unconscious process of imitating referent others who serve as models for beliefs, values, and behaviors. In later stages of maturation, the identification process involves conscious choice and discrimination among possible identities” (p. 252). This can be seen when participants in this research identify with their moral exemplars, aspiring to the ideals they identify in others (see Section 2.4).

In the earlier development of psychoanalytic theory, the focus was on defence as an action of the ego to prevent anxiety-inducing unconscious thoughts from becoming conscious. This one-person, intra-psychic phenomenon was recognised in several different versions, from the original Freudian repression to which was added projection, isolation, regression, reaction formation, undoing, and splitting of the ego, to the work of the next generation which enumerated some ten defence mechanisms. With the subsequent development of objects relation theory, the focus of psychoanalytical theory then shifted to
the two-person, therapist-client relationship where defence mechanisms were seen less as obstacles to be overcome, but rather as insights which enable access to (dysfunctional) relationships from formative years. Indeed, defence mechanisms, in this way of understanding, serve to protect the self-esteem of the person. Defence mechanisms can now be understood both in their intra-psychic and in their interpersonal context (Cooper, 1998). As McAdams (1998) considered the role of defence in the life-story, he observed, “Life stories are not simple veridical reports about what ‘really happened’ in a person’s life. They are instead imaginative renderings of life into narrative form in which the past is reconstructed to meet current needs and goals and the future is anticipated in the light of the reconstructed past.” (p. 1129). That which is forgotten, and from which one is disengaged, are significant parts of this process.

2.2.7.2 Motivated Forgetting and Moral Disengagement

Mazar, Amir, and Ariely (2008b) developed their theory of self-concept maintenance looking at a wide range of common-place unethical behaviour such as cheating, dropping litter, and lying. They noted ‘inattention to moral standards’ and ‘categorization malleability’ as two ways in which people dealt with the threat to their self-concept posed by their own immoral behaviour. In the context of immoral behaviour of similar gravity, Shu, Gino, and Bazerman (2012) labelled the two principal mechanisms used to maintain self-concept as ‘motivated forgetting’ and ‘moral disengagement’, these, respectively, being equivalent to the earlier categories of inattention to moral standards and of categorization malleability.

First, regarding motivated forgetting, people manipulate their memories of past events in the interests of self-presentation (Bem, 1967; Brewin, 1988; O’Doherty & Davies, 1987; see Section 2.2.4). Shu and Gino (2012) suggested that the life-skill which
enables people to forget information (useful for minimising confusion and avoiding information overload) can also be applied to moral situations where after an event, one intentionally forgets those moral codes which have been breached by one’s behaviour. This is an adjustment of internal understanding.

Second, moral disengagement changes the rules of engagement so that what might previously have been considered as immoral becomes acceptable. This is an adjustment of external understanding.

Moral disengagement is the process of making detrimental conduct personally acceptable by persuading oneself that the questionable behavior is actually morally permissible. ... Moral disengagement mediates the relationship between the moral principles individuals hold and their behavioral transgressions. (Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2012, p. 330)

Moral disengagement may take any of the following forms: by portraying unethical behavior as serving a moral purpose, by attributing behavior to external cues, by distorting the consequences of behavior, or by dehumanizing victims of unethical behavior. Together, these ways to morally disengage explain how individuals recode their actions to appear less immoral and, as a result, shift ethical boundaries. (Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2012, p. 331)

Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer (2008) proposed that “empathy and moral identity are negatively related to moral disengagement, while trait cynicism and chance locus of control orientation are positively related to moral disengagement” (p. 374). Then Vincent, Emich, and Goncalo (2013) suggested that being in a good mood increases cognitive flexibility, which increases the capacity for moral disengagement, which can lead to
greater immoral behaviour. Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, and Regalia (2001) identified the way in which moral disengagement can occur at different stages of the perception-to-action sequence.

[S]ocial cognitive theory specifies eight mechanisms of moral disengagement that operate at different points in the control of behaviour by moral self-sanctions. They center on the construal of injurious conduct itself, the sense of personal agency for the actions taken, the representation of the injurious effects that flow from the actions, and the characterization of the recipients of maltreatment. (p. 126)

The eight mechanisms of moral disengagement referred to above are moral justification, euphemisms and convoluted language, exonerative comparison, displacement, diffusion of responsibility, misrepresenting the harm, ascription of blame, and dehumanization. On reflection, these are all responses which I can easily recognise when I consider the ‘excuses’ which people commonly make for their failings. In seeking to understand the handling of self-discrepancies, I would expect to encounter the effects of all these forms of moral disengagement as well as the impact of motivated forgetting.

A challenge within this current research is that once moral disengagement and motivated forgetting have occurred, the experience of the previously underlying self-discrepancy may no longer be readily accessible. People are less likely to recollect what they have been motivated to forget, and less likely to offer as relevant that from which they have disengaged! It was therefore necessary to pay particular attention to those residual self-discrepancies which did remain after the application of moral disengagement and motivated forgetting. Indeed, what was significant was that there actually was some remnant of self-discrepancies which was still apparent after the application of moral disengagement and motivated forgetting. Whilst in other contexts the presentation of fresh
information might cause suppressed memories to become salient, no fresh information was available to be presented to the participants of this current research. Indeed, in this current research, there was no opportunity to introduce evidence from third parties, though this variant had been considered in my previous research (Primrose, 1993). Moreover, the more focused approach, which was used for the third cohort of the main study, was not sufficiently challenging to overcome the effects of suppression. Hence rather than accessing underlying discrepancies, this current research worked with those self-discrepancies which were readily accessible (see Section 6.9.11).

2.2.7.3 Motivational Dissonance

Harter (1999) wrote about one function of these residual self-discrepancies, going beyond the ‘learning from one’s mistakes’ discussed above (see Section 2.2.4). Developing an interesting angle on Higgins’ (1987) work on self-discrepancies between Actual / Ideal and Actual / Ought, and the differing emotions which were engendered, she discussed how some degree of real-ideal differentiation is necessary as a source of motivation ...

[and] also describes how people actually produce discrepancies by creating challenging standards that then mobilize them toward a goal. Subsequent goal attainment then reduces the discrepancy, leading the person to set even higher standards. (p. 145)

I had used the phrase ‘motivational dissonance’ to describe this phenomenon which recreates dissonance, not to be confused with the classic motivational effect of cognitive dissonance towards attitude change and hence dissonance reduction (e.g. Elliot & Devine, 1994). Indeed ‘too much success can be bad for you’; an informal survey of senior educationalists suggested that many young people find success rates consistently above 70%-85% to be demotivating.
Indeed, occasional failures that are later overcome by determined effort can strengthen self-motivated persistence if one finds through experience that even the most difficult obstacles can be mastered by sustained effort. (Bandura, 1977, p. 195)

Returning to the work of Mazar, Amir, and Ariely (2008b) on self-concept maintenance, moral decision-making may be enhanced when moral identity was central. And the centrality of moral identity could be increased by the salience of moral codes and other morality triggers. Thus social norms may influence moral decisions, for example with in-group dishonesty bringing an increase in individual dishonesty and out-group dishonesty bringing a decrease (Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009).

### 2.2.7.4 Moral Credit

As noted at the end of the previous section, fluctuations in the strength of one’s moral identity may be inversely related to fluctuations in moral motivation (Sachdeva, Iliev, & Medin, 2009). Zhong, Liljenquist, and Cain (2009) proposed that attention to self-concept maintenance suggested a cycle of moral cleansing and moral licensing whereby moral credit was expended and accumulated. For example, Mazar and Zhong (2010), testing the impact of moral priming and of moral licensing, found that whilst exposure to environmentally green issues made people more likely to act in a moral way, undertaking green behaviour made people less likely to do so, hence indicating that the impact of licensing was stronger than that of priming. This parallels the addition, by Anand, Ashforth, and Joshi (2005), of the metaphor of the ledger in their discussion of the techniques of neutralization identified by Sykes and Matza (1957) as mentioned below (see Section 2.2.8.1), where the employees participating in that research rationalized that they
were entitled to indulge in deviant behaviours at work because of the credits they felt they had accrued in their jobs.

2.2.7.5 Moral Credentials

Whilst the moral judgements ascribed to others only make partial allowance for the balancing effects of good deeds on a bad deed (Riskey & Birnbaum, 1974), people may be more generous in their evaluations of themselves. Merritt, Effron, and Monin (2010) explored the question as to whether this cycle of moral cleansing and moral licensing was intended for internal or external impact.

Do good deeds reframe bad deeds (moral credentials) or merely balance them out (moral credits)? When does past behavior liberate and when does it constrain? Is self-licensing primarily for others’ benefit (self-presentational) or is it also a way for people to reassure themselves that they are moral people? (p. 344)

They concluded that it is more important to appear virtuous than to be virtuous (see also Dana, Weber, & Kuang, 2003; Effron & Monin, 2010; Miller & Effron, 2010). This preferences Symbolization, with its emphasis on self-presentation, over Internalization, as discussed earlier (see Section 2.2.6.1). Thus it seems that moral credentials are more significant than moral credits. In discussing self-concept maintenance, the remaining issue is the function of moral reasoning.

2.2.7.6 Moral Reasoning

As mentioned earlier in the discussion on agency (see Section 2.2.3), most moral decisions have to be made quickly, with minimal time for reflection. In Haidt’s (2013) overview of contemporary moral psychology, his three conclusions are “(1) Intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second, (2) There’s more to morality than harm and fairness
and (3) Morality binds and blinds” (p. 281). His Social Intuition Theory (Haidt, 2001) drew together the intuitive nature of this moral decision-making with the social context in which moral judgements are made. He described most moral decision-making as a rapid emotive response where the situation is appraised intuitively within the context of one’s relationships with others. Haidt (2001) suggested that the role of moral reasoning becomes particularly pertinent after an event, thus “moral reasoning is usually an ex post facto process used to influence the intuitions (and hence judgments) of other people” (p. 814). Thus whilst the original moral judgement may have been an emotive response to an intuitive appraisal, on retrospective reflection, post-hoc rationalizations may determine the manner in which the recollection of the event is processed. Indeed, original thinkers can be more dishonest (Gino & Ariely, 2012) as creativity increases moral flexibility, which increases the potential for dishonesty! As Shalvi, Dana, Handgraaf, and De Dreu (2011) have suggested, “people rely critically on self-justifications to enable themselves to lie, even when these justifications will never be available to other people” (p. 187). Thus for Haidt, “moral reasoning can now be defined as conscious mental activity that consists of transforming given information about people in order to reach a moral judgment. To say that moral reasoning is a conscious process means that the process is intentional, effortful, and controllable and that the reasoner is aware that it is going on” (2001, p. 818).

As noted earlier in the discussion on agency (Section 2.2.3), moral reasoning applies, not primarily to the moment of the decision, but to a period of time around and after the incident which includes any consequences which have become apparent (Blasi, 1995). Thus moral reasoning, offered retrospectively, may include reference to factors which were not actually salient at the time of the original decision. Whilst emotion may have been dominant at the time of the event (Section 2.2.3.4), reason is dominant in the
manner in which the event is processed for recall, whether as recounted in the interviews of this research or more generally to be used by participants to guide further behaviour.

There are thus three phases in the development of the recollection of a moral event. First, the moral decision is made as an emotive response following an intuitive appraisal. Second, in the immediate aftermath of the decision and any consequences, moral reasoning forms an account of the event which preserves moral credentials. And third, over time the event may be forgotten or it may be internalised within the autobiographical self. The interest of this research follows the third phase, and in particular when the event is retained within the self-memory system in a form which is not consistent with the ideals to which the person would aspire. The final stage in our conceptual framework addresses how we maintain equilibrium in the context of such self-discrepancies.

2.2.8 Dissonance - How do we maintain moral equilibrium in the context of self-discrepancies?

In considering the maintenance of equilibrium in the context of self-discrepancies, the eighth and final stage is to introduce dissonance as a possible candidate for inclusion as a core concept within the conceptual framework. Then there are sections on techniques of neutralization, the ‘Accepting Group’ from earlier research (Primrose, 1993), and finally Ayal and Gino’s (2011) related concept of ethical dissonance.

Dissonance theory had developed in the context of the juxtaposition of two incompatible cognitions with the conclusion that “the existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance” (Festinger, 1957, p. 3). In its original formulation, dissonance had focused on the differences between the pre-decision situation and the post-decision situation. Brehm and Cohen (1962) had refined this understanding by stressing that the
cognitions involved must be related to each other. They had outlined five methods of dissonance reduction – attitude change, exposure to information, recall of information, perceptual distortion, and behavioural change. Kelman and Baron (1974) had found that the first of these, attitude change, was not available as an option when the discrepant action evoked moral dissonance, which is the situation of this current research. They had also noted that cognitive inconsistencies may endure over a prolonged period of time. Indeed, the endurance of cognitive inconsistencies was the core observation which led to the concept of dissonance being central to my earlier research. Thus I wrote, “the life-experience of heroin addicts in Karachi affords an excellent example of cognitive dissonance arising out of discrepancies between attitudes and behaviour” (Primrose, 1993, p. 53). However, whilst classic dissonance theory suggests that the psychological discomfort arising from dissonance results in attitude change and other forms of dissonance-reduction, both in the earlier context of chaotic Pakistani heroin addicts and in this current research, the data suggested a degree of stasis in the occurrence of self-discrepancies. This then calls into question the ability of classic dissonance theory to adequately explain the phenomenon being investigated. Considering our own situation, ‘Do as I say, not as I do’ is advice we offer to ourselves. We breach the very rules we uphold. And to manage this, there are several techniques.

### 2.2.8.1 Techniques of Neutralization

Sykes and Matza (1957) had explored the question, “one of the most fascinating problems about human nature is why men [sic] violate the laws in which they believe” (p. 666). In their seminal work on delinquency, they had identified five techniques of neutralization which allow the teenager to exploit the flexibility which social norms allow. These were 1) denial of responsibility, 2) denial of injury, 3) denial of the victim, 4) condemnation of the condemners, and 5) appeal to higher loyalties. The significance of this
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

initial five-fold classification has endured, with Anand, Ashforth, and Joshi (2005), after an examination of corruption in business, modifying the list to include the sixth item mentioned above (see Section 2.2.7.3). This extra item is the metaphor of the ledger, where the participants rationalize that they are entitled to indulge in deviant behaviours because of the credits they have accrued in their jobs. Anand, Ashforth, and Joshi (2005) also renamed the fourth item of condemning the condemners as ‘social weighting’, thereby including selective social comparison. These are all ways in which one can reduce the level of dissonance experienced as a result of immoral behaviour.

However, there is a paradox in the approach to be adopted in this research. The research is to investigate situations where the participant identifies a discrepancy between their past behaviour and the ideals to which they aspire. If this discrepancy had evoked dissonance, then since the event there will have been considerable opportunity for the participant to engage in dissonance-reducing activity, yet some residual measure of dissonance still remains. This means that in the situations being investigated by this current research, despite the application of dissonance-reducing techniques, some level of dissonance endures (see parallel discussion on self-discrepancies in Section 2.2.7.2).

This situation is similar to that of the ‘Accepting Group’ of responses which I identified (Primrose, 1993) amongst chaotic, Pakistani (ex) heroin addicts. As an initial summary of the four groups of responses identified in that earlier research, in the ‘Accepting Group’, participants had acknowledged their behaviour; whilst in the ‘Confessional Group’, they had accepted their guilt; and in the ‘Testimonial Group’, they had asserted improvements; and finally in the ‘Defensive Group’, they had transferred the blame elsewhere. It is argued here that these first three categories can be linked to the three modes of religious coping identified by Pargament, Kennell, Hathaway, Grevengoed,
Newman, and Jones (1988). Participants of the Accepting Group had a reasonable sense of responsibility for their addiction-related behaviour, and a reasonable sense of ability to achieve its subsequent resolution. Within the strongly religious Islamic culture of that earlier research, this assumed a measure of divine participation in their recovery, which would be most similar to Pargament et al.’s (1988) collaborative style. However, it is worth noting that in the Christian context of Pargament et al. (1988) and of Kerley, Deitzer, and Leban (2014), the religious mode of coping where the relationship with the divine is described as ‘collaborative’ (both God and the person are active) would suggest a greater mutuality in divine and human involvement in problem-solving than would be expressed in an Islamic context. Participants in the Confessional Group expressed an exaggerated sense of responsibility for their addiction-related behaviour, with no sense of personal ability to achieve its subsequent resolution; this pervasive understanding of their own inability to change parallels the ‘deferring’ mode (an active God and a passive person). Participants in the Testimonial Group referred to their capacity and responsibility to achieve change; this parallels the ‘self-directive’ mode (an active person and a passive God). The fourth category of the Defensive Group conforms to the situation where neither God nor the person is perceived as being active. The most relevant of these four categories to the current research is the first, the ‘Accepting Group’, acknowledging its different expression in a Christian and in an Islamic religious milieu.

2.2.8.2 Accepting Group

In using the ‘Accepting Group’ of responses, as distinct from the other three groups, participants in that earlier research had apparently been able to tolerate some measure of attitude-behaviour dissonance. This they had expressed with mild rather than strong emotion, little rather than strong argument, with a reasonable sense of responsibility for their addiction-related behaviour, and with a reasonable sense of ability to achieve its
subsequent resolution. Within a culture in which dependency on the divine is routinely acknowledged within every statement of human intention (vs. ‘Insha’Allah’), those in the Accepting Group were aware of both their own part and that of the divine in their rehabilitation. In contrast to the other groups, the majority of ‘Accepting Group’ responses had been from ex-addicts who were able to look back on their addiction-related behaviour. This parallels the participants of the current research, who were invited to look back on their past behaviour from a stable position of good standing within their community. Significantly for participants in this current research, and to a lesser extent for participants using the Accepting Group of responses in my earlier research (Primrose, 1993), any immoral behaviour to be considered in the interview was not likely to be part of the contemporary public discourse within their immediate social setting. Unlike the chaotic heroin addicts in Pakistan, nobody was reminding the participants of this current research about their moral failings on a daily basis.

2.2.8.3 Ethical Dissonance

Ayal and Gino (2011) developed their concept of ‘ethical dissonance’ to describe this situation, where there is tension arising from inconsistencies between one’s actual, undisclosed, immoral behaviour and one’s own ethical values or attitudes. Ayal and Gino (2011) suggested that because ethical dissonance differed from cognitive dissonance in that the unethical behaviour is not public, it was not necessary to relax one’s internal codes to accommodate the apparent contradiction. Attitude change, as identified at the beginning of this section, was not required – which is important as Kelman and Baron (1974; Section 2.2.8) had indicated that it would not have been possible.

Ayal and Gino (2011) were investigating ‘ordinary’ unethical behaviour such as cheating and lying, and they identified the “three psychological mechanisms that enable
people to rationalize and condone their unethical behavior: moral cleansing, local social utility, and social comparisons of one’s own behavior to that of others” (p. 3). These three “honest rational mechanisms” (p. 6) have distinctive features.

For Ayal and Gino (2011), “Moral cleansing is an attempt to rid oneself of negative feelings after committing an unethical act by mental appeasement. This conscious process enables individuals to distance themselves from transgressions and turn a new page in their moral ledger” (p. 6). Moral cleansing is an aspect of moral self-regulation (Zhong, Liljenquist, & Cain, 2009).

In their analysis of ‘local social utility’, Ayal and Gino (2011) noted the benefits accrued to others and the “diffusion of responsibility [which] refers to the possibility that the presence of others in group settings enables people to ‘de-individuate’ and distribute responsibility among group members, thereby reducing their own responsibility and guilt” (p. 12).

In their analysis of ‘social comparisons’, Ayal and Gino (2011) noted that “the presence of others is relevant to ethical decision making not only when individuals share in the social utility of their behavior, but also when others help to establish a standard for ‘ethical’ behavior” (p. 14). They differentiated between descriptive and injunctive social norms, which provided the flexibility for “moral hypocrisy - an individual’s ability to hold onto a belief while acting contrary to it” (p. 17).

However, Ayal and Gino’s (2011) work considered how people deal with concealed unethical actions around the time of their commission, whilst this current research extends the concept of ethical dissonance to the more remote situation where the
participant recollects behaviour from the past which failed to accord with their current ideals.

Subsequent work, by Barkan, Ayal, Gino and Ariely (2012), identified the additional response of ‘the pot calling the kettle black’, whereby when wrong-doing cannot be discounted, individuals can adopt an excessively strict moral code, condemning in others that which they would conceal in themselves. This particular manner of dealing with ethical dissonance is unlikely to surface in this current research, where the point of entry was through moral exemplars to be emulated rather than notorious examples to be avoided. Hence during the research interviews for the main study, individuals are not given the opportunity to establish their own righteousness by pointing to the errors of others, or to behave as alluded to by Jesus when he asked in the Sermon on the Mount, ‘Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?’ (Matthew, chapter 7, verse 3, NIV).

2.2.9 Summary of Conceptual Framework

Working back up through the eight conceptual stages suggested at the beginning of this chapter (see Table 2.1, p. 30), this current research investigates the management of ethical dissonance which has been caused by discrepancies between the ideals to which one aspires and the recollection of one’s past behaviour. These discrepancies persist in the context of self-concept maintenance, when post hoc rationalizations have already occurred to preserve one’s moral identity. This dissonance can be accessed through an understanding of the self predicated upon internal divisions. This includes the autobiographical self which has been modified to enhance one’s self-image whilst also retaining sufficient real experience of failure so as to ensure optimal learning. It also includes moral agency, the acknowledgement of people’s responsibility for their own past
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour behaviour, in commission, in omission, and in disposition. Such behaviour is subject to ethical scrutiny utilising several different moral frameworks. Adopting a critical realist epistemology, the concepts identified contribute towards an outline conceptual framework that is sufficiently robust to allow for an engagement with the material, but not so refined as to permit the testing of theory. This current research is thus located within a pluralist approach to morality (Abend, 2013).

2.3 Unanswered questions, new perspectives and contribution to knowledge

This research question explores a common phenomenon which has not previously been fully investigated. It focuses on how people of good standing within their local communities maintain equilibrium in the context of discrepancies between their moral self-concept which is based upon their aspirations and their moral self-concept which is based upon their recollection of discrepant behaviour. The phenomenon is considered from the perspective of moral psychology research carried out in the context of a faith community, which therefore at points draws on concepts and findings from the field of psychology of religion, and which forms part of a longer standing practical theology project on the part of the researcher. The client group belong to a faith community, for which morality is a cohesive feature, and the data were obtained in the social context of a participant/interviewer relationship replete with religious primes.

Within modern psychology, it was the work of Kohlberg (1927-1987) which re-established the relevance of morality to the understanding of human behaviour. His staged approach to moral judgement initially dealt with abstract, third person, serious issues of justice, with participants having time for a considered response. The resultant work on moral reasoning was then developed as researchers addressed the immediate emotional response which contributed towards real world, first person decisions. The topics of moral
concern extended from justice to include the second personal domain, that of care, and subsequently the three corporate domains of loyalty, solidarity, and purity. The gravity of the issues addressed was adapted to questions of dishonesty and selfish behaviour. The significance of the context was clarified, with the priming of moral identity and the coconstruction of the life-story. Differences were noted between private and public self-presentations, with choices between moral credit and moral credentials. Tensions were acknowledged between the Actual Self and the self-guides of the Ideal Self and the Ought Self, both those of oneself and those of others.

Theories were developed as to why people behave well, in a self-concordant manner. This included variables such as moral agency, locus of control, and outcome saliency. When behaviour was incongruent with ideals, then the role of ego defences in repressing anxiety-producing cognitions was recognised, along with the techniques of neutralization which address potential dissonance. Moral disengagement and motivated forgetting were shown to combine to minimise the awareness of moral discrepancies.

The working self was understood to contain aspects of the self-memory system which enhance goal-achievement. This included autobiographical memories of past behaviour discrepant with one’s ideals. For people of good standing within their faith community, such behaviour would not be part of the public discourse, and would be inconsistent with their self-image as held within that community. Much research on immoral behaviour acknowledges the immediate benefits accrued to individuals through behaving in a manner contrary to their ideals which is nonetheless concealed from others. In this research, the memory of that behaviour is retained within the auto-biographical self.

This research explores what happens in an interview context, when the memory of that behaviour is made salient in the context of the moral ideals held by the participant.
Within a critical realist epistemology, this gives fresh insight into how the participant manages discrepancies between the ideals to which they aspire and the behaviour which they recollect.

In introducing this thesis (see Section 1.1), it was acknowledged that the research question may be of relevance to all areas where ideology affects people’s behaviour. It relates to how ‘respectable’ people continue to behave in ways which fall short of the ideals they profess. It may provide insights into how a community, which is characterized by an ethos of moderation, can tolerate amongst its membership radicalised individuals, thereby giving tacit approval to (violent) extremist actions at variance to its own (peaceable) norms and behaviour. This extends to the way in which faith communities have coped with divergent moral choices amongst their membership, with both tolerance and persecution. And as this research focuses on how ‘respectable’ people resist the moral injunction to ensure that their moral behaviour is in harmony with their ideals, so others may wish to apply the knowledge gained to overcome that resistance. This may help inform teaching and preaching, most readily within the Christian community in which context the research was undertaken.

2.4 Accessing Moral Ideals

In order to investigate this phenomenon, this research utilizes Haidt’s Social Intuition Theory (2001, 2013) accessing an individual’s morality through their network of relationships. It recognises that people prioritise Symbolization over Internalization (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Barkan, Ayal, Gino, & Ariely, 2012) and moral credentials over moral credit (Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010; Dana, Weber, & Kuang, 2003; Effron & Monin, 2010; Miller & Effron, 2010). This is the understanding of self-awareness as in the classic ‘looking glass self’ quotation ascribed, amongst others, to Charles Cooley (1864-
1929), ‘I am not who I think I am; I am not who you think I am; I am who I think you think that I am’.

Shults and Sandage (2006, p. 162) commented that “relationships with other people who serve as spiritual mentors, models, authority figures, companions, guides, or narrative imagoes can be highly influential on psychosocial development and spiritual formation.” In the conduct of the interviews of the main study, participants were invited to give salience to their moral identities with reference to their self-selected moral exemplars (Reed, 2002). These exemplars were fulfilling the role of self-guides for the Ideal Self (Higgins, 1987). Referring to Social Identification Processes, Reed (2002) observed that “Early in life, identification is considered an unconscious process of imitating referent others who serve as models for beliefs, values, and behaviors. In later stages of maturation, the identification process involves conscious choice and discrimination among possible identities” (p. 252). A hundred years earlier, Cooley (1902/92) had developed the ‘looking glass self’ mentioned above, thus:

Self reverence, as I understand the matter, means reverence for a higher or ideal self; a real "I," because it is based on what the individual actually is, as only he himself [sic] can know and appropriate it, but a better "I" of aspiration rather than attainment; it is simply the best he can make out of life. Reverence for it implies, as Emerson urges, resistance to friends and counsellors and to any influence that the mind honestly rejects as inconsistent with itself; a man must feel that the final arbiter is within him, and not outside of him in some master, living or dead, as conventional religion, for instance, necessarily teaches. Nevertheless this highest self is a social self, in that it is a product of constructive imagination working with the materials which social experience supplies. Our ideals of personal character are
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This research’s methodology therefore invited interview participants to identify the qualities of excellence which they see in those whom they admire. In the moral milieu in which these interviews took place, the character strengths identified were all imbued with moral significance. In this way, the moral categories which participants used to evaluate their situation were made explicit; as with Kelly’s (1995) theory of personal constructs, the unipolar expression of admirable qualities, allows the inference of converse behaviour which would meet with disapproval. This oblique approach circumnavigated some of the self-evaluation problems identified by Nisbett and Wilson (1977), when people are asked directly about introspective awareness (see Sections 2.2.3.3 & 2.2.3.4). These very qualities were then used in the conversation which followed as proximates for the qualities to which the participants would aspire themselves, a premise only challenged in one situation (see Section 5.4.5.5) which affirmed its functional validity.
Chapter Three - Methodology

3 METHODOLOGY

As this research addresses a commonly occurring phenomenon, the perspective of Real World Research is explored, with flexible designs and qualitative strategies (Section 3.1). The tools of Thematic Analysis are introduced (Section 3.2), and the data collection from the main study is discussed in this context (Section 3.3). The personal nature of this data corpus generates ethical consideration (Section 3.4). And then finally the reflective context of this study gives rise to various rhetorical issues to be addressed (Section 3.5).

3.1 Real World Research

Three possible purposes of research are commonly put forward – to explore, to describe, and to explain, whilst a fourth, to emancipate or empower, can be added for research intended to engender action and cause change (Robson, 2011). The central research question of this thesis is to explore the phenomenon of how equilibrium is maintained in the context of ideal/behaviour disharmony, seeking to provide an adequate description of this prevalent yet seemingly elusive experience, along with some tentative elements of an explanation. There is no intention to develop a robust explanatory causality, and from the outset, I resisted pressure from colleagues to approach the research with a change-agenda. Hence when colleagues wished to discuss how this research might be used to help church leaders overcome a resistance to personal change amongst members of their congregations, I would refocus the conversation on the efforts made by church members to maintain their apparent moral equilibrium.

In Robson’s (2011) approach to real world research, he differentiated between the paradigms of fixed designs and flexible designs, adding in the third category of multi-
strategy designs (also known as mixed-strategy). Whilst fixed designs are more associated with a quantitative approach and flexible designs are more associated with a qualitative approach, both types of design may use quantitative and qualitative data, and a multi-strategy design will incorporate significant amounts of both forms of data. When considering whether to choose a fixed, flexible, or multi-strategy design,

The research questions have a strong influence on the strategy to be chosen. … ‘What’ questions concerned with ‘what is going on here?’ lend themselves to some form of flexible design study. (Robson, 2011, p. 76)

A flexible design is usually associated with exploratory work, rather than descriptive or explanatory studies. This fits well with the primary emphasis of this thesis which seeks to understand how people manage disparity between the ideals to which they aspire and the way in which they recollect that they have behaved. However, I also wish to describe the phenomenon with greater clarity than is currently available, hence the research design will also have to fulfil a descriptive requirement. Indeed, there is even the aspiration for the beginnings of an explanatory theory!

It is of the essence of qualitative analysis that guidelines should be continually evolving (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; qualified by Reicher, 2000). Using the traditional bifurcation of research into qualitative and quantitative strategies, Hayes (1997) had offered these components as distinguishing the former from the latter.

1. Qualitative vs. quantitative data
2. Natural vs. artificial settings
3. Focus on meanings rather than behaviour
4. Adoption or rejection of natural science as a model
5. An inductive vs. a deductive approach
6. Identifying cultural patterns vs. seeking scientific laws
7. Idealism vs. realism. (p. 20)
From this perspective, the approach of this current research aligns more closely with a qualitative approach, as can be seen when each of the seven points listed above is considered in turn. First, more of the accessible data-sources are in textual rather than numerical format, with the likes of a semi-structured interview being preferred to a questionnaire. Second, the interest is in how people cope with ‘normal’ situations rather than contrived dilemmas. Third, it is the meaning within the behaviour not the behaviour itself which is the primary focus of attention; ‘how do people cope?’ rather than ‘what do people do?’ Fourth, in the background there is an unchallenged assumption that there is a reasonable explanation for the phenomenon under investigation. Fifth, understanding develops during the course of the research, rather than there is, at the outset, a theory to test. Sixth, the research generalizes from individual experience and there is no expectation that prescriptive definitions will be identified. And finally, progress will come through conceptual models rather than precise facts. On each of these features, the qualitative approach is to be preferred over quantitative as the dominant methodology, with quantitative analysis utilised in a supportive role within a flexible design. Indeed, if, in the main study, the statistical analysis of bio-data, and other factual information pertaining to the cohorts under investigation, was to have become a primary focus, this would have imposed undue sampling restrictions on the cohorts of potential participants (see also Section 5.2). Thus quantitative analysis plays a minor role in this current research.

Considering the qualitative aspects of this flexible design, “good qualitative research should embody elements of ‘sensitivity to context’, ‘commitment and rigour’, ‘transparency and coherence’ and ‘impact and importance’” (Coyle, 2007, p. 22). To this list of essential elements for good qualitative research, Creswell (2007) added “the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37). A social constructivist worldview (Creswell, 2007) adds an
important perspective, namely that as a research-practitioner, I am building an understanding of the world in which I live and work. Within qualitative analysis, the “speaking position” of the researcher is a valuable component of the method (Coyle, 2007, p. 18), the context of which needs to be made explicit. With the subjective meanings which participants give to their experience, I anticipate the exploration of a complex and varied set of opinions. Within the limits of the social constructivist account, I can then locate the theoretical perspective within my own personal context and thus express myself in a format that is readily accessible to the reader and to my professional colleagues.

3.2 Thematic Analysis

There are several ways to categorize qualitative research methodology. These are examined in order to make explicit the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted, which is that of the particular methodological tool of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). Robson (2011) identified the three most commonly used approaches to flexible design research as case studies, ethnographic studies, and grounded theory studies. He also listed narrative research, biographical and life history research, phenomenological research, and hermeneutics as approaches that might, on occasions, be preferred because of the particular research question being asked. Creswell’s (2007) categorization listed five approaches to qualitative research, namely: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (see also Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007). Henwood (1996, p. 32) identified three broad strands to qualitative research as shown in Table 3.1 (p. 94):
Table 3.1 – Strands of Qualitative Research (Henwood, 1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad strand</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Methodological principles</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strand I</strong></td>
<td>Empiricism</td>
<td>Discovery of valid</td>
<td>‘Data display’ model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td></td>
<td>representations</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>and validity</td>
<td></td>
<td>(using induction)</td>
<td>Protocol analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grounded theory</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Construction of</td>
<td>Ethogenics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intersubjective meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strand II</strong></td>
<td>Contextualism</td>
<td>Interpretative analysis</td>
<td>Discourse analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generativity</td>
<td></td>
<td>(highlighting deconstruction</td>
<td>Narrative analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and grounding</td>
<td></td>
<td>of texts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strand III</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discursive</td>
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<td>and reflexive</td>
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In this research, I am seeking to generate an understanding, grounded in the data, of the tactics used to maintain moral equilibrium in the context of ideal/behaviour discrepancies. There is no existent model to test for reliability and validity. The discursive approach (Coyle, 2007; Creswell, 2007) would deny the critical realist’s assumption of an enduring reality to the phenomenon of ideal/behaviour discrepancy management, focusing solely on underlying discourses within the text. However, grounded theory, with its contextualist epistemology, falls within Henwood’s (1996) middle strand of generativity and grounding, enabling the construction of intersubjective meaning (see Table 3.1, p. 94).

Grounded theory is particularly appropriate when “the main concern is to develop a theory of the particular social situation forming the basis of the study” (Robson, 2011, p. 135). Robson noted that “there are tensions between the evolving and inductive style of a flexible study and the systematic approach of grounded theory” (2011, p. 148). However, this is less pronounced with the more recent social constructivist approaches to grounded theory (e.g. Charmaz, 2006). Whilst the current research explores the phenomenon of ideal/behaviour discrepancies, there is the intention to describe this in sufficient detail to allow for the initial development of a rudimentary explanatory theory.
The intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory. Grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants. (Creswell, 2007, p. 62, italics original)

“Grounded theory is a good design to use when a theory is not available to explain a process.” Grounded theory normally uses interviews. “The point is to gather enough information to fully develop (or saturate) the model. This may involve 20 to 30 interviews or 50 to 60 interviews” (Creswell, 2007, p. 66, italics original).

One of the situations in which Payne (2007) recommended a grounded theory approach is when “there are no ‘grand’ theories to explain adequately the specific psychological constructs or behaviours under investigation” (p. 70). At an early stage this seemed similar to the situation in which I found myself. As discussed earlier in the development of the conceptual framework, I had initially anticipated that classical cognitive dissonance theory would adequately explain the phenomenon under investigation. I had then anticipated that attitude/behaviour discrepancy theory would provide an adequate explanation. However, the normality of the situation being examined in this current research, in contrast to that of the chaotic heroin addicts investigated in my earlier research (Primrose, 1993), denied this real world research sufficient purchase to test the theoretical positions of either classical cognitive dissonance or attitude/behaviour discrepancy, and no single alternative theoretical perspective was identified that was adequate to the task. The phenomenon being considered was too pervasive to be readily distinguished from everyday behaviour. Abend (2013) argued for a pluralistic approach to morality, arguing that research has been unduly dominated by an interest in moral
judgement. The literature review thus identified the absence of a coherent conceptual framework capable of explaining the phenomenon being investigated in this current research, and hence the research methodology adopted allowed for the progressive generation of fresh theoretical perspectives.

In my earlier research (Primrose, 1993), I had intuitively adopted an approach similar to grounded theory, drawing subsequently on Strauss (1987), Oppenheim (1966), Turner (1981), and Martin and Turner (1986). Grounded theory has developed in several different ways since the positivist and rigorous methodology pioneered by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Creswell (2007) contrasted the more systematic, analytic approach of Strauss and Corbin (1990) with the softer, social constructivist approach of Charmaz (2006). The former uses prescribed categories of information, whilst the latter, working with the conceptual richness of the field, provides greater flexibility and is more applicable to the localized, yet amorphous, area of this current research. I recognize my approach as more similar to the latter, with Creswell’s (2007) corresponding description of grounded theory focusing on these seven key aspects: developing a theory grounded in the data from the field; grounding a theory in the views of the participants; drawing from sociology; studying a process, action, or interaction involving many individuals; using primarily interviews with 20-60 individuals; and generating a theory illustrated in a figure.

In considering the use of speech as data, Payne (2007) observed that grounded theorists feel able to draw conclusions about the state of mind of individuals on the basis of their ‘talk’. They are interested in exploring the influence of previous experiences and personal understanding on the emotional and cognitive reactions displayed in talk. Thus, from this perspective, talk is seen as representing the contents of people’s minds and providing direct access to thoughts and emotions. Descriptions are taken to represent a
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‘real’ account of experiences and are seen as indicative of feelings at the time of the experience, although it is clear that the dialogue of the interview presents a retrospective account of those experiences. For grounded theorists, the social context of the interview is regarded as largely unproblematic.

Having acknowledged the potential merit of grounded theory, the decision to move on from a grounded theory approach to that of thematic analysis developed from a conversation and subsequent private correspondence with Adrian Coyle (personal communication, 16th March 2008) who recommended thematic analysis as a technique which had emerged out of grounded theory and might be of particular relevance. The particular shift in understanding was from an intention to generate theoretical understanding (as in a grounded theory approach), to a more modest aspiration to describe themes that could be identified within the data (as in thematic analysis).

Although thematic (coding) analysis has its origins within grounded theory, Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) have argued for its status as a distinct tool which can be used in many branches of qualitative research. They contrasted those methodological tools, such as thematic analysis, which they asserted are “essentially independent of theory and epistemology, and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches,” (p. 78) with methods such as grounded theory, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and interpretative phenomenological analysis, which are all tied closely to a particular theoretical or epistemological position. They found support in Payne (2007) who asserted:

The aims of grounded theory analysis are to develop inductive theory which is closely derived from the data rather than deductive theory which is supported by hypothesis testing. Therefore grounded theory is a suitable method for exploratory
research and explanatory research but it should be more than descriptive. If the intention of your research is merely to describe a set of behaviours, perceptions or experiences, then thematic analysis (Joffe & Yardley, 2004) is likely to be a better option. (p. 70)

Likewise, when considering another alternative approach, that of narrative analysis, Joffe and Yardley (2004) argued that the goals of thematic … analysis are simply different from those of, for example, narrative analysis. The aim is to describe how thematic contents are elaborated by groups of participants, and to identify meanings that are valid across many participants, rather than to undertake an in-depth analysis of the inter-connections between meanings within one particular narrative. (p. 66)

I anticipated the data from the main study (Chapter Five) to be amenable to the techniques of thematic analysis with a primary descriptive focus and a secondary exploratory focus, leading towards the beginnings of the development of theory.

Braun and Clarke (2006) noted the importance of making explicit the theoretical position of the method adopted when using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society. It can also be a ‘contextualist’ method, sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism, and characterized by theories, such as critical realism, which acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn,
the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of ‘reality’. (p. 81)

In keeping with its critical realist epistemology, this research sits within the central contextualist strand of “generativity and grounding” as described by Henwood (1996, p. 32; see Table 3.1, p. 94).

In engaging with the primary data from the interviews, there are six phases of thematic (coding) analysis developed in succinct detail by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) namely: familiarizing oneself with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing (potential) themes; refining and naming themes; and finally producing the report.

In other research situations, there may be, from the start, rich descriptions of the data set or a detailed account of one particular aspect, which would allow for what Joffe and Yardley (2004) referred to as deductive coding. However, as I do not have strong theoretical models to apply to the data at the outset, my analysis instead begins ‘bottom up’ with inductive coding. Typically, a researcher may focus on themes either at a semantic, explicit level or at a latent, interpretative level; I intend to move from the former to the latter, as the analysis progresses and opportunities arise for me to examine underlying ideas and concepts. In this, my critical realism shifts its epistemological bias away from the essentialist side of contextualism towards the constructionist side of contextualism. The adoption of a more social constructivist perspective would then allow me to express the emergent concepts in language readily understood by the reader and by professional colleagues.
3.3 Data Sources

Several sources of data for the main study are considered (Section 3.3.1). Issues of validation are raised (Section 3.3.3), and then the link between the developing analysis and the literature review is discussed (Section 3.3.4).

3.3.1 Sourcing Data for Main Study

My research interest is in how people hold together their moral aspirations regarding their behaviour with their awareness of how they actually have behaved. Prior to embarking formally on this research, in discussion with others it had been possible to identify individuals who, like the rich young ruler of the synoptic gospels, considered themselves to be righteous. In my pastoral work as a vicar, especially with funeral visits, it was not uncommon to hear reference to ‘a good person’ or someone who ‘never did nobody no harm’. Those who had been blessed by the ministry of a previous member of the clergy would frequently project on to him/her an aura of perfection. However, I also was aware of many people, held in high esteem by others in the community, who were themselves privately cognisant of occasions when there had been a difference between their ideals and their behaviour.

In the period leading up to the registration of this thesis, I had considered several literary genres as possible sources of raw data, such as published biographical literature, classical drama, popularist TV soaps, and even accounts of the ‘confessional’. In considering the potential and limitations of each of these, I acknowledged the limits of my knowledge, and the paucity of my expertise, in hermeneutics and literary analysis, and hence did not progress these particular opportunities. However, these literary data-sources remain available for future research.
The most common source of data for thematic analysis is interviews. Of the variety of interviewing styles available, semi-structured interviewing allowed me to focus on my research question whilst maximizing the participants’ freedom to respond out of their own experience (Charmaz, 2006; Kvale, 1996). The interviews would be with individuals who are in good standing within their local community, seeking to access their experience of ideal/behaviour disharmony.

Nisbett and Wilson (1977) drew attention to the reliability issues pertaining to ‘introspective awareness’, pointing out that direct questions relating to higher level cognitive processes often met with a priori theories rather than awareness based on subjective experiences. For this reason, the interview technique adopted an oblique approach (see Sections 2.2.3.3, 2.2.3.4 & 2.4).

As noted previously (Sections 2.1 & 2.3), a shared morality is a cohesive feature to a religious community. The community respects those to whom it attributes moral excellence, and expects moral excellence of those holding senior positions. Thus people of good standing in a local church afford a good example of those whom manage discrepancies between aspirations to moral excellence with the private recollection of past behaviour. Indeed, as a research-practitioner, I formulated the current research question through personal observations of the moral reasoning of respected and respectable church members, in the same way that I had formulated the earlier research question through personal observations of the moral reasoning of chaotic heroin addicts in Karachi. With the dominant cultural role exercised by Islam in the Pakistani context, and with membership of an Anglican Church being the common feature in the English context, both the research questions are aspects of moral psychology with elements of the psychology of religion.
3.3.2 Sourcing Ancillary Data

Three ancillary situations helped to clarify the context in which I was working, the first being of incidental significance, the second and third being more amenable to rigorous analysis. First, I recorded the comments made by acquaintances on hearing of my research. These gave insight into views commonly expressed by my colleagues and friends. With limited data, conclusions would have been more illustrative than definitive (see Appendix A). Second, a seminar was organised for church-workers, focusing on the related question, ‘why don’t Christians change?’ which allowed for a preparatory exercise of self-reflexivity. Here the data were sufficiently rich to allow for some thematic analysis (see Chapter Four). Third, two collections of sermons were analysed to identify the manner in which moral exhortation was a cohesive factor for the community of a church.

3.3.3 Validation

Methodological pluralism (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2005) allows the strengths of one method to compensate for the limitations of another. Of the various validation strategies available (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007), there was the opportunity to triangulate data from the four different sources of the individual interviews of the main study, the preparatory exercise in self-reflexivity with peers, the comments of acquaintances (Appendix A), and the selected sermons which illustrated the function of morality in community identity. Morse et alia (2002) argued for the reintroduction of verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research during the research process, rather than deploying strategies for trustworthiness and utility after the research is completed. They suggested that core to the adoption of verification strategies is “investigator responsiveness” (p. 17), which in this study was enhanced by my prolonged engagement with the research question, my personal experience, and the substantive preparatory self-reflexivity.
Within the conduct of inquiry itself, verification strategies that ensure both reliability and validity of data are activities such as ensuring methodological coherence, sampling sufficiency, developing a dynamic relationship between sampling, data collection and analysis, thinking theoretically, and theory development. (Morse et alia, 2002, p. 17)

Aspects of these five verification strategies were built into the engagement with the data throughout the process of this research.

The data-sets from the preparatory exercise and main study were audio-recorded, following which transcriptions were made which recorded the spoken text with little additional annotation of the emotions conveyed through the spoken word. The data-sets for the sermons were obtained in textual format. Thematic analysis was applied to the text, with modest supporting information from field-notes and bio-data. This generated sufficient data, so that it was not necessary for me to analyse the wealth of non-textual data accessible through my personal experience of the group-seminar and the interviews, and available through the emotional dynamic reflected in voices of the audio-recordings (see Section 6.7.2).

3.3.4 Timing of Literature Review

In contrast to the prevailing wisdom of the time (e.g. Hart, 2001), Charmaz (2006) observed that, in the related field of grounded theory, “classic grounded theorists advocate delaying the literature review until after completing the analysis” (p. 165). Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that for thematic analysis there are different positions regarding when you should engage with the literature relevant to your analysis, with some arguing that early reading can narrow your
analytic field of vision, leading you to focus on some aspects of the data at the expense of other potentially crucial aspects. Others argue that engagement with the literature can enhance your analysis by sensitizing you to more subtle features of the data. Therefore, there is no one right way to proceed with reading for thematic analysis, although a more inductive approach would be enhanced by not engaging with literature in the early stages of analysis, whereas a theoretical approach requires engagement with the literature prior to analysis. (p. 86)

There are close links between the literature review and the theoretical framework, both being ideological exercises; hence much has been gained by their mutual interaction. Considering the overall rhetorical structure of the related area of grounded theory, Creswell (2007) noted that the purpose of the literature review is not to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework, but rather to identify gaps in knowledge which could then be addressed by the research process. Ideas are identified within the data. Ideas are also identified within the reading of existent literature. Both these conceptual sources contribute to a dynamic theoretical development which continues beyond the viva-voce to the very end of this current research project. Thus this completed thesis is the final iteration of a process which is being continually revised through an on-going engagement with contemporaneous academic literature. Throughout this process, adherence to ethical research principles is of paramount importance.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

In discussing research ethics, Hogg and Vaughan (2005, p. 19) observed that “there are five ethical principles that have received most attention: protection from harm, right to privacy, deception, informed consent and debriefing”. The ethical dimension to this research was heightened as a result of its engagement with personally sensitive material
which participants would be invited to disclose. This was particularly true for the main study, (see Chapter Five) when church members were asked to identify their own moral exemplars, and later to share recollections of occasions when they had failed to live up to their own ideals. In the preparatory seminar (see Chapter Four) the focus of the discussion for those attending was on ‘other people’, and all were familiar with ‘Chatham House rules’. The data from the sermons had been delivered in public. Hence it was the main study that generated most ethical issues.

I postulated several scenarios, which could occur during the semi-structured interviews of the main study and hence may need to be addressed. These are shown in Table 3.2 (p. 105).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Issue</th>
<th>Example of Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distress</td>
<td>Death of loved one mentioned as one of the Moral Exemplars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>Praise or criticism of known individuals, eg vicar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unresolved Guilt</td>
<td>Admission of past misdemeanours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken Relationships</td>
<td>Reference to on-going antagonism or conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gossip</td>
<td>Information about other church members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis of Faith</td>
<td>Articulation of doctrinal doubts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Expression of sexist or racist views</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principle of confidentiality placed interpersonal boundaries on the issues raised and the anonymising of data placed temporal boundaries on these issues. What remained was to ensure that the immediate intrapersonal aspects of these issues received appropriate attention.

3.4.1 **Personal Support**

The person from whom I received spiritual direction was responsible for the pastoral care of the clergy in a neighbouring diocese. Anticipating the personal nature of the main study’s interviews, I had asked him to identify three vicars for that study, and one
for its pilot, whom he knew to be pastorally sensitive. This aspect of pastoral sensitivity would increase the likelihood that they would understand the nature of the research question and be able to suggest suitable church members as participants. They were asked to identify church members who, as far as they knew, were not currently dealing with trauma. This stipulation was lest the immediacy of the church members’ personal concerns displace the broader life-time focus of the interview (see also Section 5.2).

King (1996), arguing for the importance of reflexivity in addressing the researcher/participant power imbalance, suggested the importance of the Rogerian qualities of ‘empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard’ with appropriate guidelines and boundaries to respond to personal material that the participant may share. It was recognised that personal issues may arise in the interview process which the participant may wish to address. Whilst a limited measure of pastoral support might be offered during the interview itself, it was neither possible nor appropriate for me to provide any participant with on-going support. For many participants, matters could be raised with their vicar, or with a friend, or a family member, but provision was made in case this was not appropriate. In discussion with the clergy, a local Christian counselling service was identified who were willing to accept self-referrals, and their contact details were included in the debrief provided for each participant (Appendices Ha, Hb, Hc & Hd). The interview process relied upon informed consent.

3.4.2  Informed Consent

On at least four occasions, each participant of the main study was invited, should they so wish, to withdraw from the research, this being made explicit on initial contact, again during the introduction to the interview, then prior to the commencement of the audio-recording, and finally within the final debriefing. The participant was also given the
opportunity to request for any section of the audio-recording to be deleted, this actually occurring twice, once at the request of the participant and once at my suggestion. The repeated confirmation of informed consent recognised the increasingly personal nature of the interview and ensured the ‘depth’ of participant’s consent matched the material that had been shared (see also interview schedule in Appendix B). It was anticipated that the interview would include material of emotional significance to the participant.

3.4.3 Emotions

Both in the introduction of significant others as Moral Exemplars and in the discussion of past behaviour, there was the possibility that the participants would experience a variety of emotions. In particular, sadness and grief could be triggered by the recollection of loved ones who had since died, and in the discussion of occasions of disappointment or relationship breakdown (see Table 3.2, p. 105). Participants identified me as a ‘vicar’ and their own vicar was, by intentional selection, pastorally sensitive. This allowed my own pastoral sensitivity to provide a safe context in which emotions could be expressed and acknowledged. Indeed, I offered paper tissues where appropriate, and the social conversation after the interview could be extended to allow time for composure to be regained. As well as expressed emotions, there was concern that the interview might be experienced as stressful, particularly with regard to the recollection of bad behaviour from the past.

3.4.4 Focus on Failure

Reflecting on the content of the interviews of the main study’s first two cohorts, there appeared a paucity of dialogue demonstrating high levels of cognitive complexity. It was recognised that this may be linked with the open-ended, exploratory style of questioning which allowed the participant to deflect disturbing questions. It was therefore
decided to modify the interviewing style for the third cohort, introducing a challenging presumption that on some occasions there actually had been failure to live according to one’s ideals. I was concerned that this change of approach might create undue stress for the participants. The different approach was piloted with two friends, and then discussed with them afterwards. Both indicated that this more assertive style of questioning was acceptable within the overall caring and affirming ethos of the interview.

3.5 Rhetoric

The ideas and concepts examined in this research may fall within or between the disciplines of psychology and theology. The initial inductive phase of the analysis was predicated on my belief that there would be themes, identified within the data, which could contribute towards, and be explicated by, the fields of social psychology and of practical theology, the latter being pioneered by, for example, Cameron, Bhatti, Duce, Sweeney, and Watkins (2010). Later in the process, my own theological and psychological awareness, which developed as I was engaging with the data, allowed for a critical examination of data from a deductive perspective.

Finally, as I looked at the writing-up of this thesis, there were four additional rhetorical issues to consider (Creswell, 2007), which whilst applying to all studies are particularly important in addressing qualitative studies. The first is the issue of reflexivity and representations which Banister et al. (1994) detailed with aspects of observation such as focus, structure, time-scale, transparency, and feedback. I acknowledged the impact of the research on myself, the participants and the readers. I have been explicit about my own personal situation and the liberal Anglican cultural milieu which I inhabit. I discussed the considerations I have made in allowing for the possibility that some of those interviewed may read the results of the research. More particularly, I have been open about the way in
which I may adjust the final manuscript in anticipation of personal responses which may be forthcoming from colleagues who know me. And I intended to minimize the use of the passive voice, lest personal responsibility for what is written is reduced; rather lest I reduce personal responsibility for what I write!

Of the other three rhetorical issues, the second is to be explicit about my audience. Am I writing for the academic examiner, colleagues, participants, policy makers or the general public? My intention has been, having satisfied my examiners, for aspects of this work to be of value to colleagues in their pastoral ministries. The third rhetorical issue is the way in which I choose to encode my writings. As a research practitioner, the language and imagery which I have used appeal to my primary audience of professional colleagues. The fourth and final issue is the extensive use of quotations, to allow the voice of the participants to be projected as clearly as possible.

3.6 Summary of Methodology

This research is a descriptive study employing a flexible design, with a predominately qualitative approach using thematic coding analysis. The primary data came from semi-structured interviews, supported by limited bio-data and peripheral information. Sustained engagement with the research question and substantive self-reflexivity contributed towards the validity of the outcome which developed from intuitive description to a more deductive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. I used a critical realist epistemology for the research, whilst adopting a social constructionist perspective to express the results in theological and psychological concepts accessible to my professional colleagues. Informed consent and other ethical aspects of this current research were anticipated in the application approved by the university’s research ethics committee.
Chapter Four–Preparatory Exercise

4 PREPARATORY EXERCISE

4.1 Introduction

In casual conversation with clerical colleagues of my acquaintance, many expressed an immediate interest in the initial research topic of how people live with ideal/behaviour disharmony, often expressing their own opinions on this matter with comments which were both succinct and expressive (see Appendix A). This suggested that many other members of the clergy may also see the relevance to situations in their own ministry of this preliminary research topic and of the subsequent research question of how moral equilibrium is maintained. As theological practitioners, I posited that, like me, my fellow church leaders would have regularly engaged with such issues, and that our pragmatic understanding would be indicative of the daily context in which lay people in our parishes live with the implied discrepancies between their behaviour and their ideals and/or maintain moral equilibrium. Having recognized the extent of the theological understanding held by colleagues, I decided to access this at an early stage of this current research process so as to inform the conceptual development of my engagement with the preliminary research topic and the subsequent research question. The intention of this preparatory exercise was to achieve greater depth and clarity with respect to my own assumptive world, through identifying theological themes which pertained to the preliminary research topic and led on subsequently to the central research question, and which were commonly held by Anglican clergy and church workers in situations similar to my own. After the main study, a further stage of self-reflection was enhanced by examining the content of two sets of sermons, both rich in moral exhortation.
4.2 Preparatory Exercise

For the preparatory exercise, colleagues were invited to a seminar to discuss the question, “why don’t Christians change?” The wording of this question reflected the preliminary research topic which focused on the more passive nature of ‘living with ideal/behaviour discrepancy’, rather than the subsequent development of the central research question into how moral equilibrium is maintained.

The seminar had three distinct phases of engagement (see Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2). First the focus group generated ideas. These were then clustered into topical domains. These domains then formed the basis for a semi-structured conversation. An audio-recording of the clustering and the conversation was transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis.

4.3 Method

When the focus group took place, there were 230 licensed clergy in the Diocese of Gloucester, and I was personally acquainted with over two-thirds of them (158/230). There was thus a large pool of clergy who might be willing to contribute to this preparatory exercise, either through an interest in the preliminary research topic, or because of their existing relationship with me, or due to a combination of both. The possibility was thereby acknowledged that their motivation might have a personal as well as an intellectual aspect, hence no claims are made as to the generality of the insights gained beyond their immediate relevance to myself, as researcher.

The approval of the diocesan director of ministry was readily forthcoming, and an invitation was sent to all licensed clergy in the diocese via the monthly clergy emailing. I also emailed direct invitations to some twenty of those with whom I had a more substantial relationship, which included some non-parochial clergy and lay ministers. Arrangements
were made for a working lunch, at church premises which were centrally located and which were often used for training events in the diocese. In all, twelve colleagues expressed an initial interest in attending. A further fifteen sent their apologies, most adding insightful and informative comments relating to the preliminary research topic. Briefing letters were emailed to those who had expressed an interest, and, in the end, nine participated in the event. The composition of the group (excluding myself) was four incumbents, two diocesan officers, one self-supporting minister, one curate and one lay worker. There were five men and four women, inclusive of one married couple. In the latter part of the two-hour programme, there was a substantive semi-structured conversation which was audio-recorded. Prior to this recorded conversation, I had welcomed the participants, explained the process, and introduced the preliminary research topic. This had then led into a ‘thought shower’ exercise, using flip-charts, designed to identify the ideas which we would subsequently be discussing. There then was a group exercise when we considered the material recorded on the flip-charts, clustering the ideas which had been suggested into thematic ‘domains’. One colleague had indicated that he was amenable to assist by fulfilling the role of scribe, which allowed me to facilitate the ‘thought shower’ and the clustering group exercise which then followed. The audio-recording began with the domain-clustering with its group exercise, and continued with the semi-structured conversation. Figure 4.1 (p. 113) shows the distribution of time across the various activities. The audio-recording was subsequently transcribed and formed the principal source of empirical data, along with the flip-charts, my assistant’s notes, feedback forms and my own field notes.
Thus the semi-structured conversation drew on material which had been generated by the participants themselves during the introductory thought shower exercise and which, in the following group exercise, we had subsequently clustered into topical domains. The collaborative nature of the exercise ensured that the group collectively owned this material and the conversation which followed. Thus comments which were made during the recorded semi-structured conversation were to be understood in the context of the whole event, which included their relevance to comments made by the participants prior to the commencement of that conversation.

A qualitative analysis approach allowed for themes to emerge out of the transcribed text, and in this situation, the presumption that there would be (theological) themes allowed the detailed approach of Thematic Analysis to be used as a methodological tool (see Section 3.2). The emphasis was on the transcription of the semi-structured conversation, with supplementary evidence from the flip charts, my assistant’s notes, my field notes and the feedback forms. The original audio-recording was available for detailed investigation when required, this being particularly useful when participants were quoted verbatim. NVivo10, a software package designed for qualitative analysis, was used to
process the transcript as the primary source of data. As themes emerged from the data, so they were tested for robustness and consistency. A more thorough discussion of thematic coding analysis using NVivo10 is included as part of the main study (see Sections 5.3.2; 5.4; 5.4.4; 5.4.5; & 5.6).

4.3.1 Thought Shower and Clustering

The introductory thought shower exercise generated 49 comments (single words or short phrases), which the participants of the focus group suggested as factors to explain why Christians do not change their behaviour to live in accordance with their ideals. Immediately prior to the facilitated semi-structured conversation, there was a group exercise during which these 49 comments were clustered into (six) topical domains, these clusters emerging in dialogue and being tested, amended, and accepted by the whole group. When for 11 comments, two different domains were suggested by the participants, the comments were assigned to both (thus allowance is made for double-counting). The process of clustering in topical domains was included in the transcript of the audio-recording and hence was subject to close scrutiny. The six domains accepted at that stage were labelled by the participants, as shown in Table 4.1 (p. 115), with numbers indicating total number of items in each domain, allowing for double-counting. The first domain of ‘ideals and morality’ highlighted a decline in Christian moral standards. The second of ‘repentance and forgiveness’ focused on human sinfulness. The third of ‘inertia and pain’ recognised a tendency to preserve the status quo. The fourth of ‘teaching and practical response’ drew attention to the failure of the church to provide clear guidance. The fifth of ‘corporate and individual’ acknowledged the tension between the expectations of the church and the needs of the individuals. And the sixth of ‘God and self’ was concerned with spiritual awareness.
Table 4.1 - Domains, with number of comments and examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>N=49</th>
<th>Typical Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>secular morality, ignorance of higher ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>sin/fallenness, barriers to repentance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>perception of self-righteousness, pain of not changing is not great enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>lack of clear teaching, lack of pastoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>limitations of church, institutional church vs personal growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>lack of spiritual maturity, sanctification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These domains are represented pictorially in a Venn diagram as Figure 4.2 (p. 115), with the area of each circle proportionate to the number of comments in that domain, and numbers shown in the overlaps. Following the clustering exercise, the group broke for lunch and then resumed to discuss these ‘moral’ domains.

Figure 4.2 – Diagram of Domains, N=49
4.3.2 Semi-structured Conversation

In the conversation following the break, I introduced these domains as the topic for group discussion, moving from one domain on to the next, starting with the most popular, namely number III, ‘Inertia/pain’. I introduced all but one domain, finishing without time for me to introduce number V, the domain of ‘corporate & individual’, although it had already been independently mentioned by the participants during the course of the conversation. I guided this semi-structured conversation with a light touch, frequently using summary statements to encourage all participants to remain engaged with the developing dialogue. The right-hand column of Table 4.1 (p. 115) gives typical examples of the issues which had been generated through the initial thought shower and formed the basis for the semi-structured conversation.

The semi-structured conversation differed in ethos from the initial thought shower and clustering exercise. The thought shower, during which ideas had emerged rapidly, had been lively with participants suggesting fresh material themselves rather than pausing to discuss the contribution of others. Likewise, the generation of the six clusters of topical domains, which had followed the thought shower, was full of short contributions made in rapid succession, suggesting spontaneous, instinctual responses. The concepts articulated at this early stage of the seminar used language which was largely intuitive and associative. This was different from the semi-structured conversation which occurred later in the seminar, and suggested the distinction between former use of ‘Automatic’ System 1 thinking and the latter use of ‘Reflective’ System 2 thinking. “System 1 refers to our intuitive decision processes, which is typically fast, automatic, effortless, implicit, and emotional; while System 2 refers to reasoning that is slower, conscious, effortful, explicit, and logical” (Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011, p. 20; see also Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, and Kahneman, 2001).
Thus the semi-structured conversation which followed the clustering allowed for ideas to develop as the participants were in dialogue with one another. During this phase of the seminar, theological concepts emerged more distinctly, and, in contrast to the initial thought shower and clustering exercise, there was more evidence of reflection and the development of ideas.

This semi-structured conversation was an amicable affair, with participants listening to and responding to one another’s contributions. Whilst differing views were expressed, this was in the context of general consensus rather than conflicting opinions. As a result, when a participant did not contribute to a particular phase of the discussion, it would be presumptuous to assume that his/her views were either in agreement with or contrary to the views which others had articulated.

4.3.3 Transcription

I obtained the services of a professional stenographer/audio-typist to transcribe the domain-clustering group exercise and the subsequent semi-structured conversation. For most of the transcript, I was then able to recognise the voice of the speaker and thus insert the names of the participants against their spoken text. Finally, the transcription was rendered anonymous, with names changed and recognisable references replaced by generic terms. In this format, it was up-loaded into NVivo10 for coding.

4.4 Analysis

The six topical domains listed above had emerged in discussion with the participants and had then formed the basis for the semi-structured conversation which followed. In this semi-structured conversation, the topic of the actual contributions made by participants was linked to the domain being discussed. This was done both when the domain had been introduced systematically by myself, as researcher, and when it had been
introduced independently by the participant as, in addition to when I had systematically introduced a domain as the focus for conversation, each of the six domains was also independently introduced into the conversation by at least one participant during the course of the semi-structured conversation. This spontaneous use by the participants of all the domains which had emerged during the clustering process suggested an internal consistency to the pragmatic categorization which had occurred at that stage in the process. It suggested that the participants were comfortable using in discussion the terminology which they had previously agreed together.

On average, each participant contributed to almost four of the six domains, with 3 participants contributing to five domains, and 2 participants to four domains, and 1 participant contributing to each of one/two/three and six domains, as shown in Figure 4.3 (p. 118). This indicated that, rather than a minority of participants dominating the conversation, the majority of participants made an active contribution to most domains.

Figure 4.3 - Number of domains in which participants make a contribution

All nine participants joined in the conversation around the domain ‘teaching / practical response’ and even in the domain ‘corporate & individual’ which, due to time
constraints, I did not introduce, four of the nine participants contributed to the discussion.

Figure 4.4: Numbers of Participants contributing to each Moral Domain, in the order in which the domains were introduced

There were 72 contributions coded in the semi-structured conversation, for 57 of which I could positively identify the speaker. Of the 72, 45 could be coded as either addressing the reason why people don’t change, or as saying how people can change, or as being a combination of both. A quick survey of the transcript from this perspective found that almost 56% (25/45) of the contributions where about why people don’t change, which has been the prime focus of the preliminary research topic. Just over 24% (11/45) were about how people actually can change, whilst 20% (9/45) were a combination including both reasons for change and also reasons for no change.

Examples would be:

Why people don’t change:
“If people's faith isn't that real and therefore they have got as far as coming to church [but] they have not really come to Christ in a way that is on-going pilgrimage, then it is going to be too difficult.” (Georgina)

How people can change:

“Change is happening, and I think most Christian people, who go to Church, do change because their life situation changes. I think what we do is that we don't acknowledge that the changes they are making are valid.” (Bruce)

Combination:

“[For] some of them the tape is so strong, you can't actually [change], you can't, only God can.” (Kevin)

![Figure 4.5: Number of contributions about why people do and/or don’t change](image)

4.4.1 Second Order Analysis

The clustering of the comments generated by the initial thought shower was a dynamic process, whereby that raw material was quickly grouped into topical domains on
the basis of implicit, intuitive association (Kahneman, 2011). Where different participants suggested that particular comments were associated with alternative topical domains, then the comments were recorded as associated with both. The resultant categorization of the spontaneous comments was then subject to a more rigorous discussion through the semi-structured conversation. This subsequent discussion was slower, with thoughts developing through dialogue, and with frequent summaries provided by myself to facilitate wider ownership (Kahneman, 2011). As facilitator, at the time I encouraged theological reflection on the issues which had originally been expressed in the thought shower using the language of popular psychology. In the following months, the transcript of the semi-structured conversation around the six domains was then subject to further analysis. The methodology adopted was that of Thematic Analysis (see Section 3.2), utilising the six stages of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) namely: familiarizing oneself with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing (potential) themes; refining and naming themes; and finally producing the report. It was this latter ‘second-order’ analysis which led to the substantive conclusions of this preparatory study.

The process of Thematic Analysis had begun with the initial exercises described above (Section 4.4). Identifying the use which participants made of the various Moral Domains was an effective way of familiarization with the data (the first stage of Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). The generation of initial codes (their second stage) began with the simple categorization of whether episodes were about ‘why people don’t change’, ‘how people do change’ or a combination of these. Continuing the initial coding, the transcript was read with the expectation that theological themes could be discerned. These were coded as a written exercise. Searching for themes (the third stage), I noted ideas which occurred to me whilst coding the text, and was alert to further examples of the same. Initially I identified nine initial codes using these provisional labels (Table 4.2, p. 122).
Reviewing these themes (the fourth stage) I reflected on the results of this initial coding exercise, grouping these nine initial codes into four more generic overarching themes. I was able to refine and name the themes (the fifth stage), selecting labels from the world-view which I shared with the other group-members (see Table 4.3, p. 123).

The first generic theme of ‘Circumstances’ was about our experience of life, the human condition and how the circumstances around us impact our lives. The second generic theme of ‘Praxis’ focused on the importance of faith expressing itself in action, without which knowledge and belief have no value. The third generic theme of ‘Salvation’ highlighted an awareness of the grace of God at work in our lives, bringing transformation. The fourth generic theme of ‘Growth’ saw the Christian life as a journey of faith, as we move through stages of potential development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Codes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Commitment</td>
<td>really come to Christ (Georgina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Direction</td>
<td>people will say you need some kind of mentor or therapist (Georgina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crises</td>
<td>For those who have a strong and dynamic faith even if we are in crisis it merely gets stronger, but for those whose faith is weak and wavering they just give up altogether (woman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Understanding</td>
<td>There is a lack of theology in the church (Bruce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Together</td>
<td>We never engage with each other about what difference it made to us (Rachel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith to Action</td>
<td>It is not an event, it is a process (Henry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>When things go wrong, ‘it’s the devil’ (woman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Experiences</td>
<td>It is guilt, that they shouldn’t be carrying (Rachel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election</td>
<td>I am O.K. because I am redeemed, saved, et cetera [sic] (Ruth)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3: Four Themes with Description, and their initial codes with examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four Themes</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circumstances</strong></td>
<td>This theme is about our experience of life, the human condition and how the circumstances around us impact our lives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Initial codes with examples | Personal Commitment: *really come to Christ*  
| | Spiritual Direction: *people will say you need some kind of mentor or therapist* |
| **Praxis** | This theme focuses on the importance of faith expressing itself in action, without which knowledge and belief have no value. |
| Initial codes with examples | Crises: *For those who have a strong and dynamic faith even if we are in crisis it merely gets stronger, but for those whose faith is weak and wavering they just give up altogether*  
| | Theological Understanding: *There is a lack of theology in the church* |
| **Salvation** | This theme is awareness of the grace of God at work in our lives, bringing transformation |
| Initial codes with examples | Learning Together: *We never engage with each other about what difference it made to us*  
| | Faith to Action: *It is not an event, it is a process* |
| **Growth** | This theme sees the Christian life as a journey of faith, as we move through stages of potential development. |
| Initial codes with examples | Personal Responsibility: *When things go wrong, ‘it’s the devil’*  
| | Past Experiences: *It is guilt, that they shouldn’t be carrying*  
| | Election: *I am O.K. because I am redeemed, saved, et cetera* |

Recognising the cyclical nature of Thematic Analysis, I coded the whole transcript using NVivo10 for a second time using these four generic themes of Circumstances, Praxis, Salvation, and Growth. With double-counting, the total number of examples generated from the 49 comments now increased from 60 to 67 (this final result being shown in Table 4.7, p. 125).

### 4.4.2 Dichotomies

Reflecting further upon these four generic themes, I identified and labelled as new interpretative themes, the twin dimensions of ‘Individual / Corporate’ and ‘Interventionist / Non-Interventionist’. The Individual / Corporate dimension expresses the extent to which the comment referring to the ideal/behaviour dissonance focuses on people as individuals, or whether they are seen in this regard as part of the corporate fellowship of the church. The Interventionist / Non-Interventionist dimension engages with the issue as to whether or not there is an expectation that God will act in a dynamic and deliberate way. Reflecting
further on these theological themes, these were expressed as dichotomies, as shown in Table 4.4 (p. 124):

Table 4.4: Dichotomous Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Interventionist</th>
<th>Non-Interventionist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>Circumstances</td>
<td>Praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cyclical nature of Thematic Analysis now led into the report-writing (and final) stage, bringing together all the data and themes which had been generated.

4.4.3 Theological Themes, Orientation and Domains

The theological themes occurred across all the domains and in each of the three types of orientation identified. Table 4.5 (p. 124) shows that each theme occurred in the form of a positive reason why people change, and in the form of a negative reason why people don’t change, and in the form of a combination of both.

Table 4.5: Number of contributions for each Theme and their Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=45</th>
<th>positive</th>
<th>negative</th>
<th>combination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praxis</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 72 contributions from the group discussion were themed according to the domain in which they occurred, and the 49 comments from the thought shower were themed according to the domain to which they were assigned. For the latter, double-counting resulted in 49 comments generating 67 themed items. Table 4.6 (p. 125) shows the contributions from the group discussion and Table 4.7 (p. 125) the comments from the thought shower.
Both in the transcripts and in the thought shower, examples of Interventionist responses and of Non-Interventionist responses occurred in each topical domain. Likewise, both in the transcripts and in the thought shower, examples of Individual responses and of Corporate responses occurred in each topical domain. This suggests that these two dimensions have relevance to a wide range of explanations held by my peer-group as to why Christians don’t change.

### 4.5 Discussion of Preparatory Exercise

The preparatory exercise was shaped at an early stage of the research process, when aspects of psychology of religion were more predominant in the development of the study. The question as to why Christians don’t change is common to my experience of the church, and hence one would expect the themes identified in this study to be present within the thinking of the church of which I am familiar. The four generic themes express common aspects of traditional New Testament theology. For example, Circumstances are related to the manner in which St Paul refers to *sarx* as the physicality of the world (not simply the
flesh) which compromises our freedom to respond to the leading of the Spirit. Praxis is a major theme in the Epistles of James, where faith without works is pronounced dead. Salvation picks up a synoptic Kingdom of God imagery, with the distinctiveness of those who profess Christ as Lord. Growth is part of the Johannine narrative, with poetic imagery and reflective self-awareness.

Within this preparatory exercise, the four themes were used when reasons for the occurrence of change were being given, when reasons for the non-occurrence of change were being given, and for situations which addressed both aspects. The four themes also occurred in each of the moral domains which were discussed.

The preparatory exercise occurred at a time in the research process when the focus of attention was on the introductory research topic of how people live with ideal/behaviour discrepancies. However, as I reflected on this material, each of the four themes seemed to me to express an understanding of agency (Section 2.2.3), whereby responsibility for action is allocated. This indicated a greater degree of intentionality, and hence assisted in the transition to the central research question of how people maintain moral equilibrium in such situations.

When Circumstances and Praxis are combined, this indicated an emphasis on Individual Agency; when Salvation and Growth are combined, this indicated an emphasis of Corporate Agency. When Circumstances and Salvation are combined, this indicated an emphasis on Divine Agency; when Praxis and Growth are combined, this indicated an emphasis on Human Agency. This two-dimensional representation of Agency (see Table 4.8, p. 127) draws attention to our relationship to God and our relationship to one-another. Participants therefore showed a significant personal preference in their theological
understanding of the role of Agency. (This links with the modes of religious coping
(Pargament et al., 1988) discussed at the end of Section 2.2.8.1.)

Table 4.8 - Theological Themes showing Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Praxis</th>
<th>Salvation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Divine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Human</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an exercise in self-reflexivity, I recognised within myself and my peer-group
these four theological themes pertaining to agency. This led into the main study which
investigates how people of good standing maintain equilibrium in the context of the
differences between the ideals to which they aspire and their recollections of the way they
have behaved. Those participating in the interviews for the main study were all held in
high esteem within their local church community, hence it was anticipated that they will
have recourse to the theological themes identified within this dichotomous understanding
of Agency.

4.6 Sermons

A further phase of self-reflexivity occurred after the initial thematic analysis of the
main study. This took place with an investigation of the moral content of a selection of
sermons. This provided an opportunity to consider the moral milieu of the religious
community to which the participants of the main study belonged, as indeed did I also.

The preaching of sermons has been the practice of the church over the centuries.
Justin Martyr (c100-165) described how Christians gathered together on a Sunday, and
after the reading of Scripture “the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation
of these good things” (Apology LXVII ANF I p. 186). Tertullian (c155-230) observed,
We assemble to read our sacred writings … With the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast, and no less by inculcations of God’s precepts we confirm good habits. In the same place also exhortations are made, rebukes and sacred censures are administered. (Tertullian XXXIX ANF III, p. 46)

Having myself preached several sermons most weeks for over 35 years, it is form of communication with which I am familiar. Likewise, as committed members of local Anglican churches, participants of the main study will have also heard many sermons, often on a weekly basis.

Not all sermons contain an exhortatory thrust, with didactic teaching, apologetics, and calls to worship being other styles commonly occurring, with many sermons being a mixture of styles. For the purposes of this research, interest was focused on sermons which were of a motivational nature, urging listeners to increase their commitment to moral excellence. Such preaching is a communal activity, where the religious community is bound together in the pursuit of holiness. In this context, morality has a cohesive function.

Two sets of sermons were identified where moral exhortation was accompanied by a recognition that congregation members may acknowledge the aspiration to goodness whilst excusing themselves from compliance. The variety of excuses identified echoed my own experience, suggesting that the phenomenon of ideal / behaviour discrepancy investigated in the individual held in good standing by the local church is linked to the morality that binds that church together. Indeed, this was further confirmed when I found it easy to compose a hypothetical sermon directly addressing such excuses.
Reflecting on my own preaching, and that of the two sermon-sets which I examined, I recognised that the research question addressed a central aspect of the experience of morality which bound faith communities together.
5 MAIN STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This is a descriptive study using thematic analysis. The essence of the central research question is how people who are of good standing within their moral community maintain equilibrium between the ideals to which they aspire and the way which they recollect that they have behaved when these are discrepant. A church is an example of a community whose moral values are, to a certain extent, homogenous, with preaching and teaching, both formal and informal, reinforcing a shared understanding of morality. Hence people of good standing within their local church form a group in which the hidden phenomenon of discrepancies between current ideals and past behaviour may occur. In my personal and professional life, I have spent much time within such groups. The preparatory exercise with my peer-group enabled me to reflect on my own situation, encouraging me to access this phenomenon through direct conversations with people of good standing in their local church. In such conversations, I would seek to make salient both their ideals and their recollected behaviour, and then to record how they responded to the juxtaposition of these two ‘cognitions’. In contrast to my earlier research with chaotic heroin addicts in Pakistan (Primrose, 1993), it was not possible to assume which moral aspirations might have been breached; hence it was necessary for each participant to make salient their own moral aspirations, and then reflect on behaviour which had breached those aspirations. The situation was reminiscent of the rich young man who approached Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life (Matthew 19; Mark 10; Luke 18). On being reminded of the formal moral code enshrined in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5), he professed his adherence thereby establishing his righteousness. He had ‘done nothing

Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

Chapter Five - Main Study
wrong’. It was only when confronted by Jesus’ call to sell his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor that he was obliged to re-evaluate his self-understanding. He left distressed! The moral aspirations of the respectable (should) go beyond those dictated by society.

The preparatory exercise with church workers, discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter Four), had explored the introductory research topic, asking the inverted question, ‘why don’t Christians change?’ The church workers had together identified six clusters of moral domains around which they discussed this question. This was the context for self-reflection. Now for the main study, selected church members were first asked the open question, ‘what do you admire in others?’ and then later invited to recollect situations where they themselves have failed to live up to those qualities which they had admired in others. This oblique approach to the articulation of moral aspirations enabled participants’ (potentially) discrepant cognitions to be salient simultaneously. This addressed the unreliability of asking people directly about their own cognitive processes (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; see Sections 2.2.3.3, 2.2.3.4, 2.4, 5.3.3, & 6.7.4). In this regard, the approach adopted in the research aligns more closely with a discursive understanding where dialogue is contextually analysed, rather than a therapeutic relationship in which direct questioning may lead to occasions of insight and increased self-awareness, and the possibility of personal transformation.

The subsequent conversations between participant and interviewer provided a prolonged focus on the ideal/behaviour discrepancies which were evoked. The transcribed text of such conversations was later analysed for themes which, from a critically realist perspective, indicated how these discrepancies were being managed by the participants.
The context of the recorded conversation was personal, in the participant’s own home (with one exception), and with their informed consent. Both the communication prior to the visit and the first half of the interview had established the subject of the interview to be reflections on moral behaviour by those held in good standing within a church community. As the participants narrated sections of their life-story, reassurances as to the anonymity and confidentiality of the process resulted in their understanding of the audience for this material as being the person of myself, as the researcher in the present, and their memories of moral exemplars about whom we had recently been talking. In many aspects, I myself embodied ‘respectable church’, and in the earlier part of the interview, the participant will have experienced my endorsement of the values associated with their moral exemplars. This will have consolidated the values of being a ‘good church member’ as the context of the interview. Any impact on the interview data will have been to enhance the participant’s sentience of ideals to which they aspire and hence accentuate the experience of any discrepancies with recollected behaviour. This will have increased the challenge to maintain moral equilibrium.

Second-order analysis of the preparatory exercise’s seminar discussion (Section 4.4.1) had suggested four theological themes reflecting the two dichotomies of individual or corporate, and of interventionist or non-interventionist. As this was developed, it demonstrated that members of my peer-group who participated in that exercise showed consistent preferences in their theological understanding of Agency, from the perspective of our human relationship to God and of our relationships with one-another (Section 4.5).

5.2 Method

The main study was based upon semi-structured interviews which I undertook with over 60 individuals who were of good standing within their local church communities.
The sampling strategy adopted maximised access to potential participants in a manner which reduced the risks of data-contamination and addressed the ethical implications of participation. Potential participants were nominated by their parish priests as being in good standing with their local church community and not, to the priest’s knowledge, undergoing a period of personal trauma. The clergy had been identified as pastorally sensitive; they were given direct experience of the interview format so as to enhance their understanding of the research process. The researcher personally approached the nominated participants in a manner which allowed each to make an informed choice whether or not to be interviewed. Beyond the criteria of being in good standing and not undergoing personal trauma, no further criteria were specified within the sampling strategy. (See Section 5.2.3.)

5.2.1 Sample size

This sample size was informed by Creswell’s observation from the related field of grounded theory. “The point is to gather enough information to fully develop (or saturate) the model. This may involve 20 to 30 interviews or 50 to 60 interviews” (Creswell, 2007, p. 66, italics original). The latter range, 50 to 60, was chosen to address the prevalent yet seemingly nebulous nature of the phenomenon being investigated. This number was confirmed as appropriate for thematic analysis in conversation and subsequent private correspondence with Adrian Coyle (personal communication, 16th March 2008). Being familiar with Anglican churches, I anticipated that, in each group of churches, it should be feasible to identify approximately 20 church members who were in good standing and amenable to be interviewed. The intention then was to approach three (groups of) churches.
5.2.2 Interview Structure

During the first part of each interview, through a focus on moral exemplars, I sought indirectly to identify the participants’ own moral aspirations using their own choice of words (see Section 2.4). During the second half of the interview, each participant’s recollected behaviour was discussed in the context of the particular moral aspirations with which they had aligned themselves through reflecting on the qualities of their exemplars. This second part of the interview was audio-recorded, the transcript of which was then subjected to thematic coding analysis using the software NVivo10. Thematic analysis was chosen as the methodological tool of preference because, as noted earlier, “if the intention of your research is merely to describe a set of behaviours, perceptions or experiences, then thematic analysis is likely to be a better option [than grounded theory]” (Payne, 2007, p. 70; Section 3.2). The transcript of the interviews recorded how the participants maintained moral equilibrium whilst the conversation addressed ideal/behaviour discrepancies. With a critical realist epistemology, the transcript is taken to give access to the manner in which the participants normally address ideal/behaviour discrepancies so as to maintain moral equilibrium, whilst acknowledging the context in which the conversation takes place.

The outline of the researcher/participant contact was as follows:

1. initial contact by letter or email, with follow-up phone call(s), then briefing letter confirming arrangements
2. introduction and explanation
3. naming of moral exemplars
4. identifying admirable qualities of exemplars as moral domains
5. discussion of recollected behaviour for each moral domain [recorded section]
6. completion of spiritual assessment inventory (cohorts 2 & 3)
7. debrief
Full details of the interview schedule are shown in Appendix B.

5.2.3 Access to Participants

Churches are communities whose religious nature means that morality contributes towards coherence and shared identity. Thus to be of good standing within a church community correlates with the perception of moral excellence. As explained above, it was surmised that sufficient participants for the interview process could be recruited from three (groups of) churches (see Section 3.3). Sampling from three (groups of) churches also mitigated the risk of corrupted data, for example if one participant was to talk freely with other members of their church whom I had yet to interview, data from the two other churches would remain uncontaminated. However, I was well-known throughout the churches of my own diocese and did not have the resources to employ an independent research assistant to reduce the distorting impact of existing relationships. In order to minimise situations where prior acquaintance might compromise the data or the analysis, I recruited parishioners from a neighbouring diocese to take part in the interviews, contact being made through their parish clergy. Three parish priests from that neighbouring diocese had been recommended by my spiritual director as clergy who were pastorally sensitive and likely to be sympathetic to the nature of my research. This was important as the interviews would address personal and potentially distressing matters. Participants would need to be able to trust the confidentiality and sensitivity of the process. These parish clergy were asked to suggest participants who were held in good standing within the church community and who, to the best of their knowledge, were enjoying a period of relative stability and were not currently dealing with personal trauma. The sampling did not incorporate any other criteria as the research was essentially descriptive (see Section 5.2), without any intention to include statistical analysis. Only basic bio-data were recorded. The avoidance of personal trauma was to allow the questioning to focus on the
current recollection of past events rather than be dominated by issues of immediate concern. In consultation with each of these parish priests, the provision of pastoral support was identified so that, should the interview-experience precipitate issues of personal concern, appropriate referral systems were in place for the participant’s well-being. The ethical implications of these aspects of the interview process were anticipated and addressed in preparation for the scrutiny process undertaken by the research ethics committee of UWE’s Faculty of Applied Sciences [sic] during initial registration. These issues were discussed in full in Section 3.4. Thus the essential features of the sampling strategy were designed to maximise access to the phenomenon, rather than provide quantitative data (see also Section 5.2).

5.2.4 Three Cohorts of Participants

The first cohort of interview participants came from a popular Evangelical Anglican church located within a wealthy middle-class suburb of a large city, drawing members of its congregation from the parish and its surrounding localities. On Indices of Multiple Deprivation, this parish was ranked nationally approximately 700 out of 12,700, listed in increasing order of deprivation. Over an 11 day period, 24 participants were interviewed, with one further parishioner being unavailable. Two transcripts were incomplete, leaving 22 transcripts from 11 men and 11 women, aged from 39 to 83.
The second cohort of interview participants was from a benefice of four prosperous Cotswold villages, each with a population of several hundred and a loyalty to their own local parish church. On Indices of Multiple Deprivation, the parishes were nationally ranked approximately 2,000 out of 12,700, being disadvantaged in ‘Barriers to Housing and Services’. Over a 22 day period, 19 participants were interviewed, with one further parishioner being unavailable. This cohort included five couples, there being none in either of the other two cohorts. Partners in couples were interviewed consecutively, thus each couple providing two distinct transcripts. Of the total 19 interviews, three transcripts were incomplete, leaving 16 transcripts from 5 men and 11 women, aged from 43 to 87.
The third cohort of interview participants came from a more deprived locality on the edge of the city, where the parish church was of a more Anglo-Catholic disposition and the vicar described the community as having ‘low self-esteem’. On Indices of Multiple Deprivation, the parish was nationally ranked approximately 11,000 out of 12,700. Over a 9 day period, 20 participants were interviewed, with one further parishioner being unavailable. Two transcripts were incomplete, leaving 18 transcripts from 8 men and 10 women, aged from 22 to 82. Reflecting on the experience of the first two cohorts, the new question emerged as to whether the way in which participants handled ideal/behaviour disjunctures was related to their level of formal education. As a simple measure, the educational achievements of this final cohort were noted, with five completing their education at school, ten training vocationally, and three going to university.

Figure 5.2: Age profile for Cohort Two
The combined total of useable transcripts from all three cohorts was from 56 participants, of whom 24 were men and 32 women, the youngest being 22, the oldest 87, and the modal age span 60-69. Regarding prior knowledge, I had previously encountered one participant at her place of work, one participant knew my wife, and one parish priest had previously met my wife; in each of these three situations, having acknowledged the prior contact, we agreed to proceed.
All 63 interviews, including the seven whose transcripts were rejected as partial, took place over two months between 21st April 2008 and 21st June 2008, within a three month sabbatical from my work as a parish priest. I undertook up to six interviews per day. I completed all the interviews for each cohort before beginning any of the interviews for the subsequent cohort.

One interview took place in a church-room, all the others taking place in the participant’s home. Most interviews were completed within visits of total duration between one and two hours. The duration of the audio-recording ranged from 11 to 72 minutes with a mean of 32 (Cohort One, 16-72, mean 34; Cohort Two, 11-41, mean 26; Cohort Three, 19-55, mean 34) – however some recordings included redundant material from the beginning of the post-interview discussion which extended until a convenient opportunity arose to switch off the recording devices. Tea/coffee was usually provided, and on three occasions within the second cohort, hospitality extended to a shared meal after the interview had been completed. When a table was available for the A7 cards used during the
first part of the session and for the audio-recorders used during the second part of the session, this assisted the flow and the focus of the interview.

5.2.5 Piloting

The interview process developed in four distinct stages. First, prior to the formation of the interview structure, I interviewed a colleague informally to test the overall approach. He talked freely of family, friends, and acquaintances whose lives had been an inspiration to him, becoming emotional whilst talking about a close relative who had died several years previously. This indicated the ease with which moral exemplars could be identified as well as confirming the importance of pastoral sensitivity, particularly following the evocation of memories of significant others with whom contact had ceased, in this case that of his mother who had died.

Second, I interviewed the three vicars of the main cohorts, thereby testing the interview format and enabling these vicars to experience for themselves the process in which their parishioners would participate. It proved relatively straightforward to follow through the interview format, and in doing so, in all three situations, moral exemplars were identified, admirable qualities were named, and the subsequent dialogue engaged with ideal/behaviour discrepancies on the basis of admired moral qualities being ideals to which one aspired (see Section 2.4). One of the three vicars had not done the preparation requested, and one had prepared excessively, and the format dealt adequately with both extremes. As anticipated by the criteria used by my spiritual director in selecting colleagues to recommend, all three showed considerable self-awareness and seemed to value the opportunity offered at the end to discuss the interview experience and the purpose of the research. They indicated that their experience of the interview had been positive. I concluded that the data collected would have been pertinent to my original
research question. However, I had agreed with these three clergy that whilst their interviews would be recorded, these recordings would be neither transcribed nor analysed.

The third stage of the initial development of the interview format was to trial the interview with some church members, including the transcription of the recorded part and its initial analysis. A fourth vicar was identified by my spiritual director as being suitable for this purpose. He was interviewed along with four of his parishioners, two men and two women, with one further parishioner declining the invitation to participate. This vicar’s city-centre church drew from a wide geographical area. These pilot interviews provided me with a variety of learning experiences, such as aspects of the interview process being challenged by the participant, personal matters of pastoral concern being raised, criticism of the participant’s church being voiced, and my request for the participant to clarify apparently enigmatic responses being refused. These experiences enhanced my skill and confidence in undertaking the subsequent interviews. One of these four pilot participants posted me a ‘thank you’ card. The interviews with these four parishioners were transcribed and the coding analysis was trialled on their four transcripts. The results of this initial tentative coding were not included within the primary data of the main study.

And the fourth and final stage of the interview development took place after the interviewing was underway. After completing the interviews for the first two cohorts, in order to test for cognitive complexity (see Section 5.3.3) the interview format was modified for the third cohort. To pilot these changes, two friends obliged at short notice with interviews which focused on the modifications being introduced. These friends then were able to share with me their experience of being interviewed, thereby enabling me to address my concerns that the emotional impact of the proposed changes would be able to be handled satisfactorily.
The piloting thus took place in these four stages:

i. Informal interview with colleague

ii. Demonstration interviews with vicars of three cohorts, with audio-recording

iii. Pilot interviews with fourth vicar and with four of his congregation members, audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed, but not included in data set

iv. Trial interviews with two friends, testing changes for third cohort, with discussion.

5.2.6 Context of Interview

Initial contact with participants was through their own vicar. The vicars of the second and third cohort had approached participants seeking their prior consent, whilst the vicar of the first cohort expected me to initiate contact with those whose names he provided. All participants received a personalised introductory letter from myself (as shown in Appendix D), either through the post or, if suggested by the vicar, via email, with an indication of a follow-up telephone call. Some participants made an initial reply by email.

The follow-up telephone call was an opportunity to explain more about the research and the interview process, and to answer any queries. At this stage the request was made for the participant to identify their moral exemplars in advance of our meeting. Most appointments were arranged at the first telephone call, though a few were arranged via email, and some required a second telephone call. Letters and accompanying guidance for the interview were then sent, by post or email (see Appendix Ea & Eb), confirming arrangements and reiterating the request to identify eight moral exemplars prior to our meeting.
For the first cohort, the vicar recommended casual, non-clerical attire, for the second, casual clerical attire, and for the third, a clerical shirt and a jacket; each was in keeping with the attire normally worn by the vicar when visiting parishioners known to them. Through the preliminary correspondence and my dress-code, participants were aware, before the interview was underway, that I was a colleague of their parish priest and that this was the context of the interview. This encouraged a coherence between my participation as interviewer and the moral ambiance of the research question.

In the conclusion of the interview, when the main dialogue had been completed, I recorded brief bio-data, re-iterated arrangements for confidentiality and consent, referred to pastoral provision, answered queries, expressed gratitude, and left a personalised debriefing letter (see Appendix B, Ha, Hb, Hc, & Hd.). This letter contained my postal address should the participant wish to withdraw consent or add any additional comments. However, I indicated that I would not be able to engage in correspondence. I received one follow-up letter, expressing gratitude and containing one point of clarification. As previously agreed with each vicar, details of whom to access for pastoral support were included in the debriefing letter. On one occasion a participant asked for an item to be deleted from the recording, which I was able to do, and on another occasion the participant agreed with my suggestion that we delete some extraneous material of a personal nature (Section 3.4.2). To reduce cross contamination within each cohort, I told the participants the date on which I would have completed interviewing in their locality, and asked them to wait until after that day before discussing the content of the interview with others, a request which appears to have been met.

During the interviews of the first cohort, the question emerged as to whether the manner in which ideal/behaviour disjunctures were handled was related to spiritual
maturity (Hood et al., 1996). Accordingly, for the second and third cohort, the participant was asked to complete a short spiritual assessment inventory (Hall & Edwards, 2002). They were given the option to complete the inventory at the end of the interview, or at their earliest convenience, posting it on to me in an SAE which was available. However, all chose to complete the inventory straightaway, using the clip-board provided. Whilst they were doing so, I recorded the bio-data on the interview matrix and, from the 18th interview onwards, usually completed the categorization of the moral domains which had been discussed. The completion of the spiritual assessment inventory and subsequent informal conversation was helpful in allowing the participant emotional space in which to process material which had been generated during the interview.

Shortly after I left the participant’s home, I made brief field-notes about what had taken place. This was particularly helpful when more than one interview occurred on the same day. Incidents of sexist or racist language were noted but not challenged. If I had not already done so in the final stages of the interview process, at the time of writing the field-notes I also completed the categorization of the moral domains which had been discussed.

In the field-notes of 15 of the 56 useable interviews, there is mention of tears or crying, some of which occurred during the interview and some in the conversation afterwards. This was often with reference to the death of much-loved relative or moral exemplar. I understood each of these expressions of grief to have been cathartic. In 7 of these 15, there is explicit reference to the participant expressing gratitude for my pastoral sensitivity. At the end of no appointment was the participant left distressed, and where there were personal issues to be addressed, it was recorded in the field-notes that support, as arranged, was recommended.

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1 The initial coding of the moral domains was completed in the first 17 interviews.
The vicar of the third cohort had arranged for a short debriefing meeting four weeks after the conclusion of the interviewing to which all her participants were invited, and for which I had composed the following prayer to be read.

Thank you God for all those who, throughout the years, have inspired us and shown us something of your goodness. We bless you for those whom we meet no longer, whether separated by death or distance. We commend them to your eternal love. And we bless you for those with whom we are still in contact, with whom our love is refreshed and renewed. Strengthen in us those good qualities that we share with others, that we might be encouraged, reflect your grace and fulfil your purposes in this world. Forgive us when we fall short, and enable us, through your Spirit, to be transformed, day by day, into the people whom you would have us be. And may we, and all those whom we love, keep our eyes fixed clearly on Jesus Christ, the author and perfector of our faith.

The vicar subsequently emailed:

I met with those you interviewed [from my parish] this week and am writing to let you know that the general response was very positive. As you would imagine, with such a cross section of people there were a couple who found the searching nature of the process challenging and I have been able to spend more time with them reflecting on the impact of all that happened. Most found the chance to share deeply for an hour and a half an opportunity that they rarely get...and so valued the session even more. ‘What a nice chap!’ was something oft repeated. After a general discussion to which everyone contributed we finished with a time of silent reflection and spoken prayer culminating in the prayer you offered in your last email. (private e-correspondence of 20th July 2008)
5.3 Content and Format of Interviews

5.3.1 Moral Exemplars

The use of semi-structured interviews enabled me to focus on the research question whilst giving the participants the opportunity to contribute out of their own experience (Charmaz, 2006; Kvale, 1966). After the preliminaries, the interview commenced with the participant naming (eight) individuals who were known to them personally and whom they admired. In prior correspondence, they had been requested to identify such people, from their past and their present. Six participants (one of whose transcript was amongst those incomplete and hence excluded) did not choose their exemplars until the interview began. However, most participants (57/63, with 51/56 of those used) had, as requested, prepared a list before my arrival, with occasional alternatives required, such as following the exclusion of famous people not known personally to the participant. With three participants, we proceeded on to the next stage of the interview with less than the full eight exemplars. At the start of each interview, I wrote the first names of these (eight) exemplars on eight small pieces of A7 card, on the reverse side of which were the first eight letters of the alphabet, from ‘A’ through to ‘H’.

It was postulated that after contact had ceased with a ‘significant other’, recollections of that person might become increasingly selective, potentially distorting the balance of memories. Hence a distinction was made between moral exemplars with whom the participant was still in contact, and those with whom contact had ceased. The original request had been made to identify four of each. Of the 56 participants in the main sample, 53 provided a total of eight exemplars, 36 (67%) of whom provided four current exemplars and four past exemplars. The full distribution is shown in Figure 5.6, (p. 148) with the most common variance being towards more from the present than from the past. Of the
remaining three, one participant from Cohort One provided only five exemplars (one current, four past), and two participants from Cohort Two provided only six exemplars (both three of each).

![Figure 5.6: Proportion of Past to Current Exemplars](image)

*Figure 5.6: Proportion of Past to Current Exemplars*

the left column 0:8 indicates none from the past and eight from the present; the next column 1:7 indicates one from the past and seven from the present; etc

In this current research, similarities amongst moral exemplars gave salience to the participant’s key moral constructs (see Section 2.4). Indeed, the context of the interview, with the influence of my own presence, was such that when asked about what they admired in their exemplars, all the responses given were of a moral nature – thus no-one said that they admired qualities such as the wealth, physique, power, or prestige of another person. This approach resonated with Kelly’s Personal Construct Theory (1955; see Bannister & Fransella, 1971), where his Repertory Grid used similarities and differences between individuals to give salience to a person’s key constructs, and indeed where the presence of one polarity implies the existence of its converse. This latter point suggests that the naming of a virtue implies an awareness of the corresponding vice.
5.3.2 Moral Domains

Through identifying admirable qualities in others, we can indicate qualities to which we might aspire in ourselves (see Section 2.4). Having written on the eight small A7 cards the names of their (eight) moral exemplars, I then asked the participants to identify qualities which they admired in their moral exemplars. In particular I asked them to identify qualities which were true of more than one exemplar. This latter stipulation was so that the qualities identified were expressed in a generalised format, thus ‘good with children’ rather than just ‘good with his son’. I noted on a bespoke record-sheet the actual words which were used to describe these qualities as a ‘moral domain’, and then I recorded all the exemplars whom the participant indicated displayed that particular quality, using the letters A-H rather than each exemplar’s name. Examples of actual record-sheets are included in the Appendix (Fa, Fb, Fc, Fd, & Fe). Sometimes I prompted the participants by repeating the words which they had used themselves when originally introducing their moral exemplars. The process was repeated until between six and ten qualities had been identified, most frequently eight as shown in Figure 5.7 (p. 150). It was important to note that the words which I recorded were those actually used by the participant, with the precise meanings which they wished to ascribe to those words/phrases at that time. A note of caution is therefore required before assuming linguistic equivalence when the same word is used by different participants.
In my earlier research (Primrose, 1993), in the absence of suitable lists of moral qualities, I had generated my own list from my recollection of numerous conversations with addicts. That list, when refined, had then become prescriptive; on that occasion, the same eight moral qualities, represented pictorially on bespoke laminated A5 cards, were used with all 35 addicts interviewed.

Using the method of Thematic Analysis (see Section 3.2), I undertook the coding of moral qualities mentioned by the participants into (eventually eight) moral categories as an iterative process, following the six steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012). My first step was to familiarise myself with the data; after the first week of interviewing church members for this present research, I wrote out the 124 qualities which had occurred in their first 15 interviews. My second step was to generate the initial codes. Intuitively I was able to cluster these qualities into seven groups, the bifurcation of the last leading to eight categories. My third step was to search for interpretative themes. On further reflection I was able to arrange those eight categories into four pairs of themes, each pair located by a different focal referent. The foci to which the pairs referred were God, People,
World, and Self. My fourth step was to review the themes. Within each pair, I identified the style as being either of a passive situational aspect (A=Aspect) or of an active behavioural response (D=Deed). The former style of aspect accords with ‘terminal’ values, whilst the latter style of response accords with ‘instrumental’ values (Rokeach, 1973; see Section 2.2.3.5). The fifth step was to refine and name the themes. After minor modification and relabelling God/Spiritual, People/Interpersonal, World/External, and Self/Intrapersonal, I concluded this process of coding with the final versions of the eight categories as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1- Codes for four pairs of categories of moral qualities; 
Focal Referent of God, People, World, or Self, and Passive Aspect or Active Deed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>The reference is to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>God, a spiritual presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Deed</td>
<td>religious activity, e.g. evangelism, witnessing, teaching the faith, attending church events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Inter-Personal</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>the approach which is adopted in relating to other people, e.g. valuing each equally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Inter-Personal</td>
<td>Deed</td>
<td>actions undertaken for others, e.g. acts of compassion, kindness and helping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>the appreciation of the world around, e.g. beauty, nature and music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WD</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Deed</td>
<td>engagement with the world around, e.g. doing something about issues of injustice and care for the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Intra-Personal</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>a quality of the person themselves, e.g. joy and being full of faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Intra-Personal</td>
<td>Deed</td>
<td>a response generated by a person’s engagement with their experience of life’s journey, e.g. wisdom, fortitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point I was able to allocate, to these four pairs of moral categories, each of the 124 qualities identified from the first week’s fifteen interviews as well as the additional 14 qualities identified from the sixteenth and seventeenth interviews. In the spirit of the grounded theory refinement process of ‘saturation’, these moral categories were provisionally deemed ‘fit for purpose’. At the time of that initial categorization, when prompted by reading the transcript, I was still able to recall each of these seventeen
interviews as a distinct event, and hence the words used were still evocative of their original utterance. These four pairs of moral categories, with minor refinement, proved sufficient for the categorization of all the qualities which emerged in the subsequent interviews and hence were used to code the moral domains. This concluded thematic analysis’ sixth step with the writing of a report about this initial stage of the interview process.

So in contrast to my previous research (Primrose, 1993) when the questions asked of all the heroin addicts interviewed had related to the same eight fixed moral qualities, in this current research, six to ten moral qualities were identified by each of the 56 participants, which were then used exclusively for the second part of their own interview. These 452 qualities from the transcripts used were able to be categorised according to the four pairs previously identified. With data missing from three interviews of Cohort One, the distribution of these four pairs of moral categories utilised by participants from the remaining 53 transcripts used is shown in Figure 5.8 (p. 152).

Figure 5.8 Distribution of Moral Categories used by participants
It is instructive to note that in the Interpersonal (P) and Intrapersonal (S) Categories, for each cohort the frequency of passive ‘aspect’ exceeded the frequency of active ‘deed’, whilst in the Spiritual (G) Category, for each cohort the frequency of active ‘deed’ exceeded the frequency of passive ‘aspect’. In the External (W) Category, the numbers were too small for meaningful comment.

It was not possible to map these four pairs of moral categories onto the five universal values of fairness, care, loyalty, authority, and purity (Graham et al., 2011, see Section 2.2.2.4). The research process continued using the four pairs of moral categories which had been produced through the application of Thematic Analysis, acknowledging that Graham at al. (2011) had suggested a different categorization.

### 5.3.3 Ideal / Behaviour Disjunctures

So having established a bespoke platform of moral aspirations, using words chosen by the participant themselves, the interview entered its second and critical phase. It was in this second part that the research question was finally explored. The A7 cards with the names of the exemplars were returned to the participant, demonstrating that none of the exemplars’ personal details were to be retained, and emphasizing that the research focus was now on the participant rather than on the exemplars. It was at this stage that I would repeat my earlier request for permission to audio-record the next section of the interview, a matter which I had already discussed in the introduction. On each occasion, both a digital and an analogue audio-recorder were used. The digital recording was subsequently downloaded for storage and computer-based reference. The analogue recording was on a tape which was used by a professional typist to produce a transcript. On three occasions in Cohort One, when the tape-recorder failed, a replacement analogue copy was subsequently made from the digital recording.
It is worth noting that the participants were not asked the research question in the direct format of, ‘how do you reconcile differences between the ideals to which you aspire and behaviour which you recollect?’ Rather, the ideals to which they aspire were first given salience through the oblique approach of engaging with those qualities which they admire in their own moral exemplars (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; see Sections 2.2.3.3 & 2.4). After the articulation of all the ideals to be considered, recollected behaviour pertaining to each ideal was asked after. In this indirect way, the ideal and the recollected behaviour were placed in juxtaposition, thereby creating the potential for dissonance. It was the participant’s response to this juxtaposition which was the focal point of the research question. The critical realist epistemology assumed a correlation between the participant’s response at the time, and the manner in which they normally handle such ideal/behaviour discrepancies. Furthermore, I myself, as interviewer, embodied many aspects of the ‘church’ culture which was the context for such dilemmas, hence accentuating the relevance of the responses which occurred during the interviews.

The first part of the interview had focused on the admirable moral qualities seen in the participant’s moral exemplars. Using the participant’s actual words as written on their record-sheet, each of their focal moral qualities was introduced in turn; I would ask the participant whether they had always behaved in accordance with the particular quality which they had admired in their exemplars. Consistent with the ‘Looking Glass Self’ (Cooley, 1902/92; see Section 2.4) used to make salient moral ideals, I would usually employ the “Hidden Observer” technique (Hilgard, 1986, referenced in Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 1996, p. 97) whereby I phrased the question in terms of, ‘if there was some-one who knew everything about you, and I were to ask them whether ….. what would they say?’ This technique of introducing a fictitious omniscient informant extended Social Intuition Theory (Haidt, 2001, 2006) to the situation where a person responds to
how they think others might be thinking about them. It recognised that people may wish to make use of self-justifications even if they are lying in a way which is undetectable to others (Shalvi, et al., 2011). It also helped address self-deprecating modesty and facilitated access to material which the participant knew about themselves yet which was not in the public domain. However, for two participants from Cohort One and for two from Cohort Three, this third-party perspective was confusing and hence was immediately abandoned in favour of direct questions.

During this section of the interviews, the conversation would be extended, often using a reflective style, whereby I reiterated the participant’s response, allowing them the opportunity to repeat, develop or amend their original comments. This had the added advantage of reinforcing verbal clarity, useful for subsequent transcription should an audio-recording be indistinct.

On most occasions, the topic of conversation followed the same sequence in which the exemplars’ qualities had been identified. However, occasionally the participant led the conversation on to another moral quality out of sequence, in which case I returned, at the first appropriate opportunity, to the qualities which had been bypassed.

In an early review of the first two cohorts, it was recognised that there was a paucity of examples which illustrated levels of cognitive complexity (Reich, 2002; Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Streufert, 1992), in particular material indicating higher levels of cognitive complexity. ‘Miserly Thinking’ (Hunsberger, Lea, Pancer, Pratt, & McKenzie, 1992) implies that people will only express the minimum amount of complex thinking which is required. In only a very few situations did the participant develop an argument or line of thinking. I conducted a thought experiment, the writing of an imaginary dialogue, which suggested ways in which a conversation could be developed so that a participant’s
responses could be challenged in a manner which should elicit further responses of a higher level of complexity. In addition, I would also, at the end of the interview, be able to summarise the arguments given, thereby producing a block of text which could be analysed for cognitive complexity.

For Cohort Three, this desire for greater cognitive complexity resulted in a modification to the interview style. The questioning became more assertive, with the presumption introduced that there actually would be a gap between the participant’s behaviour and that of their moral exemplars. In the third cohort, rather than anticipate situations where the participant in reality behaved badly, the attention shifted to where the participant would have fallen short of the standards set by their exemplars. At the end of each interview in Cohort Three, I endeavoured to summarise the main points made by the participant.

5.3.4 Moral Disclosures

The structure of the interview was predicated upon the participant recollecting, when prompted, occasions when their own behaviour had not been fully consistent with the ideals which they had identified through their moral exemplars. Participants may have become consciously aware of some of those recollections without articulating them within the interview itself. However, those which were disclosed became part of the dynamic of the conversation. On a few occasions, the participant made explicit reference to an immoral or illegal act. However, more often the disclosure would refer to a failure to fulfil an ideal, rather than the recounting of actual misdemeanours.

5.3.5 Transcription

A professional stenographer/audio-typist transcribed the audio-recording of the second part of each interview. The four pilot interviews had been transcribed before the
main interviewing began. The transcription of the main interviews began straightaway. Whilst the main interviewing was contained within a period of two months, the transcribing of Cohorts One, Two, and Three took a total of 19 months to complete. The first twelve recordings to be transcribed were of the relevant portion (i.e. the latter phase) of the first twelve interviews of Cohort One. In order to test the coding process against a cross-section of the data, I asked the stenographer to transcribe several (7) from Cohort Three, and then requested some more (9) from Cohort One, and then some (9) from Cohort Two. Finally, the remaining interviews from all three cohorts were transcribed, with the stenographer leaving to the end those audio-recordings which lacked clarity, were difficult to follow, and hence were more time-consuming.

Of the 67 interview transcripts, the first four were part of the pilot project and not included in the analysis. On investigation, I had found seven of the remaining 63 interview transcripts to be incomplete, leaving 56 whole interviews available for analysis. These were 22 of the 24 from the first cohort, 16 of the 19 from the second cohort and 18 from the 20 of the third cohort. I archived the transcripts from the four pilot interviews and most of the seven partial transcripts, in case they might prove to be of value at a later stage.

I prepared the 56 transcripts in MS Word 2010, formatting them for export into NVivo10. In order to preserve anonymity, the names of all participants were changed; other proper names were replaced either by an initial letter or by generic terms such as ‘vicar’ or ‘our locality’. I entered the information peculiar to each participant onto a MS Excel 2010 spreadsheet. This information was collated to cover the following four items: to which cohort the participant belonged; their gender; their age and age-range; and the number of ‘domains’ which were discussed. For the second and third cohorts, the results of the Spiritual Assessment Inventory were included, though for this thesis, they proved to be
redundant. For the third cohort, educational level attained was also included. I then imported this participant-specific information into NVivo10 which processed them using the term ‘attribute’.

The transcript was divided up into consecutive ‘domains’, each domain starting when I introduced one of the moral qualities identified by the participant in the first part of their interview. At the point in the transcript where the moral quality for a new moral domain was introduced, the word ‘Domain’ was inserted as a heading, with a numeric descriptor in the form X/Y, where Y represented the total number of domains, and X represented the numerical order; thus as there were usually eight qualities identified, the first domain was usually ‘Domain 1/8’ and the last was usually ‘Domain 8/8’. If there was a summary at the end, as in Cohort Three, this was designated as ‘Domain Summary’. If there was additional material at the end, this was designated as ‘Domain Extra’.

5.4 Analysis

Each transcript was analysed using the software NVivo10. Each item of continuous speech by the participant was designated as an ‘episode’. The items of data which were coded were the participant’s responses to the juxtaposition of their own recollected behaviour with each moral quality to which they aspired. Consecutive episodes covering the same topic were coded together as a single item.

The first of Braun and Clarke’s (2006, 2012; see Section 3.3) six steps for thematic analysis is ‘familiarization with the data’. This had begun with the categorization of the exemplars’ moral qualities and their assignation to moral domains. It continued with the processing of bio-data which NVivo10 terms as ‘attributes’.
5.4.1 Attributes

NVivo10 allows for factual information relating to each case to be entered as ‘attributes’. As noted in Section 5.2.6, the bio-data available for all participants included their gender and the cohort, hence church, to which they belonged. For most participants their precise age was ascertained; for all participants their age-range expressed as the decades of 20-29 through to 80-89 was known. For the second and third cohorts, the results of their spirituality inventory had been calculated, with ‘realistic acceptance’ the measure of potential interest for further research (Appendix G). Participants from the third cohort were also asked the level of their formal educational achievement, this being assigned to ‘left school’, ‘acquired vocational qualification’, or ‘attended tertiary education’. The potential significance of each of these attributes was postulated. Further information was not sought, lest this distract from the exploratory nature of the research.

5.4.2 Domains

Each interview contained six to ten moral domains, these consisting of the portion of conversation pertaining to each of the moral qualities to which the participant aspired. First, various features of these domains were noted as part of the primary data. The moral quality which was the substance of the moral domain had been assigned to one of the eight categories of the Aspect/Deed pairs with Spiritual, Inter-Personal, External, and Intra-Personal Foci. The categorization of the moral quality (GA, GD, PA, PD, WA, WD, SA, SD – see Table 5.1, p. 151) was then assigned to the domain itself. From the 18th interview of the first cohort onwards, before the conclusion of the interview I had assigned each domain to categories of either God (for Spiritual), People (for Inter-Personal), World (for External), or Self (for Intra-Personal), and either to Aspect, or to Deed. In the 18th to 56th interview transcripts, acronyms for these assigned terms were then inserted into the transcript at the beginning of each moral domain.
Second, the chronological order in which the domain occurred in the interview was noted, with the three phases of early, middle, and late. This would allow for consideration of whether participants would handle ideal/behaviour disharmony differently depending on whether the dialogue was within the beginning or central or concluding phase of the conversation. For example, disclosure of potentially embarrassing material may be less likely in the opening phase of the dialogue. The participant was aware that we were working through the moral qualities identified in the first part of the interview, hence would be alert, as we came to the final domains, of the opportunity to correct any bias which had developed.

As the number of domains varied from six to ten, the order of the domains was assigned in approximate thirds. For example, with six domains, the 1st & 2nd domains were assigned as Early, 3rd & 4th as Middle, and 5th & 6th as Late, whilst with eight domains, the 1st, 2nd & 3rd domains were assigned as Early, 4th & 5th as Middle, and 6th, 7th & 8th as Late. This is shown in full in Table 5.2 (p. 160). The total domains in Early were 162, in Middle 128, and in Late 162.

Table 5.2 - Order of Moral Domains as Early, Middle, or Late

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Six</th>
<th>Seven</th>
<th>Eight</th>
<th>Nine</th>
<th>Ten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early (total 162)</td>
<td>1st &amp; 2nd</td>
<td>1st &amp; 2nd</td>
<td>1st, 2nd &amp; 3rd</td>
<td>1st, 2nd &amp; 3rd</td>
<td>1st, 2nd &amp; 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle (total 128)</td>
<td>3rd &amp; 4th</td>
<td>3rd, 4th &amp; 5th</td>
<td>4th &amp; 5th</td>
<td>4th, 5th &amp; 6th</td>
<td>4th, 5th, 6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late (total 162)</td>
<td>5th &amp; 6th</td>
<td>6th &amp; 7th</td>
<td>6th, 7th &amp; 8th</td>
<td>7th, 8th &amp; 9th</td>
<td>8th, 9th &amp; 10th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.3 Points of Enquiry

During the interview process, and as a result of background reading, I had noted over fifty questions which expressed my own areas of concern and assumptions and were potentially pertinent to this study; I clustered these by topic. Hence I approached the
thematic analysis of the main study with an awareness of the significance of areas as diverse as the Spoken Context, Cognitive Sophistication, Life Story, Religion, Moral Identity, Change, Participant/Exemplar identification, Emotions, and Moral Dilemmas. These were explicitly stated both to acknowledge any bias in the initial coding and to allow for potentially relevant data to be identified. They are listed in full in Appendix I as part of the discipline of ensuring that my assumptions, as researcher, are explicitly acknowledged. This open process of self-reflection then provided the context in which the coding developed. In the concluding general discussion (see Section 6.9), there is acknowledgement of some of the questions which were raised at this stage but which were not explored elsewhere.

5.4.4 Coding

The second of Braun and Clarke’s (2006, 2012; see Section 3.3) six steps for thematic analysis is the ‘initial coding’. Using NVivo10, I coded the transcripts during the single month of August 2010. Resource limitations prevented the recruitment of independent coders for the thematic analysis. This would have introduced another layer of verification. The large sample size of the main study did go some way to moderate the likelihood of codes being overlooked.

The transcripts were ordered alphabetically in accordance with the pseudonym given to each participant, thereby randomly mixing the three cohorts. This alphabetical list of 56 transcripts was divided into four quarters, each of 14 transcripts. The first transcripts for coding were selected from the beginning of the list. Looking at the bio-data associated with these first 14 transcripts, I recognised a random disproportionate bias towards Cohort One. To proceed quarter by quarter, whilst allowing for apparent cohort bias, I decided, after the first (Barbara – Edward), to complete the third (Kit – Peter), then second (Fred –
Kenny), then final quarter (Rhona – Yvonne) in that order. This had the effect of smoothing out cohort bias, which was initially 7:3:4, followed by 2:4:8 (cumulative 9:7:12), then 7:6:1 (cumulative 16:13:13), and finally 6:3:5 (cumulative 22:16:18).

Following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012; see Section 3.2), I coded the first quarter of the transcripts, looking for portions of narrative which presented to me as pertinent to the research question, and assigning names to these ‘Free Nodes’. (NVivo10 uses the term ‘Free Node’ to refer to any characteristic of an item of data which may also apply to some, but not all, other items of data. As coding progresses, Free Nodes develop in clarity. They may merge with other Free Nodes when a common feature is recognised, or split into more precise Free Nodes when further differentiation is possible. Free Nodes are defined internally by usage rather than by reference to any external authority.)

From the initial 14 transcripts, a total of 38 ‘Free Nodes’ were generated. Of these, 34 were used by at least two participants, 18 were used by at least five participants, and 4 were used by at least ten participants. Reviewing the coding at this early stage, I recognized that some coding was for situations suggestive of ideal/behaviour harmony, and some of ideal/behaviour disharmony. A distinction was also suggested between coding associated with active responses and coding associated with passive responses. On consideration of the 38 ‘Free Nodes’, I eliminated two minor categories as they merged with other more major categories.

Having coded the second 14 transcripts, I again reviewed the coding. To the 36 ‘Free Nodes’ carried over from the first quarter, one new node was added, and the meaning of several nodes clarified and developed. Of these 37, 35 were used by at least two participants, 13 of which were used by at least ten participants, 4 being used by at least
twenty participants. Errors in formatting or potential breaches of confidentiality were coded under separate ‘Tree Nodes’ (‘Tree Nodes’ are Free Nodes where internal parent/child links have been identified.) These Tree Nodes were used to avoid technical errors being carried over when episodes were quoted in the thesis but these technical Tree Nodes were not used in the on-going analysis.

I continued coding, completing another 14 transcripts, thus 75% of the total. Again new ‘Free Nodes’ were added, others merged and the meaning of several clarified. At this stage there were 40 ‘Free Nodes’. I examined these and merged several to leave 30 ‘Free Nodes’, all of which had been used by at least four participants. During this procedure, I recoded certain episodes as the Nodes became more precise in their meaning.

I approached the coding of the final quarter using these 30 ‘Free Nodes’, to which it was not necessary to add any further new nodes, thus indicating the related grounded theory concept of ‘saturation’ had been achieved. At the end of the final 14, I checked to see which Nodes had not been used in this final session of coding, and made notes accordingly. The Free Coding was now complete, with a total of 1,767 episodes from 56 interview transcripts being coded against 30 Free Nodes.

On closer examination, six of these 30 Free Nodes were recognised as being aspects of the interview process, and were discounted from the next stage of thematic development. The significance of these six was retained for the manner in which they might indicate the importance of the topic under discussion. These six are listed in Table 5.3 (p. 164), in order of the frequency of ‘ever-used’ by participants.
Table 5.3: Interview Process; Free Nodes, Labels, Frequencies, and Meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Participants N = 56</th>
<th>Episodes N = 1,767</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Narrative</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>The participant expresses emotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Comment</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>The participant comments on the process of the interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Historic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>The participant refers to behaviour which has come to an end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>The participant refers to behaviour which is ongoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>The participant refers to themselves in the Third Person, usually mimicking the “Hidden Observer” question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>The participant brings a topic of conversation to a close.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remaining 24 Free Nodes form the primary basis of the thematic development. They are listed in Table 5.4 (p. 165), in order of the frequency of ‘ever-used’ by participants. Fuller details of the emergence of these Free Nodes are shown in Appendix J.
Table 5.4: Thematic Free Nodes, Labels, Frequencies and Meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LABEL</th>
<th>Participant N = 56</th>
<th>Episodes N = 1,767</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life History.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>refers to an event or period of their life history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Acknowledged.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>acknowledges that there is a gap between their ideals and their behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>stresses that this behaviour is typical of whom they understand themselves to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content on Reflection.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>reflects on the situation and concludes that they are content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>offers evidence that substantiates ideal/behaviour harmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Try.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>insists that they are trying to improve their behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilemma.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>acknowledges that there is an (unresolved) dilemma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Harmony.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>insists that they are improving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Taken.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>refers to virtuous actions which they have undertaken in response to the ideal/behaviour disharmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>refers to external circumstances to explain the ideal/behaviour disharmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disposition.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>refers to anger and other emotions to explain the ideal/behaviour disharmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could Do Better, Perhaps.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>wonders whether they might do better, but falls short of any commitment to try. generalises from this ideal/behaviour disjuncture to insist that they are or have been a bad person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Recrimination.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>disjuncture to insist that they are or have been a bad person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Aspire.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>looks ahead to a time when there will be ideal/behaviour harmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of Disharmony.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>offers a concrete example of when this ideal/behaviour disharmony occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Relationships.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>attributes their ideal/behaviour disharmony to their partner or other person with whom they have a close relationship. stresses what they have done to make amends for their past behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redemption.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>refers to virtuous actions which they have undertaken in response to the ideal/behaviour disharmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better in the Past.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>refers to their behaviour in the past having been better than it is in the present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Prevents.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>refers to the pressure and demands of their work to explain their ideal/behaviour disharmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside My Experience.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>points out an aspect of their own situation, such as gender or skills, which causes the ideal behaviour to be impossible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Not Available.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>refers to lack of time to explain their ideal/behaviour disharmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Priority.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>refers to the prioritization of family to explain their ideal/behaviour disharmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Fortune.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>attributes ideal/behaviour harmony to good luck.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.5 Themes

The third, fourth, and fifth of Braun and Clarke’s (2006, 2012; see Section 3.2) six steps for thematic analysis are ‘searching for themes’, ‘reviewing (potential) themes’, and then ‘refining and naming themes’. The development of themes was thus an iterative process which began with the 24 Free Nodes at the conclusion of the Free Coding. Initial terminology was intentionally loose to allow for freedom of thought. Two dichotomies were noted, that of harmony/disharmony in reference to the relationship between the ideal and the behaviour, and that of active/passive in reference to whether the response implied action or not. Initial ideas in circulation at this stage of the thematic development included self, auto-biographical self, identity through relationships, fragmented identity, post-modernity, narrative including tense and chronology, guilt, prayer, God, happy endings, redemption, Jesus Christ, choice, and intention. I was interested in the occurrence of prayer, and coded this word and its conjuncts to a new Free Node. I acknowledged my enthusiasm for polarity and queried whether harmony fell along a spectrum.

My first attempt at producing categories which would aggregate the Free Nodes resulted in Narrative, Agency, Emotions, Reason, External, Engagement, again noting that, at this stage, these terms were being used loosely. Reflections based on Theology and on a ‘mindmap’ linked to the thesis’ Conceptual Framework (see Section 2.2), encouraged my thinking to develop further and generated additional insight. Thus the centrality of Moral Identity was apparent. Both the Autobiographical Self and Narrative contributed to a nuanced understanding of Self, with questions about the role for the participants of familial obligations and of employment. Moral Agency linked with Moral Desire and Intention, enduing the participants’ actions with teleological significance. Feelings/Emotions and Reason were difficult to incorporate. Whilst I had eschewed as being too prescriptive the various approaches of Stages of Faith (Fowler, 1981), of Integrative Complexity (Suedfeld,
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

Tetlock, & Streufert, 1992), of Relational and Contextual Reasoning (Reich, 2002), and of Interacting Cognitive Systems (Barnard & Teasdale, 1991), I revisited the ideas of Knowledge and Appraisal Personality Architecture (Cervone, 2004), questioning whether the framework of Appraisal and Judgement might link to the large number of Reason responses. Reflection on Self led me to ontological awareness, and then prayer and its connection to the potentiality of change. I noted sanctification, holiness, forgiveness alongside the givenness of who we are, which indicated the scope of theological development.

This suggested the next iteration, which was based around the five terms, Action, Intention, Engagement, Environment, Emotions. I then linked the first four with moral agency which had been identified as a concept of potential relevance in the preparatory exercise of self-reflexivity (see Section 4.5). Thus, Action was linked to actualised agency, Intention to potential agency, Engagement to unresolved agency, and Environment to constrained agency. Using another mindmap, I explored the idea of the divided self (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Turner, 2008). Using the preceding terms, Action (actualised agency) posits a distinction between the past and the present; Intention (potential agency), a distinction between the present and the future; Engagement (unresolved agency), the ambiguity of competing understandings; Environment (constrained agency), a distinction between self and context; and then for Emotions, two strands, a distinction between actual biography and potential biography, and a distinction between the passionate self and the placid self. This latter bifurcation of Emotions made the emerging thematic scheme more manageable.

This revision allowed for six thematic clusters as shown in Table 5.5 (p. 168) below:
These six themes are described in greater detail below, with examples taken from the transcripts. In keeping with the focus of thematic analysis upon the description of themes, theorising is not developed at this stage in the process. (However Section 5.6 includes the development of theoretical perspectives on these themes.) The extensive use of quotations is a feature of qualitative studies (Section 3.5) which ensures that the voice of the participants is projected as clearly as possible. It is important to note that, due to the
use of the ‘Hidden Observer’ (see Section 5.3.3), the participant may reply referring to themselves in the third person.

5.4.5.1 Change: ‘I have changed’

The participant asserts that change has occurred for the best, hence the present is an improvement on the past. A distinction between the past and the present is asserted, and the past and present compared in a way which locates negative aspects of any inconsistencies in a previous era.

This theme combines three coding categories known as Redemption, Action Taken, and Improving. It was used by 48/56 (86%) of participants. In Redemption, the badness of the past is explicitly acknowledged and linked deliberately with the change which has occurred. In Action Taken, the participant is identified as the moral agent affecting change. In Improving, an on-going process of change is narrated.

5.4.5.1.1 Change - examples

Brenda, after describing her miserable school days, continues

"It seems a strange thing to say when I wanted to be a teacher, doesn't it really? But I guess I felt I didn't - that I didn't want to teach somewhere like that."

David, after describing the trauma of his daughter's life-threatening illness and her survival, ends:

"And ever since those days I have not - then I was in my - what - early twenties - never had a doubt - I suppose, remarkable in a way but I have been very, very fortunate I think - and I thank God for all that."

and later adds,
"And then I suppose - because of our experience, I have been able to give people comfort at work."

Diane endured an extremely hostile work environment and concludes:

“so yes, I had a bad six years, and um - and I am now in this new job which is absolutely fantastic. I think I can start being true to myself again, and what my faith is, and where I am.”

Harold remembers the injustice of an inaccurate reference, then:

"And it was a very stressful time, but I think part of the way of dealing with that, and the process of going through that, is thinking in terms of God having a plan for my life. Therefore if a position I am in is as difficult as it was then, there must be a way forward that is helpful for me if you like, or that is in the long term for the good, although it is difficult to see in the immediacy."

later on, referring to his own work ethic

"so - you know - a long way down the line, twenty years down the line, that very rough experience for me has influenced the way I behave in my work."

Katie mentions the problems of the poor parenting which she received, which she links to the good parenting which she is giving to her own children. For Marian, being a single parent forced her to become more out-going:

“Ever since, as I say, I was on my own bringing up two children, I had to come out of my shell, I used to be a very shy person, and to come out of that shell you have to be sort of willing to welcome people into your life, as well as - you know - to theirs.”
Marie owns personal responsibility for the wrongness of the marital affairs of her younger years, and reflects:

“maybe I can have long enough to have a period of time where I can perhaps make up for some of the misdemeanours. You can't get back - I can't do anything about what I have done, but perhaps I can help people in other ways.”

For Yvonne, the experience of trauma has given empathy:

“Yes, that's right. And because I have had sudden bereavements that I have had to cope with, I do feel I understand much better how someone else feels, and to be able to try and help them, before I suffered those things.”

In the comparisons with the past given above, wherever responsibility for that past is located, a virtuous present is owned by the participant. In the following episodes, the participant’s moral agency is more apparent. This can be expressed by a personal focus on the problem to which they are responding.

Edward knows that he has to combat his antagonistic tendencies:

“Well, quite often it is very difficult to – like I say somebody comes into the room and you have this – not barrier – but – your hackles rise, and it is difficult to – um – it is difficult to do what is right and I suppose recognising it in the first place is – er – start of the battle.”

Harold is aware of the challenge that gossip represents:

“I think probably the most common one is around something we talked about earlier, which is gossip and that sort of thing, which is very easy to fall into because - you know - in work, in Church, in whatever walk of life, people like to
talk about what is topical, what is juicy and so on, and so it is very easy to fall into
that, more than anything else I think.”

The action mentioned by the participant is often of a religious nature, with prayer
being mentioned by 18/48 (37%) of those who use this theme. There are succinct
responses, such as Fred:

“Well, in a Christian context you want to pray for it, obviously.”

And Ken:

“One just has to pray, well, ‘Please sort it out for me’.”

And Simon:

“Yes, that's right. And I have got examples of it from the past to help me,
and of course I have got prayers to help me in the future as well.”

And Kay:

“I did find it very hard when the second load of cancer was slung at me.
Very hard. But [my husband] and I - I think that was the only time - we - when we
sat down and prayed together.”

And references to Christian faith, such as Yvonne:

“Um - Yes, time has passed, the shock has diminished and my Christian
faith has welled up over me and given me strength. .... Yes, it is like a cloak coming
around, giving me that strength and that hope.”

This can be more deliberate, such as Naomi, who after admitting to prejudices and
favourites, says that she responds:
“By consistently telling myself that God loves everybody, and that we are all equal.”

Rather than express 'not-lovely' thoughts, Katherine uses techniques such as:

"Well, I, quite often, I suppose, I say a silent prayer or - I am a lover of classical music - I put on Classic FM, and that calms me down."

Religious activities, such as membership of house-groups, are credited with bringing about change, hence Kathleen:

“...caring so I hope that although I am quite good, I am getting better because of the Key Group.”

This extends to a range of church-based activities, courses at work and even just time to think. Hence Tina:

“...sometimes it is so stodgy you have to wait for the stodge to just go away, but then when it is kind of dissipating a bit, then during, sort of I suppose, usual things like trying to pray more, read the Bible more. [I have] been looking for a spiritual director, which I am still journeying there, so there are tools around all that really - Study groups in the Church, stuff like that, Lent Groups and all that kind of thing - they are all there to tap in to, and they all help to a greater or lesser degree.”

And Lenny:

“... I did a training course a couple of years ago, at work, where we actually did personality analysis, - the outcome of that was that these are
your natural traits, these are your - given the choice this is the way you would re-
act - the situation you would like to be in - but there is nothing to say you can't
work in other situations, it is just you find it more difficult. I think that is where I -
with the communication in - in that something which I know is a weakness, and I
need to try and improve it.”

And Kenny:

“Patchy, not consistent. More consistent now, but patchy. Now I love -
when we go away - we haven't been away for a while, but we go away in the
Bahamas in this ramshackle place - the service there isn't greatly inspiring - but we
have time to think. We just go there and we have time to think, we take a Bible and
read passages, and read different books. It is just having time to think and be
rigorous about your thoughts.”

For some, the action of attending Church is what is prominent, for example Kit:

“Nobody ever has, I mean people have said to me, ‘Why do you go to
Church, why do you do that?’ - Because I want to, I feel I need to. I never - when
I was in my early teens at school, I just wanted to be one of the crowd, I didn't like
to say I was a Sunday School teacher, I went to Church every Sunday - I kept all
that hidden, - and I have felt very guilty about that sometimes, - you know - to feel
that I should have been able to stand up for my faith in those days. Since then, I
mean, I have never hidden the fact. My husband, I won't say he is a non-believer,
but he doesn't go to Church - only for the coffee in the week. But it has always
been a question of that is me, that is how I am, I go to Church Sunday by Sunday,
and that is my faith, and if you don't like me that way, then so be it, but you will
never stop me. In the beginning when we started courting he wanted to go out Sunday evenings, but I said, ‘No, I go to Church Sunday evenings. If you want to see me, come to Church with me’, which he did. And I could do that now, but I wish I could have done that when I was younger.”

When reference is made to progressive improvement over time, often a single reason is given. This can be the positive benefits of maturation and getting older. Thus Brenda:

“Um - I think it gets less and less as I have got older and especially since I have retired. I think I have probably got more time and energy and space to think about other people, and sometimes it has actually gone through my mind, and I have thought now I wished that I had had that time earlier on in my life. I know it isn't always possible, but it gets easier as I have got older. I think I have become more tolerant, to be honest, as I have got older, in many ways.”

And Earnest:

“I think as the years have gone by I have become more accepting probably.”

And Edgar:

“That is it, yes. I think I am a little bit. As I have got older, I am a little bit better at it.”

And Edward:
“Well, one would like to think that one would have the wisdom, but – er – I suppose a lot of it has to do with your experiences in life. And – as you get older I think you tend to get wiser.”

Ronnie reflects on his life:

“I have tried to live my life within the Christian ethic – if you like - of love, and commitment. There has never been a time when I have ever doubted what I was doing. My faith now is stronger now than it ever has been. I am practically at the end of my life, - I think I am digressing by saying, ‘I don’t fear death, but I fear dying.’”

Chrissie introduces the concept of maturation:

“as you mature I think that is one of the things you have to learn.”

Katie, reflecting on the exemplars she has identified, says:

“I think it is. um - And I think it is more so as I mature. I think that they may have been living a good Christian life much longer than me.”

The positive effects of being with others, and in particular as part of the Church Family, are suggested as the reason. Thus Brenda:

“Yes, and I think also having talked to you about these different eight people, and they are not all in the far distant past, that I have been able really to take from their characters and help me with my own. I don’t think - I don’t think - I mean ‘man isn’t an island’. I don’t think you can do this all on your own. I think a lot of goodness rubs off from other people on to you, and I think that helps you tremendously.”
And Charles:

“Yes, that is fair to say. I think the other reason why I am doing a lot more at the moment is that this Church, for all its – I don’t know, you could say its middle class origins, what have you, there is a strong movement within the Church for that, and – yes, I mean to say, yes that is part and parcel of that as well, there is very much a movement there, like anything if you are with a bunch of people who are doing it, it is much easier.”

And Edward:

“Er – I – things you, you know, the changes in my life I suppose – um – it is – when I started going back to Church again, er – being in – within the Church, it makes you think a lot more about your personal – er – behaviour, - whatever you like to say. And – and it gives you time to reflect on it – and – so therefore I think it does change you – for the better.”

Kathleen has responded to increased awareness of environmental concerns:

“I think this is something we have been made much more aware of in more recent times, I am sure, and yes, I have become very aware of recycling, and I have always cared about animals. I have always liked animals and hated, would have hated, to see any kind of cruelty or - against animals. I am not a great gardener or................. but I think saving the planet is something which is very important which we have been made much more aware of.”

The motif of life as a journey is readily applicable. For example, Charles:
“Yes, I haven’t – I haven’t got to the end of the journey I suppose in thinking about that – you don’t necessarily ever get to the end of the journey.”

And Simon

“Yes, yes. And in a way that links with all these years of a desert when I used to go to formal worship, twice a year, just to be - to remain on the fringes of the club if you like. It links with that, so there has always been an awareness in my life, it is just more intense when I think about people that I know, and people that I have known, and things that happen in my life, - and - oh I think I must do better. So it has always been there, that”

5.4.5.1.2 Change - summary

In all of these situations, the participants begin with an actual or implicit reference to a past which was not as good as the present, and conclude with a reference to the present about which they are comfortable. The mention of a single explicatory factor is usually sufficient, which is seldom developed. In essence, the participant asserts, ‘I have changed’.

5.4.5.2 Commitment: ‘I am committed to change’

The participant asserts their commitment to the occurrence of change. The emphasis is not on any progress which may happen but on the participant’s personal intention, on their Moral Desire. There is a teleological perspective, with the future state contrasted with the present.

This theme combines two coding categories known as I Try and I Aspire. It was used by 44/56 (79%) of participants. In I Try, the emphasis is on active connection with the issue. In I Aspire, the connection with the issue is more notional, with the emphasis more
on the desired outcome. In both situations, the participant acknowledges their personal responsibility.

5.4.5.2.1 Commitment - examples

There can be indications of a struggle, internal for Yvonne:

“Let's say I am fighting against my impatience.”

And more in the domestic scene for Peter:

“Yes, I think, again it is how you try to lead your family as a father and discipline as well for your children, that, that is very challenging. And trying to do, to do right by everyone, and also trying to find a bit of you as well, in that. So there are certainly challenges really.”

In Diane’s numerous examples, trying does not equate with succeeding:

“Um - I - I try very hard to work for the benefit of others, but quite often I end up feeling resentful about it, - and taken for granted, and therefore obviously I am not selfless.”

“I would try to put it in a positive way; to develop the relationship from there. And otherwise what you can do is end up being a door-mat, so I think there is a fine balance.”

“Not as much as she would like to be. And again sometimes I think I try a bit too hard.”

“I think it is a stable feature for some time. It is something I have been aware of for a long time, but I don't seem to make much progress.”

“So I do try very hard to break those barriers down.”

“I think there are some people who are very private, very hard to get to know them,
and however much you may approach them in a friendly way, and try and converse with them, they don't seem to want to open up, - so it isn't possible to understand them in a deep way, and they don't appear to want to be understood.”

Others are also able to express the co-existence of trying and failure. Thus Kenny:

“I said always - but may not always, but it is my intention to do so, yes. And when one doesn't, you realise you have fallen far short of your expectations.”

And Edward:

“Well, you have to try and get it right, but the thing is you might not get it right for a long time, but if you know it is wrong, then you have got to make some form of effort to improve things.”

And Ronnie:

“I suppose - um – I try to think well that is not the right way to act. So next time I meet that person perhaps I bite my tongue, or do something like that, and try to say ‘Well, God loves you – I must’. It doesn’t always work of course. I do my best.”

And Yvonne:

“Well, when I show myself to be impatient, for instance waiting in a queue, and I have complained, and afterwards I feel ashamed, and that is all I can say. I know I shouldn't be impatient, but - on the whole, I try to be patient.”

“I'm not going to beat myself up about it, because the past is the past. I can't do anything about the past. I have got to concentrate on now, and the future.”

Or more explicitly, John:
“This person would say, ‘Yes. He does try, but he falls by the wayside.’”

The inclusion of regret can be expressed as motivational. Thus Len:

“So there was a very long period when I had no connection with the church at all, which I regret. I try to make amends for it.”

And Nicola:

“Yes, Oh yes, I do try and learn from my mistakes, yes, definitely.”

For some the concept is core to their self-understanding, thus for Kit:

“Well I have often thought if I had an epitaph, it would be ‘She Tried’.”

Whilst all the preceding examples have some element of intentional activity, there are also situations where the participant’s response is solely at the level of what would be colloquially expressed as a wish, hence prior to the engagement of moral action. This can be expressed succinctly. For George:

“I wish it was really. Well I - I pray a lot.”

And Ken:

“Mm. I wish I was.”

And Nora:

“I suppose I just want to be a caring and loving person, I think.”

And Mary:

“I wish I was. I can be. I have been, I think.”

Or with greater narrative content, as with Kenny:
“No - I think it has grown - something that has grown, certainly. I have always been - yes - in since I suppose my mid-thirties - 25 years, I have been consistent in that. But I would like more time to do that - I would really like to get into my next phase - not quite get there yet, but I would like to spend more time with young people, that I really believe in. I can see plenty of people that I see on building sites, who I know could do wonderful things with their life. You see the skills they have got.”

Whilst Simon refers to prayer on nine occasions, he combines this with intention “it is the thing I pray about most.” ... "with a desire to improve"

Tanya sees how the passage of time will make her aspirations realistic:

“Um, yes, well - I kind of think, it is the kind of thing you only see in old people. And I do aspire to be old one day, and I guess that to me it is about keeping on going, keeping on reading the Bible, keeping on praying, keeping on inter-acting with people, yes I have been faithful over a long period of time. And allowing God to change you, being open to God changing you.”

Naomi is quite precise in her wish:

"I am hoping that I will be able to be better at deciding which is more important and dealing with that one and not feeling guilty about either."

And Peter gives a religious context:

“‘Yes, um, I suppose the common strand in there - I think - I suppose the inspiration for the perfect person is Jesus really,’”
The prior exercise involving exemplars makes it easy for aspirations to be expressed with reference to real people, hence for Thelma:

“And sometimes I think back to that old lady and I think I wish I had her 100% belief, and she was so so serene.”

And for Wendy

“I am O.K. about being the way I am, but I would like at times to be able to be a bit more the way they are - which is very vague - I am sorry.”

5.4.5.2.2 Commitment - summary

Participants accept their personal responsibility for modifying their behaviour in line with the ideal that has been acknowledged. They indicate this commitment through a statement of their personal endeavour or wish. The process is on-going, with no sense of completion or success. In essence, the participant asserts, ‘I am committed to change.’

5.4.5.3 Engagement: ‘there are issues here to engage with’

The participant shows an appreciation both of the actual situation and of the ideal situation, and concludes that they are comfortable with the relationship between the two. If a disparity is acknowledged then this is accepted without any indication of how it would be addressed. The focus is more on the issue rather than the person, and there is no commitment regarding any future behaviour.

This theme combines eight coding categories known as Better in the Past, Could Do Better Perhaps, Dilemma, Content on Reflection, Evidence, Harmony, Gap Acknowledged, and Example of Disharmony.
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

It was used by 55/56 (98%) of participants. In Better in the Past, the participant acknowledges that there was a time when their actual behaviour was closer to the ideal, without giving any indication of an intention to return to that good behaviour. In Could Do Better Perhaps, the participant shows an awareness that their behaviour could improve, without declaring any intention to do so. In Dilemma, the participant rehearses at length different aspects of the situation, without drawing any conclusions. In Content on Reflection, the participant, whether starting to talk about a bad or a good situation, concludes in a positive state, sometimes having postulated third-party exaggerated views from which to distance themselves. In Evidence, the participant narrates an event which shows that they meet the ideal. In Harmony, the participant suggests that their behaviour accords with the ideal. In Gap Acknowledged, the participant’s response is succinct, agreeing that their behaviour does not meet the ideal, often to be followed, on my prompting, with an additional longer response. In Example of Disharmony, the participant responds at some length with real situations where they have failed to live up to the ideal, either in generalised (thin) or particular (thick) form.

5.4.5.3.1 Engagement - examples

For several individuals, the aging process and passage of time account for a decline in standards. For example, with Kenneth:

“As I have got older, I have got more rigid.”

And Edmund:

“Shall we say I am getting less and less enthusiastic in things as I get older?”

And Mary:
“It is dwindling. Put that down to age.”

Changes in situation can be offered as explanations, with David no longer having the opportunities for witness provided by work. Marion remembers leaving a Bible Study Group that failed to help her cope with the death of a friend's daughter, whilst for Diana, talking about herself:

“It has got harder as one gets older. And it gets stretched when you have serious illness within the family, and that really tests your faith, your belief. Diana has gone through a lot of that recently.”

“Um - it is harder, um - it was much easier when - in my early life, - than I find it now. I don't know why that is, I guess it is just pressures of life.”

John refers to the impact on himself of a casual visit to the shrine at Walsingham

"he is empowered by the Spirit on occasions, and it lasts all right for a time but then he falls by the wayside."

And Tanya

“Well I know that there have been times in my life when I have prayed more - knowing that praying is very rewarding and I know that it is a great thing to do, and I know that I don't do it well at the moment.”

Wendy expresses uncertainty:

“I would find it difficult, I have found it difficult in the past. I hope I would be obedient, but I might not.”

Edgar freely talks about his failings:
“[I] don't want to make that commitment. I am basically lazy. If I could find a quick way, an easy way to doing things, I would do it to satisfy myself, not what other people would think was the right way to do things.”

Likewise, Fred is aware of his shortcomings:

“But I probably don't do as much as I feel I should do. .... I don't do as much as my sister would do ... I recognise I fall short. I don't - yes, I could do more.”

George mildly rebukes himself:

“Well I feel that - yes, I am wet about that, I think I probably should be stronger in my expression of my convictions, but I am just wet about forcing it down people's throats really.”

Referring to his lack of the type of dedication manifest by his exemplars, Leonard stops short of any commitment to change:

“I am trying to reflect where I am now at the age of 63. And I don't think I could say I am dedicated to a cause, I am committed and enthusiastic about many things, but that is not quite the same in my mind as this word dedication - there is a difference.”

Marie qualifies her good qualities:

“Um - Yes more selfish all ways. .....spectrum - if they were totally generous all round the spectrum - I am more selfish than that. Generous where I want to be generous, as opposed to perhaps sometimes when I should be. I love to spoil my children, I enjoy taking the girls shopping, buying them clothes. When he was
younger, I loved taking my son out to dinner, - all those things. But I think my generosity is a bit to suit me.”

Wendy acknowledges her failings:

“‘Yes. You know - sometimes we are asked down at [our church], ‘could anybody do this’, or ‘could somebody do that’, or ‘could somebody fill in here’ - I mean there are always people that immediately respond, and say, ‘Yes, I will do that’. I stand back and wait to see who is going to respond first.’”

Wendy’s thinking develops as she is talking:

“I would find it difficult; I have found it difficult in the past. I hope I would be obedient, but I might not.”

“No, I don't think I would mind if they took it in - rejected me. I wouldn't particularly mind anyway. It is very difficult to try and express this actually. I don't know. I am confused over that one.”

Tanya expresses conflicting views:

“Yes and No. Yes in that I think it is amazing, and - what people manage to achieve. Some people are natural leaders - and I do think that I am a leader, and I am a leader, but perhaps not quite in the same league as those people I pointed out. But I also recognise in myself that I probably don't have those personality traits that will ever make me quite like that.”

Stuart is at ease with ambiguity:
“Yes, I am not sure that the two parallel paths will arrive at the same conclusion. And I am the sort of person who can live with the two things, going on quite separately.”

For Susanna, the demands of her partner contribute towards her dilemma, so talking about herself:

“Yes, but she struggles at times. Yes, that's true. Try to balance my needs and other people's needs, always sort of - if I can help I want to and I will, but sometimes it is difficult to gauge what level of commitment that might - that again can be difficult, because certain relationships are more important, not more important but - I don't want to risk relationships like with my husband, by being too much away from him. So that can sometimes perhaps make it a little bit more difficult to give as much help as you would, might [like]. Because you could spend your whole life doing everything for everybody else but then your relationship with other individuals is bound to suffer, because you can't dedicate the time they need.”

There can be reference to the limitations of human nature, as with Ronnie:

“I have never said, ‘That’s it.’ It hasn’t worked that way. But I am human.”

Participants can profess a lack of understanding, as with Ken:

“No, I don't know. They may be - they may be more sensitive, that sort of thing than me. I don't know. I just don't know.”

Harold narrates his church-based activities, and then concludes:
“but there is always the feeling, ‘could I be doing more?’ Where could I make that space?”

Edmund’s concealment is bold:

“My wife doesn’t like me drinking. So I don’t tell her. I am not totally honest about what I consume at times.”

Whilst Barbara’s illustration is inconclusive:

“No – well, I am delaying it – you know, because I could give more – it is about the choices that I make, so – you know – am I going to – am I going to forego a holiday in, say, France – which, you know it could come to £2,000 – or am I going to give that to the Church?”

The engagement can be expressed as a narrative. These can be lengthy; Dorothy’s is one of the shorter. In this and other examples, she postulates a more extreme version of the ideal from which she then distances herself:

“I can’t just believe those things, I can’t, I just can’t - Because on the Alpha Course, it was very clear that the Bible was the absolute, untouched word of God, and I thought I don’t believe it, - I feel very guilty about many things, - about what I don’t manage to believe and things - but that I don’t feel guilty about being that, because I think there are so many conflcitions and things that don’t make sense, - so I am not going to believe that is the absolute word of God as it is, not interpreted by people and not - and so I - that is a division - so I think if you have to believe that the Bible is as it is to be trusted, absolutely, implicitly, and not questioned, then I can’t do that. But I think I can still believe and have faith without believing that. So that is the big division, I think really.”
Likewise, Harold’s thinking develops as he talks:

“I think probably over time the answer is, Yes. I think there are times when I do find it difficult to forgive, immediate things, immediate instances, that might happen that are unjust, either to me or to others - but generally, on the whole, I think I put things behind me very, very quickly, and again because of the position I am in my role as a Deputy Head, and therefore dealing with staff, dealing with students day to day, and take for example, students who - you know - they have done something wrong, and as a School we are - part of our ethos is that there is a way back - then I think my day to day life is built around having that response to how people act and behave, not particularly towards me most of the time, but again because of the role I am in, I have to pick up those situations where there has been an instance between students and other members of staff. And so a lot of my life is about a situation, and move on, and I suppose, [that] has influenced to a large degree, the way I think and behave towards others. So I think, Yes. I do find it difficult to forgive when there is an immediacy, especially when it has affected me or a member of my family or something like that, a close friend or whatever. But over a reasonably short period of time, I can move on in those situations.”

Having extolled the virtues of tolerance, Earnest reflects on his own situation, concluding with an element of provisionality:

“Um - I think they would probably say that for the most part that would be true, - I might have one or two blind spots but there are certain things which I am intolerant of, I suppose. But I think that's right, because I think in my life I have come across people from many different walks of life and quite a few different nationalities, and so I think, Yes, I think I would say for the most part that would be
true. Certainly on early acquaintance, obviously as one gets to know somebody
better then there may be certain aspects of their personality that you feel should not
be accepted for some reason or other, or of their behaviour which you wouldn't be
comfortable with. But no, I think as the years have gone by, I have become more
accepting probably.”

Sometimes the change process is explicit, as when Edmund discusses parental
responsibility for the actions of an adult child.

“My wife and I talked about it, and we decided we didn't go wrong.”

Sometimes people offer an explanation for their behaviour, such as Katherine:

“Um - well - a lot of people I know go to [lots of] different sessions at
Church - I am not so involved now - partly from age - as I said before to you - um -
I feel you don't always have to be in Church to be a Christian.”

In response, the participant can refine the original topic, such as Kenny’s additional
comments on leadership:

“No. I don't think so, I - I inspire people, I am certainly a leader, I like to
think I am. I was chosen to do my job and I have been doing it for some years. But
- yes, I think I am a leader, but I don't think I am truly inspirational in making
people think outside the box.”

Some participants can include mention of failures, before coming to a happy
conclusion, such as Rhona

“Um - yes, there are bound to be the odd situations when you think, Oh for
goodness sake, you know, leave me alone, or you know, there was just a minor
thing really, I was phoned up and asked to do something on a specific day and I had already arranged to do something else, you know, they had already planned to do - the person who phoned me up had already changed their duties or whatever without actually consulting me first, to see if I could step in and help, and I thought, you know, I do have my own life to lead, I can't just be always here running around for you. And then I think afterwards, well you know, does it really matter, you know, I can do it, I can change what I was going to do. So yes, I do try to sort of accept things as they are I suppose.”

Barbara, with some embarrassment, provides the evidence of others to substantiate her good behaviour:

“Yes, I would say yes, though I do sort of find that embarrassing to say that, because two people within the last couple of weeks have both said that to me about me, so I think I can say, Yes.”

Edmund gives examples of his good behaviour:

“It is easy - family commitment, yes. If any of the family need taking up to the airport, we do it. Next door my brother-in-law takes me, I take him. I took another brother-in-law and my sister to the airport a couple or three weeks ago, will pick them up next Monday. That is easy, it is easy, there is no hassle about it at all. It is what we are a family for. You don’t live - you shouldn’t I think live in a community and not know people.”

Whilst for some the examples come readily, for Nancy there is a delay:

“I think that I'm - I can't think of any special occasion now, but it will come as I perhaps talk. I don't give up easily, because I am like that. If - one thing, one
thing I am thinking of now, if someone - say I am walking up the road, I always say, ‘Hello’ to everyone.”

On occasions, testing circumstances are described, for example for Teresa:

“No. No, because my husband who died a couple of years ago, - I had at least 7 years of nursing him, one way and another, and - you know - he was the youngest, he had had asthma as a child, he was very selfish, spoilt by his mother, - when he was nice, he was very, very nice, but when he was bad he was really, really aggressively selfish. And even his doctor said to me one day, ‘Are you going to leave him?’ And I said, ‘No, I couldn't hold my head up. I will nurse him through to the end.’ So I have been severely tested, and I think I have come through.”

Barbara’s is a simple statement that she is seen to conform to the ideal:

“Yes, I think that is something that people would say about me.”

This positive self-affirmation can be as succinct as, for Marie:

“Yes. I think sometimes I can help people.”

In contrast, there can be a simple admission of failings, as with Wendy:

“I am not very good at giving my time.”

Sometimes the response is brief, relying on the content of the preceding question for a full understanding, as with Sarah:

“I think there are bound to be.”

There can be an acceptance of failings, as with Kenny (using an example also coded as Commitment):
The idea that perfection is impossible is offered by several, including Tina:

“"Yes, that is how I feel, that is not to say that in an ideal world, it would be nice, it would be nice to be lots of things in an ideal world, but we just know we couldn't do."

Finally, the failings can be presented with a moderate measure of self-recrimination (contra the substantive Self-Recrimination of Emotional Disposition, Section 5.4.5.6), as with Brenda:

“"With hindsight, yes, because I think probably the major example of that would be the way most of my married life I didn't get on very well with my mother-in-law."

Diane is also ashamed of her past behaviour:

“"Yes. I think it is very easy to actually talk about people and people's situations behind people's backs. Or gossip generally. And get caught up in the general camaraderie - talking to neighbours about other neighbours - this sort of thing. Then I feel ashamed afterwards."

These examples of bad behaviour are not accompanied by any intention to change, hence with Len:

“"I still am, unfortunately. I have to confess that there is one particular person who speaks far too loudly, always jumps in, and every day I think, “Please,
5.4.5.3.2 Engagement - summary

The participant shows an awareness of the issue, sometimes a multifaceted understanding. They are quite relaxed about the situation; whether they consider themselves to behave in accordance with or at variance with the ideal. Even if reference is made to feelings, the emotional content expressed is of no greater than moderate intensity. There is an absence of any clear intention or commitment. In essence, the participant asserts, ‘there are issues here to engage with’.

5.4.5.4 Environment: ‘it is the circumstances around me’

The participant identifies aspects of their environment which constrain their freedom. Usually this accounts for an inability to conform to the ideal under discussion, but the participant can also be disowning responsibility for behaviour otherwise considered as virtuous. There is no intention to change this situation.

This theme combines seven coding categories known as Family Priority, Good Fortune, Outside My Experience, Circumstances, Close Relationships, Work Pressure, and Time Not Available. It was used by 47/56 (84%) of participants. In Family Priority, the participants’ duty to meet the demands of their family members takes precedence over the ideal under discussion. In Good Fortune, participants assert that they can claim no personal credit for their apparently virtuous behaviour. In Outside My Experience, participants indicate that the virtuous behaviour of exemplars is linked either with life-events foreign to the participant or to an aspect such as gender or profession in which they differ from the exemplars. In Circumstances, participants describe generic external situations which are beyond their control and which obliged them to behave the way they do. In Close
Relationships, participants refer to individuals with whom they are closely involved and who require them to respond in particular ways. In Work Pressure, participants identify aspects of their employment which prevent them behaving as they would wish. In Time Not Available, lack of time is explicitly mentioned as the reason for the failure to behave in the ideal way.

5.4.5.4.1 Environment - examples

Christine is clear that home should take priority:

“Yes, I think the family would always come first.”

Likewise, with Kate:

“[my husband] has retired, he is still at 83 quite active, and now that he is retired I feel my principal occupation is to do things with him. And that is number one.”

The pressures of work and family can run together, as for Wendy:

“Um - I would say that for many years, in bringing up a family, going to work, working long hours in Dubai, I had very little time that was my own.”

Leonard attributes his virtuous temperament to nature:

“I think so. I guess I was born with it, it is just a wonderful bit of luck to have it, I guess.”

Whilst Kenneth sees nurture as the cause of his strong faith:

“It gives me a direction in life, and I thank my mother for that, because she made me go to Sunday School. It was the thing in those days, and it has given me
something which I needed. I could have gone off the rails - I could have gone off the rails. Mum had to work, support. I was very lucky. And I put that down to someone up there smiling.”

Others see their exemplars as having coped with greater trauma and testing than they have ever experienced, thus Diane refers to herself:

“I am not sure that Diane has ever really encountered great adversity, - She may have had her heart broken a couple of times, but she has never wanted for the basic things in life. So it would be interesting to know how Diane would cope with that.”

Men and women identified ideals which they attributed to the opposite gender, thus for Vince:

“That was the one I picked on for ladies, wasn't it? To a certain extent, yes. I wouldn't say I was serene myself. To a certain extent with serene you see, you are almost edging on to passive.”

Ronnie refers to musical talents in others:

“Oh yes. Yes. One of the persons I admired – well I admire many musicians – our Organist and choir master here at [our church]. I mean he has the technical knowledge and to teach us – even at my advanced age – aspects of music that were completely closed to me – talking about composers, and the types of music they wrote. Yes I often wish I had that ability. But recognise that I haven’t got it.”

Health issues can intervene, such as for Christine:
“Yes - I have had to slow down over the last two years because of an eye operation.”

Diane is conscious of the stressful nature of her working life:

“Oh, I mean, Yes, when you have been working all day - 7.00 o'clock at night, you have got three calls to do - you are dying to have something to eat - tired out - and somebody else rings up with something that is not really necessary - yes, it just goes out of the window - but then you are human, aren't you?”

Close family members can constrain behaviour, as for Wendy:

“No, I find it very easy. The only barrier is my husband.”

Teresa also found her husband restrictive:

“I don't do very much because over the years my husband needed a huge amount of care and attention - he wasn't a charitable person, and I said I would do something one day, and somebody asked on the telephone, and I was sitting there saying, ‘Yes, I'll do that and that and I put the phone down.’ And he said, ‘You can't do that.’ And my duty had been to him first, because after all I was married to him”

As we noted earlier in Engagement, Edmund modifies his behaviour because of his wife’s attitude:

“My wife doesn't like me drinking. So I don't tell her. I am not totally honest about what I consume at times.”

There are several references to the impact of the participant’s partner not being a Christian. Charles’ story is instructive:
“Um – Well I would have said, previously it was a lot to do with my – I suppose whether or not – I was interested - whether or not I have been with a girlfriend. Because when I think back to the times when I was younger, I didn’t have a girlfriend, and the times when I did have a girlfriend, I suppose they weren’t Christians, so – um – I suppose it is fair to say I didn’t have the time – and the time would have been slightly problematic, would have caused problems in relationship. Whereas at the moment – my wife is also a practising Christian – I suppose I spend more time doing it.”

The work environment can constrain behaviour, for example with Barbara:

“you can’t be direct with people who are more senior to you”

“in a work environment – if I am very honest – the politic – the politics which – politics do require you not necessarily to be as honest as maybe – for example – I work for – I am also – I am working as a Consultant so basically I can be disposed of whenever they want, they can basically say Well off you go – which would be a problem for me. And therefore maybe I am not as honest at work as I might which I would otherwise be, I think – so I suppose to some extent where my job is on the line, I need to compromise that.”

Marion is able to identify the impact of work:

“I think since that three years my life has changed totally round again. So that whereas I was very much focused on family, and Church and Youth Club, and things in the village - because I have gone back to work and my horizons have just expanded a bit, so I have found myself stretched probably too much”

While Stuart looks back from retirement:
"So - over the last ten years or so I have been able - I have had much more time to think about the other people in my family, whereas - I am sure my wife would say, up until then I had been very egocentric. You know - I just had to - it was work, travel, come home, travel, work - just - that was the way my career developed. Once you were on the big wheel it was difficult to get off."

Brenda voices a common situation:

"I think often it has been a question of time, and having too much to do - you know - and probably when you have to prioritise, you don’t always get it right."

Tessa attributes bad outcomes to rushed decisions:

"Again it is usually when you haven’t got time to think about it, to – because if people come to me with – I mean sometimes you can give a wise answer fairly quickly, sometimes I find it is something I have to think about, perhaps to pray about, and may not be able to give an answer for quite a while. And if you haven’t got the time to do that, I think you are in danger of giving the easy answer. You know – do you understand what I am saying, that sometimes wisdom needs thought, and thought sometimes takes time – and sometimes you haven’t got that time."

5.4.5.4.2 Environment – summary

Participants externalise responsibility and locus of control, and hence do not anticipate being able to modify their behaviour. This is an on-going situation, though changes can occur, for example with retirement or the death of a significant other. In essence, the participant asserts, ‘it is the circumstances around me’. 
5.4.5.5 **Self-Identity: ‘it's who I am’**

The participant asserts their Self-Identity as the reason which explains the behaviour being considered. It is anticipated that no change will occur.

This theme combines two coding categories known as Self and Identity. It was used by 55/56 (98%) of participants. In the context of the consideration of (eight) significant others, the participants are able to make comments about themselves. In Self, the participant refers to an aspect of their personality or a feature of their life history to explain why they behave in a way which falls short of the ideal under discussion. In Identity, the participant asserts that the accord between their actual behaviour and the ideal behaviour is an important aspect of their self-understanding. Here the participant explicitly challenges the presumption that admiration implies aspiration, and in doing so acknowledges the strength of the presumed connection.

5.4.5.5.1 Self-Identity - examples:

Participants were able to say that the reason they did not behave like their exemplars was because they were who they were. Vince is most succinct:

“*I don't know - I suppose it is me. My being I suppose.*”

Similarly, Simon:

“I would like to think that I could have that, but I don't know that I am wired correctly.”

“No. *In the - I can't remember the name now - the process where you can judge a character, but I come out as what is called a Completer/Finisher.*”

And Tina:
“I suppose to some extent it is a general personality trait of not always wanting to make feelings open to other people, keeping a little bit back to do with most things to be honest. And as a lack of self-confidence, I suppose, about where I am in general.”

And Rhona:

“I think in a way, basically, I am actually quite shy. And so I intend to withdraw, and not open up about things.”

Charles begins to reflect out loud on this, and then stops, mindful of my presence:

“I don’t know – I suppose the only – the only thing I can think about is that I possibly think that I am not made like that, I am not capable of it, - that is an interesting thought. Um – yes I think that we are in quite a personal area, in terms of my personality – and reflections of my mother I see in me, which I probably wouldn’t want to explore too much in someone else’s company.”

Others are more explicit, with many attributing their behaviour to experiences in earlier life. In these situations, the emphasis is on the personal impact upon the participant; had the emphasis been on the external circumstances this would have been coded as Environment. Thus for Marian:

“Yes, the way I have been treated. I have been told I don't - I don't give over myself completely, there is always a little bit back, maybe because I have been hurt so much in the past, I don't know.”

“Well, yes. The violence, I have had throughout my life.”

And Katie:
“That's because my mother gave me a hard time, I think.”

And Charles:

“The inability to cope, not having anyone that you could, with whom that could be shared, which would bring a loneliness aspect and I think that goes all the way back to childhood.”

Several participants suggest that it is too late to change, for example, Diane:

“I think it is a stable feature for some time. It is something I have been aware of for a long time, but I don't seem to make much progress.”

The concept of an instinctive response decreases the space for personal choice, as with John:

“But also I don't think it is my instinct to think of a way of calming a situation. If you hear that someone has done something wrong, thinking Why the heck did they do that? Why did they do that? Don't get them to explain why they did it - suggest a way out - without them losing face. So I know what should be done but it is not always my instinct to do it that way.”

Len mentions the difficulties resulting from dyslexia, whilst Nora finds extempore prayer a struggle:

“I find praying very difficult out loud. I am O.K. with myself, but I do find it difficult out loud. I like to know when I am going to be asked to pray, because I find it very difficult to think like that. And I think that again is a disadvantage, I should - I am getting better at it. And that is only since I have been in office [as a
churchwarden]. I suppose it comes eventually. Some people, it comes naturally to you, doesn't it, but it doesn't to me unfortunately. I don't know why.”

Chrissie is able to see the influence of culture:

“It is part of, I think - you know - this Britishness. I think people really talked about their faith much more in India, than they do here.”

There are also situations where the link to self-identity is part of positive projection of the participant as some-one who behaves in accordance with the ideal. There can be a succinct assertiveness, when participants claim that the ideal behaviour under discussion is a personal characteristic. For example, Barbara:

“yes, almost to an extreme level”

And David:

“I think that the people who know me would say that. Yes, very definitely.”

And Diana:

“Across the board - I would hate if anybody thought they couldn't trust me absolutely, that is very important.”

And Helen:

“No. I hope that is one of my better points.”

And Katherine:

“Well, I am told I am very easy to talk to.”

And Tanya:
“Yes, probably, yes. That is an extension of me in a way.”

Ronnie is more elaborate, as we noted earlier under Change:

“That is a very difficult point, a difficult question. I have tried to live my life within the Christian ethic – if you like - of love, and commitment. There has never been a time when I have ever doubted what I was doing. My faith now is stronger now than it ever has been. I am practically at the end of my life, - I think I am digressing by saying, ‘I don’t fear death, but I fear dying.’”

To articulate such self-affirming comments may require the overcoming of some modesty, such as for Tessa:

“I think I do have some wisdom. I hate it; it sounds as if you are blowing your own trumpet.”

And similarly for Wendy:

“I personally think I do it quite well. That doesn’t sound very humble, does it?”

5.4.5.5.2 Self-Identity – summary

Participants confidently present aspects of the person they understand themselves to be. This can be an explanation of why they do not behave according to the ideal, or an assertion that they do fulfil the relevant expectations. There is no indication that any change is anticipated in the traits expressed. In essence, the participant asserts, ‘it’s who I am’.
5.4.5.6 Emotional Disposition: “that's how I feel”

The participant refers to the experience of strong emotions which contribute to the behaviour under discussion. This is in contrast to the way in which they have described that their moral exemplars behave. The implication is that the participant is unable to alter their response, either the arousal of the emotions or the consequential behaviour. Regret may be expressed.

This theme combines two coding categories known as Feelings and Self-Recrimination. It was used by 35/56 (62%) of participants. In Feelings, the participant links emotions which they experience with behaviour which is not ideal. In Self-Recrimination, the participant feels bad about themselves, extrapolating from the specific behaviour to a more generalized self-condemnation.

5.4.5.6.1 Emotional Disposition - examples

David’s reflections on about his childhood shyness conclude:

“So, yes, I think because I am basically shy that I - it is a handicap that has stopped me doing it.”

Diane has a tendency to worry, and expresses this in a self-derogatory manner:

“I think - I am a terrible worrier and I worry about unimportant things a lot of the time, and those get in the way of me seeing what the important things are until it is too late.”

For Edward it can be anger:

“I would like to think that I could be like that – I mean in certain cases, Yes, I am. But on occasions, I can be quick to anger, I suppose.”
Likewise, James refers to anger, then explains:

“Because I think the real me is suffering from an inferiority complex. People don't see it that way, but that is the real me.”

As noted earlier with Self-Identity, Tina reflects on her emotional responses:

“I suppose to some extent it is a general personality trait of not always wanting to make feelings open to other people, keeping a little bit back to do with most things to be honest. And as a lack of self-confidence, I suppose, about where I am in general.”

Wendy’s sensitivity to being accused of being silly was established in childhood:

“Yes, I think so. I don't mind being rejected, but I don't want people to think ‘Oh she is just being silly.’”

Others, such as Brenda, express self-condemnation:

“Oh definitely I didn't try hard enough.”

Lack of generosity is a common theme, as with Diane:

“I think so, I would like to think that I could give up all my worldly possessions and go off and live in the Third World and help people less fortunate than me. However ... image has been really important to me and I like to look smart and be well groomed, - it is obviously an important part of my job. I like pleasant surroundings, my home is important to me, I like it to be clean and tidy and presentable; and my garden is my passion, - so I work very hard to try and keep that looking lovely. And there never seems to be enough money to do all the things you want to do, and then I think that is a really bad way to be, because there
are so many poor people in the world, - I am so lucky - there are so many people
that have absolutely nothing, or virtually nothing, - and struggling to survive. So
yes, I think that is probably one of my worst traits.”

As noted earlier, Diane is also concerned about gossip. She admits to her own
involvement:

“Yes. I think it is very easy to actually talk about people and people's
situations behind people's backs. Or gossip generally. And get caught up in the
general camaraderie - talking to neighbours about other neighbours - this sort of
thing. Then I feel ashamed afterwards.”

Edgar is explicit about the experience of guilt:

“It is something that I feel I have failed at, because there have been
occasions where, particularly friends and acquaintance have been sick, and I have
thought about going to visit them, and have never actually done it, and I have felt
guilty afterwards.”

Fred is aware of his short-comings

"I recognise I fall short. I don't - yes, I could do more."

John reflects on his own personality:

“He is very selfish - self-centred - just thinks about what he wants to do.
Doesn't communicate with his daughters or his other relatives - um - I have not had
the gift of making close friends, getting on well with people.”

Len carries unresolved issues as a parent:
“I don't think of myself of having been a good parent. I was not as generous and kind to my son as I should have been. That doesn't mean to say that I was in any way unkind in a physical way at all, but I could have been more generous to him, and that has been a source of great concern to me over the years.”

Marie carries guilt from previous behaviour; referring to herself, she says:

“She would like to have, but she does know that she has behaved quite badly, throughout her life, surprisingly badly actually, and at the time really - was totally selfish, um – and ... I suppose she feels she doesn't actually repent enough, of the bad things she has done, to deserve the total forgiveness to give her the confidence that she would like.”

Likewise, for Teresa:

“So I can't say that I admire the way that I have behaved. But perhaps I didn't have any alternative.”

5.4.5.6.2 Emotional Disposition – summary

Participants refer to emotional states which result in behaviour at variance with their ideal. They may express regret or guilt, but do not express any intention to take responsibility for the emotions nor to try to change the ensuing behaviour. In essence, the participant asserts, ‘that is how I feel’.

5.4.6 Disclosures

The transcripts were subsequently scrutinised for episodes of disclosure, when the participant provided details about occasions when they failed to live in accordance with the ideal under discussion. These were then coded in December 2012, again using NVivo10 to undertake thematic analysis in a manner similar to before. All these episodes of disclosure
were from their adult life, confirming the findings of Gino and Desai (2012) that childhood is associated with purity. Two groups of categories were identified, which were labelled Explanation and Occurrence. The latter group of Occurrence differentiated between whether the episode referred to single or to multiple events, and whether the chronology was, for example, past continuous or past historic. This coding for Occurrence, whilst of potential interest, was not perceived to be of immediate relevance to our research question, hence was not utilized.

The former group of Explanation referred to the nature of the participant’s involvement in the behaviour which was disclosed. This generated seven categories which are detailed below, with frequency, definition and examples. A total of 249 episodes were coded, with episodes occurring within each of the 56 transcripts (range 1 to 14, mean 4.45). The distribution of ever-use of the seven categories of Commission (20/56), Omission (23/56), Falling Short (38/56), Factual (27/56), Progress (10/56), Redefinition (14/56), and Self-Depreciation (11/56) is shown in Figure 5.9 (p. 210).

![Ever-Use of Disclosure Categories](image)

Figure 5.9: Ever-use of Disclosure Categories
Thirteen participants used the same category more than four times, that category dominating their responses, with one preferring Omission, three preferring Falling Short, five preferring Factual, two preferring Progress, and two preferring Self-Depreciation.

5.4.6.1 Commission

There were 25 examples from 20 participants. The participant explicitly acknowledges that they have done something wrong. Often reference is made to a series of events, rather than a single action.

Examples of Commission:

The events can have enduring significance, such as when James narrates at length the occasion when he lost his faith and became suicidal. Marie regrets past adulterous relationships, referring to herself

“*She would like to have, but she does know that she has behaved quite badly, throughout her life, surprisingly badly actually, and at the time really - was totally selfish, um - and ....................I suppose she feels she doesn't actually repent enough, of the bad things she has done, to deserve the total forgiveness to give her the confidence that she would like. ... maybe I can have long enough to have a period of time where I can perhaps make up for some of the misdemeanours. You can't get back - I can't do anything about what I have done, but perhaps I can help people in other ways. “*

More often the reprehensible nature of the bad behaviour could be comparatively mild, thus Dorothy refers to her lack of forgiveness towards a relative. Sarah talks of being cross, and Susanna talks of getting ratty. Leonard comments:
“I am thinking of perhaps flippant remarks that were probably not appropriate in particular circumstances.”

The context can be significant. Referring to pressures at the work-place, Diana says she was unable to be honest for six years, whilst Len admits:

“When I was at work, I was just one of the boys, and things just went along, I worked hard, I would not necessarily be strictly honest as I should have been, especially as far as expenses were concerned - but that was the way it was.”

5.4.6.2 Omission

There were 34 examples from 23 participants. The participant regrets that they have failed to act as they believe they should have done.

Examples of Omission:

Many examples of omission were part of extensive text where the circumstances are discussed at length.

David was mindful of occasions when his faith wavered:

“No. I have had periods, not very long periods, when we have perhaps not attended Church - but they have been very short periods, when one has been a bit disillusioned, and felt one needs to stand back, and have a rest, and then go back - but not for many years now.”

Edgar readily acknowledges his lack of the virtue of hospitality, whilst Tessa knows that she does not always display the quality of God’s love. Yvonne (who used this category six times) is typical in expressing regret:
“Well when I show myself to be impatient, for instance waiting in a queue, and I have complained, and afterwards I feel ashamed, and that is all I can say. I know I shouldn't be impatient, but - on the whole I try to be patient.”

At the more extreme level, Len is deeply distressed that he failed to take seriously his son’s ill-health immediately prior to his death:

“Yes, he died. He died. He was - he lived in London, and he went into hospital there because he had pains, and they said they couldn't find anything wrong, so he came down here. First of all my wife said, “we will go and bring him down”, but I thought he was a little bit like my father had been, and he was the sort if he got a splinter in his finger, would expect to have surgery, whereas my mother, you could cut her head off and she would never complain, - but I thought of that - and I said, “You know I don't think I need to go and collect him.” And he came down and he wasn't any better.

We got Dr. [F] from the Clinic and she came up and saw him and said, “Well, I can't see anything wrong with him. Take him up to the hospital.” and I did, and they checked him, and they couldn't find anything wrong with him, so he said, “I can come home to-morrow.” So we came home and we were watching television, and the phone rang, and they said, “you must come immediately” - we did - he was dead. He had an aneurysm and they didn't know. I should have gone and collected him. I should have been a better father. That is a big burden. But the amazing thing is this, that we are not a particular affectionate -we weren't not particularly affectionate but he was up when he said, “I can come home to-morrow”, and he came and embraced me - did he know something? I don't know. There must have been some reason for him doing that.”
5.4.6.3 Falling Short

There were 71 examples from 38 participants. The participant recognises that they have not done as well as they could have done. The intention was to have succeeded, with the focus on the measure of success rather than the measure of failure.

Examples of Falling Short

Several examples include extensive monologues or dialogues. Shorter examples are given below. Edward, Marie and Wendy were the most frequent users of this category, with four examples each.

Christine’s response contains both aspiration and reality. Having discussed his irritable response to an out-of-hours phone call after a long day, David accepts his imperfections

“you might even snap at them and be not very nice, and then afterwards you feel very bad about it, and very guilty that you have not done as you should have done. But I mean only Jesus was like that, was unique, and we aspire - we like to aspire - but we don't achieve it, any of us, do we?”

There are many examples of people ‘trying’ to be good, with the implication that they are not always successful. George admits that he fails now and then, whilst Edmund continues to try to be sincere and caring even though people may take him for granted. For John, the inner motivation is attributed to God:

“Maybe not that he tries, but he is empowered by the Spirit on occasions, and it lasts all right for a time but then he falls by the wayside.”
On several occasions, percentages are used to convey the discrepancies, with Yvonne’s “about 90%” and Nicola’s “not 100%”. Thus for Kenneth:

“Yes, I would say that 95% Kenneth is always there for somebody [if they] needed him, the odd 5% would be - I mean - I feel that Kenneth would want to do 100% but in some ways, according to who the person is, that is - it is a difficult question really, - I find it difficult.”

The imagery of falling short is used by Kenny:

“I said always - but may not always but it is my intention to do so, yes. And when one doesn't, you realise you have fallen far short of your expectations.”

5.4.6.4 Factual

There were 58 examples from 27 participants. The participant recounts their failure to live according to their ideals. The misdemeanours tend to be mild.

Examples of Factual

Brenda (who with David, Kate, Katherine, and Vince used this category four times) is pragmatic about the need to prioritise. Likewise, Chrissie recognises her limitations posed by her work and family commitments. Christine has been less of a help to others during the last two years because of an eye operation. David explains:

“You can't do everything. You are far from perfect. Nobody is perfect, that is one of the things. There are a lot of things I can't do, and never will be able to do, and that is probably one of them.”

Edmund talks of his behaviour, expressing concern neither for his drinking nor its concealment:
“My wife doesn't like me drinking. So I don't tell her. I am not totally honest about what I consume at times.”

Marian shares her experience of domestic abuse to explain her reticence:

“I don't give over myself completely, there is always a little bit back, maybe because I have been hurt so much in the past ..... Well, yes. The violence, I have had throughout my life. ... Physical”

Whilst Yvonne recognises the influence of her upbringing:

“I think that because I was brought up just after the War and my parents were really very poor, we had to be extremely careful with money and I know generosity applies to time and talent as well, so I probably weigh up the things that I do, rather than be spontaneous in generosity.”

5.4.6.5 Progress

There were 22 examples from 10 participants. The participant asserts that their behaviour is improving.

Examples of Progress

Charles attributes change to maturation:

“It is something I have been thinking about – it is something that I would – I have been praying for to a certain extent as well. It – I think there is a bit of movement along that way, but it is something I think – I don’t know, it may be it is a long time coming, maturity – um – yes, it is something I very much aspire to actually.”
Earnest reckons that as the years have gone by he has probably become more accepting, whilst Edward sees the transformative impact of the experiences of life:

“as you get older I think you tend to get wiser.”

Eddie aspires to fulfil the will of God:

“it doesn’t matter whether I am tired or I am enthusiastic or whether I am full of energy, in all the things I do, I try to train myself to the fact that if I don’t do this to the best of ability, I am letting God down. Or if I do this really well then I believe that pleases God. So on the two extremes, it is a kick up the backside if I am not doing my best and God not being happy.”

5.4.6.6 Redefinition

There were 16 examples from 14 participants. The participant presents the ideal in a manner which reduces behavioural discrepancy. Often a distinction emerges between what is reasonable to expect of the participant and of the exemplar.

Examples of Redefinition

In response to the exemplary quality of unquestioning faith, Earnest discusses his ambivalence around certitude, and concludes that reading the Bible is best. Leonard recognises his ambivalence around being totally dedicated to a cause. Having started with stubbornness, Vince then prefers drive as a quality to emulate. Stuart, having begun by admiring simplicity of faith in others, goes on to discuss the merit of honest doubts, concluding
“Yes, I am not sure that the two parallel paths will arrive at the same conclusion. And I am the sort of person who can live with the two things, going on quite separately.”

For Christine, the virtue is qualified by her prioritization of her family:

“I think it is the same answer again, isn't it. Yes, unless it is something with the family.”

Mary sees the danger of honesty upsetting others. Having extolled honesty, Edmund then qualifies his comment:

“Oh - when I say they are totally honest, they are totally honest as far as I can see. They are probably the same as me. They probably tell white lies.”

5.4.6.7 Self-Depreciation

There were 23 examples from 11 participants. The participant makes derogatory remarks about themselves when referring to the ideal/behaviour discrepancy.

Examples of Self-Depreciation

Yvonne reckons that others may think her to be very patient, but she does not. Barbara (who with James used this category five times) refers to her generosity negatively:

“I would say, I don’t score particularly high on that, not as high as I would like to, - and in terms of time, giving people time I probably don’t score as high on that as I would”

Brenda discusses at length her failure to get on with her mother-in-law:
“With hindsight, yes, because I think probably the major example of that would be the way most of my married life I didn't get on very well with my mother-in-law. ... and I thought, 'oh why didn't I try harder?'... Oh definitely I didn't try hard enough.”

Diane refers to her selfish materialism as one of her worst traits. Edgar reckons that he is basically lazy, and feels guilty when he fails to visit family and friends. Len has a poor opinion of himself:

“I could never aspire to be as good as them, I have so many failings. My education has been a great burden to me. I would have loved to have had a first class education, although I didn't realise that until it was too late to do anything about it. I don't think of myself of having been a good parent. I was not as generous and kind to my son as I should have been. That doesn't mean to say that I was in any way unkind in a physical way at all, but I could have been more generous to him, and that has been a source of great concern to me over the years.”

**5.4.6.8 Discussion about Disclosures**

In considering the distribution of these categories, it was noted that they became less frequent as the interview progressed. Considering the total number of episodes occurring in the moral domains of each of the three phases of the interview, in the Early Phase there were 128/162 (79%) episodes of disclosure, in the Middle Phase 80/128 (62%) episodes of disclosure, and in the Late Phase 41/162 (25%) episodes of disclosure, as shown in Figure 5.10 (p. 215).
It had been anticipated that the more assertive questioning introduced at the beginning of Cohort Three would result in a higher incidence of such disclosures but initial analysis did not support this, as shown in Figure 5.11 (p. 220).

Figure 5.11: Disclosures per Phase

Figure 5.11: Proportional frequency of Explanations for Disclosure in each Cohort
Variation in the distribution of Explanation for Disclosed Behaviour against age-range and against gender was not sufficient as to merit further comment.

These occasions of disclosure are a natural by-product of the interview process, in that in order to discuss ideal/behaviour discrepancy, the opportunity was created to disclose recollected discrepant behaviour. All participants responded at least once by disclosing details of behaviour contrary to their ideal to an extent that they felt obliged to offer an explanation of that behaviour before moving on to discuss how they managed the discrepancy between that behaviour and their ideals. The focus of the interview was on the tactics employed, rather than the recollected behaviour itself. However, it will be apparent that there is a close connection between these two phenomena as discussed below (see Section 5.5.1.3).

5.5 Discussion of Main Study

5.5.1 Themes vs. Attributes

The frequency with which the six interpretative themes of Change, Commitment, Engagement, Environment, Self-Identity and Emotional Disposition occur is explored. Then using the data available on variables recorded as part of the interview process, possible links between the themes and these variables are considered.

5.5.1.1 Frequency of Use

The six themes of Change, Commitment, Engagement, Environment, Self-Identity and Emotional Disposition are widely used. When the text was coded, ‘episodes’ were of varying length, with long monologues and single components of extended dialogue both scoring the same. This means that ‘ever-used’ by a participant is a more reliable measure of prevalence rather than the actual number of episodes used by a participant. Figure 5.12 (p. 222) shows the number of participants who ever-used each theme. Further details of
usage are shown in the Table K (Appendix K, p. 346), and in Figure L (Appendix L, p. 347). Ranging from 35/56 (62%) participants using Emotional Disposition to 55/56 (98%) participants using Engagement and Self-Identity, the results indicate that each theme enjoys wide-spread usage.

![Figure 5.12: Number of Participants using each Theme](image)

The inverse relationship of Number of Themes vs. Number of Participants was also considered on the basis of ever-used, showing that most participants used most themes, as illustrated in Figure 5.13 (p. 223). Over 3/4 (79%) of participants used five or six of the themes and all used at least two. The ever-use of themes by those using just two or three was proportional to the overall popularity of the themes, that is those using few themes used the most popular ones. As noted above, frequency of use would need further refinement as a reliable measurement, as some longer passages were coded as a single episode, whilst several shorter components were each coded separately. However, it is worth noting that Leonard, the only participant to use just two themes, was the participant contributing the least number of episodes; likewise, all five participants using just three themes fell within the lower half of participants when ranked by number of episodes.
contributed. This suggests that as the number of episodes rose, the number of themes used also rose, rather than some participants restricting their usage to a limited sub-group of themes.

Figure 5.13: Number of Participants vs. Number of Themes

5.5.1.2 Focus

Focus is the term used to categorise the topic of each section of the interview. There are four main topics, each with two variants (see Table 5.1, p. 151). Looking at the matrix of Focus vs. Themes, it showed that the Focus of PA (Interpersonal, Aspect) and then the Focus of SA (Intrapersonal, Aspect) dominate the responses. Only one example of WD (External, Deed) occurred during the interviews, and this was not amenable to being coded. Thus the topics of the 455 domains which were coded against the six themes were distributed as shown in Table 5.6 (p. 224).

The three Foci of Interpersonal (People, 43%), Spiritual (God, 29%), and Intrapersonal (Self, 27%) dominated that part of the semi-structured conversation which was coded for the six themes, with minimal occurrence of the fourth Focus of External
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

(World, 2%). The ranking is the same as that in which the topics occurred when the moral domains were identified during the preparatory part of the interview. Thus the moral issues identified via moral exemplars, and also those discussed in the interview, focussed on personal concerns about people, God, and self, with less opportunity to develop concerns for engagement with the natural world. Likewise, when the moral domains were generated from the exercise with moral exemplars, and also when the discussion of moral domains was coded for the six themes, about twice as many domains were concerned with the more passive Aspects of a person’s internal qualities (69%, 64%), rather than the active Deeds of how people responded through engaging with their external experiences (31%, 36%). The bias in identifying moral domains towards the more internal passive Aspects over the more external active Deeds inclines towards the disposition of Character-Ethics rather than the action more typical of Utilitarianism and Deontology.

Almost all the themes occur within each Focus used, with no obvious correlation noted, whether the Foci are considered individually, taken as their four pairs, or considered according to Aspect/Deed. This means that the themes occur proportionally in all the different topics that are discussed, without any discernible bias, as shown in Figure 5.14 (p. 225).
Figure 5.14: Focus vs. Themes

The themes present as applicable to the full range of moral domains discussed, without any discernible bias in the extent to which they are used when the Focus is on Interpersonal (People), Spiritual (God), Intrapersonal (Self), or External (World) issues, or the extent to which they are used whether the emphasis is passive quality-like Aspects, or active Deeds.

5.5.1.3 Disclosure

The Explanation given for the Disclosure (Section 5.4.6) is concurrent with the theme emerging in the discussion of that disclosure. Figure 5.15 (p. 226) shows the proportional distribution of themes against disclosures.
Whilst the following comments may reasonably be made from the matrix of frequency of theme against disclosure, due to the overlap in coding, they commend the internal coherence of the themes rather than any additional independent evidence.

- The explicit nature of Commission tends towards the excuse of Emotional Disposition or the improvement of Change.
- The passive nature of Omission tends towards discursive Engagement or the introspective Self-Identity and Emotional Disposition.
- The aspirations of Falling Short tend towards the intention of Commitment or the circumstances of Environment.
- The details of Factual tend towards the information of Self-Identity, Engagement and Environment.
- The success of Progress tends towards the achievement of Change.
- The revision of Redefinition tends towards the additional details provided by Self-Identity and Engagement.
- The negative nature of Self-Depreciation tends towards the condemnatory aspects of Emotional Disposition.

Whilst 1,626 coding events produced the six main themes, only 249 episodes of disclosure were coded. The main themes address the entirety of how the participant
managed ideal/behaviour discrepancy, whilst the explanations for disclosed behaviour tend to focus on the behaviour itself.

5.5.1.4 Order

The timing of episodes is considered as falling within the initial, the central or the final periods of the interview. Looking at the matrix of Order (Early/Middle/Late) vs. Theme, the correlation between Order and Theme shows that themes occur proportionally at each stage of the interview, with no discernible bias, as in Figure 5.16 (p. 227).

![Figure 5.16: Order vs. Theme](image)

This implies that the emotional dynamic of being at the beginning, central, or concluding part of the semi-structured conversation did not appear to influence the choice of theme adopted to cope with ideal/behaviour disjunctures being presented. Suggestions of initial reticence, or a relaxed middle section, or final self-correction were not supported. However, it was noted earlier (Section 5.4.6.8) that Disclosures were less prevalent as the interview progressed, suggesting that the interview process was sufficiently robust to elicit further thematic responses without the need for additional Disclosures. It may also indicate
that the participant felt less need to ‘explain’ their behaviour, and were more able to move straight on to discussing its significance.

### 5.5.1.5 Education

The educational attainment of the final twenty interviewees was recorded, 18 of which became part of the data-set which was used. Looking at the matrix of Education (School/Vocational/University) vs. Theme for this third cohort, each theme was used by participants at each educational level, with no discernible bias.

[Diagram: Education vs. Theme]

Figure 5.17: Education vs. Theme

Thus suggestions that themes with the potential for greater cognitive complexity (Engagement and Environment) would be preferred by those with greater educational achievement were not supported.

### 5.5.1.6 Cohort

The three cohorts represented Anglican congregations of slightly different churchmanship, as well as different socio-economic status. Considering Cohort vs. Theme, all themes were used by each cohort, with no apparent correlation. Piff, Kraus, Côté,
Cheng, and Keltner (2010) identified that prosocial behaviour amongst the poor is essentially relational. Trautmann, van de Kuilen, and Zeckhauser (2013) highlighted the complexity of the relationship between morality and ‘social class’, especially the effect of differentials in cost/benefit, opportunities, moral values and in-class variation. However, more detailed research would be necessary before any hypotheses could be tested on differences between responses of members in good standing from churches of differing socio-economic backgrounds.

![Figure 5.18: Cohort vs. Theme](image)

**5.5.1.7 Gender**

Considering Gender vs. Theme, the usage of each theme was in proportion to the gender split.
5.5.1.8 Age-Range

The Age-Range vs. Theme graph shows that participants in each age-range made proportionate use of each of the themes.
5.5.2 Summary

These six interpretative themes have been derived empirically from the data. From the limited information available, all the themes were used across the age-ranges, by both men and women, of varying educational attainment, of differing churchmanship and socio-economic background, whatever the topic under discussion, and wherever in the interview that discussion took place. Whilst further research may identify second-order preferences, I suggest that these six themes are universally used as tactics by upstanding church-members when confronted with possible variance between their ideals and their own behaviour.

5.6 Theoretical Lens

The sixth of Braun and Clarke’s (2006, 2012; see Section 3.2) six steps for thematic analysis is the writing of the report. In doing so, certain theoretical perspectives illuminate an understanding of some of the three pairs of themes which I identified, yet I have not found a satisfactory theoretical perspective which adequately addresses all of them. A pluralist approach is required (Abend, 2013) which allows for theoretical ecumenism (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2005). Some concepts are readily applicable to certain themes, yet have limited or no relevance to others. Considering which theoretical frameworks preference which themes, the six themes can be arranged into the three pairs of Change & Commitment, Engagement & Environment, and Self-identity & Emotional Disposition. Conceptually, the first pair may be associated with Agency, the second with Context, and the third with Self-Concept. And likewise the three pairs of themes can be mapped respectively on to the three prime moral perspectives of Deontology, Utilitarianism, and Character-Ethics. The way in which ‘Division’ features is shown in Table 5.7 (p. 232) and discussed in the following sections.
Table 5.7: Themes and Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Morality</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Division</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change &amp; Commitment</td>
<td>Deontology</td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Diachronic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement &amp; Environment</td>
<td>Utilitarianism</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Internal / External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Identity &amp; Emotional Disposition</td>
<td>Character-Ethics</td>
<td>Self-Concept</td>
<td>Actual / Ideal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The methodology adopted for the collection of data invited the participants to identify significant relationships in their lives, reflect on the qualities which they admired in those people, and then recollect their own behaviour. This conversational focus on aspects of the participant’s life-story predisposes the data towards narrative identity as an over-arching framework providing the process with continuity and coherence. This feature of the process indicates, but does not necessarily imply, that narrative identity also serves as an over-arching framework providing continuity and coherence to the three pairs of themes identified as tactics for handling ideal/behaviour self-discrepancies, this being a matter which merits further consideration.

5.6.1 Change and Commitment.

In both the tactics of Change and Commitment, there is a clear temporal distinction, with two distinct chronological periods. Immoral behaviour (that is behaviour in contravention of the participant’s own morals), often in terms of action, is located in the earlier period, and aspirational behaviour (that is behaviour in accordance with the ideals to which the participant aspires) is located in the latter. Thus for Change, bad behaviour is acknowledged as having occurred in the past, whilst good behaviour is more recent. For Commitment, failings are acknowledged in the present, and improved behaviour is promised for the future.
This approach depends upon a robust understanding of Moral Agency. We are responsible for our actions, which means that we accept responsibility for the earlier bad actions, but we seek to be defined according to the later good actions. We accept responsibility for the occurrence of a contrary disposition, and we hope for a positively-valenced state of mind in the future. This sequence is an example of Moral Cleansing, when the subsequent good action compensates for the previous bad action(s) or state of mind. Moreover, the recollection of the earlier bad action(s) or state of mind functions as part of the Self Memory System to inform the following good behaviour. To use the archery analogy from scripture (e.g. Romans 3:23), the degree and frequency with which one has ‘fallen short’ must be sufficiently small to make the possibility next time of ‘hitting the mark’ a realistic aspiration, yet not so small as to discount the significance of success if it is achieved. The concluding presentation of oneself is in accordance with one’s Moral Identity, as expressed through the qualities of one’s moral exemplars. With Commitment’s focus on the future, the teleological significance of Moral Desire can determine the horizon. The initial ideal/behaviour disjuncture generates the distress anticipated by Dissonance Theory, with the consequential behaviour intended to reduce that discrepancy. In Moral Dissonance terms, this expresses both Moral Credit, with good compensating for bad, and Moral Credentials, with a good image being presented. Of these, Moral Credentials has been suggested to be dominant (Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010; Section 2.2.7.5)

The approach to morality which fits best is deontology, in that principled statements take precedence. It is about intention rather than actions. The behaviour is deemed good or bad intrinsically rather than by outcome. Fowler’s seven Stages of Faith (1981) allowed for increased sophistication in dealing with the issues raised, with many participants seeming to fit best his description of the sixth ‘conjunctive’ stage, where
opposites can be integrated, and the beginning of dialogical knowing to appreciate the multidimensional and interdependent nature of ‘truth’. However, the research context did not force the participants to adopt higher levels of moral reasoning.

As noted earlier, Change was used as a tactic to handle ideal/behaviour discrepancies by 48/56 (86%) participants and Commitment was used as a tactic by 44/56 (79%) participants. The combined pairing of Change and Commitment was used as a tactic by 52/56 (93%) participants, indicating widespread usage.

The main philosophical question that remains outstanding is ‘in what way does a subsequent good action make amends for a previous bad action?’ As noted towards the end of Section 1.2, Schimmel (2004) explained how, for exoneration to function, we require identity to be continuous but not fixed.

5.6.2 Engagement and Environment

In both the tactics of Engagement and Environment, the focus is on the context in which the question has arisen. In the case of Engagement, various aspects of the issue are explored, whilst in Environment, it is the external circumstances which form the basis for the discussion. From a Social Constructionist perspective, the problem is explored within the relationship between the researcher and the participant, in which aspects of ‘vicar’ and ‘respected church member’ are manifest.

It is suggested that an analysis of the Cognitive Complexity of the thought processes would allow for understanding of how apparently incompatible dilemmas are handled. However, the manner in which data were collected in this study limited access to more extended thinking. In Cohort Three, educational attainment was recorded, and the interview technique modified, to encourage cognitive complexity (see Sections 5.2.5 &
5.3.3). Initial scrutiny (see Section 5.5.1.5) did not show that higher educational attainment preferred the use of this pair of tactics. Likewise, no bias was discerned within Cohort Three (see Section 5.5.1.6). More detailed investigations would be required to conclude whether higher levels of Cognitive Complexity are directly linked to the use of this pairing of Engagement and Environment.

The internal attributions of Locus of Control and of Internality/Externality are of immediate relevance. In Engagement internal locus of control is minimised, whilst in Environment the emphasis is on externality. In terms of Self-Concept Maintenance, in Engagement and Environment the impact of external information is reinterpreted through moral disengagement (Shu et al., 2012) and categorization malleability (Mazar et al., 2008b). Consideration is given to obtaining the best results in the circumstances, with the pragmatism of Local Social Utility being introduced to explain the outcome. Kohlbergian Stages of Moral Development allow for increased sophistication in how one deals with the situation. The judgement as to what is the moral course of action is dependent upon a utilitarian approach to morality which is able to assign differential weighting to the potential outcomes thereby allowing for a decision to be made (see Section 2.2.2.2).

As noted earlier Engagement was used as a tactic to handle ideal/behaviour discrepancies by 55/56 (98%) participants and Environment was used as a tactic by 47/56 (84%) participants. The pairing of Engagement and Environment was used as a tactic by all 56/56 (100%) participants.

5.6.3 Self-Identity and Emotional Disposition

In the tactics of Change and Commitment, the focus has been on the person as moral agent, and, in Engagement and Environment, the focus has been on the person in context. In this third pair of tactics, the focus is on the person as experienced in their
relationships with others. In Self-Identity, the emphasis is on the way in which the person represents themselves to others. In Emotional Disposition, their personal feelings define who they are in the moral situation being considered. There is the internal phenomenon of motivated forgetting (Shu et al., 2012) and inattention to moral standards (Mazar et al., 2008b). There is a rejection of moral absolutism, with a stress on the Actual rather than the Ideal or the Ought. Social Intuition provides an understanding of the immediate response, with morality serving to enhance social cohesion rather than preserve internalised Moral Identity or conform to external expectations; thus the emphasis is on one’s understanding of others’ understanding of oneself. One’s actual behaviour can be compared to that of others, and through employing such social comparisons Moral Identity serves as a core part of the Self-Concept (see Section 2.2.6.4). One’s self-understanding gives an account of oneself which fits with the trajectory of one’s life-story.

Character-ethics provide a morality of virtues which are dynamic and applied to the individual and their circumstances. There is a continuity of self, with a legacy of past carried over into the present.

As noted earlier, Self-Identity was used as a tactic to handle ideal/behaviour discrepancies by 55/56 (98%) participants and Emotional Disposition was used as a tactic by 35/56 (62%) participants. The pairing of Self-Identity and Emotional Disposition was used as a tactic by 55/56 (98%) participants.

5.6.4 Summary of Theoretical Lens

Change & Commitment, Engagement & Environment, and Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition, the three pairs of interpretative themes, were used as tactics to deal with discrepancies between aspired ideals and recollected behaviour by respectively 52/56 (93%), 56/56 (100%), and 55/56 (98%) participants. This indicates wide-spread usage of
all three pairs by people of good standing when confronted by ideal/behaviour disjunctures.

The phenomenon being investigated is that of ‘ethical dissonance’ (see Section 2.2.8.3). Ayal and Gino (2011) had identified “three psychological mechanisms that enable people to rationalize and condone their unethical behavior: moral cleansing, local social utility, and social comparisons of one’s own behavior to that of others” (p. 3). As shown above, each of these ‘honest rational mechanisms’ inclines towards a different approach to morality. These three ‘honest rational mechanisms’ have distinctive features (see Section 2.2.8.3) which suggest tentative links with three pairs of themes identified in this study. In particular Change & Commitment shows aspects of the ‘turning over of a new page’ in moral cleansing. And Engagement & Environment shows aspects of the ‘diffusion of responsibility’ in local social utility. Finally, Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition shows aspects of the ‘moral hypocrisy’ in social comparisons. This is further developed in the General Discussion (Section 6.3).

Narrative Identity brings together personal responsibility from Change & Commitment, situational context from Engagement & Environment, and pragmatic experience from Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition.

The Self is perceived to be divided either through past/present or present/future in Change & Commitment, or through internal/external in Engagement & Environment, or through actual/ideal in Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition. Yet further work still needs to be done to provide an overarching moral framework which adequately explains the three pairs of tactics used to deal with ideal/behaviour discrepancies which have been identified in this study.
Chapter Six - General Discussion

6  RÉSUMÉ

This research is based on an understanding of the individual in the context of their recollections of the past and their aspirations of future behaviour. The research question explores how ‘respectable’ people maintain equilibrium when there is a disjuncture between the moral ideals to which they aspire and their recollected memories of how they have behaved. This is real-world research addressing an issue which occurs in many common-place situations. It builds on my earlier research (Primrose, 1993), which considered how chaotic heroin addicts in Pakistan dealt with disjunctions between their ideals and behaviour. The current research question was refined by restricting attention to the contrasting situation of regular members of local Anglican churches. As a research-practitioner, the research was closely related to my professional role as a minister of religion. Through a preparatory exercise in self-reflexivity, I identified the centrality of agency. In the Main Study, three pairs of tactics were identified which were used to deal with discrepancies between ideals and behaviour. These tactics show linkage to the three principal approaches to morality in common use.

6.1 Preliminary Considerations

The first of two preliminary considerations was the applicability of my earlier research (Primrose, 1993). That earlier research had explored the manner in which chaotic Pakistani heroin addicts dealt with the clash between their addiction-related behaviour and the moral milieu which they inhabited. The question arose as to the applicability of the findings of that earlier research to the context of this current research question. The findings of that earlier research were the identification of four groups of responses used by the addicts to address dissonance between ideals and behaviour. These were labelled the
Accepting Group, the Testimonial Group, the Confessional Group and the Defensive Group. In the Accepting Group, the addicts accepted their behaviour. In the Testimonial Group, they testified to change, actual or intended. In the Confessional Group, they professed their wretchedness and inability to change. In the Defensive Group, they deflected personal responsibility for their behaviour. The Accepting Group of responses had mainly been utilised by those who, at the time of being interviewed, were no longer using heroin. They had been able to ‘look back’ at their addiction-related behaviour from a position of comparative stability. In this respect, their situation most closely resembled that of the people being investigated in this current research. Like those former addicts, people of good standing in their local community were able to distance themselves from any earlier occasions when they had behaved badly. When the four-fold categorization derived from my previous research (Primrose, 1993) was applied to this current research, most responses were coded primarily to the Accepting Group, effectively marginalizing the Testimonial, Confessional, and Defensive Groups. Even though in this respect the application of the earlier categorization was of limited value as an analytical tool, it did draw attention to the potential relevance of the three features of ‘change’, ‘introspection’, and ‘externalization’, these three being features of, respectively, the Testimonial, Confessional, and Defensive Groups. Having acknowledged the preponderance of coding to the Accepting Group, the direction of the current research was to develop more refined analytical tools to investigate the prevalence of responses which explored marginal links to each of the three other groups.

The second preliminary consideration was the response of friends and colleagues when learning of the topic of this current research. When informing acquaintances of the nature of my research, their responses tended to be immediate and succinct. These brief spontaneous comments indicated that a number of my acquaintances had previously given
some thought to the preliminary research topic of how ‘respectable’ people live with discrepancies between the ideals to which they aspire and the behaviour which they recollect, their thoughts leading to a (temporary) resolution of the issue to their personal satisfaction, this usually being based around a single explanatory factor. Twenty one of these responses are listed in Appendix A, many expressing ideas drawn from folk religion and popular psychology using ‘Automatic’ System 1 thinking (see Section 4.3.2; also Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Kahneman, 2011). They indicated a pluralistic understanding of morality with a multi-vocal presentation of good and evil (Abend, 2013). The subsequent preparatory group exercise was a prolonged focus on members of my peer group which enabled greater self-reflexivity leading to the central research question.

6.2 Preparatory Group Exercise

Following on from the two preliminary considerations, I undertook a preparatory group exercise which sought a more reflective understanding of the research question from amongst my own wider social context. It brought together a group of my colleagues, in the format of a seminar which began with brief, spontaneous comments, and then asked the participating church-workers to reflect upon these contributions. This moved the dialogue from folk religion to theological reflection, from observations about good and evil to the exploration of questions about personal responsibility. The thought processes progressed from the ‘Automatic’ System 1 to the ‘Reflective’ System 2 (see Section 4.3.2; also Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Kahneman, 2011). The transcript of the preparatory group exercise was subject to thematic analysis.

The participants of the preparatory group exercise were ordained and lay members of my peer group within the diocese in which I served. These church-workers first freely identified a list of possible factors to explain the phenomenon under investigation. They
next clustered these brief, spontaneous comments by topic into moral domains, thus increasing the level of theological reflection. These moral domains then became the subject of a semi-structured conversation, the transcript of which provided the primary data for this exercise. In the subsequent analysis of the data, my colleagues identified four main theological themes, these being labelled Circumstances, Praxis, Salvation, and Growth. The two orthogonal dichotomies observed within these four themes were whether the response was individual or corporate, and whether God was perceived to be interventionist or not. This led to a four-fold understanding of agency (Table 4.8, p. 127), which reflected the different approaches which church-workers adopted to understand why members of their congregations do not make progress in their pursuit of moral excellence. This preparatory investigation into the understanding of members of my peer group served a valuable function as an exercise in self-reflexivity.

The first dichotomy, individual vs. corporate, is central to any discussion of personal responsibility. To what extent is a person responsible for their behaviour, and to what extent is that responsibility shared with others around them? Some measure of self-responsibility is essential to an understanding of agency (Benson, 2001), yet without embracing the illusion of autonomy. The first dichotomy of individual vs. corporate expressed this dilemma, thus supporting Harré’s (1983) approach of moral agency, which addressed the tension between the excessive individualism of the cognitivists and the excessive collectivism of the social constructivists, and thus provided a language for this aspect of the four theological themes.

Statistical analysis of the preparatory group exercise showed that, for these church-workers, the individual vs. corporate dichotomy was independent of the second dichotomy, which reflected an understanding of whether God was to be considered as interventionist
or not. This latter dichotomy supports the framework of Pargament et al.’s (1988) religious coping modes which address whether God and/or humans were perceived to be active. The four theological themes which were identified through the preparatory exercise can be re-expressed, in the first person, using a divine/human control framework thus:

- **Praxis**: I will work together with God
- **Salvation**: God will intervene to change us.
- **Growth**: Together we will work for a better future.
- **Circumstances**: I am unable to change.

Mindful that the Islamic context of the previous research limits the extent to which people would express the concept of any collaboration with God (see Section 2.2.8.1), the four theological themes identified through the preparatory group exercise can be linked back to the categories which were identified in my earlier research, as shown in Table 6.1 (p. 237).

Table 6.1: Theological Themes, Control Relationships, Coping Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparatory Exercise</th>
<th>Praxis</th>
<th>Salvation</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Circumstances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pargament et al. (1988)</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Deferring</td>
<td>Self-Directive</td>
<td>n/a²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primrose (1993)³</td>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>Confessional</td>
<td>Testimonial</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through the preparatory exercise, I was able to recognise for myself the issue of intentional change (Anscombe, 1957) using moral agency as a central concept (Harré,

² Pargament et al. (1988) did not consider the scenario whether neither the divine nor the human dimension are involved in addressing the problem to be solved.

³ Note that in Section 6.1, the order of these four categories is Accepting, Testimonial, Confessional, Defensive.
This concept has been extended further with the observation that, within a Christian religious milieu, responsibility may be held within the human domain, or attributed to God, or held jointly. The Main Study acknowledged the theological themes which I identified through this preparatory group exercise, applying moral agency to individuals in good standing within their faith communities.

6.3 Main Study

The concept of agency was found to be present in the four theological themes, which I identified through the preparatory group exercise, with its exploration of the question, ‘why don’t Christians change?’, and in particular the concept of moral agency, as developed by Harré (1983), and that of divine/human control relationships, as developed by Pargament et al. (1988). Participants in the Main Study gave salience to their own moral framework, through reflecting on those whom they held to be moral exemplars. In the interview context, participants then talked about situations where they recollected behaviour at variance with the ideals of their expressed moral framework. At this point, participants’ thoughts, which may, up to that moment, have been held privately, were shared with the researcher. Two features are of particular relevance.

First, whilst the participant’s thoughts may have been shaped by moral emotion when they originally occurred, in the intervening period they may have been modified by the application of moral reason (Blasi, 1995). Such reasoning may have included reference to information not available at the time of the original event (Brewin, 1988; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; O’Doherty & Davies, 1987). It has been the intention of this current research to examine the participant’s recollection of the event(s) at the time of the interview, rather than their experience of the event(s) at the time of occurrence.
Second, the majority of behaviour which was shared by the participants of this current research would normally be construed to be of lighter moral significance than the behaviour associated with the heroin addicts of my earlier research. So in the Main Study, from a total of 48 references from 31 participants, there were 17 references to misdemeanours from 14 participants, and there were 31 references to a bad disposition from 23 participants. Further, at or shortly after the time of their initial articulation during the interview, many participants qualified any references to bad behaviour with ameliorating comments so as to reduce the apparent gravity of the offence(s). Whilst there were two mentions of false expense claims, as well as one mention of adultery and one mention of concealed drinking, the dominant issues in this current research were impatience, selfishness, and intolerance. The focus of this current research is upon behaviour of a venial rather than mortal nature.

Thus the two distinguishing features of this current research are the retrospective nature of its engagement with behaviour, and the comparatively light nature of the moral gravity of the behaviour which is recollected. Abend (2013) rightly noted that moral judgement research had concentrated on moral decision-making, where participants are presented with complex moral dilemmas, with significant outcomes which are virtual rather than actualised. Biographical literature and work on moral exemplars (Walker & Pitts, 1998) have given retrospective consideration to behaviour of substantial moral significance. Ariely and others (e.g. Barkan et al., 2012; Gino & Ariely, 2012; Gino et al., 2009, 2013; Mazar et al., 2008a, 2008b; Mazar & Ariely, 2010) have looked at current examples of minor wrong-doing in both real world and laboratory situations. However almost all of the bad behaviour which forms the substance of this research is of a minor severity, and all of it is accessed retrospectively, thus this research considers a combination of factors not previously investigated.
In referring to ‘bad behaviour’, “moral behavior is not synonymous with engaging in immoral behavior; moral and immoral behaviors are not opposite ends of a single scale but rather two, distinct dimensions” (Jordan et al., 2011, p. 703). Moreover in this research, the participants of the Main Study often referred to situations of a negatively-valenced disposition, such as impatience or selfishness, rather than to an action or inaction. And finally most examples given by participants were remembered from a lifetime period (e.g. ‘when I was working …’) or general events (e.g. ‘when they ask for volunteers in church …’), rather than as event-specific knowledge (e.g. ‘when my son died …’; see Conway, 2002). In these respects, the results of this current research are applicable to retrospective recollections of on-going behaviour of a minor nature, which may never have been enacted. So with the human capacity to forget, and the desire to present a good self-concept, why, in the absence of external evidence, is any bad behaviour ever remembered?

It is important for survival that one recollects occasions which have had adverse outcomes, so that one does not repeat the same mistakes. Indeed, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs (2001) illustrated the evolutionary advantages in ‘bad is stronger than good’ when measuring the impact of adverse vs. affirmative experiences. Therefore, the participants’ recollection of bad behaviour functions as an important part of the self-memory system of the autobiographical self (Conway, 2002; Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). So the retention of these memories will have been intentional, to assist the working self in the achievement of life-goals (Aquino et al., 2009). Even if the recollection of the event has undergone significant cognitive revision since its occurrence (Brewin, 1988; O’Doherty & Davies, 1987), the interview process was so constructed that only those memories were articulated where there actually was the recognition by the participant of some residual discrepancy between ideals and recollected behaviour. Thus the application of techniques of neutralization and ego defence mechanisms caused memories of many
events to cease to be dissonant, and hence excluded from the conversation (Anand et al., 2005; Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Sykes & Matza, 1957; Section 2.2.7.1).

Now the context of the interviews in this central study also ensured that the participant’s moral identity (Blasi, 2005) was both central and salient, and hence contributing to the participant’s positive self-concept (Haidt, 2001) as a confident basis for engaging with the present (Harré, 1983). Through the way in which the interview was structured, there was thus the juxtaposition of recollections of bad behaviour and the ideals expressed in moral identity.

The analysis of participants’ responses to this juxtaposition led to the identification of three pairs of tactics used to manage the discrepancies between these two self-understandings. Summarising briefly each of these six tactics, in ‘Change’, the participant indicated that they had behaved badly in the past, but that they had changed now and would not behave that way again. In ‘Commitment’, the participant accepted that they were behaving badly, and asserted that they intended to improve. In ‘Engagement’, the participant discussed the complexity of the situation around the bad behaviour and its ramifications. In ‘Environment’, the participant blamed external factors as the cause of the bad behaviour. In ‘Self-Identity’, the participant saw the behaviour under consideration to be an essential aspect of who they understood themselves to be in the context of significant others. In ‘Emotional Disposition’, the participant identified emotional features as being the cause of the bad behaviour different from that of their moral exemplars. These six tactics were grouped as three pairs, thus Change & Commitment, Engagement & Environment, and Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition. These pairs were found across the range of moral domains which occurred in the interviews, and each was used by most participants.
6.4 Findings

This research addresses an area not previously investigated. It concerns the recollection of behaviour. The moral gravity of that behaviour was light. The awareness of the behaviour is not in the public domain. The behaviour is acknowledged to be in breach of the person’s self-selected moral ideals. The recollection of the behaviour and the moral ideals are salient simultaneously, thus evoking ‘retrospective ethical dissonance’.

6.4.1 Principal Findings

The principal findings of the Main Study were the description of three pairs of tactics used by members in good standing of churches in South West England to manage discrepancies between their moral ideals and their recollected behaviour. In these situations, a form of ethical dissonance was identified based on the recollection of undisclosed behaviour which the participant recognised as being contrary to those ideals which contributed to their moral identity, the gravity of this immoral behaviour being of a mild nature. This dissonance persisted beyond the application of ego defence mechanisms and techniques of neutralization (Anand et al., 2005; Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Sykes & Matza, 1957; Section 2.2.7.1).

The focus of the ideals discussed could be assigned to moral domains of an interpersonal, intrapersonal, spiritual or external nature, with the former three categories dominating. Each focus could either express the more passive ‘Aspects’ of a person’s internal qualities or the active ‘Deeds’ of how people responded through engaging with their external experiences, the former being twice as common as the latter (Section 5.5.1.2).

Six tactics were identified which people used to manage discrepancies between their moral ideals and recollected behaviour. Each of these tactics contained an implicit...
division in the self. For Change & Commitment, there was a diachronic distinction, in the former between the person in the past and the person in the present, and in the latter between the person in the present and the person in the future. For Engagement & Environment, the distinction was between the person and the circumstances in which they found themselves. For Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition, the distinction was between the actual person and the ideal person in their social context. This lends support to the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1999), who put forward the universality of the metaphor of the Divided Self. The earlier discussion on the multiplicity of the self (see Section 2.2.5.2) indicated the prevalence of this concept (e.g. Blasi, 2004b; Galin, 2003; Harré, 1983; Harter, 1999; Higgins, 1987; McAdams, 1996, 2001; Turner, 2008; Wilson et al., 2000).

No single formulation of divisions within the self gained universal acceptance, yet all have found application. Likewise, the divisions observed within the three pairs of tactics identified within this current research provide a framework for the co-existence of mutually incompatible self-understandings, and in particular for the co-existence of the auto-biographical self and moral identity. The research question explores how people manage discrepancies between their auto-biographical self and their moral identity, and has identified three pairs of tactics commonly employed. In what way is this similar to cognitive dissonance?

Classic cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) addressed the situation of two mutually incompatible cognitions, originally one being prior to a decision and the other subsequent to it. A range of techniques were identified to reduce the extent of such dissonance (Anand et al., 2005; Sykes & Matza, 1957) or to neutralise it (Brehm & Cohen, 1962). The refinement of moral dissonance applied this general concept of dissonance to issues of morality, where motivated forgetting and moral disengagement (Shu et al., 2012),
or their equivalent of inattention to moral standards and categorization malleability (Mazar et al., 2008b), are used to manage the dissonance.

The results of this current research are closely aligned with that of Ayal and Gino (2011) who introduced the term ‘ethical dissonance’ to refer to situations when the bad behaviour is not in the public domain. In particular, they identified “three psychological mechanisms that enable people to rationalize and condone their unethical behavior: moral cleansing, local social utility, and social comparisons of one’s own behavior to that of others” (p. 3). These three psychological mechanisms, of moral cleansing, local social utility, and social comparisons, can be linked to the three pairs of tactics which were identified within the Main Study.

First, the pair of Change & Commitment relate to the concept of moral cleansing (Ayal & Gino, 2011), with the critical proviso that in our current research ‘bad behaviour’ is recollected retrospectively, rather than accessed contemporaneously. Mindful of this difference in diachronic perspective, the (profession of an) intention to change inherent within the first pair of tactics, Change & Commitment, parallels the process of moral cleansing, whereby bad behaviour is followed by good behaviour. In discussing the maintenance of the self-concept, Mazar et al. (2008b) developed their concept of a cycle of moral cleansing and moral licensing, whereby bad behaviour was cleansed by subsequent good behaviour, which then gave license for further bad behaviour (see also the moral self-regulation of Zhong et al., 2009). However, Merritt et al. (2010) suggested that this is more a matter of moral credentials than of moral credit; thus it is more important to appear virtuous than to be virtuous. So self-concept maintenance prioritises self-presentation over self-consistency, which links back to moral identity’s public dimension of Symbolization being prioritised over the private dimension of Internalization (Aquino & Reed, 2002).
Thus the first pair of tactics, Change & Commitment, can be associated with the psychological mechanism of moral cleansing.

Second, the pair of Engagement & Environment relates to the concept of local social utility (Ayal & Gino, 2011). The emphasis of these two tactics is on the surrounding circumstances, which parallels the process of local social utility, where by restricting attention to the micro-situation, wider social concerns can be ignored for a proximate benefit (Schurr et al., 2012). This requires a disengagement from the external moral framework, a phenomenon identified variously as moral disengagement (Shu et al., 2012) and categorization malleability (Mazar et al., 2008b). Thus the second pair of tactics, Engagement & Environment, can be associated with the psychological mechanism of local social utility.

Third, the pair of Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition relates to the concept of social comparisons of one’s own behavior to that of others, both in-group and out-group (Ayal & Gino, 2011). This requires an internal re-evaluation of the moral standards underpinning one’s relationships with others, a phenomenon identified variously as motivated forgetting (Shu et al., 2012) and inattention to moral standards (Mazar et al., 2008b). Thus the third pair of tactics, Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition, can be associated with the psychological mechanism of social comparisons.

In each of the above three situations, there is a division within the self which allows for one self-understanding to be prioritised over the other, and, in this way, for a positive self-concept to be maintained whilst the working self still has access to recollections of bad behaviour. Thus in the first situation of Change & Commitment, the new changed version of the self is presented rather than the previous self (McAdams, 1996, 2001). In the second situation of Engagement & Environment, it is the self in its external circumstances which...
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

is presented, rather than the internal self (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Barkan et al., 2012). And in the third situation of Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition, the actual self is presented rather than the ideal self (Higgins, 1987).

However, the discrepancies between, on the one hand, the presentation of a positive self-concept and, on the other hand, the memories of bad behaviour which are retained by the self-memory system to assist the working self, need to be managed in a way that ensures continuity of the self (Schimmel, 2004). Turner (2008) and others used McAdams’ (1996, 2001) narrative presentation of the life-story, the storied self, the narrative identity to provide continuity to the multiplicity of the self. Thus in McAdams’ storied self (1996), the reconstructed past established the context for the experienced present and the anticipated future. As the participants of Main Study had actually been invited to tell their story, the emergence of narrative identity within all three pairs of tactics would have been expected, and its occurrence does indeed enable both the ideals and the behaviour to be articulated within the same discourse.

6.4.2 Unexpected Findings

This research focused on the description of a common phenomenon, without the presumption of any explanatory theory which would be amenable to testing. Such an open approach at the onset of this work meant that there were few expectations regarding the findings of this research beyond that the phenomenon was amenable to description. As the research progressed, various of the assumptions held by the researcher became explicit. The testing of these assumptions illuminates the context of the research and points towards further work.

Following on from the Kohlbergian renaissance in moral decision-making, much research has explored the significance of emotion rather than reason in how people engage
with moral issues as they occur. The application of reason was recognised as often being post hoc, and hence rejected as the prime explanatory factor in moral decision-making. However, in this current research, it actually is the recollection of the behaviour which is being considered, hence it is precisely this retrospective application of reason which is being investigated. Thus in this research, reason was recognised as being more significant than emotion in understanding the phenomenon being investigated.

6.4.2.1 thematic distribution

The most unexpected finding was that it seemed that participants did not manifest preference in their choice of tactics used. This accords with a discursive approach, and with the work of Nisbett and Wilson (1977) which suggests that participants would select from all available explanations which are proximate and plausible. An alternative approach is suggested for further research (see Section 6.9.10).

Having identified three pairs of tactics used by participants to manage discrepancies between moral ideals and recollected behaviour, it was postulated that individuals would show a preference as to which pair they tended to use. However initial indications were that most participants used all three pairs without noticeable personal bias (Section 5.5.1.1).

A preliminary consideration of attributes looked at whether the basic bio-data of gender or age influenced prevalence of use, but no obvious bias was discerned (Sections 5.5.1.7 & 5.5.1.8). Likewise, no bias was apparent when the tactical responses were compared with the three cohorts of participants, these cohorts differing in churchmanship and socio-economic background (Section 5.5.1.6). Whilst incidences of disclosure were concentrated towards the earlier phases of the interview, the incidence of tactical responses was more evenly spread throughout the whole interview (Sections 5.4.6.8 & 5.5.1.4).
Combining these observations with those of the preceding paragraph, one could speculate that participants sought to maximise the cumulative effect of the tactics which they employed by making use of all of the available options.

When Engagement and Environment were identified as a pair of tactical responses, they were recognised as involving more extended reasoning than the other two pairs. It was postulated that this pair of tactics would be used more by participants who had achieved greater formal education. Educational attainment was only recorded for the third cohort, and no obvious bias was discerned (Section 5.5.1.5).

### 6.4.2.2 Universal values

Graham et al. (2011, see Section 2.2.2.4) had identified five universal values of fairness, care, loyalty, authority, and purity. In this current research, four pairs of moral categories were identified within the material generated by the participants when they reflected on those qualities which they admired in their moral exemplars (Section 5.3.2). However, it was not possible to map these four pairs of categories on to the five universal values, although a reasonable match had been perceived between the eight moral domains of my earlier research (Primrose, 1993) and the five universal values. Within this current thesis, the categorization identified in the data was preferred (Section 5.3.2).

One of the four pairs of moral categories, that relating to the World and natural environment, seldom featured within the recorded part of the interviews which was transcribed and analysed. The personal and church context of the interviews may have contributed towards a bias towards religious, intrapersonal and interpersonal features.
6.4.3 Relevance of Findings

Moral inconsistencies have been of considerable interest to the scholarly and scientific community, both from individual and communal perspectives. This research describes how a particular group manage inconsistencies between their moral ideals and their autobiographical self. The group are members in good standing of a faith community, and the recollected discrepant behaviour is of a minor nature, and not in the public domain.

6.4.3.1 Cohesion of Religious (and other) communities

Shared moral ideals contribute towards the cohesion of religious communities. Hence behaviour by community members contrary to such ideals can threaten to fragment that community. This can be particularly destructive if it leads to the exclusion of people who are otherwise of good standing within that community. The identification of ways in which individuals within a community of faith manage discrepancies between their moral ideals and their recollected behaviour indicates how cohesion can be maintained whilst discrepant behaviour, albeit of a minor nature, can be (privately) acknowledged. The earlier phase of this research project explored how discrepant behaviour could be accepted as being in breach of shared moral ideals; subsequently the central research question became the maintenance of moral equilibrium, with the application of various forms of ego defence (Section 2.2.7.1). The earlier research topic had also explored how faith communities may be able to tolerate the emergence of a measure of immoral behaviour within the core membership. (Note that this is distinct from the exaggerated denial identified by Barkan et al., 2012 as a distinctive response to ethical dissonance.) It may be that leaders of faith communities use this understanding to manage the disclosure of discrepant material in a constructive manner.
6.4.3.2 **Radicalization**

Of contemporary concern is the phenomenon of radicalization within faith communities. This occurs across a wide range of religions though popular attention in the UK is focused upon Islam. A religious community can be committed to values of peace and harmony, whilst being able to tolerate contrary behaviour by some of its members. The tactics identified offer a point of entrée into this highly complex and politicised arena suggesting ways by which a community can maintain its moral integrity whilst acknowledging the discrepant behaviour of some of its members. Recognising the sensitivities involved, the response of moderate faith leaders to extremist behaviour from community members may be enhanced by an exploration of the thinking behind the tactics identified in this research.

6.4.3.3 **Preaching, Teaching and Motivational discourse**

The promulgation of shared moral teaching is an essential aspect of religious communities. When preaching includes moral exhortation, the intention of the preacher goes beyond reinforcing community ideals to challenging members of the congregation to live in accordance with such ideals. This research suggests ways in which members of congregations (in particular similar to those of the participating churches) can hear the moral imperative contained within sermons, and discount its personal applicability. Having recognised such barriers to implementation, techniques to enhance the effectiveness of exhortation can be developed. The potential for this was noted in two sermon-sets collected as part of the wider study of practical theology of which this current research forms a part.

6.4.3.4 **Dishonesty**

Estimates of the annual cost of dishonesty in the USA include $10 billion for ward-robining (Ayal & Gino, 2011) to $600 billion for employee theft and fraud (Mazar et al.,
2008b). Extensive research in this area suggests how people are able to maintain a good self-concept whilst engaging in cheating, lying and dishonesty (see Section 2.2.7). Most of that work addresses situations where people do not acknowledge such behaviour as in breach of their own ethical code. The findings of this research contribute to an understanding of how some people look back at earlier instances which they do recognise as having been contrary to their own moral identity. This affords an additional opportunity to engage with prevalent dishonest behaviour.

6.5 Psychological Implications

When Ayal and Gino (2011) developed their concept of ethical dissonance (see also Barkan et al., 2012) they addressed the situation of ‘ordinary’ unethical behaviour such as cheating, fraud, and lying, which is so prevalent that its cumulative effect has devastating social and economic consequences. Gino et al. (2009) and Mazar et al. (2008b) indicated the ease with which people engage in non-maximal dishonesty. This is despite the desire to maintain a positive self-concept which leads people to have an exaggerated understanding of their good qualities (Mazar et al., 2008b). Often there is the ‘reinterpretation of ambiguous unethicality’ by which means a person can conclude that their behaviour is not immoral. However, this current research applies to situations where there is behaviour whose contravention of ideals is, at least to the participants, beyond ambiguity. It is here that the work of Ayal and Gino (2011) is most closely aligned to the central research question, with their introduction of the concept of ‘ethical dissonance’. They put forward three ‘honest rational mechanisms’ of moral cleansing, local social utility, and social comparisons as ways in which people can deal with undisclosed, yet unambiguous, moral infringements.
In discussing moral cleansing, the first of these three mechanisms, Ayal and Gino (2011) identified the processes of physical washing and pain, of moral licensing, and of confession. Of these, it is the process of moral licensing which is utilised by the first pair of tactics identified within this current research, Change & Commitment. This is part of Zhong et al.’s (2009) system of moral self-regulation, where the participant, having recollected bad behaviour, addresses a moral deficit with (the promise of) subsequent good behaviour.

The second honest rational mechanism (Ayal & Gino, 2011) is that of local social utility. Here, categories of morality can be manipulated (Mazar et al., 2008b), and the person fails to engage with the moral issues (Shu et al., 2012). This can either be due to the selective promotion of the welfare of others, or responding as part of a group. It is the former which is relevant here, with reference being made to the situation of others in a manner which allows for an alignment of self-interest. Pro-social behaviour replaces moral behaviour (Gino et al., 2013; Wiltermuth, 2011), with benefits to a restricted group excusing immoral behaviour. In the second pair of tactics identified within this current research, Engagement & Environment, participants do relate selectively to the situation of those around them, but with neither moral rigour nor integrity. Whilst referring to others, the participant shows partiality and secures their own benefit.

The third honest rational mechanism (Ayal & Gino, 2011) is that of social comparisons with others. People interpret their own ethical behaviour in the context of that of others. They use either descriptive norms to refer to the behaviour of others or themselves, or injunctive norms to evaluate such behaviour as moral or immoral. In this situation, the attention to moral standards is lax (Mazar et al., 2008b) and moral aspects of a situation can be intentionally forgotten (Shu et al., 2012). In the third pair of tactics
identified within this current research, Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition, the participant asserts their own self-understanding within their network of significant relationships.

The material presented in Table 5.7 (p. 232) can be expanded to show further potential links between the themes identified within the Main Study, using concepts from my own and other research (Ayal & Gino, 2011; Primrose, 1993). Table 6.2 (p. 260) illustrates this material, with the first column showing the various theoretical lenses, and the remaining three columns showing the equivalent concept under its related pair of the tactics which were identified within the Main Study. The distinctions are not exclusive, rather indicating a propensity towards the linkage suggested. Indeed, when the (biblical) imagery of archery was used in conversation to discuss ‘falling short’, and problems of technique, circumstance, and disposition were suggested as causes of poor performance, these were easily linked with the three pairs of tactics, as shown in the final row.

The confluence of numerous conceptual models affords a certain robustness to the threefold categorization of Change & Commitment, Engagement & Environment, and Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition. These capture the underlying themes which illustrate the variety of ways in which people of good standing within their own communities give account for the discrepancies between the ideals to which they aspire and their recollected behaviour. They provide direct support for Ayal and Gino’s (2011) description of moral cleansing, local social utility, and social comparisons as honest rational mechanisms used to handle ethical dissonance in situations lacking ambiguity.

It has been possible to link each pair of tactics with one of the three main theories of morality, namely deontology with Change & Commitment, utilitarianism with Engagement & Environment, and character-ethics with Self-Identity & Emotional
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

Dispositional. As most participants made use of all three pairs, most participants used all three of the main theories of morality to handle discrepancies between their moral ideals and their recollected behaviour. In this respect participants are able to utilize each theoretical perspective to manage as aspect of ethical dissonance. Hence the three main theories of morality prevalent in society (deontology, utilitarianism, virtue-ethics) are available for participates to employ within a discourse on moral inconsistencies in a manner which mitigates the experience of ethical dissonance whilst maintaining the integrity of the moral identity and the autobiographical self. For example, it could be suggested that for Change & Commitment, the deontological intention to do right obviates any need to deal with the past; for Engagement & Environment, the utilitarian benefit and convoluted argument prevents detailed scrutiny; and for Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition, the emphasis on character can take the focus away from behaviour. This is similar to the use made of a priori causal theories when people are asked to explain their cognitive processes (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

In summary, this research extends the field of psychological understanding to situations where respectable people, mindful of moral ideals to which they aspire, recollect discrepant behaviour which is not in the public domain. It builds on the identification of moral issues by Kohlberg (1969) and Gilligan (1982), extended by Graham et al. (2011) to cover five distinct moral domains, and allows participants in this research to self-define the moral ideas to which they aspire. It agrees with Walker and Pitts (1998), Abend (2013), and Hirschberger and Pyszczynski (2012) that morality is multi-vocal, and that moral behaviour and immoral behaviour are distinct dimensions (Jordan et al., 2011). Most research on moral psychology has focused on discrete events (virtual or actual) at the time of their occurrence, though Blasi (1995) considered the situation retrospectively. The perspective of this research is retrospective along with its inclusion of dispositions as well
as actions, and multiple rather than just singular occurrences. Whilst the focus on the event has highlighted the significance of emotions, this research recognises the part played by moral reason in constructing an account of that event as part of the autobiographical self (O’Doherty & Davies, 1987; Haidt, 2001). The social construction of autobiographical memory (Pasupathi, 2001) and psychoanalytical work on ego defences suggest how dissonant material can be neutralised or excluded, along with work on self-concept maintenance (eg. Mazar et al., 2008b); however, this research focuses attention on where residual dissonant material is retained within the autobiographical memory. For moral dissonance (Kelman & Baron, 1974), this material is held within the public domain, but for Ayal and Gino (2011) the material is hidden, hence is labelled ethical dissonance. This research introduces a further variant in that the ethical dissonance is retrospective.

Table 6.2 - Tactics from Main Study and related concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lens</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Disposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Change Commitment</td>
<td>Engagement Environment</td>
<td>Self-Identity Emotional Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>Deontology</td>
<td>Utilitarianism</td>
<td>Character-Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Locus of Control</td>
<td>Self-Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primrose</td>
<td>Testimonial Change</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>Confessional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td></td>
<td>Externalization</td>
<td>Introspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayal &amp; Gino</td>
<td>Moral Cleansing</td>
<td>Local Social Utility</td>
<td>Social Comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archery</td>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Circumstances</td>
<td>Disposition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Note that in Section 6.1, the order of the categories is Accepting, Testimonial, Confessional, Defensive, whilst in Table 6.1, the order is Accepting, Confessional, Testimonial, Defensive.
6.6 Theological Implications

Starting from within the psychology of religion, as well as contributing to moral psychology, this current research also contributes to practical theology. The concept of sin is intrinsic to orthodox Christian theology (MacIntyre, 1993), and this thesis considers how ‘good’ Christians deal with the recollection of past sinful behaviour.

6.6.1 Agency

The preparatory group exercise provided an opportunity in self-reflection as members of my peer-group explored the research question. The results of that analysis highlighted the significance of agency in my conceptual approach. The four theological themes identified form two orthogonal dichotomies which address issues central to the Christian tradition.

6.6.1.1 individual or corporate

The first dichotomy is whether the reason ‘why Christians do not change’ lies with the individual or in the wider community (of the church). Now the formation of the early church had occurred during an era when community took preference over the individual, hence the radical nature of Jesus’ affirmation of the individual (Luke 12:6-7). The increasing emphasis upon the individual throughout the period of modernity and into post-modernity has resulted in the church now needing to reassert the importance of community. ‘You don’t need to go to church to be a Christian’, is a westernised attitude of more recent times. With an understanding of personhood which is rooted in relationships, Christian theology is able to value the individual in the relational context of the corporate. Indeed, a significant portion of Christian ethics is concerned with the way in which people relate to one another. The church workers in the preliminary exercise were able to be part
of a discussion which recognised both the individual and the corporate, though each member of the group showed a preference.

### 6.6.1.2 interventionist or non-interventionist

The second dichotomy which was identified within the preparatory group exercise was whether God was to be understood in interventionist or non-interventionist terms. This is the juxtaposition of the sovereignty of God and humanity’s autonomy which is reflected in modes of religious coping (Pargament et al., 1988). Free will and predestination are held in tension.

These two dichotomies support a focus on moral agency (Harré, 1983), which from a Christian perspective is how a person, created in the image of God, has the capacity for good, both the common good and the ultimate good. The capacity to do good, and the capacity to do ill, and the freedom to think about doing good and ill, form the basis of the moral accountability that underpins the Main Study.

### 6.6.2 Moral Failure

Each of the three pairs of tactics which were identified through the Main Study challenges differing aspects of a Christian understanding of dealing with moral failure, that is ‘sin’. An orthodox understanding of how one deals with personal sin would be

- confession,
- repentance,
- forgiveness / absolution,
- penance / reparation / reconciliation,
- sanctification.
The psychological responses of Change & Commitment, Engagement & Environment, and Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition, challenge and are challenged by Christian doctrines of personal repentance, pervasive evil, and on-going sanctification.

6.6.2.1 personal repentance

The first pair is that of Change & Commitment. The participant takes moral responsibility for the earlier bad behaviour and asserts that their later behaviour will be good. The results of the Main Study indicate that this process of moral cleansing is stronger for moral credentials than for moral credit (Section 5.6.1). However, within the Christian tradition, the assertion is neither that the good behaviour cancels out the bad behaviour, nor that it re-establishes the participant as a good person; rather it is that the good behaviour indicates that the participant has repented of the bad behaviour which will therefore not occur again. Jesus’ challenge to hypocrisy confronts the human tendency to value the appearance of virtue more than its substance (Matthew 6:1-18). Thus the use of Change & Commitment can obscure the need for personal repentance.

6.6.2.2 pervasive evil

The second pair is that of Engagement & Environment. Here the participant recognises that responsibility for bad behaviour resides beyond the individual, whether in circumstances outside their control or in the bad behaviour of other people. With a lower level of perceived personal control, there is a weaker sense of agency. A contemporary Christian doctrine of evil does recognise sin as having penetrated social and corporate entities (Wink, 1998). However, this is not a matter for passive acceptance or grounds to limit the extent of our concern. Jesus echoed the prophetic call to challenge evil and injustice (Luke 4:14-18). He confirmed the obligation to care for all rather than restrict our care to our immediate circle of friends (Luke 6:32-36; Luke 10:25-37). The use of local
social utility, identified in the Main Study, is challenged by the Christian tradition which demands an active engagement with evil at every level in the world around us (Matthew 6:9-15).

### 6.6.2.3 on-going sanctification

The third pair is that of Self-identity & Emotional Disposition. Self-assertion in the context of others is used to legitimise (on-going) bad behaviour. Jesus’ parables include examples of people who try to establish their righteousness by comparing themselves favourably with others (Luke 18:9-14). The elder brother of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11-32) is satisfied with impoverished relationships. Whether in response to the invitation to condemn the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) or in his riposte to Simon’s disparaging remarks about the woman who anointed his feet (Mark 14: 3-9), Jesus was clear that each person is to be on a journey towards holiness.

The psychological responses of Change & Commitment, Engagement & Environment, and Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition, challenge and are challenged by Christian doctrines of personal repentance, pervasive evil, and on-going sanctification.

### 6.7 Methodological Issues

As a research-practitioner engaged in real-world research, this thesis adopted a flexible design, with methodological developments occurring in response to issues encountered in the process of both data-collection and analysis. This contributed towards a series of methodological limitations.

#### 6.7.1 solo researcher

Working alone, the researcher particularly appreciated regular support from his supervisors who took a lively interest in this project. However, in areas such as the initial
coding of the thematic analysis, this was undertaken entirely by the researcher, without the benefit of additional and independent coders.

6.7.2 data

Whilst the data-set of the Main Study came in a variety of formats, only the transcribed text of the interview was used for analysis. The audio-recordings contained a richer data-set which included aspects such as tone of voice, pace of speech, pauses and interruptions; whilst these data were not utilized in this study, they are available for future research. Thorough piloting and the precaution of using both digital and analogue recordings ensured that of the 63 interviews undertaken, the quality of 56 (89%) was suitable for analysis, with only a modest quantity of lost or corrupt data.

Those participating in the interviews came from a well-defined group, all being members in good-standing of Anglican churches in South-West England who were, to the best knowledge of their parish priest, in a period of comparative stability. Concentrating on such a restricted group of people enabled a narrow focus, which contrasted with the narrow focus on chaotic Pakistani heroin addicts within my earlier research.

6.7.3 participant engagement

The semi-structured interview was designed to maximise the extent to which those being interviewed gave informed consent to their participation, with opportunities to withdraw being given at the beginning of each stage when the interview progressed to a deeper level. However, participants did not have the opportunity to review the whole interview recording or its transcript prior to its inclusion within the analysis. Likewise, there was no third party verification of any of the material shared by the participants.
6.7.4 *cognitive awareness*

Nisbett and Wilson (1977) suggested the unreliability of asking people to give account of their cognitive processes, arguing that people will select from plausible theories which are available at the time rather than base their response on objective evidence. In order to take account of this potential methodological difficulty, participants were not directly asked the central research question, ‘how do you maintain equilibrium between your moral ideals and your recollected discrepant behaviour?’ Rather an oblique approach was used first to cause self-selected moral ideals to be expressed and then to cause discrepant behaviour to be recollected. This used the looking glass self (Section 2.4) to access ideals to which one aspires through a discussion of the admired qualities of self-selected moral exemplars, and the hidden observer technique (Section 5.3.3) to access memories of past behaviour. An alternative approach, using direct questioning, is an option for further research (Section 6.9.10).

6.7.5 *behaviour*

The format of the interview allowed participants to refer to negatively-valenced disposition as well as the commission or omission of a deed. It was also possible to refer to multiple occurrences rather than just a single event. This wide interpretation of behaviour discrepant with moral ideals allowed for a much more extensive discussion than would have occurred had the dialogue been restricted to disclosures, indeed the latter numbered 249 whilst 1,626 episodes of immoral behaviour were coded.

6.7.6 *miserly thinking*

Participants took advantage of the absence of corroborating evidence to engage in miserly thinking and to produce arguments no more sophisticated than necessary. It was
not possible to require participants to operate at higher levels of cognitive complexity to test whether these would have been available.

6.8 Limitations

Beyond the methodological limitations, the research also has limitations in its applicability.

6.8.1 critical realism

Whilst this is real world research, it was not possible to observe the phenomenon to be investigated without some form of active engagement. This engagement took the form of semi-structured interviews which were designed to give salience to the dilemma under consideration. Hermeneutically, for this thesis I have relied upon a realist stance (Sandage, Cook, Hill, Strawn, & Reimer, 2008), thus the account given in the interview is taken to relate directly to the manner in which the participant maintains moral equilibrium between the ideals to which they aspire and the recollection of their discrepant behaviour. It is acknowledged that the context of the interview will have shaped, but not determined, the content of those recollections when they were being shared.

6.8.2 mixed discipline

The phenomenon has been approached from the perspective of moral psychology research carried out in the context of a faith community. At points, it draws on concepts and findings from the field of psychology of religion. Moreover, the thesis forms part of a longer standing practical theology project being undertaken by the researcher. Straddling these related disciplines necessitated choices as to which existing literature to include, with an acknowledgement that additional potentially relevant material can inform further research developments.
6.8.3 data-sets

Those who contributed the data for this research were all members in good standing of Anglican churches in South West England. Locating this research within moral psychology, its applicability could be extended to other respectable, liberal British Christians.

6.8.4 adults

All those interviewed were in their adulthood, and the nature of the semi-structured interview relied on mature adult-adult interaction. All the discrepant behaviour recollected by participants pertained to their adult life, with references to childhood only occurring when discussing formative experiences as part of the third pair of tactics, Self-Identity & Emotional Disposition. Mindful of Kohlberg’s and other theories of moral development, it would not be appropriate to apply the findings of this research to children or adolescents without further study.

6.8.5 individual

The social dynamic of the data collection was the one-to-one encounter between the participant and the researcher. The participants’ moral exemplars and their church communities were the explicit context of the interview, and the researcher embodied many aspects of the church. However, there was no third party participation in the data-collection, hence participants were not required to engage in collective thinking.

6.8.6 thought processes

The style of the conversation during the interviews was reflective, hence participants’ initial spontaneous responses were followed with the opportunity for further development. This will have encouraged Reflective System 2 thinking (see Section 4.3.2). However further reflection could have been encouraged if a way had been found to create
the juxtaposition of moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour, and then request the participants to provide written responses, providing them with the ample time in which to do so.

6.9 Future Research

The exploratory nature of this thesis affords the opportunity for numerous avenues for future research.

6.9.1 data sources

In the period leading up to the registration of this thesis, I had considered several literary genres as possible sources of raw data, such as published biographical literature, classical drama, popularist TV soaps, and even accounts of the ‘confessional’. In considering the potential and limitations of each of these, I acknowledged the limits of my knowledge, and the paucity of my expertise, in hermeneutics and literary analysis, and hence did not progress these particular opportunities. However, these literary data-sources remain available for future research.

6.9.2 other groups

The principal findings of this current research are represented by the three pairs of tactics which were identified in the Main Study. This was in the context of a specific group of people, namely members in good standing of Anglican churches in the South-West of England. Further research could explore the incidence of these tactics in other groups where shared moral teaching is a cohesive factor. For example, Christians of an Orthodox, Conservative Evangelical and Quaker tradition might present contrasting understandings of the pursuit of holiness and a doctrine of evil. Likewise, devout Muslims in good standing with their local mosque may provide insights when contrasted with this and with my earlier research, whilst considering humanists or members of non-Abrahamic faiths would extend
the theological basis. Consideration could be given to non-religious groups with a cohesive ideology such as environmental or political movements. And finally, there are individuals in several faith traditions who do consider themselves to be ‘righteous’, with whom engagement would be an exciting challenge. In all these situations, one could investigate the incidence of these tactics as well as their interplay with the prevailing theology or ideology.

6.9.3 solitary individuals

A further issue emerges due to the focus in the Main Study on the participants as solitary individuals. The preparatory exercise had identified the individual vs. corporate dichotomy in its adoption of moral agency. However, the solitary nature of the interviews of the Main Study resulted in a stress on the significance of moral agency in isolation from the relationships which give meaning to that person and the context of their thoughts and actions. As Higgins-D’Alessandro and Cecero (2003) suggested, when James in The Varieties (1902) emphasised the individual role of moral excellence, that was a corrective to the excessive emphasis upon institutional conformity prevalent at the time. That corrective is no longer required, indeed the balance needs to shift back to re-instate the proper role for community relationships in understanding moral behaviour. Further research could approach the issue from a socio-dynamic perspective. For this, a feminist critique may prove useful in that, as McFadyen (2000) suggested in his analysis of sinfulness, patriarchy strives for autonomy and independence, whilst feminism strives for relationship and community.

6.9.4 spiritual assessment inventory

Participants of the second and third cohorts of the Main Study completed a Spiritual Assessment Inventory (Hall & Edwards, 2002), the most promising result of
which was the measure of ‘realistic acceptance’. Should further work wish to examine the prevalence of the three pairs of tactics identified in the central study amongst differing groups, then this measure, along with other aspects of psychometric bio-data, could be considered for inclusion.

6.9.5 moral exemplars

When details of moral exemplars were recorded, this included whether contact was current or had lapsed. It was postulated that after contact had ceased with a ‘significant other’, recollections of that person might become increasingly selective, potentially distorting the balance of memories. Hence a distinction was made between moral exemplars with whom the participant was still in contact, and those with whom contact had ceased. Additional data were collected through noting which exemplars shared which moral qualities. None of this information was used in this thesis, but is available should one wish to explore more fully the manner in which self-selected moral exemplars reflect the ideals to which a person aspires.

6.9.6 moral domains

It is instructive to note that in the Interpersonal (P) and Intrapersonal (S) Categories, for each cohort the frequency of passive ‘aspect’ exceeded the frequency of active ‘deed’, whilst in the Spiritual (G) Category, for each cohort the frequency of active ‘deed’ exceeded the frequency of passive ‘aspect’. In the External (W) Category, the numbers were too small for meaningful comment. This may be an opportunity for further research.

6.9.7 cognitive complexity

As the data-collection progressed, it was postulated that holding simultaneously cognitions of moral ideals and the recollection of discrepant behaviour was an exercise in
cognitive complexity. The interview technique for the third cohort of interviews was adapted to provide greater opportunity for the expression of cognitive complexity.

In Cohort Three, educational attainment was recorded, and the interview technique modified, to encourage cognitive complexity (see Sections 5.2.5 & 5.3.3). Initial scrutiny (see Section 5.5.1.5) did not show that higher educational attainment preferred the use of this pair of tactics. Likewise, no bias was discerned within Cohort Three (see Section 5.5.1.6). More detailed investigations would be required to conclude whether higher levels of Cognitive Complexity are directly linked to the use of this pairing of Engagement and Environment (Section 5.6.2).

Second, work on cognitive complexity within speeches and extended written text (Reich, 2002; Suedfeld et al., 1992) has been able to identify increasing levels of complexity. This has included the ability to transcend dilemmas and paradoxes, these being common to religious thought. However, the format of the Main Study’s interview dialogue was that of a semi-structured conversation which did not encourage such linguistic sophistication. Thus there was little access to higher levels of cognitive complexity which might be anticipated with those participating, many of whom would be at Fowler’s (1981) fifth and sixth stages of faith (Individuative/Reflective and Conjunctive). These are stages which show the development of personal commitment moving on to ‘dialogical’ knowing with ambiguity and multiplicity. An alternative methodology, allowing ample time for written responses and/or comparative examples (Shu et al., 2012), might overcome ‘miserly thinking’ and access higher levels of cognitive complexity, prompting the participants to use integratively complex thinking (Hunsberger et al., 1992).
6.9.8 narrative identity

The Main Study’s interview structure encouraged the participant to reflect on their life-story, both in terms of significant others, and in terms of past behaviour. This enhanced the role of narrative identity (Section 5.6). Narrative identity may provide a unifying concept for the tactics which were identified in the Main Study.

6.9.9 change agenda

Throughout this research process, I have regularly encountered others who wished to pursue a change agenda, rather than restrict attention to how people resist change. So following on from this current research, there is the opportunity to consider how to apply these insights into how people resist pressure to change, in order to facilitate the very change which is being resisted! An exploratory foray into the relevance of this material to hermeneutics suggested that this would have immediate application for preaching and teaching. This may also be relevant to pastoral care and spiritual direction, as people are encouraged to live out their faith in challenging circumstances.

6.9.10 direct questioning

During the latter part of the research process the issue has arisen as to whether the central research question might have been put directly to the participants. This may have been of value even if the behaviour under consideration was defended against as this approach may have captured both conscious and unconscious ways of maintaining equilibrium. This affords an interesting opportunity to test Nisbett and Wilson’s (1977) hypothesis which had suggested that direct questions do not give reliable access to internal cognitive awareness; instead such direct questioning would result in participants selecting from a pre-existing set of generally accepted explanations irrespective of their own
personal circumstances. Further research might wish to adopt the approach of direct questioning, and compare those results with these of this thesis.

6.9.11 grounded theory

When considering the limitations of the study it has been important to acknowledge that while the ideals to which participants aspire and recollection of past behaviour may both have been captured in a creative way (with a good rationale having been made for this), the way in which moral equilibrium is maintained has not been addressed with the same thoroughness. At the beginning of the research process, the experience and interest of the researcher, both direct and indirect, was in a more passive phenomenon of 'living with' discrepancies between recollected behaviour and ideals to which one aspired, for which thematic analysis was the appropriate approach. The rigorous demands of the research process led from that initial focus on the description of this passive situation to an exploration of the more active phenomenon of how moral equilibrium is maintained between ideals and discrepant behaviour. Further research may wish to consider adopting the approach of grounded theory to investigate the maintenance of moral equilibrium as this may produce additional theoretical insights.

6.10 Personal Reflection

In choosing to undertake this research, I was able to address an issue of personal relevance. My earlier research amongst Pakistani heroin addicts had engaged with the issue of moral dissonance, where the juxtaposition of social mores and immoral behaviour was apparent to all. Now, in this current situation I was able to explore the parallel phenomenon of ethical dissonance, where the behaviour which was contrary to one’s ideals was not in the public domain. I have undertaken this present research during my mid-50s, when, as a clergymen in the Church of England, I have held aspirations to moral
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

excellence, whilst at the same time acknowledging my personal failure to behave consistently in accordance with such high standards. As a preacher, I have regularly exhorted others to strive for a life of holiness. I have been held in good standing by those around me, indeed being for some a moral exemplar. I have moved towards a Quest Spirituality (Hood et al., 1996), which “involves an openness to changing one’s religious beliefs or the valuing of religious doubts” (Shultz & Sandage, 2006, p. 170). Such a spirituality develops from “cognitive dissonance and an ability to tolerate the anxiety of authentically engaging existential questions” (Shultz & Sandage, 2006, p. 234). This has ensured that this thesis has remained personally applicable, with self-reference being part of a discipline of authenticity (King, 1996).

In this current research, I chose to explore how people of good standing within their local community handled discrepancies between the ideals to which they aspired and their recollection of their past behaviour. To maximise the level of identification, I chose as communities, Anglican churches in South-West England. These were church communities similar to ones of which I had been both member and minister. This close identification accentuated the advantages and limitations of being a research-practitioner (Banister et al., 1994; Creswell, 2007; King, 1996). So in undertaking the primary data collection, the participants encountered, in my role as Vicar, one who represented the values endorsed by their own moral milieu. This ensured that the conversations were grounded in the general context of Christian ideals to which they aspired and with which I concurred. However, this lack of objectivity prevented any abstract, third-party, detached observations (King, 1996) and will have influenced the self-presentation of interview participants. Moreover, I am mindful (and indeed hopeful) that some research participants and professional colleagues may actually read parts of this thesis. This latter point has ensured that I have expressed myself in writing in a manner which could be the basis for future discussions.
This current research grew out of my earlier work with heroin addicts in Karachi (Primrose, 1993). Whilst in many ways I could personally identify with chaotic Pakistani Asian urban heroin addicts (and indeed was occasionally assumed to be an ex-addict), three aspects of their situation were clearly different from my own. First, the moral framework in which they lived was, by and large, universally accepted in their social context, with their addiction-related, anti-social behaviour being publically condemned. In contrast, in my own individual context and in that of the participants of the Main Study, the particular moral framework pertinent to the research question was that which each of us personally adopted. Hence in this current context, each person’s moral behaviour was to be understood with reference to their own moral framework, through which they related to others within their own social context. Living in the absence of a dominant meta-narrative, and when social fragmentation has led to atomization (Morisy, 2009), no one can claim the high moral ground of being counter-cultural, and each of us has to give personal account.

Second, the seriousness of the immoral behaviour of chaotic heroin addicts was generally perceived to be more severe than the ‘disappointing’ behaviour of the respected church member. Indeed, in contrast to illegal acts, such as the stealing and fraud, which were prevalent amongst the accounts of my earlier research, little of the bad behaviour, owned by myself or shared by the participants of this current research, could be considered in breach of criminal or civil law. This meant that the gravity of the bad behaviour to be investigated was of a much lower order.

Third, for chaotic heroin addicts, their immoral behaviour had been apparent to all in their local neighbourhood and hence was in the public domain. In contrast, my situation was the same as those within the current research, for whom, as people of good standing within their own community, any current or past misdemeanours and immoral dispositions
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

were not (any longer) apparent to others, rather the personal recollection of such failings was a matter held privately by each person. It is this third distinction which gives rise to ‘ethical dissonance’ (Ayal & Gino, 2011), which occurs when the behaviour in conflict with one’s personal ideals is undisclosed.

It was these three distinctive features which formulated the personal context for this current research, developing out of my earlier work with chaotic Pakistani heroin addicts. This current research question was explored within a liberal moral milieu, addressing issues of a minor nature, which were not in the public domain. In living with this research, I have been able to develop a deeper understanding of virtue-ethics. Their interrelated connections prevent a singular focus on any one aspect of moral excellence.

I pray that responding to the divine call, I may heed St Paul’s injunction to the church in Rome (Romans, chapter 12, verse 2, NIV), “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
REFERENCES


Coyle, A. *Letter of 16th march, 2008*


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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - ACQUAINTANCES’ RESPONSES TO RESEARCH

The following comments were made by 21 friends and acquaintances when I shared with them the nature of my research. They offer some insight into popular thinking within my cultural milieu.

1. An allied health professional with an academic background 4/2/08
   “The most common ways to manage Cognitive Dissonance are: Rationalisation (adaptive coping behaviour); Delusion (maladaptive coping); Denial (take your pick)”

2. A senior evangelical vicar 13/2/08
   “It’s Romans 7”

3. A parishioner with a history of troubled relationships March 08
   “It’s all about human frailty”

4. A relative working with a global concern 5/4/08
   “In principle I do, but in private I don’t”

5. A former probation officer 28/4/08
   “The trouble with our society is that everyone is having their behaviour excused”

6. An independently dogmatic entrepreneur 29/4/08
   “The enlightenment was about causality and choice, and we failed to realise that you can’t have both”

7. A former probation officer 30/4/08
   “It’s a sort of mental schizophrenia, ....”

8. A retired bishop 7/5/08
   “Church people with value/behaviour issues can just opt out of church.”

9. A Baptist colleague 8/5/08
   “I am interested in the Gospel for ‘middle England’.”

10. A fellow PhD student 14/5/08
    “Oh you mean when I do something stupid?”

11. An insecure evangelical 8/06/08
    “Why is my faith so pedestrian?”
12. A some-time morose philosopher 9/6/08
“When we engage with anything, we change it. I’m throwing ideals at behaviour and measuring what bounces back, and throwing behaviour at ideals and seeing what bounces back.”

13. A wedding guest 14/6/08
“It’s all about what excuses I make when I’m not prepared to be fully committed”

14. A pastor 14/6/08
“What model of holiness are you working with?”

15. The wife of a senior cleric 20/6/08
“Are you asking about adultery?”

16. An elder in a house-church 1/8/08
“Are they being taught about the Holy Spirit?”

17. A relative in their late 20’s 14/8/08
“when you stumble”, “when you don’t live as God intended you to be”

18. A retired vicar with an extensive counselling ministry 2/9/08
“Ideals are a dangerous thing. They are okay when you are a young person, but now I’m older how one actually behaves is much more important.”

19. A priest with a creative spirituality 13/10/09
“Since I’ve got older, I’ve become less and less certain about what I do believe. It’s all down to the practice. If the Bishop stopped me and asked me what I believe, I would probably get thrown out. However it is the practice of prayers which leads on to the village of a life based on care for others.”

20. An elderly former missionary 11/8/10
“Oh, you’ll learn plenty about yourself then!”

21. A priest with a responsibility for spirituality 13/1/12
“Is it just a matter of Paul’s ‘the good that I would do, I do not, and the evil that I would not do, I do’”
APPENDIX B – Interview Schedule

Arrival: Greetings. Identify suitable location within house, with privacy; use of table advantageous. Accept tea/coffee if offered; courtesies to (and dismissal of) others in the house

Introduction: Thank for participation; reiterate purpose of research. Check that participant is agreeable to proceed. Visibly place of recording devices on table or open surface ‘for later’. Place clip-board on table or open surface, with (bottom to top) SAE, Personalised Debriefing Letter, Spirituality Inventory, Interview Matrix, Set of eight A7 Blank Cards, Pencils

Moral Exemplars: Take pencil and A7 cards, and ask for names of moral exemplars. Explain as necessary, correcting if examples suggested do not meet criteria. If list not prepared/sufficient, work with interviewee to generate names. Write enough to identify within interview, eg “gran”, “Sue”. Discourage prolonged conservation about individuals during the completion of the list. During or at the end of list completion, note on Interview Matrix whether contact is past (p) or current (c); thus demonstrating how letter is code for name.

Interview Matrix: Showing interviewee all the names, ask them to identify a quality which they admire about one of them. Write the actual words/phrases used on the interview matrix, and ask interviewee which other exemplars manifest that same quality. If description of quality becomes more general (eg ‘good with his son’ becomes ‘good with children’) note generalised description. Collect together the cards with the names of those manifesting that quality, turn them over to display their alphabetical letter (A through to

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5 Example: Earlier I had asked you to think about eight people known personally to you, whom you have admired. Can you now tell me who they are, and I will write their names on this little cards?

6 Example: Looking at all the people you have identified, is there a particular quality about one of them which is why you admire them?..... Are there any of the others who also possess this quality?
H), and note on Interview Matrix under letter. Repeat this process looking for up to eight qualities. If necessary, prompt mentioning names of exemplars who have not yet been included, with possible further prompt, if remembered, using actual phrases made when exemplar was first introduced.

**Transition:** Collect all A7 cards and hand them over to interviewee, saying that they will no longer be required, as the rest of the interview is about the interviewee rather than their moral exemplars. Explain that I would like to audio-record the next part of our interview, advise them that material can be deleted, in total or in part, at any stage, and seek again their permission to record. Switch on both analogue and digital recording. (nb analogue tape needs turning over after 45 minutes).

**Discussion:** Phrasing the question using the Hidden Observer technique, mention, in their words, the first admirable quality identified, and enquire whether this describes them (Cohorts 1 & 2)⁷ or whether they have ever behaved in a way contrary to that quality (Cohort 3)⁸. Reflect back to interviewee as required to extend conversation. Repeat exercise for all the qualities identified. (For Cohort 3, include summary at end.) Switch off both recorders at convenient opportunity.

**Conclusion:** Thank interviewee. Repeat offer to delete all or part of the recording. If not already known, ask age and note on Interview Matrix. (For Cohort 3, ask educational attainment, and note on Interview Matrix. For Cohort 2 & 3, invite interviewee to complete spiritual assessment inventory either now with clip-board, or at subsequent convenience posting back with SAE. During inventory, assign admirable qualities to moral domains).

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⁷ Example: You mentioned earlier that you admired several people because of [how good they were with their children]. If I was to ask some-one who knew everything about you, whether you had been [good with your children], what would they say to me?

⁸ Example: You mentioned earlier that you admired several people because of [how good they were with their children]. If I was to ask some-one who knew everything about you, whether you had ever failed to be [good with your children], what would they say to me?
Provide interviewee with personalised debriefing letter, reiterating its contents. Allow space for pastoral conversation before expressing gratitude and leaving.

**Field Notes:** At first available opportunity after the interview, make field notes, completing if necessary the coding of the admirable qualities.
APPENDIX C – LETTER TO INCUMBENTS

Dear A/B/C

[NAME] suggested that I contact you and two of your colleagues. I am Vicar of Thornbury, in the Diocese of Gloucester, and am embarking on a part-time Ph.D. in Psychology of Religion, based at the University of the West of England. Six years ago I completed an M.Phil looking at how Pakistani heroin addicts coped with the dissonance between the values they held and their addiction-related behaviour. Now I would like to investigate how ordinary church members cope with any dissonance between the ideals that they hold and their established patterns of behaviour.

To gather data, I would wish to interview twenty church members from each of three different churches. These interviews would be in their homes, lasting about 1 1/2 hours. The interviews would be audio-recorded, and subsequently transcribed. Prior to the interview, I would send the church-member an introductory letter, inviting them to participate. I anticipate phoning to arrange the timings of interviews, which would be confirmed by second letter which explained the process in greater detail.

I have been able to arrange for a three-month sabbatical, from mid-April 2008, during which all the interviews should be conducted. Between now and then the interview structure will be developed.

If you may be interested in assisting me, then I would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you and discuss the details. These would include requirements of confidentiality, anonymity, pastoral care and the safety of children and vulnerable adults. It would be helpful for me if my approach was similar in all three parishes where I interview, hence I would like to copy general correspondence to you and your two colleagues, if you are (all three) agreeable. I would also alert Bishop Mike as to my intentions.

I will phone you over the next few days, to see if you may be interested. I would then hope to meet up with you to discuss details.
APPENDIX D - INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Mr/Mrs ........

Research Project

I am a Vicar in the neighbouring Diocese of Gloucester, and have been granted a sabbatical as part of studies towards a PhD. I am registered with the Psychology Department of the University of the West of England. As part of my research, I intend to interview church members drawn from several parishes. Your Vicar suggested that I approach you, so I am writing to ask if you would consider being one of those interviewed.

The interview would take place at your home, will last up to 90 minutes, and would subsequently be transcribed and analysed. The material would be securely stored, the content would remain entirely confidential, and any references adjusted to ensure anonymity. You would be given to option to withdraw from the process at any time, before, during or after the interview.

The subject matter of the research is how each of us live out our Christian faith in the context of the ideals that we hold.

I will phone you in the next couple of days, to ask whether you would be willing to help in this matter, address any questions that you may have, and, if appropriate, to arrange a mutually convenient time for an interview.

Thank you very much for your interest. I hope that you will be able to assist me in this matter.
APPENDIX E - INTERVIEW CONFIRMATION AND GUIDANCE

Appendix Ea - Interview Confirmation and Guidance for Individuals

Dear [NAME]

Thank you very much for being willing to be part of my research project. I look forward to meeting you at your house on ………. at ………. I expect that our interview will last no longer than 90 minutes.

As I mentioned on the phone, I am hoping to interview about twenty members of your benefice and have arranged appointments between [DATES]. To avoid compromising the independence of this study, I will be asking you not to talk about the content of our interview until after the end of the [DATE] of this month.

During the interview, we will be considering how we think about the ideals that are important to us as Christians and our own behaviour. At the beginning of our interview, I will ask you to name eight individuals whom you have known personally, each of whom show in some way what it means to live according to the way of Christ; people whom you respect because some aspects of who they are demonstrate for you Christian virtue; people who have qualities that you admire. It would be helpful if half were people with whom you are currently in contact and half were people whom you knew in the past. Please write a list, referring to each person by (first) name or any other simple identifying feature.

I will be making an audio-recording of our interview, which will subsequently be transcribed. Confidentiality will be maintained, and all material anonymised. At the end of the interview, there is a simple questionnaire. [nb this last sentence was absent in cohort one]

Once again, thank you for your co-operation.
Appendix Eb - Interview Confirmation and Guidance for Couples

Dear

Thank you very much to both of you for being willing to be part of my research project. I look forward to meeting you at your house on ........ at ........ I would like to interview you separately, I expect that the combined time for both interviews will last no longer than 2 ½ hours.

As I mentioned on the phone, I am hoping to interview about [NUMBER] members of your benefice between DATES. To avoid compromising the independence of this study, I will be asking you not to talk about the content of our interview until after the end of the month.

During the interview, we will be considering the ideals that are important to us as Christians and our behaviour. At the beginning of our interview, I will ask you to name eight individuals whom you have known personally, each of whom exemplify in some way what it means to live according to the way of Christ; people whom you admire or respect because some aspect of who they are demonstrates for you a Christian virtue. It would be helpful if half were people with whom you are currently in contact and half were people whom you knew in the past. Please write a list, referring to each person by (first) name or any other simple identifying feature. Do not include your husband/wife.

I will be making an audio-recording of our interview, which will subsequently be transcribed. Confidentiality will be maintained, and all material anonymised. At the end of the interview, I will leave you with a simple questionnaire, which I would be grateful if you would complete and post back to me.

Once again, thank you for your co-operation.
Moral ideals and recollected discrepant behaviour

APPENDIX F - SAMPLE INTERVIEW MATRICES

Appendix Fa - Sample Interview Matrix 1

Interview Matrix for Thelma, a woman aged 73 from the Third Cohort whose formal education was completed when she left school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PA</th>
<th>1. Devotion to duty, loyalty, fortitude</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>2. General niceness, kindness, popularity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>3. Christian faith</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>4. Adaptable, new experiences, flexibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>5. Well liked, popular, respected, always good</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>6. Happiness, cheerful, optimistic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>7. Inspired loyalty, willing to help</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>8. Made a good impression on others</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Matrix for Thelma, a woman aged 73 from the Third Cohort whose formal education was completed when she left school.
Appendix Fb - Sample Interview Matrix 2

Interview matrix for Lenny, a man aged 42 from the Third Cohort whose formal education was completed with vocational training.
Appendix Fc - Sample Interview Matrix 3

Interview Matrix for Rhonna, a woman aged 70 from the Third Cohort whose formal education was completed when she left school.
Appendix Fd - Sample Interview Matrix 4

Interview Matrix for Edmund, a woman aged 81 from the Third Cohort whose formal education was completed with vocational training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Absolutely sincere &amp; caring</td>
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<td>2. Encouragement to do what you want to do</td>
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<td>3. Truthfulness</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4. Teaching, inculcating knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>5. Guided us in our beliefs</td>
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<td>6. Help anyone at any time, anywhere, belong to the group</td>
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<td>7. Dedication to the cause</td>
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<td>8. Committed to family</td>
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<td>9.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
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</table>
Appendix Fe - Sample Interview Matrix 5

Interview Matrix for Margaret, a woman aged 59 from the Third Cohort whose formal education was completed with vocational training.
APPENDIX G - A SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

This is the spiritual assessment inventory developed by Hall and Edwards (2002) which was completed by participants of the second and third cohorts of Main Study.

Instructions:

Please circle the number that best indicates the extent to which each statement represents your experience.

It is best to answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.

Give the answer that comes to mind first. Do not spend too much time thinking about an item.

Give the best possible response to each statement even if it does not provide all the information you would like.

Try your best to respond to all statements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not true of you at all</th>
<th>Slightly true of you</th>
<th>Moderately true of you</th>
<th>Substantially true of you</th>
<th>Very true of you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have a good sense of how God is working in my life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I regularly sense God speaking to me through other people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. There are times when I feel disappointed with God</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>and</td>
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<tr>
<td>3b. When this happens I still want our relationship to continue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to God is an essential part of my life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am frequently aware of God prompting me to do something</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a. There are times when God frustrates me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6b. When I feel this way, I still desire to put effort into our relationship</td>
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<td>7. My experiences of God’s responses to me impact me greatly</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>8. I frequently bargain with God</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Not true of you at all</td>
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<td>9. I am regularly aware of God’s presence in my interactions with other people</td>
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<td>10. I am very afraid that God will give up on me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. My emotional connection with God is very unstable</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I am very sensitive to what God is teaching me in my relationships with other people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I almost always feel completely cut off from God</td>
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<td>14a. There are times when I feel irritated at God</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>14b. When I feel this way, I am able to come to some sense of resolution in our relationship</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>15. I am aware of God responding to me in a variety of ways</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>16. I frequently feel that God is angry at me and punishing me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>17. I am aware of God attending to me in times of need</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>18. God seems to understand that my needs are more important than most people’s</td>
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<td>Not true of you at all</td>
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<td>19a. There are times when I feel angry at God</td>
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<td>19b. When this happens, I still have the sense that God will always be with me</td>
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<td>20. My relationship with God is an extraordinary one that most people would not understand</td>
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<td>21. I have a good sense of the direction in which God is guiding me</td>
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<td>22. There are times when I feel like God does not come through for me</td>
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<td>23. God’s way of dealing with other people does not apply to me</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>24a. There are times when I feel betrayed by God</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>24b. When I feel this way, I put effort into restoring our relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. My emotional connection with God is very unstable</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. No matter how hard I try to avoid them, I still experience many difficulties in my relationship with God</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. When I sin, I still have a sense that God cares about what happens to me</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Not true of you at all</td>
<td>Slightly true of you</td>
<td>Moderately true of you</td>
<td>Substantially true of you</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>I often worry that I will be left out of God’s plans</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>When I consult God about decisions in my life, I am aware of His direction</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and help</td>
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<td>30a</td>
<td>There are times when I feel frustrated by God for not responding to my</td>
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<td>and</td>
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<td>30b</td>
<td>When I feel this way, I am able to talk it through with God</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>I often feel I have to please God or he might reject me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>32a</td>
<td>There are times when I feel like God has let me down</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32b</td>
<td>When this happens, my trust in God is not completely broken</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>I often completely withdraw from God</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>God recognises that I am more spiritual than most people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>God does not seem to exist when I am not praying or reading/ hearing the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bible</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>Manipulating God seems to be the best way to get what I want</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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APPENDIX H - DEBRIEFING LETTERS

Appendix Ha - Debriefing Letter to Pilot Participants

Dear NAME,

Thank you very much for taking part in this research. I appreciate that as well as giving freely of your time, we may also have discussed matters of personal significance. It may be that after I leave, you may continue to reflect on issues related to the topics that we addressed. If there are any matters of which you would wish me to be aware, then feel free to include these in the feedback form.

It is my intention to make a full transcription of our interview, which I will then analyse. The content of the interview remains totally confidential. Any subsequent reference to interview material will presented in a way to preserve anonymity. If, for any reason, you do not wish me to make any use of your interview, then please contact me and I will destroy all records of your interview.

I plan to interview five members of your parish. In order not to jeopardise the validity of my research, I would be grateful if you would refrain from talking about your interview to other parishioners until after this weekend.

It is possible that as a result of our interview, personal issues may have been raised, whether memories of the past or matters of present concern. You may wish to deal with these on your own, with the support of your family, friends and faith. Your Vicar is aware of the nature of these interviews, and has indicated that he is personally available to support any interviewee with any pastoral concern that may have arisen. If for any reason, you wished to access independent help, then he suggests that you contact [AGENCY] [TELEPHONE NUMBER].

I myself won't be able to be in contact with you after the end of our interview. It will be several years before I will be writing up this research, however I will keep your Vicar informed of progress.

Thank you very much for your co-operation. May God work in each of our lives, with grace, forgiveness and the power of his Holy Spirit, that we may daily be renewed, and ever transformed into the likeness of his Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Appendix Hb - Debriefing Letter for Cohort One

Dear NAME,

Thank you very much for taking part in this research. I appreciate that as well as giving freely of your time, we may also have discussed matters of personal significance. It may be that after I leave, you may continue to reflect on issues related to the topics that we addressed. If there are any matters of which you would wish me to be aware, then feel free to include these in the feedback form.

It is my intention to make a full transcription of our interview, which I will then analyse. The content of the interview remains totally confidential. Any subsequent reference to interview material will presented in a way to preserve anonymity. If, for any reason, you do not wish me to make any use of your interview, then please contact me and I will destroy all records of your interview.

I plan to interview twenty-four members of your parish. In order not to jeopardise the validity of my research, I would be grateful if you would refrain from talking about your interview to other parishioners until after [DATE OF FINAL INTERVIEW].

It is possible that as a result of our interview, personal issues may have been raised, whether memories of the past or matters of present concern. You may wish to deal with these on your own, with the support of your family, friends and faith. Your Vicar is aware of the nature of these interviews, and has indicated that he is personally available to support any interviewee with any pastoral concern that may have arisen. If for any reason, you wished to access independent help, then he suggests that you contact [AGENCY] [PHONE NUMBER].

I myself won’t be able to be in contact with you after the end of our interview. It will be several years before I will be writing up this research, however I will keep your Vicar informed of progress.

Thank you very much for your co-operation. May God work in each of our lives, with grace, forgiveness and the power of his Holy Spirit, that we may daily be renewed, and ever transformed into the likeness of his Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Appendix Hc - Debriefing letter for Cohort Two

Dear NAME,

Thank you very much for taking part in this research. I appreciate that as well as giving freely of your time, we may also have discussed matters of personal significance. It may be that after I leave, you may continue to reflect on issues related to the topics that we addressed. If there are any matters of which you would wish me to be aware, then feel free to include these in the feedback form. (I would also be grateful if you were willing to complete the attached questionnaire, and return this at your earliest convenience in the stamped addressed envelope provided.)

It is my intention to make a full transcription of our interview, which I will then analyse. The content of the interview remains totally confidential. Any subsequent reference to interview material will presented in a way to preserve anonymity. If, for any reason, you do not wish me to make any use of your interview, then please contact me and I will destroy all records of your interview.

I had planned to interview twenty members of your benefice, this being the last. In order not to jeopardise the validity of my research, I have asked all those whom I have interviewed not to talk about their interviews with other parishioners until after today.

It is possible that as a result of our interview, personal issues may have been raised, whether memories of the past or matters of present concern. You may wish to deal with these on your own, with the support of your family, friends and faith. Your Vicar, [NAME], is aware of the nature of these interviews, and has indicated that he is personally available to support any interviewee with any pastoral concern that may have arisen. If for any reason, you wished to access independent help, then he suggests that you contact [AGENCY] on [PHONE NUMBER].

I myself won’t be able to be in contact with you after the end of our interview. It will be several years before I will be writing up this research, however I will keep [VICAR’s FIRST NAME] informed of progress.

Thank you very much for your co-operation. May God work in each of our lives, with grace, forgiveness and the power of his Holy Spirit, that we may daily be renewed, and ever transformed into the likeness of his Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Appendix Hd - Debriefing Letter for Cohort Three

Dear NAME,

Thank you very much for taking part in this research. I appreciate that as well as giving freely of your time, we may also have discussed matters of personal significance. It may be that after I leave, you may continue to reflect on issues related to the topics that we addressed. If there are any matters of which you would wish me to be aware, then feel free to include these in the feedback form. (I would also be grateful if you were willing to complete the attached questionnaire, and return this at your earliest convenience in the stamped addressed envelope provided.)

It is my intention to make a full transcription of our interview, which I will then analyse. The content of the interview remains totally confidential. Any subsequent reference to interview material will presented in a way to preserve anonymity. If, for any reason, you do not wish me to make any use of your interview, then please contact me and I will destroy all records of your interview.

I had planned to interview twenty members of your parish. In order not to jeopardise the validity of my research, I am asking all those whom I interview not to talk about their interviews with other parishioners until after [DATE OF FINAL INTERVIEW].

It is possible that as a result of our interview, personal issues may have been raised, whether memories of the past or matters of present concern. You may wish to deal with these on your own, with the support of your family, friends and faith. Your Vicar, [VICAR’S NAME], is aware of the nature of these interviews, and has indicated that she and [NAME OF LOCAL PRIEST] would be personally available to support any interviewee with any pastoral concern that may have arisen. If for any reason, you wished to access independent help, then she suggests that you contact [AGENCY] on [TELEPHONE NUMBER].

I myself won’t be able to be in contact with you after the end of our interview. It will be several years before I will be writing up this research, however I will keep [VICAR’S FIRST NAME] informed of progress.

Thank you very much for your co-operation. May God work in each of our lives, with grace, forgiveness and the power of his Holy Spirit, that we may daily be renewed, and ever transformed into the likeness of his Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
APPENDIX I - POINTS OF ENQUIRY

During the background reading and the interview process, I had noted over fifty questions which might have been relevant to the thesis. Prior to the commencement of the coding phase of the Thematic Analysis in Main Study, these questions were acknowledged. They cluster around the following topics:

*Spoken Context*

Are there phrases such as, ‘I wish I was more like …’ or ‘Why can’t I be like …’? Is there any indication that the response has been formulated (and articulated) on a previous occasion? Is there a ‘script’, or recurrent or overarching themes? Are there examples of brevity and of verbosity? Does the participant refer to a generalised chronic trend or to explicit isolated occasions? In the dialogue, is generality and specificity consistent?

*Cognitive Sophistication*

The actual words used to express exemplar’s moral qualities are recorded verbatim, hence can give an indication of moral linguistic sophistication and cognitive maturity. Interacting cognitive subsystems (Barnard & Teasdale, 1991) provide a theoretical framework in which different cognitions can be held simultaneously, differentiating between the propositional level of intellectual beliefs and the implicational level of emotional beliefs. Are moral aspirations propositional and the recounts of personal behaviour implicational? Does the participant’s reasoning develop in conversation and can one identify higher levels of cognitive complexity (Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Streufert, 1992) and Relational and Contextual Reasoning (Reich, 2002) in which apparent inconsistencies are overcome.
Life Story

Are examples of personal behaviour current or historical? Does it relate to a previous stage of life, such as pre-retirement or adolescence? Are auto-biographical memories life-time, or general events, or event-specific knowledge? Do vivid memories recall high levels of goal attainment or goal failure? Are there turning points when superordinate life goals are adopted? Do specific memories represent outcomes of plans generated to attain goals rather than the attainment of the goals themselves? Are there examples of memories that are relevant to contemporary tasks? To attain working goals, self-memory systems rely on memories with moderate positive feelings – what are the feelings associated with the memories recollected? Is there a coherent narrative of an integrative life story?

Religion

Is the rejection of the meta-narrative of a dominant morality used to explain non-conformist behaviour? Is religion used to cope with crises? Is religion used to avoid loss of control? Does the patriarchal nature of the church allow for externalised authority and delinquency? Does the social pressure to confirm displace the filial obligation to obey? Are some qualities exclusively Christian and hence not in conformity with the social milieu? This can either be distinctively religious (reading the bible) or countercultural (anti-horoscopes). Can we detect religious, moral or spiritual education acting as a scaffolding to allow that language to be used? Is the language of the response religious, moral, spiritual or secular? Is an end purpose stated or implied? Redemption or contamination – has the event been redeemed or did it spoil everything? Do we wish to refer to Fowler’s stages of faith (Fowler, 1981)?
Moral Identity

Is there an attempt to exemplify a self-definition or self-concept as a moral person? Does the multiplicity of the self allow for fragmented roles? Do we hear ‘that wasn’t me’? Is self-denigration a coping mechanism? Is the response located with the individual, within a network of close relationships or within the wider social context; was the behaviour apparent to the public, or to just a personal few, or in private?

Change

Is change asserted as being achieved and/or intended? Is this transformative second-order change, with associated dramatic experiences, or is it non-transformative first-order change? Is change expressed through the Level Three personality of narrative identity?

Participant/Exemplar identification

Is the quality associated only with exemplars with whom contact has ceased or only with exemplars with whom contact is on-going? Is there a role aspect to the exemplar, such as vicar or teacher, which is associated with the moral quality identified, and which explains why the exemplar, but not the participant, excels in this regard? This is particularly true for clergy, where the laity’s projection of holiness legitimises a differential in expectations. A similar process may apply with skills such as intelligence or musical ability. Is there any difference between qualities identified with exemplars known in childhood and those known in adulthood?
Emotions

Are there moral emotions such as guilt, shame, blame? Is there an expression of repentance? Has the participant accepted forgiveness and/or forgiven themselves? The researcher recorded a score to represent the quantity of dissonance felt – how is this significant?

Moral Dilemmas

What about situations were qualities are expressed in complementary pairs, with the second balancing the first. For example, the importance of good planning and a delight in spontaneity. Is the behaviour active commission or passive omission?
During August 2010, I coded the 56 complete interview transcripts seeking sections of the text that appeared relevant to the research questions. This was completed in four equal phases, with the opportunity to review and revise the coding between each phase. This summarises the final outcome, with each node developed separately in greater detail elsewhere. The main section consists of the 24 nodes of direct relevance to the issue of ideal/behaviour disharmony. There is a concluding section addressing the 6 nodes that primarily relate to the interview process. The labels used for the nodes are those that occurred to me at the time, and in this context have a lay non-technical meaning. During the work done on developing the meaning of each node there was some recoding of certain episodes, causing minor adjustments to the original frequencies shown below.

**Self**

Coded for 47 participants and 157 times

This is the node used by the most participants. I initially called it Personality and the later Life History. In essence, who I am, my personality prevents me. This includes reference to family background, upbringing and culture. This includes being okay about whom one is and one’s life-style option, equally valid. It absorbed ‘Called otherwise’, where an aspect of the self differentiates the participant from the exemplar. This contrasts with Circumstances, where the constraints are external. Where the similar ideas are used to explain harmony, rather than disharmony, then this is Identity. Examples can be as explicit as references to dyslexia (Len) and epilepsy (Marian). At the end of the coding, I recognised the connection between this node and the concept of the Auto-biographical Self.
Examples:

"I think a lot of it does come down to personality and the fact that I have got a reserved personality." (Wendy)

"Yes, the way I have been treated. I have been told I don't - I don't give over myself completely, there is always a little bit back, maybe because I have been hurt so much in the past, I don't know." (Marian)

"Um - I think part of that goes back to my childhood where we - we have this troubled background at home - so you know - we found it very difficult to talk about it, and I think that is very inhibiting." (Chrissie)

"I think it is too late to change me." (Stuart)

"I don't think I am that type of person." (Christine)

**Gap Acknowledged**

Coded for 47 participants and 146 times

In this situation, the participant accepts that there is a gap between the ideal and their behaviour, often with a brief response to the preceding question. Longer and subsequent responses may develop into other categories. I merged Perfection Impossible into this category.

Examples:

"Yes, that is how I feel, that is not to say that in an ideal world, it would be nice, it would be nice to be lots of things in an ideal world, but we just know we couldn't do." (Tina)

"I think he is probably conscious all the time that he should live towards his Christian values, but he may fail every now and then." (George)
No, I don’t think so particularly. You can’t do everything. You are far from perfect. Nobody is perfect, that is one of the things. There are a lot of things I can’t do, and never will be able to do, and that is probably one of them. (David)

Something that I – I really respect in others, but I don’t – I definitely don’t have that.

(Barbara)

Identity

Coded for 45 participants and 198 times

The participant indicates that quality under consideration is an important part of the way in which they understand themselves. It is distinguished from Evidence where events are described. Identity is to Harmony what Self is to Disharmony

Examples:

Across the board - I would hate if anybody thought they couldn’t trust me absolutely, that is very important. (Diana)

No. I hope that is one of my better points. (Helen)

Especially involving children and young people. I think that has been a large part of my life, and I would have hated to see any of them suffering because of their colour, or their religion, or anything really. (Kathleen)

Yes. I can’t think of any circumstance that I would answer other than Yes. (Leonard)

Yes, probably, yes. That is an extension of me in a way. (Tanya)

Content on Reflection

Coded for 44 participants and 133 times

The participant concludes, after some exploration, that they are okay with situation.

This ‘thinking out loud’ may have a positive or negative beginning. This can involve postulating a 'severe' or extreme version of the quality, and concluding that
one is not like that, and then when questioned by the researcher, saying that the
admired people were not like that either. It also includes situations where, ‘others
may think ... but I think ...’ This node ends on a positive note, in contrast to the
questioning of Dilemma, or the self-recremination of Could Do Better, Perhaps.
Often the responses are lengthy.

Examples:

Um - I think they would probably say that for the most part that would be true, - I might
have one or two blind spots but there are certain things which I am intolerant of, I
suppose. But I think that's right, because I think in my life I have come across people from
many different walks of life and quite a few different nationalities, and so I think, Yes, I
think I would say for the most part that would be true. Certainly on early acquaintance,
obviously as one gets to know somebody better then there may be certain aspects of their
personality that you feel should not be accepted for some reason or other, or of their
behaviour which you wouldn't be comfortable with. But no, I think, as the years have gone
by, I have become more accepting, probably. (Earnest)

My wife and I talked about it, and we decided we didn't go wrong. (Edmund)

Certainly I think, I think yes. They have succeeded, but then I wouldn't necessarily say I
haven't succeeded. (Peter)

Evidence Coded for 42 participants and 127 times

Evidence is provided in support of the assertion of ideal/behaviour harmony. This
often takes the form of a generative narrative. This includes Personal Cost, where
this is made emphasised. Evidence is different from Harmony, in that details are
given. It is different from Identity, in that the focus is on the event rather than the participant. Many of the responses are lengthy.

Examples:

Yes, I would say yes though I do sort of find that embarrassing to say that, because two people within the last couple of weeks have both said that to me about me, so I think I can say Yes. (Brenda)

Yes, and I have had a lot of the young Mums at Church, I help with the once-a-month Young People's Service, 'Teddy Praise' - this is for the under school age - and a lot of the young Mums come and talk to me, and I help. (Katherine)

Yes, I have. Because I think I have found that I have been able to help others who have gone through the same things that I have gone through, by being able to understand where they are at, and what really advice - I suppose it is advice in a way, but just to be there and support them and say Yes you are actually doing O.K. - or why don't you try this. Yes I am all right on that sort of account. (Rhona)

No. No, because my husband who died a couple of years ago, - I had at least 7 years of nursing him, one way and another, and - you know - he was the youngest, he had had asthma as a child, he was very selfish, spoilt by his mother, - when he was nice, he was very, very nice, but when he was bad he was really, really aggressively selfish. And even his doctor said to me one day, ‘Are you going to leave him?’ And I said, ‘No, I couldn't hold my head up. I will nurse him through to the end.’ So I have been severely tested, and I think I have come through. (Teresa)
I Try

Coded for 40 participants and 117 times

This can include personal narrative. It is different from Improving, as there is no clear indication that progress is being made, rather the emphasis is on personal engagement with the issue. I Aspire has a greater emphasis on desire rather than intention. Whilst often there is Disharmony, there are times when trying comes out of a situation with which the participant is content, or rather the fact of the trying means that no disharmony is actually encountered.

Examples:

Let's say I am fighting against my impatience. (Yvonne)

Um - I - I try very hard to work for the benefit of others, but quite often I end up feeling resentful about it, - and taken for granted, and therefore obviously I am not selfless. (Diane)

And some - I tried to be compassionate and sometimes it is very hard. (Kit)

I said always - but may not always but it is my intention to do so, yes. And when one doesn't, you realise you have fallen far short of your expectations. (Kenny)

I try to be sincere and caring, but there are some people that take you so much for granted, that you wonder why you do it at times, but you still continue to do it. (Edmund)

Well, you have to try and get it right, but the thing is you might not get it right for a long time, but if you know it is wrong, then you have got to make some form of effort to improve things. (Edward)
I suppose - um – I try to think well that is not the right way to act. So next time I meet that person perhaps I bite my tongue, or do something like that, and try to say ‘Well, God loves you – I must’ It doesn’t always work of course. I do my best. (Ronnie)

Dilemma Coded for 40 participants and 111 times

In these situations, the participant discusses both sides of the issue, without coming to a conclusion. The discussion may be in dialogue with the researcher. The conclusion remains open, rather than the accepting of Content on Reflection or the self-recrimination of Could Do Better Perhaps

Examples:

I would find it difficult, I have found it difficult in the past. I hope I would be obedient, but I might not. (Wendy)

I would hope I am not stubborn. While I am trying to differentiate between stubbornness and drive, I would have drive, yes, in other words if I see something needs to be done, I would go ahead and do it. But with stubbornness I would hate to feel that there might be a case there where you don't listen to others, - do you see what I am getting at? (Vince)

Um - I don't really know – it is accepting that you are human, you can't - you can't be everything you want to be all the time, and it is then looking at what needs to either change or just to allow yourself a little - a break. I need to, then I can go back and carry on. (Susanna)

Um - I don't really know – it is accepting that you are human, you can't - you can't be everything you want to be all the time, and it is then looking at what needs to either change or just to allow yourself a little - a break. I need to, then I can go back and carry on. (Stuart)
Well, in the beginning, I thought, well, perhaps I am not sincere enough, that my faith isn't deep enough, but I think it is. I don't know. I feel as though I am going to say the wrong thing. (Nora)

Yes, that is where I am, I know I am honest. I can't – I don't pretend. I mean – it is the way I am. I am – and I do admire so many other people and sort of wish I had this – it is almost a – I don't mean it in a detrimental way – it is almost a simple acceptance – perhaps I am making it too difficult for myself – I don't know. (Nicola)

**Improving**

Coded for 40 participants and 102 times

There is gradual improvement, and an associated increase in harmony. This often includes reference to a reason for the current improvement. It includes the journey motif.

Examples:

Well, one would like to think that one would have the wisdom, but – er – I suppose a lot of it has to do with your experiences in life. And – as you get older I think you tend to get wiser. (Edward)

Yes, I haven't – I haven't got to the end of the journey I suppose in thinking about that – you don't necessarily ever get to the end of the journey. (Charles)

**Harmony**

Coded for 31 participants and 60 times

The participant recognises no disjuncture between ideal and behaviour. This needs to be distinguished from Identity, where there is an expression of how the participant perceives themself, and Evidence, where details are offered to substantiate. At the start of the coding this category was used extensively, but later greater use was made of thicker categories. In a review, several examples were
recoded. The phrasing is usually simple, dependent on the preceding question which I had posed.

Example:

*Yes, I think that is something that people would say about me.* (Barbara)

*I hope they don't. I really don't think that they do.* (Ken)

*In a way I think I am. Yes.* (Edgar)

**Action taken**

Coded for 29 participants and 56 times

The participant alludes to action that has been taken in response to the issue. This includes prayer, attendance at groups, courses. It also includes Temptations, as this always has engagement with the struggle. If rather the issue is being explored, then this would be Dilemma. It needs to be distinguished from I Try, where the intention rather than the action is to the fore. The recognition of the struggle is sufficient, that is action is being taken, even if the outcome is not clear.

Examples:

*Yes, I think I am but I am learning. I am going to a Key Group which is on caring so I hope that although I am quite good, I am getting better because of the Key Group.* (Naomi)

*Yes, that's right. And I have got examples of it from the past to help me, and of course I have got prayers to help me in the future as well.* (Simon)

**Circumstances**

Coded for 28 participants and 45 times

Circumstances, beyond my control, were the cause of the disharmony. This can include the company one keeps. Joint Decision (eg my husband) is subsumed in Circumstances AND Close Relationships. One assumes that, as the circumstances
are beyond my control, no action will be taken. It is very important to distinguish between Circumstances, where the focus is generic, external, objective, World, and Personality/Life History, where the focus is specific, internal, personal, subjective Self.

Examples:

*In recent years there have been quite a few problems - my husband has got a lot of problems, I think, health-wise. They are genetic, I am sure. One of our daughters seems to be inheriting them - so life can be a little tedious at times.* (Katherine)

*Oh, I mean, Yes, when you have been working all day - 7.00 o'clock at night, you have got three calls to do - you are dying to have something to eat - tired out - and somebody else rings up with something that is not really necessary - yes, it just goes out of the window - but then you are human aren't you?* (Diana)

*I think it comes down to circumstances really, - if I was somewhere where everybody happily threw up their arms, and were terribly enthusiastic, then I would join in, and I would be like that. But I feel quiet constrained within myself, not to be different, if you like.* (Wendy)

*Feelings* Coded for 26 participants and 59 times

Feelings get in the way. When the existence of strong feelings impedes the desired response. Several of these had been coded Personality.

Examples:
I would like to think that I could be like that – I mean in certain cases, Yes, I am. But on occasions, I can be quick to anger, I suppose. Yes, you can get to the point where you feel like you are exploding. (Edward)

You don't, don't aspire to be - to be good to people all the time, and sometimes you are selfish and if you are tired you don't do as you would like to do to others - you get short tempered. (Fred)

Because I think the real me is suffering from an inferiority complex. People don't see it that way, but that is the real me. (James)

Then there would be an outburst, then it would be over. (Sarah)

**Could do better, perhaps**

Coded for 23 participants and 35 times

There is a recognition of disharmony, and the possibility of improvement, but no action is intended. This links with Dilemma and Content of Reflection

Examples:

*But I probably don't do as much as I feel I should do. .... I don't do as much as my sister would do ... I recognise I fall short.  I don't - yes, I could do more.* (Fred)

*Sometimes I forget, - you know - people who have got faith don't ever doubt it, but I do.* (Nancy)

*Again I am better at enabling people to do things that I think they can do better than me. I am not so good at being patient with them doing things that I could have done quicker, not necessarily better, but quicker.* (Naomi)

**Self-Recrimination**

Coded for 22 participants and 54 times
This includes guilt, living with a sense of unworthiness. It used to be called Bad and Self-condemnation, and expresses the thought "I am bad". There is no sense when spoken of this having been redeemed, although this may follow in the interview.

Examples:

*Oh definitely I didn't try hard enough.* (Brenda)

*Yes. I think it is very easy to actually talk about people and people's situations behind people's backs. Or gossip generally. And get caught up in the general camaraderie - talking to neighbours about other neighbours - this sort of thing. Then I feel ashamed afterwards.* (Diane)

*It is something that I feel I have failed at, because there have been occasions where, particularly friends and acquaintance have been sick, and I have thought about going to visit them, and have never actually done it, and I have felt guilty afterwards.* (Edgar)

*I don't think of myself of having been a good parent. I was not as generous and kind to my son as I should have been. That doesn't mean to say that I was in any way unkind in a physical way at all, but I could have been more generous to him, and that has been a source of great concern to me over the years.* (Len)

*I aspire* Coded for 20 participants and 37 times

I want to, I aspire to, I would like to be like. This includes the extreme nature of "If, ..., then I would ..." Although there is clear intention, this is less active than the category of I try.
There was a little recoding, correctly where it was more action, hence I try, or where the aspiration had been held by a person other than the participant.

Examples:

*I wish it was really. Well I - I pray a lot.* (George)

*I suppose I just want to be a caring and loving person, I think.* (Nora)

*I think – I wrote down here, and it came off the top of my head, when I was thinking about people, and how it affected me, - was it these people having been faithful and fruitful and Christianity and the study of scripture has not been just an academic exercise, but they have been living the life that they have commended to others? And that is what I would hope for myself.* (Tessa)

*Example of disharmony* Coded for 19 participants and 34 times

This will normally be of some length, and quoted in a definitive form. These (unlike Evidence) refer to Disharmony, and do not have action embedded within them.

On my way through at the end of the initial coding (19/8/10), I had to recode several away from this category. It was also apparent that some referred to precise events (thick examples) and others to generalised situations (thin examples).

Examples:

*With hindsight, yes, because I think probably the major example of that would be the way most of my married life I didn't get on very well with my mother-in-law.* (Brenda)

*No, she has had six years when she couldn't be honest.* (Diana)
Yes. I think it is very easy to actually talk about people and people's situations behind people's backs. Or gossip generally. And get caught up in the general camaraderie - talking to neighbours about other neighbours - this sort of thing. Then I feel ashamed afterwards. (Diane)

Um - well there is one person I find it very hard - on one level very, very hard to forgive, but on another level, I like her. (Dorothy)

My wife doesn't like me drinking. So I don't tell her. I am not totally honest about what I consume at times. (Edmund)

Close Relationships

This will normally be of some length, and quoted in a definitive form. These (unlike Evidence) refer to Disharmony, and do not have action embedded within them.

On my way through at the end of the initial coding (19/8/10), I had to recode several away from this category. It was also apparent that some referred to precise events (thick examples) and others to generalised situations (thin examples).

Examples:

No, I find it very easy. The only barrier is my husband. (Wendy)

With hindsight, yes, because I think probably the major example of that would be the way most of my married life I didn't get on very well with my mother-in-law. (Brenda)

Yes. But I have to say that at the end of his life my father was an alcoholic and it was a very distressing time for the family. And at that time I could not help him, and we had a difficult relationship. (Yvonne)
Redemption  
Coded for 15 participants and 23 times

Reference is made to disharmony in the past, which has led to harmony in the present. It will be interesting to enquire whether this links with the "good endings" which were linked with positive people's account of personal narratives that included trauma.

Examples:

so yes, I had a bad six years, and um - and I am now in this new job which is absolutely fantastic.  I think I can start being true to myself again, and what my faith is, and where I am. (Diana)

And it was a very stressful time, but I think part of the way of dealing with that, and the process of going through that, is thinking in terms of God having a plan for my life. Therefore if a position I am in is as difficult as it was then, there must be a way forward that is helpful for me if you like, or that is in the long term for the good, although it is difficult to see in the immediacy." later on referring to his own work ethic” so - you know - a long way down the line, twenty years down the line, that very rough experience for me has influenced the way I behave in my work. (Harold)

Ever since, as I say, I was on my own bringing up two children, I had to come out of my shell, I used to be a very shy person, and to come out of that shell you have to be sort of willing to welcome people into your life, as well as - you know - to theirs. (Marian)

maybe I can have long enough to have a period of time where I can perhaps make up for some of the misdemeanours. You can't get back - I can't do anything about what I have done, but perhaps I can help people in other ways (Marie)
Yes, that’s right. And because I have had sudden bereavements that I have had to cope with, I do feel I understand much better how someone else feels, and to be able to try and help them, before I suffered those things. (Yvonne)

**Better in the Past**

Coded for 15 participants and 23 times

In the past, there was harmony, which was, to some degree, lost. For some it has been regained

Examples:

*Shall we say I am getting less and less enthusiastic in things as I get older.* (Edmund)

*Um - it is harder, um - it was much easier when - in my early life, - than I find it now. I don't know why that is, I guess it is just pressures of life.* (Diana)

*the House Group that has been together for quite a long time a number of years now, - has gone through a phase of people not meeting as regular. We used to meet once a week during school term time, and everyone was very committed to it, and everyone wants to be committed to it now, but over the last year and a half I suppose, we have got into a position where people could make some weeks and not others, and then we decided we are not going to meet this week - not enough and then - not becomes regular.* (Harold)

*Well I know that there have been times in my life when I have prayed more - knowing that praying is very rewarding and I know that it is a great thing to do, and I know that I don’t do it well at the moment.* (Tanya)

**Work Pressure**

Coded for 14 participants and 22 times

This formerly was Work Prevents. Many participants were retired, which may explain why so many comments about work refer in a reflective manner to the past. There is an overlap with Family Priority and Time Not Available.
Examples:

you can’t be direct with people who are more senior to you. (Barbara)

This is one I find difficult. I have always found prayer a particularly difficult area, and also because of the all-consuming nature of my job, but that then becomes an excuse, because if you want to make time for prayer, you make time for prayer. (Harold)

When I am tired, I am probably not particularly caring in a .................then, and I think that is probably a huge barrier, and that can come on because of constraints at work, being stuck on the motor-way, coming home and you are tired, and by the time you have got home........you are late, your dinner is a bit cold, and all that. So I think - you know - it is the tiredness, and it is the things that make you tired. Obviously the reasons for being tired, - a traffic jam on the M25, - the train was delayed again - stuck on the tarmac - all that, so - yes - tired. (Peter)

Outside my experience Coded for 13 participants and 21 times

Outside my experience, perhaps because of life events, or gender, or innate ability

Examples:

Yes. I know of several people who have faith and yet life has been very hard for them, various things have happened, and they have never lost that faith. I have never been tested in that - yes, I have had illnesses and bereavements, everybody has, expected and unexpected, but I have never had - I don’t think I have ever had any times when my faith has really been tested to the utmost. (Kit)
That was the one I picked on for ladies, wasn’t it? To a certain extent, yes. I wouldn’t say I was serene myself. To a certain extent with serene you see, you are almost edging on to passive. (Vince)

Oh yes. Yes. One of the persons I admired – well I admire many musicians – our Organist and choir master here at [our church]. I mean he has the technical knowledge and to teach us – even at my advanced age – aspects of music that were completely closed to me – talking about composers, and the types of music they wrote. Yes I often wish I had that ability. But recognise that I haven’t got it. (Ronnie)

Time not available Coded for 11 participants and 14 times

The emphasis is on time, rather than the factor which restricts time, whether family or work. There is no expectation of freeing up time for the activity under consideration.

Examples:

I think often it has been a question of time, and having too much to do - you know - and probably when you have to prioritise, you don’t always get it right. (Brenda)

And indeed it presents difficulties now, as there is only so much you can, there are only so many hours in a day, and how you spread yourself. (Peter)

Again it is usually when you haven’t got time to think about it, to – because if people come to me with – I mean sometimes you can give a wise answer fairly quickly, sometimes I find it is something I have to think about, perhaps to pray about, and may not be able to give an answer for quite a while. And if you haven’t got the time to do that, I think you are in danger of giving the easy answer. You know – do you understand what I am saying, that
sometimes wisdom needs thought, and thought sometimes takes time – and sometimes you haven’t got that time. (Tessa)

**Family Priority**

Coded for 10 participants and 15 times

Prioritising family takes precedence over other matters, and this is seen as the right choice. This can either be partner or dependent focused. One of main aspects is that this is expressed as the virtuous choice of the participant rather than the demand of the family member (the latter being Close Relationship).

Examples:

*Yes, I think the family would always come first.* (Christine)

*[my husband] has retired, he is still at 83 quite active, and now that he is retired I feel my principal occupation is to do things with him. And that is number one.* (Kate)

*With a full time job, it is difficult, until relatively recently within the last ten years, having a family and work commitments.* (Edgar)

**Good Fortune**

Coded for 8 participants and 9 times

This refers to situations where the participant asserts harmony. This is then explained by reference to a beneficial aspect of their life for which they came no credit/responsibility. No action is required.

Examples:

*I think so. I guess I was born with it, it is just a wonderful bit of luck to have it, I guess.* (Leonard)

*I was fortunate enough to go to Grammar School and my sister was, that I have got the education that I wanted,* (Nancy)
No, I think all I would say in fact is my faith, however good or bad it is, is very, very important, very, very important to me. As I said earlier, the Church don't need me, but I do need the Church. It gives me a direction in life, and I thank my mother for that, because she made me go to Sunday School. It was the thing in those days, and it has given me something which I needed. I could have gone off the rails - I could have gone off the rails. Mum had to work, support. I was very lucky. And I put that down to someone up there smiling. (Kenneth)

These are the six which relate to the interview process

*Emotional Narrative* Coded for 27 participants and 60 times

*Process Comment* Coded for 19 participants and 31 times

*Past Historic* Coded for 13 participants and 26 times

*Current* Coded for 7 participants and 9 times

*Third Person* Coded for 5 participants and 9 times

*Closure* Coded for 5 participants and 6 times

These two are concerned with errors in the formatting

*Anon* Coded for 6 participants and 10 times

*Format* Coded for 6 participants and 8 times
APPENDIX K - MAIN STUDY - FREQUENCY OF THEMES

The numbers of ‘ever-used’ and episodes in Main Study are:

Table K - Frequency of theme by participants and by episodes

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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Participants N=56</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Change</td>
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<td>366</td>
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<td>Commitment</td>
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<td>163</td>
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<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disposition</td>
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<td>111</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX L – MAIN STUDY - NUMBER OF EPISODES OF EACH THEME

Figure L: Number of Episodes of each Theme