Systems of Indoctrination: Accelerated Christian Education in England

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I, Jenna Scaramanga, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed: _____

Abstract

Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) is an individualised curriculum used in some private schools. It is known for its conservative Protestant stance and largely literal interpretation of the Bible, and for teaching every academic subject from a biblical perspective. ACE claims the curriculum is used in more than 6,000 schools worldwide, but there has so far been minimal academic research into the curriculum or students' experiences of it.

I attended an ACE school for some of my secondary education, and this thesis combines reflections on my experiences and analysis of qualitative interviews with students who were educated at ACE schools in England. These interviews give a sense of what it is like to attend an ACE school, students' perceptions of their education and its effect on their subsequent lives.

ACE promotional materials have in the past said the system is "designed for programming the mind to see life from God's point of view". From a liberal perspective, this raises concerns about indoctrination. I conceptualise indoctrination as education which makes students closed-minded, and argue that closed-mindedness is linked to cognitive biases and cognitive dissonance. I then examine ways in which ACE is likely to instill closed-mindedness in its students through the use of forced compliance, conformity pressures, and extrinsic rewards.

While some participants found their ACE experience beneficial, the majority experienced inadequate education, sexism, homophobia, excessive punishment, and discrimination against those considered 'ungodly'. Many participants described continued effects of indoctrination despite their rejection of ACE's teachings. Inspection reports from ACE schools do not indicate awareness of these issues. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the possible effects of increased regulation on these schools.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of figures and tables

Chapter 1 Introduction

In 1996, I was 11 years old and preparing to go to secondary school. My brother, six years older and attending the local comprehensive, told my parents he did not think I would survive there. Where he had coped by keeping quiet about his Christian faith, I was possessed of an evangelical fervour. He thought I would be bullied. My parents felt I was getting "a hard attitude" to my mum, answering back and showing early signs of teenage rebellion. They wanted to put me in a safe, Christian environment where these tendencies would be corrected.

Some of my dad's university friends had started an Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) school almost ten years earlier that I had attended as a pre-schooler. My parents had never seriously considered it for my primary and secondary schooling because it did not follow the National Curriculum or offer recognised qualifications, but after my brother raised his concerns, they took me to view the ACE school.

ACE schools are not like conventional schools. Even those aspects which are similar have different names. This school had two 'learning centres' (classrooms), one for those under 12 and one for those above. Around the perimeter of each learning centre were rows of 'offices' (desks), each separated by vertical dividers (Figure 1.1). When I visited, the children were already at work. The room was silent apart from soft panpipe music. The children completed self-instructional 'PACEs' (workbooks). Every one of these was written from a biblical perspective, so that Bible memorisation and spiritual lessons were incorporated into the core subjects: English, maths, science, social studies[1], and word building (spelling).

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[1] A combination of history and geography, as well as some politics and economics.

Figure 1.1. 'Offices' in an ACE learning centre.

In the Older Learning Centre, there was a single supervisor (teacher). When children needed help with their work, they raised a flag to attract the supervisor's attention. Otherwise they were left to work individually. In the Younger Learning Centre, there was also a 'monitor' (teaching assistant). The purpose of the dividers between desks was "to minimise distractions" (ACE 2010a, 12), and no communication was allowed between students during PACE time.

Periodically, students went to a 'score station' (Figure 1.2) where they selected the relevant 'score keys' (answer booklets) for their PACEs and compared their answers with those supplied. If all answers were correct, students continued with the next page. If they were not, students returned to their seats, corrected the answers, and repeated the process until all answers were correct. To make this possible, every question had to have a single correct answer, so PACE activities consisted of fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and true or false items.

Occasionally, score keys stated "answer may vary", in which case the student's response was evaluated by a supervisor.

Figure 1.2 Student marking work at an ACE score station.

I loved the school immediately. I couldn't wait to start, so I began in the summer term of 1996 rather than waiting until September when I would ordinarily have changed schools. I felt the school was a family, but it was an easy one for me to join: my dad had founded the church which operated the school, although we no longer attended it. One of the supervisors had been a midwife present at my birth, another had suggested that I was named Jonathan, and a third had been 'born again' at a prayer meeting in my parents' living room some years before.

Going to the school was like coming home. I had disliked group work at my previous school and was glad to work in an office where I did not have to interact with anyone else. The selling point for the PACEs is that students work through them at their own pace, so faster students are able to push ahead while slower learners need not worry about falling behind the rest of the class. New students complete a diagnostic test to see where in the PACE sequence they should start. In social studies, science, and word building, I had been diagnosed at PACE 1085, the level expected of an average 13-year-old. In fact, the supervisor said, I should have been even higher, but I would be required to

complete every PACE from 1085 onwards to earn my National Christian Schools Certificate (NCSC), which the school offered instead of GCSEs and A Levels. I did not take this diagnosis as a sign of any incompatibility with the National Curriculum or weakness in the ACE system. Instead, it was confirmation of my intelligence. I shuddered to imagine myself in a state school, forced to do the work of ordinary 11-year-olds.

Our school day began with 'opening exercise' (assembly), at which the children pledged allegiance to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and to the Bible. They also recited the month's scripture memory passage. The afternoon's activities included more conventional class teaching, physical education, practical science, and chapel services. A major part of the afternoon work was preparing for European Student Convention (hereafter 'Convention'), a week-long annual competition between ACE schools involving sports, arts, drama, and music.

All ACE schools operate in a similar fashion. The rules, policies, and practices are laid out in the *Procedures Manual* (ACE 2010a) and *Administration Manual* (ACE 2012). ACE's founder, Donald Howard, boasted that the original ACE learning centre in Lewisville, Texas, "has literally reproduced itself around the world" (Howard 1979, 300). This does not appear to be an idle boast. Descriptions of ACE learning centres have been consistent across times and locations (cf. Aldrich 1983; Hepburn 2007; Murray 1983; Parsons 1987; Rose 1988; Sweet 1997; Walford 1995; Walter 2005).

My first full year in the school was a triumph. At the school's annual awards dinner, I won a certificate for completing more PACEs than anyone else on PACE 1085 or above (78) and for maintaining the highest average test score (98.75%). I felt privileged to be where (as I felt it then) God wanted me to be, and that I had as a result of the school begun to live a more fully Christian life. I was more polite, smiled more, was more respectful of my parents, and I had memorised far more of the Bible.

By the autumn of 1999, for reasons that will become clearer, my feelings about the school had changed entirely. I was suffering from depression and that October, halfway through the Autumn term, my parents removed me just in time to begin preparing for GCSEs at a more mainstream independent school. There I met lots of people who did not share my beliefs, but when they challenged me I dismissed them without seriously listening. I knew what God said, so even if I could not answer their arguments, I still knew they were wrong. It is this closed-mindedness, explicitly encouraged by ACE, which most troubles me about my education now.

I left the ACE school angry at what I had endured, and since then the significance of those 42 months has only increased in my mind. I left feeling that I was academically disadvantaged and socially hobbled (particularly in my relationships with women) by my time in the school. This feeling only increased when I was at music college completing my undergraduate degree. Even after completing GCSEs and A Levels, I felt I had never fully recovered from my ACE years. I was especially frustrated when I was contacted by Anne Warburton, then an employee of ACE's distributor Christian Education Europe (CEE)[2], to take part in research for what became her master's dissertation (Warburton 2005). Her questionnaire gave me no room to express adequately my dissatisfaction with my ACE schooling. I felt the questions contained hidden assumptions that meant none of the available responses fitted my views. I spent several days composing an essay detailing my disagreements with ACE before abandoning it, feeling that a book-length response would still be inadequate, even in the (unlikely, I felt) event Warburton wanted to hear my opinion. In the end, I did not even reply to Warburton's letter.

In 2008, I began a PG Cert in education. During this time I began to clarify my own ideas about what constituted good education, and I was able to articulate for the first time how the things I valued in education were the opposite of

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[2]   Appendix 1 is a guide to abbreviations used in this thesis.

what had happened at my ACE school. Further, I was not alone in this. The overwhelming majority of educational theorists and practitioners advocated teaching and learning that was entirely unlike ACE. I was particularly impressed by the idea of 'deep' (as opposed to 'surface') learning (Biggs and Tang 2007, 23–25, 35), characterised by intrinsic motivation and the learning of concepts rather than isolated facts. I valued deep learning, while ACE employed the strategies Biggs and Tang identify as militating against it. Prior to ACE, I had been a motivated and enthusiastic school student, but at the ACE school I had adopted the cynical attitude common among surface learners. I retained this negative approach after leaving the ACE school, keeping it for my GCSEs and A Levels and much of my undergraduate degree. I felt my ACE experience had changed me from someone who loved learning into someone who viewed it as a necessary evil.

I also noted that John Hattie's (2009) research provided strong evidence that individualisation and programmed instruction, the two foundational methods of the ACE curriculum (CEE 2012b, 18), are among the least effective teaching strategies. Summarising Hattie's work, Petty (2009, 67) categorises programmed instruction as a "disaster". I realised that my experience of ACE was not just something I had personally disliked, but something that relevant experts generally consider bad education. This only increased my frustration. How could these schools operate for so long without critique or public scrutiny when they flew in the face of current thinking about educational best practice?

In 2009, I learned that UK NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) had evaluated the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) to be comparable to Cambridge International O- and A-Level standards. The ICCE was the new name for the NCSC, a certificate given to those completing the ACE curriculum. Given what I knew of ACE and of curriculum theory, I could not believe this was happening. I wrote a letter to NARIC, detailing my objections to their decision and mentioning that two of my PACEs had included defences of apartheid, and one had claimed that the existence of the Loch Ness

monster cast doubt on the theory of evolution. I sent a copy of this letter to the *Times Education Supplement*, which attracted some newspaper coverage (Shaw 2009; Shepherd 2009). I assumed NARIC's decision was a mere oversight that would quickly be corrected. In fact, NARIC completed a second evaluation and reaffirmed its decision (NARIC 2012a), leading to further newspaper reports (Barker 2012; Loxton 2012). The latter of these went viral online, producing a string of Nessie-related headlines around the world (Herald Scotland 2012). At this time, "Loch Ness monster" appeared among the first three Google autofill suggestions when users entered "Accelerated Christian Education" into the search engine. Nevertheless, NARIC stood its ground (NARIC 2012c).

I complained to my MP about this, showing him instances of homophobic, sexist, and unscientific material in the ICCE and mentioning several schools which were advertising NARIC's endorsement on their websites. NARIC was funded by the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills, so the MP wrote to the relevant minister on my behalf. The ministerial response referred to the favourable Ofsted reports for the schools in question, arguing that my claims were groundless and that there was "no evidence" the ACE materials I referenced were used at schools in the UK.

This response revealed an ignorance of how ACE works (the PACEs I quoted were compulsory for ICCE students), but the minister was not entirely wrong. As the literature review will show, there is almost no recent scholarship on the subject of ACE and minimal independent evidence about the quality of schooling it provides or its effect on the subsequent lives of its students. NARIC's report, as a commercial in-confidence document, is not available to the public. The remaining scholarship on ACE is mostly old or of poor quality, and almost none of it is from the UK. It was this that motivated me to complete a PhD on the subject.

1.1 New Christian Schools

ACE schools are one subset of a movement of private Christian schools known as the 'New Christian Schools'. These schools are usually set up by churches or groups of parents in response to what they perceive as the growing secularism of mainstream schools. Fees are typically low compared with other independent schools (Walford 1995, 16): Maranatha Christian School (2015), the flagship UK ACE school, charged £3,975 per student per year in 2014–2015. The schools are characterised by an evangelical Christianity which relates the Bible to every aspect of present day life (Walford 1995). The growth of evangelical Christian schools in the UK mirrors similar movements in the USA (Parsons 1987) and Australia (Long 1996). Baker and Freeman (2005) give an insider's account of the development of 17 of the UK schools, which has been summarised thus:

> The new Christian school movement is grounded in belief in the God who takes the initiative within the lives of the people of God to bring to fruition the purposes of God. Here is the God who communicates with individuals and with groups through the word of scripture, through pictures and words of prophecy. Here is the God who authenticates the message through answered prayer, through healing, and through the release of the necessary finances. (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2009, 221)

Christian school movements pre-date ACE, but ACE contributed to their growth by providing an affordable means for churches and parents to set up schools without the need for professionally trained staff. Walford's survey of New Christian Schools (1995) found considerable diversity among them, and Pike's (2010) description of Bradford Christian School is quite unlike an ACE school. ACE does share a number of features with the wider movement, however. Most, if not all, New Christian Schools reject the theory of evolution and teach some version of biblical creationism (Baker 2009; Walford 1995). The perception that mainstream schools inculcate secular humanism, held by many of the New Christian Schools (Baker 2009, 79; Pike 2010, 186; Walford 1995, 13–14), is a staple of ACE's promotional material (e.g. ACE 2013a; Roderick 2008). ACE's core idea, that in a truly Christian curriculum every academic subject must be based on the Bible, is shared by many non-ACE New Christian

Schools (Baker and Freeman 2005; Walford 2002). At least one school has developed a curriculum similar to ACE but with an emphasis on British, rather than US, society (Walford 1995, 25–26, 34). Stephen Dennett, an ACE advocate as well as developer of a British ACE-style curriculum, lists ten perceived problems with mainstream schools which he cites as reasons for parents to choose Christian education:

- Christianity taught as one among many religions, not as the truth itself
- Violence
- Lack of discipline
- Racism
- Low standards of work
- Homosexuality taught as a valid alternative
- Sex education that accepts promiscuity
- 'No-fail' exams
- Immoral teachers
- Increased levels of Muslim teaching. (Dennett 1988, 16)

While advocates of New Christian Schools speak of high academic standards, "the greatest priority in children's education is for them to come to know the Lord" (Baker and Freeman 2005, 27) and to educate them "for a life of responsible discipleship in Jesus Christ" (Van Brummelen 1989, cited in Walford 1995, 32). This is linked to a particular understanding of the role of scripture. ACE schools "take as foundational that the Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God" (Dennett 1988, 55). Scripture is always used in justifying the New Christian Schools' existence:

> There are differences in the way the Bible is used to support statements and ideas, but it is accepted as authoritative, and the reader is not expected to challenge its inherent authority. While there may be some difficulties in understanding some passages or in applying them to present-day situations, in the minds of these authors, there is no question of the appropriateness of using Biblical quotations to justify arguments. Readers are not expected to question whether writings at least approximately 2000 years old *can* have relevance to modern

situations, they are expected to look for and find such relevance. (Walford 1995, 37)

1.2 Number of schools

The first ACE school was founded in Lewisville, Texas, in 1969 (Howard 1979). At its height in the 1980s, ACE claimed 8,000 schools worldwide used its curriculum (Laats 2010a). Kelley (2005, 13) cites a 1999 brochure claiming the curriculum was used by "some 7,000 schools in 125 countries, 14 government contracts, and thousands of home educators". By 2013, however, ACE was claiming only 6,000 schools worldwide, in an increased 145 countries (Jordan 2013). This decrease is despite the fact that a brochure (ACE 2010b) states that in the years 2000–2009, 4,743 new ACE schools opened. Clearly there is a high turnover.

It is no easier to be exact about the number of ACE schools in the UK. A journalist contacted me in 2014 seeking the answer to this question after both the Department for Education and Ofsted had been unable to help. The first British ACE school opened in 1979 (Dennett 1988). In the early 1980s, several ACE schools received notices of complaint from Her Majesty's Inspectors, resulting in one school closing (Todd 1984; Walford 1995). Following this, ACE's UK distributor stated:

> We have a policy of not issuing lists of A.C.E. schools after the critical H.M.I.'s report on one school in Coventry. We felt they were unusually fastidious and fear that political pressure could be brought to bear on our schools, particularly if there was a change of Government. (Todd 1984, 192)

It appears this policy has not substantially changed. While a list of schools does appear on CEE's website, it may not be comprehensive. In January 2009, CEE's memorandum to the Human Rights Joint Committee (CEE 2009) stated there were 59 schools. However, archives of the CEE website show that it listed 47

schools in Europe (of which 36 were in the UK) in September 2008[3] and the same number in April 2009[4]. In December 2014, the ICCE's chief moderator said there were "about 30" ACE schools in the UK (Boulton 2014). The schools are small: in 2008 there were reportedly 2000 children being educated with ACE in the UK, including home schoolers (Modell 2008a).

1.3 Standardisation

Murray (1983) notes that schools were reluctant to accept the label 'ACE schools', preferring "schools using the ACE curriculum". In fact, ACE forbids schools from referring to themselves as 'ACE schools' or using the ACE logo in their advertising (ACE 2010a, 5; ACE 2012, 3). ACE exerts more influence on each school than a typical curriculum producer because of the way it is run. Because students complete the same PACEs, school staff have little influence on lesson content. Schools sign a "service agreement" committing them to run their schools in accordance with ACE's *Procedures Manual*, the current edition of which runs to 180 pages, and to use the ACE curriculum exclusively[5] (ACE 2010a, 3; ACE 2012, 3). It is possible to purchase ACE materials without a service agreement, but then schools are not eligible for a "deep discount" (Ibid).

ACE goes so far as to stipulate the dimensions of student 'offices' as well as the approximate layout of furniture (ACE 2012, 76–80). All staff in the schools are required to undergo ACE's internal training before they begin working. In the UK, Christian Education Europe (CEE) provides "school assistance visits" in which schools are graded on their compliance with official procedures. In the USA, ACE annual school inspections were instituted in 1972, and reinstituted in

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[3]　　http://web.archive.org/web/20080918070552/http://www.christian-education.org/fivelaws.html

[4]　　http://web.archive.org/web/20090427024849/http://www.christian-education.org/fivelaws.html

[5]　　It is not clear what "exclusively" means here. The options list for ICCE students includes some materials from a rival Christian publisher, Alpha Omega (CEE 2012b, 38).

2003 (ACE 2010b). Official guidelines for schools even list proscribed topics for visiting chapel speakers: "The speaker will avoid references to television/movies, social drinking, sex, violence, occult concepts, swimming, teen dating, Halloween, Santa Claus, or the Easter bunny" (ACE 2010a, 144).

ACE does not provide much guidance for schools about extra-curricular activities and supplementary lessons. Nevertheless, even here ACE exerts some control through organising regional and international student conventions, for which students spend a considerable amount of their non-PACE time preparing. Since ACE chooses the events and the judging criteria, it affects what students will tend to learn and practise. For instance, in music events, rock and contemporary styles are prohibited (ACE 2013b), and pieces with an overtly Christian theme are favoured over the non-sacred. For all these reasons, it seems justified to speak of 'ACE schools' rather than simply 'schools using the ACE curriculum'.

1.4 ACE and fundamentalism

For much of its history, it has been uncontroversial to describe ACE as a fundamentalist curriculum (Hunter 1985; Laats 2010a; Speck and Prideaux 1993). ACE founder Donald Howard wrote:

> Fundamentalism is intellectually sound. It has always prevailed in periods of great intellectual enlightenment. It is the only sound and logical solution to the existence of the universe. Fundamentalism teaches that man is by nature sinful, that he is born a lost sinner, that men who are lost go to a literal burning hell, that men can be saved by grace through faith … and then man saved can go to heaven. That is fundamentalism. I am a fundamentalist. If I can be any more fundamental than fundamental, that is what I want to be. (Howard 1979, 215)

At least one English ACE school has described itself as fundamentalist. In Modell's (2008b) documentary, the headteacher of Carmel Christian School in

Bristol stated "Doctrinally we're fundamentalists, because we're using the Bible, even in science, to explain things" (Modell 2008b).

Not all ACE schools accept this label, however. In 2014 I wrote to the *Dover Mercury* newspaper about the opening of a new ACE school in the area, saying it was fundamentalist. In the resulting article, the school's "managing director" Richard Fleming denied my claim: "We are not a fundamentalist Christian school. We are just a regular Christian school. We operate the Accelerated Christian Education programme that's operated around the world, it is very mainstream" (Chessum 2014).

Historically, 'fundamentalist' had a precise meaning as a brand of Protestant Christianity noted for rejecting theological liberalism and cultural modernism, and clinging to what it termed the 'fundamentals' of faith, which usually included belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, the historicity of biblical miracles, and the virgin birth and physical resurrection of Christ (Laats 2010b). Since the 1920s, fundamentalism has been increasingly associated with the rejection of the theory of evolution.

Walford (1995, 31) notes that another characteristic of religious fundamentalism is the use of political means "to impose their version of the truth on others". He argues that 'fundamentalist' is an inappropriate term for the New Christian Schools because they are rarely political in this way. While the schools as a whole may not be, ACE is more politically inclined. Donald Howard (1979), ACE's founder, argues it is the duty of Christians to see the Bible enshrined as the basis of the country's laws, and this view appears in numerous PACEs. It is shared by at least some who run ACE schools in this country. In 2004, George Hargreaves founded both a London ACE school and Operation Christian Vote (Walter 2005), which later became the Christian Party. This party has campaigned on a platform of opposition to abortion and gay rights, reinstatement of corporal punishment in schools, and other plans to bring the law into harmony with its biblical interpretation (Scottish Christian Party 2007).

22

A YouTube video shows Hargreaves addressing a group of ACE students on the subject of becoming a politician (DoverSchoolUK 2013a).

In the academic sense, then, ACE schools are fundamentalist. In popular use, however, 'fundamentalist' has gained pejorative overtones, used interchangeably with 'extremist' and even 'terrorist'. As a result, even Bob Jones University, the bastion of Christian fundamentalism where Donald Howard earned his doctorate, has distanced itself from the term. A faculty member complained "The term has been hijacked and it takes you 30 minutes to explain it. So you need something else" (Gibson 2011). In fact, there is no label besides 'Christian' the schools accept. 'Evangelical', the obvious alternative to 'fundamentalist', is again technically accurate but rarely used by the schools themselves because of perceived negative connotations (Baker 2009, 37).

Baker (2009) identifies two main theological traditions within the New Christian Schools, 'Reformed' (neo-Calvinist) and 'Charismatic'[6]. The Reformed tradition places great emphasis on the Bible and traditional forms of worship. The Charismatic tradition, while still seeing the Bible as essential, gives more weight to personal experience and hearing directly from God. The Charismatics emphasise 'the gifts of the spirit' such as speaking in tongues and prophecy, and often their worship is influenced by rock and pop music.

Donald Howard was from a Baptist background which frowned on speaking in tongues and other ecstatic displays typical of Charismatic Christianity. Despite this, Charismatic churches have been the most visible users of the ACE curriculum in South Africa (Froneman 2012) and Indonesia (Hoon 2010). In New Zealand, support for ACE was initially strongest among Pentecostals, which

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[6]   For my purposes, it is sufficient to treat 'Charismatic' and 'Pentecostal' as interchangeable terms in this section, in keeping with scholars who refer to the 'Pentecostal/Charismatic movement' (e.g. Poloma 1997).

Knowles (1994, 190) observes was the cause of some embarrassment for Howard. In the USA, ACE's association with Charismatic Christians drew fire from fundamentalists for its "toleration of low standards, worldliness, and anti-Christian music" and led to some schools organising a rival national convention (Hobbs 1981). By the late 1980s, however, Howard appeared to embrace his association with Charismatics (Howard 1987).

It appears that Charismatics are also the dominant group of ACE users in England. A CEE staff member told me he thought that because the first ACE schools in England were run by Charismatics, other Christians had perceived ACE as a Charismatic phenomenon, which had both increased its popularity in those circles and lessened its appeal to other groups. Because of their lack of denominational affiliations and resistance to labels, it is hard to be precise about how many English ACE schools are Charismatic.

Long (1996) identifies 11 theological strands within the Australian Christian schools movement, most of which are familiar to me. Given all this, it is likely that any label will be rejected by at least some to whom it is applied, but I will follow Baker's Charismatic/Reformed distinction in this thesis.

1.5 Howard's Vision for Education

Donald Howard incorporated his personal beliefs into every aspect of his curriculum (Elkins 1992, 44), so his writing is helpful in understanding ACE. He expressed his philosophy of education in a series of books: *To Save a Nation* (1976), *Rebirth of Our Nation* (1979), *Teen Turmoil (1988)*, and *Crisis in Education: Public education a disaster … but there's new hope for parents* (1990). In each, Howard argues that education in the USA was originally a private, Christian enterprise that has been corrupted by government involvement and humanism. Since the 1962 Supreme Court decision removing compulsory prayer from public schools, American education has decayed, producing an epidemic of illiteracy, immorality, crime, and economic turmoil.

The solution is a return to private Christian education. A fifth book, *World Awakening* (Howard 1987)*,* asserts that a boom in Christian education is triggering a global revival. Howard predicted that this would continue until the return of Christ, which would probably come in or around the year 2000.

There is considerable duplication between the books, so I will concentrate on *Rebirth of Our Nation* (Howard 1979), the longest and most comprehensive. Recent ACE promotional literature (ACE 2013a) and staff training materials (ACE 2011; ACE 2012) repeat ideas from this book. Howard argues that to avoid political, social, and economic disaster, there must be a Christian curriculum which "establishes the presuppositions of fundamentalism in the mind, heart, and life of a new generation within the sphere of academic education" (Howard 1979, 224). For Howard, fundamentalism involves political as well as theological commitments. Schools must teach "Christian Americanism", with 'Americanism' encapsulated by the principles of law, freedom, and limited government (p. 102). In Howard's theology, free market economics are derived from the Bible. He maintains that socialism and welfare are unscriptural, because "Genesis declares that man is to earn bread by the sweat of <u>his</u> face, not by another man's. … Also, 'But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel' (*I Timothy* 5:8)" (p. 67). He further advocates the abolition of all state schools (p. 142).

Howard points to both economic prosperity and global missionary efforts as being made possible by the free market, so "an educational system must be committed to that system without reservation and with clarity and consistency" (p. 108). Limited government is only possible when people have such godly character that they govern themselves responsibly. Bible-based character education is therefore essential, since "only the church of Jesus Christ can build Christian character into the lives of people" (p. 230).

Howard's is a world of stark dichotomies. Schools either promote biblical theism or humanism. He claims repeatedly that mainstream schools "program"

children into humanist belief (pp. 102, 240, 261). Christian parents, by contrast, have the responsibility of "daily diligently deliberately programming the principles of eternal ages into the heart and life style, the values and the philosophy … of the next generation" (p. 257). Early ACE promotional materials therefore claimed the curriculum was "designed for programming the mind to enable the child to see life from God's point of view" (cited in Seiferth 1985, 71; Speck and Prideaux 1993, 280). ACE's vice president expands on this point:

> Children matriculate into Christian school in dire need of spiritual programing of their minds to accept and desire the things of Christ … Restricting secular access to his mind and conditioning with Scriptural principles breaks down the child's carnal resistance against God, removing previously (or currently) accepted ideas, values, notions, and concepts … At first, the child (especially teenagers) may reject godly standards and principles – yet gradually, negative mental resistance gives way. (Johnson 1980, 31–32)

In order to achieve this programming, Howard argues for children to be drilled in biblical principles every day, and to be sealed off from contact with other ideas: "A child of God has no business even listening to instruction that is contrary to God's Word" (p. 262). He devotes almost an entire chapter to this point. It also appears to be one of the most influential aspects of his thinking: British ACE advocates Dennett (1988) and Roderick (2008) place similar emphasis on it.

My post-ACE education valued considering different viewpoints and deciding for oneself what to believe. Howard calls this "purely satanic" (p. 263) and "a sin against the mind of the child" (p. 265). I now advocate a liberal education where children learn to think for themselves and make up their own minds (Brighouse 2006; Law 2006; Siegel 1988). To Howard, this is anathema.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Accelerated Christian Education

The academic literature on ACE is sparse. Since 2007, the only academic publications about ACE are three master's dissertations by ACE staff in Kenya and South Africa (Jones 2011; Mungai 2011; Niekerk 2009), a history of the origins of ACE and its two main fundamentalist competitors, A Beka and BJU Press (Laats 2010a), and an article about faith-based schools and social cohesion, which mentions in passing that ACE schools "clearly provide children with teachings that are not at all conducive to social cohesion as their curriculum involves statements that people of other religions, races or ethnicities are inferior" (Mintz and McDonough 2011).

Since ACE was founded in 1969, only eight articles in mainstream academic journals have discussed it substantially. Since 1985, there have been just nine doctoral theses wholly or mostly about ACE. Some of these are largely irrelevant to this research. Eby (1986) compared the achievement in maths and reading of ACE students with results from students of another fundamentalist curriculum, A Beka. The results did not decisively favour either curriculum. Terrell (1985) found that ACE school staff reported on surveys that they carried out all their duties as listed in the ACE *Procedures Manual*, as well as some additional duties.

Hunter (1985, 44) noted that at the time he wrote, Protestant fundamentalist day schools attracted "strongly polarized commentaries", with supportive literature coming from the fundamentalists themselves. While a few attempts at 'unbiased' commentary existed, much of the literature reflected these divides. The literature produced since Hunter's observation has continued this trend. An exchange between mainstream academics and ACE's Vice President helps to explain why. Concluding their review of ACE's high school Social Studies PACEs, Fleming and Hunt (1987, 522) argue:

> If parents want their children to obtain a very limited and sometimes inaccurate view of the world – one that ignores thinking above the level of rote recall – then the ACE materials do the job very well. The world of the ACE materials is quite a different one from that of scholarship and critical thinking.

Of this conclusion, historian of Christian fundamentalism Adam Laats comments, "Clearly, the nonfundamentalist authors of this study meant this to be interpreted as an unequivocally damning flaw" (Laats 2010a, 74). ACE's authors, however, do not value scholarship and critical thinking in the mainstream sense. In response, ACE's vice president Ronald Johnson (1987, 520) insists "We respect the right of Fleming and Hunt to disagree with us, but we ask that they evaluate our material from something other than the conventional viewpoint. Our material is *not* written with conventional viewpoints in mind". In order to be worthy of consideration, Johnson maintains, academic sources must at least be "pro-family, pro-life, pro-marriage, and pro-church", and "ACE does not necessarily embrace philosophical beliefs compatible with those of most contemporary secular writers of curriculum" (Ibid). Educational psychologist David Berliner comments "The vice-president might have said, as well, that ACE also rejects all of contemporary learning and curriculum theory" (1997, 398).

It is unlikely that ACE's founders would have contested this point. Murray (1983, 71) quotes ACE's Australian representative as saying "ACE is not 'on about' education in the sense that educators would understand, nor is it 'on about' schooling in academic things. ACE is a Christian Character training program designed to turn out Christian leaders". Similarly, Donald Howard (1987, 214) says "[W]e do *not* build Christian schools primarily to give a child the best education *nor teach him how to make a good living*. Teaching him *how to live* and *to love and serve God* are our primary tasks". Howard (1976, cited in Elkins 1992, 124) argues that mainstream educators, with their "state-trained mentalities" do not understand ACE, because its methods and philosophy are based not on "secular thinking" but on "biblical foundations".

Berliner (1997) argues that a crucial difference between mainstream educational psychology and Christian Right educators, including ACE, is the emphasis on obedience. Others have noted ACE's uncompromising stance on obedience (Costa 1996, 89; Elkins 1992, 135–136, 234). Murray (1983, 82) reports ACE's Australian representative saying "I would do ANYTHING my boss asked me to do without question. Even if I did not understand why". This, Murray argues, is the response expected of all in the ACE system. Berliner contends that this emphasis on obedience is incompatible with contemporary ideas about learning:

> Contemporary constructivist and situationist views of learning do not begin with an "obedient mind"; rather, they start with a view of the mind as active and socially mediated … various subject matter fields now require of a learner curiosity, agency, and thoughtfulness—characteristics that cannot develop well when obedience is the primary goal of child rearing. (Berliner 1997, 391)

ACE's advocates, by contrast, view obedience as a prerequisite for education, and necessary to secure salvation. Johnson argues:

> A student obtains freedom by obedience and subjection to parents, or tutors appointed by the child's father (Galatians 4:2). In order to be properly molded in the image of Christ, a child must rest in a position of submission to authority vested in adults who "watch for his soul." (Johnson 1980, 27)

A further divide between mainstream educators and ACE is over the place of rote learning (Berliner 1997). Rona Joyner, an Australian activist, declares "children should not be taught to think: they should be taught facts and correct principles of action instead" (Hunter 1985, 209), while US textbook campaigner Norma Gabler insists "What some textbooks are doing is giving students ideas, and ideas will never do them as much good as facts" (Parker 1981, cited in Berliner 1997, 397). One English ACE headmaster argues for rote learning because it is used in the Bible (Dennett 1988, 42). Not all staff in ACE schools

entirely share these views (Elkins 1992, 28, 208; Hunter 1985, 208), but they remain a further point of disagreement between ACE and contemporary curriculum theorists.

The debate over ACE, and evangelical/fundamentalist schools more widely, is not only about the status of religious studies on the curriculum or how best to achieve educational aims. It reflects deep divides over what those aims ought to be. ACE is a rejection of mainstream education in much the same way that creationist 'science' is a rejection of mainstream biology and 'biblical counselling' (Chapter 11) is a rejection of mainstream therapy. It is unsurprising, therefore, that every independent review of the ACE curriculum by mainstream educators has declared it unsatisfactory.

2.1.1 Histories

In his history of Christian education in England 1944–1984, Todd (1984) includes some information on ACE schools, noting in particular critical inspection reports some schools received in 1984, and negative press coverage concerning the schools' use of corporal punishment. Long (1996) charts the history of the Christian schools movement in Australia. He concludes "the influence of fundamentalist epistemology and the dominance of fear and confusion" typify both ACE schools and the wider movement. These, he argues, have led to "authoritarianism, separatism, underlying contradictions, lack of openness, fear of criticism, adversarial reactionism and managerial myopia" (Ibid, 425–426).

Hunter (1985) uses ACE as a case study of church-state relationships in Australia and the USA. He chronicles the rise of ACE in these countries, showing how Donald Howard's philosophy of education was part of a wider fundamentalist movement promoting similar ideas. One major tenet of this ideology is that because God has commanded Christians to found schools, they should be entirely free of any form of government oversight or regulation. To accept state approval, they argue, would be to acknowledge the state as a higher authority

than God. Christian school advocates cited Bible verses such as "We ought to obey God rather than men" (*Acts* 5:29) as justification for civil disobedience. Many ACE schools in these countries were unwilling to compromise on this point, which led to legal battles in both places. In the most notorious case, Faith Christian School in Nebraska was padlocked shut by the state and the pastor jailed for contempt of court. The church continued to operate the school, using an unheated bus as a learning centre (Parsons 1987, 141).

In a follow-up study, Hunter (1993) records that in its first 20 years, ACE was involved in more than 150 lawsuits, mostly relating to accreditation. The literature does not record any similar controversies in the UK, however. Only Dennett refers to UK school registration: "Although there are some reservations about ACE at government level, many schools using ACE have been finally registered with the Department of Education and Science" (Dennett 1988, 37).

2.1.2 Academic reviews

The extant literature on ACE refers to eight independent curriculum reviews. Frustratingly, given the dearth of quality research on ACE, it appears that some of them have been lost. Even with the help of librarians, I failed to locate several publications cited elsewhere. Carins (2002, 15) describes two:

> Beeke's (1992) examination of the ACE program's curriculum and procedural practice was conducted on behalf of British Columbia's Ministry of Education, Independent Schools Branch. King's (1990) review of the ACE material and program practice was reported as an Executive summary published by the Western Australian College of Advanced Education. While strengths were acknowledged, departure from conventional educational practice prompted perceptions that the ACE program was not, and could not be effective without changes. Some procedural practices and curriculum content were considered to be inconsistent with the educational expectations of the region.

Carins was an employee of ACE's Australian distributor and mentions using ACE to home school her own children, so it is unlikely she is exaggerating these

criticisms. Another ACE advocate (Harding 2007, 17) also cites King's report, saying he "found merit within the ACE program but expressed fears for its 'pupils progressing through to adulthood in the 1990s and beyond'". Neither Carins nor Harding expands on the substance of Beeke's and King's criticisms.

Hunter (1985) refers to two reports I could not obtain, including a 1981 report by the Uniting Church of Australia's Board of Education, which criticised ACE's "'isolationist, behaviorist' approach to learning; the rigidly defined standards of behavior; disciplinary methods; the rejection of secular scholarship; and the claimed ACE monopoly of Christian truth. These were seen to be 'shortcomings (and) serious limitations in the educational effectiveness' of schools using ACE materials and method" (Hunter 1985, 53). He also summarises a 1983 report from the Curriculum Office of the State Department of Education in Queensland:

> The report argued that ACE materials confuse faith with fact, and further, that the ACE program ignores learning principles beyond the most simple acquisition and regurgitation of "knowledge." ACE disregards, the report claimed, any learning content and styles that may interfere with the ACE faith position or with the "military" style training that supports it. The learning principles that ACE, it is claimed, has ignored or overlooked are the inclusion of any teaching-learning method beyond rote memory routines and the substitution instead of one learning methodology only, that of programmed Skinnerian training … In summary the report asserted that ACE programs (of English and Math) are "lacking in all aspects" of the government's curriculum guidelines. These include resource material; knowledge base; skills and abilities base; and learning and teaching methods. (Ibid, 55)

The four surviving curriculum reviews (Alberta Department of Education 1985; Fleming and Hunt 1987; Moser and Mueller 1980; Speck and Prideaux 1993) have similar conclusions. They argue ACE is educationally inadequate, a system of rote learning that lacks opportunities for critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative activities. Speck and Prideaux (1993) add that ACE's individualisation deprives students of group learning and speaking and listening skills, a concern echoed by Elkins (1992, 139). Speck and Prideaux (1993) and

Alberta (1985), writing in Australia and Canada respectively, argue that ACE's US-centrism makes it unsuitable for local educational requirements.

In addition to general charges of educational inadequacy, a number of content criticisms appear in the literature. These mainly focus on ACE's intolerance, sexism, and political bias. Perhaps surprisingly, ACE's science content receives little comment in the literature. Only Speck and Prideaux critique it extensively, arguing that creationism is incompatible with science because "creation science operates on a different definition of what counts as science (and should more correctly be named creation beliefs) and a different 'scientific' method is employed" (1993, 288).

2.1.3 Intolerance

The context for Alberta (1985) was that a private school teacher, Jim Keegstra, was caught having been teaching holocaust denial for 15 years (Bercuson and Wertheimer 1985). In the wake of this scandal, the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding (Ghitter 1984) produced a report on Alberta's private schools. While Keegstra was not an ACE teacher, ACE came under considerable scrutiny because of alleged connections between Keegstra and Stockwell Day, a politician who also operated an ACE school (Laird 1998). The Committee was sufficiently concerned by what it found in ACE, A Beka, and other fundamentalist textbooks that it commissioned a separate investigation.

The Department ultimately concluded PACEs "do not display a systematic lack of tolerance and understanding toward any of the minority groups. Occasional lapses do occur as were noted in social studies where a degree of insensitivity towards blacks, Jews, and Natives was identified. These flaws are insufficient to warrant rejection" (Alberta 1985, 25). They took exception to the PACEs' treatment of mainstream scientists:

> [ACE's elementary-level science] was rated problematic while the junior high science and biology programs were rated as unacceptable. The

unacceptable ratings were given because of the repeated condemnation of those who reject the author's interpretations of the Bible as these pertain to science. Those who challenge the explanations given in PACEs … to historical events and scientific phenomena are described as being "godless", "anti-biblical", "foolish", and "a fake teacher". (Alberta Department of Education 1985, 24)

ACE denied allegations of racism, saying that they would not knowingly associate with schools that discriminated by race (Parsons 1987, 116). Nevertheless, problematic material remained in the PACEs:

> Some of the social studies PACEs contain material about Aboriginal Australians. Advice was sought on this content from Aboriginal Studies Officers of the Education Department of South Australia. They, in turn, consulted teachers and Aboriginal people. Extreme concern was expressed about the inaccuracy of the materials, and it was indicated that such materials were not acceptable to Aboriginal people (Prideaux & Speck, 1989).

> Major deficiencies identified included the promotion of simplistic generalisations about Aborigines, and lack of attention to the richness and diversity of Aboriginal cultures, and the complex social structures, values and beliefs of Aboriginal people. (Speck and Prideaux 1993, 285)

Frances Paterson conducted a comparative review of ACE and two other fundamentalist curricula, and concluded: "To say that the authors … portray Roman Catholicism and non-Western religions in a negative way is to understate the case by several orders of magnitude. All the texts evince a deep hostility to these religions" (2003, 107). Although Paterson notes that the majority of the material is unobjectionable, she finds that where other religions are mentioned the tone is almost always pejorative, and cites PACEs that describe Native Americans as "savages", "primitive pagans", and "worshipers of demons" (p. 159).

Alberta (1985) argues tolerance, understanding, and respect for others require more than the mere avoidance of slights. Critical thinking skills are required for

the development of each of these attitudes. PACEs, they add, "are notably lacking in this respect" (p. 25).

2.1.4 Gender

Wendy Costa points out that in ACE, "women are portrayed only as mothers, grandmothers, and wives (as well as an occasional nurse, teacher, or missionary). In the entire six levels [of PACEs examined], there is not a single story or picture about a courageous woman who contributes to society except in one of the above capacities" (1996, 122). She argues that the gender roles depicted in PACEs are at odds with current realities and do not prepare children for participation in society. Speck and Prideaux (1993) make a similar argument, quoting explicit statements about the necessity for wives to obey their husbands. In Norway, statements of this kind led to some ACE materials being declared in violation of the Equality Act (Skjeie 2005, 97–98). The Norwegian Equality Ombudsman cited PACE activities including:

> Wives will be (sorry, sad, happy) to obey their husbands.
>
> (Wives, cats, dogs) shall obey their husbands.
>
> A wife obeys God when (he, she, it) obeys the husband.

Costa believes that the curriculum merely "ignores" (1996, 122) changes in gender norms since the 1960s, but this is to misunderstand ACE's position. Donald Howard (1989, cited in Davis 1990, 96) lists his opposition to "the women's movement" among five main reasons for starting ACE. Stitzlein (2008, 52) argues that for ACE and similar schools to include antisexist teaching "could possibly strip the religion from central distinctive elements of its identity". Nevertheless, she argues for the state to restrict sexist teaching in private religious schools to prevent harm to their students.

2.1.5 Politics

Parsons (1987, 40) observes that ACE and other curricula for Christian day schools "make no pretence of religious or philosophical neutrality. They are

written from a fundamentalist perspective, with every subject bathed in scriptural interpretation and political conservatism". Where the literature refers to ACE's politics and history education, it is almost always to note bias. Moser and Mueller (1980, 11) contend that ACE's approach to patriotism and politics "borders on propaganda", equating communism and socialism with evil and depicting US free enterprise as ordained by God. Speck and Prideaux find ACE's teaching of substantive values "essentially one-sided and sometimes prejudicial" (1993, 287). Fleming and Hunt (1987, 522) argue that PACEs at times "appear to distort the truth to fit a particular political/ religious belief", and that PACE authors display "an almost paranoid fear of the Communist conspiracy in all aspects of modern life". Paterson (2003, 29) echoes these concerns:

> Shorn of the text that makes them uniquely textbooks … these books become indistinguishable from the literature of the Religious Right. Delete from this mass the statements based on religious faith and what remains is a series of ideological statements that could easily pass for partisan campaign literature.

Rose (1988, 127–129) quotes a selection of PACEs from the school she observed which support these claims, describing Communism as "atheistic, Satanic … an international conspiracy which attempts to destroy the church, the family, and all legitimate governments". Murray (1983, 80) notes ACE's "partisan politics", adding (p. 81) "As early as Year 2 level, one-twelfth of the Social Studies curriculum is devoted to business, free enterprise, capitalism and profit making". Elkins (1992, 136) argues that while the ten elementary-level PACEs she reviewed did not contain propaganda, they did "present a simplistic, narrowly interpreted perspective colored by Dr. Howard's philosophy".

2.1.6 Empirical research

Existing curriculum reviews sometimes assume that the PACEs represent the entirety of the education provided by ACE schools, whereas in reality schools

have used the materials to varying extents (Walford 1995, 22). There are a limited number of empirical studies of ACE schools.

Rose (1988) conducted an ethnographic study of two Christian schools in New York state, one of which was a Baptist ACE school serving a working class community. Besides acts of worship, Rose describes little in the way of enrichment activities at the school. She did, however, see some strengths to the ACE system, arguing that it was one way for parents who had little say over US public schools to regain some control of their children's education. It also had some benefits for working class, fundamentalist children, who "tend to feel quite comfortable and secure" in the ACE school because "their fundamental beliefs and values are not challenged" and "they may escape much of the humiliation and devaluation that they are likely to experience in the average public school" (p. 205). While acknowledging that her critique might not apply to middle class ACE users, Rose argues that in this working class context, the ACE system functions to produce "diligent, unquestioning workers" (p. 210) well-suited to the demands of corporate society:

> By combining the A.C.E. format with the goals of small fundamentalist congregations, the working-class children have effectively been separated from middle-class, college-bound students … [B]ecause of the nature of the education, A.C.E. students are unlikely to challenge the kind of education they are receiving or to question whether or not they have been "educated." Given their isolation in work stations, they are much less able to produce patterns of "resistance" … Indeed, they may be getting the best preparation possible for the army, the factory, or the automated office. (p. 211)

After a month of observations and informal interviews at three ACE schools in Indiana, Elkins (1992, 220) found that teachers sought to implement their own strategies in addition to ACE's, but they lacked the professional training to execute this, their only qualifications being ACE's supervisor training. They were further restricted by the way ACE "makes most of the teaching decisions" (Ibid).

Elkins' questionnaire data suggested these schools were representative of others in the state.

Elkins also made positive observations. Children at one school "seem happy, loved, confident, and well-adjusted" (p. 173) and at another she "was amazed to see older students being consistently considerate and affectionate toward the younger children" (p. 195). At another school, however, the total enrolment was just five children, and Elkins noted that as a result the children lacked companionship and at lunchtimes there was "minimal conversation" (p. 179).

Costa's (1996) ethnography of an ACE school potentially offers a different perspective because all the students and staff were African American. Disappointingly, Costa provides only a brief, thin description of the school's activities, and she does not support her conclusions with evidence from her observations. Consequently, evaluating her findings is somewhat difficult. She claims that "Despite the 'teacherless' curriculum, the principal and most of the monitors and supervisors were born teachers who in fact taught the students a great deal" (p. 113). Descriptions of what is taught and how are not given.

Costa refers to "the school's emphasis on Black and Hispanic history in the upper grades" (p. 15). Since there is no such emphasis in ACE, this must have come from elsewhere. There is no mention of any supplementary lessons, however, except to say that the supervisor "occasionally supplements the A.C.E. materials with books, music, and posters about Black history" (p. 124). She states "Individual A.C.E. schools, of course, often supplement the PACEs with field trips or other activities", without expanding on what these involve, before adding "it is fair to say that the PACEs are the curriculum" (p. 75). This, combined with her observation that "The spiritual community of the school helps compensate for the lack of intellectual community caused by the absence of class projects or discussions" (p. 111) suggests that provision of music, books, and posters may have been the extent of curriculum enrichment.

The opinions of students are an unfortunate absence in all the ethnographies mentioned so far. Costa and Elkins refer to conversations with students but do not quote from these conversations at all, and Rose does so only very occasionally. Somewhat better in this regard is Twelves (2005), whose study of an 'exemplary' Christian school in Australia includes data from student focus groups and questionnaires from past students. The school Twelves observed had started as an ACE school, but had phased it out almost entirely at secondary level and was reviewing its use with primary students. Although the PACEs still had some supporters in the school, among current students, "There was general satisfaction expressed that the PACE system was being replaced but they were concerned that elements still lingered" (p. 185), and parents' attitude PACEs was also "generally negative" (p. 359). PACEs also attracted more negative than positive comments from former students. The student focus groups, who were either self-selected (secondary) or nominated by teachers (primary), spoke favourably about the school itself, as did parents and staff. Twelves argues that the school is successful in its aims to promote the Christian faith as well as to provide an excellent academic education. Evidence for the former includes the fact that 90% of former students responding to his survey were Born Again; evidence for the latter was students' creditable performance on the Victorian Certificate of Education, a credential awarded to students who complete high school studies. Twelves argues that while both aspects were important, the school deliberately prioritised Christian objectives above the academic (p. 285).

While doctoral literature reviews do not usually include master's and bachelor's dissertations, there are three of particular relevance to the present study: Carins (2002) in Australia, Warburton (2005) in the UK, and Baumgardt (2006) in South Africa. All are employees of ACE's regional offices, and all set out to establish ACE's credibility as preparation for university entrance in their respective countries. This reflects the different priorities of ACE's stakeholders in these countries compared with the USA. While ACE has long published a list of tertiary institutions that have reportedly accepted its graduates (Hunter 1985, 223), it encourages them to attend what it calls "**TRUE** Christian colleges"

(ACE 2012, 24) such as Bob Jones University or Liberty University (founded by Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell). There are few, if any, equivalent institutions in the UK, South Africa, and Australia.

All three studies employed similar methods, with an initial postal survey sent to graduates in each country. This was followed up in each case with qualitative interviews with key informants and, in Warburton's case, a focus group. The similarities do not end there: Baumgardt's dissertation plagiarises Carins' substantially (compare Baumgardt 2006, 3–4, 8; Carins 2002, 2–3, 11).

In Chapter 1, I described how I declined to complete Warburton's (2005) survey. According to the librarian at the University of Northampton, there are no remaining copies of the dissertation. Warburton herself, however, was able to provide me with an incomplete version, which was missing the data presentation and analysis, as well as some of the discussion of findings. Her conclusion, that ACE produces students with "the core values of integrity, patience, determination, trustworthiness and accountability" who "will find themselves in leadership roles", (n.p.) is therefore somewhat difficult to evaluate. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of postal surveys and who was asking the question, all Baumgardt's and Carins' respondents felt ACE had prepared them well for further study, and expressed appreciation for the moral and spiritual education they had received. Both dissertations acknowledge that the absence of responses from those critical of the system is a weakness. In their conclusions, both dissertations, particularly Baumgardt's, somewhat minimise weaknesses in ACE education identified by participants, such as the lack of preparation for written examinations.

2.2 New Christian schools

While there has been no published research on the experiences of British ACE students specifically, there has been some about the experiences of students in the new Christian schools. These surveys have included students from ACE

schools, although their responses are not separately presented. Published studies include surveys of both current and former students.

2.2.1 Current students

There have been three major surveys of students in new Christian schools (Baker 2009; Francis 2005; O'Keeffe 1996). O'Keeffe and Baker both administered the Francis Scale of Attitude Towards Christianity, O'Keeffe to 439 children aged between 8 and 17, in 15 different schools, and Baker to 695 children aged between 13 and 16, in 25 schools. Both surveys found favourable attitudes towards Christianity, although O'Keeffe found consistently higher levels of agreement with pro-biblical statements. Table 2.1 shows responses to identically-worded items from both questionnaires.

Table 2.1: New Christian School Students' Attitudes to Christianity

	% Agree (O'Keeffe 1996)	% Agree (Baker 2009)
I know that Jesus helps me	92	77
God helps me lead a better life	89	74
I know that Jesus is very close to me	87	73

Baker's survey found high levels of Christian belief, acceptance of creationism, personal wellbeing, satisfaction with school, and conservative morality. It found low levels of scientism, acceptance of evolution, and acceptance of homosexuality.

Baker's findings largely replicated those of Francis (2005), who compared the beliefs and values of 13–15 year old boys in the New Christian Schools with those of boys attending non-religious schools. He found that the Christian belief, creationism, sense of personal wellbeing, and conservative morality were significantly higher among the Christian school boys.

Table 2.2 Boys in New Christian Schools vs non-denominational (adapted from Francis 2005)

	Christian %	Non-denom %	P<
I believe that Jesus really rose from the dead	89	28	.001
I believe that God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh	82	19	.001
Homosexuality is wrong	70	21	.001
I am worried about being bullied at school	23	31	.05
I like the people I go to school with	83	92	.001

A later study (Francis, Penny, and Baker 2012), comparing Baker's (2009) more thorough data with students from Anglican and non-denominational state maintained schools, did not find such strong evidence of increased personal wellbeing for the new Christian school students. The Christian school students were more likely to agree that their life had a sense of purpose and that they were happy at school, but also more likely to agree 'I often long for someone to turn to for advice'. There were no significant differences between Christian and nondenominational students' responses to the statements 'I find life really worth living', 'I feel I am not much worth as a person', 'I often feel depressed', and 'I have sometimes considered taking my own life'. Christian school students reported higher levels of environmental concern, and were less likely to agree that immigration should be restricted (43% vs 48%) or that there are too many foreign people in this country (38% vs 51%). The Christian school students again reported lower levels of worry about bullying and much higher levels of Christian belief.

A difficulty with all the research mentioned so far is that it has not been able to determine how much of the students' beliefs and values are influenced by their schooling rather than other demographic factors. Francis, ap Siôn, and Village (2014) sought to disentangle these variables. Among the controlled variables were the students' sex, self-reported church attendance, and personal prayer, as well as parents' employment and social class. The study did not control for

parents' religious affiliation or observance, however, which makes for imperfect conclusions.

The study found that the new Christian schools appeared to exert an influence on their students' beliefs and values beyond what is explained by these other demographic factors. The authors argue that attendance at new Christian schools contributes to "higher self-esteem, greater rejection of drug use, lower endorsing of illegal behaviors, lower racism, higher levels of conservative Christian belief, and more conservative views on sexual morality (abortion, contraception, divorce, homosexuality, and sex outside marriage)" (Francis, ap Siôn, and Village 2014, 30). In the cases of self-esteem and racism, the effect was no longer statistically significant once demographic factors (particularly personal religiosity) were taken into account. The authors argue that this personal religiosity is nurtured by the schools, however.

2.2.2 Former students

Sylvia Baker conducted a qualitative postal survey of students who graduated from 11 new Christian schools between 1986 and 2003. Responses from 106 men (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2007) and 135 women (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2009) were analysed separately. Although it is unclear how many, some former ACE students did respond. It is noted that one woman and "some" men "criticised Christian teaching materials from the USA" (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2007, 8; ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2009, 227), which probably refers to PACEs. Overall the responses were very positive. Large majorities said they enjoyed their time in the school, felt well prepared for the next stage of life, and were currently practising Christians. A smaller majority (60%) said they did not feel overprotected by their schools.

Although the responses from males and females were published separately, the themes described in each are similar. Both men and women made favourable comments about the small class sizes and resulting individual attention. They

expressed appreciation for the Christian nurture and moral instruction received, and some specifically argued that belief was not coerced. They favourably described acts of collective worship, such as one woman who referred to speaking in tongues for the first time at the school, adding: "Best memories—... assemblies—every now and then God's presence would really show up and lessons would be scrapped" (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2009, 231).

Other favourable comments described the atmosphere typical of a close community—the authors note that words such as 'family', 'homely', 'friendly', 'happy', 'loving', 'safe' and 'caring' featured prominently in responses from both men and women (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2007, 10; ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2009, 232). Some commented that they appreciated being sheltered from the outside world.

Negative comments raised about the education provided included a lack of teachers with subject expertise. Men expressed the view that the Christian ethos was used to excuse inferior teaching, or preaching instead of teaching. Both men and women referred to the restricted number of subjects available, and women described inadequate facilities and resources. Some men and women described the religious aspect of their schooling as coercive, and said this had pushed them away from faith.

The most consistent area of complaint was over the sheltered environment. Respondents mentioned being unprepared to deal with issues such as drugs and sex, and having little idea what the world outside the school was like. They also criticised the stance on relationships with non-Christians, or even the wrong kinds of Christian. A male suggested that non-Christians did not fit in to the 'family' atmosphere, while a female said "Quite often I would go home and burst into tears as a result of my fellow pupils (and even teachers!) ridiculing candles, altars, the role of Mary, wearing robes, saying set prayers etc" (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2009, 233). There were criticisms of restrictions on television and music listening at some schools, and one woman commented: "I wasn't

prepared for the concept that my friends would go out, get drunk, smoke pot, have sex yet still be nice people who weren't totally depraved with no sense of right and wrong" (Ibid, 240).

There are some limitations to these data. The analyses refer specifically to 'graduates', meaning that those who, like me, left the schools early were not included. Baker describes the way participants were recruited thus: "I sent out questionnaires to as many former pupils as I could track down" (Baker and Freeman 2005, 17). Those with negative experiences are unlikely to notify their former schools of changes of address. Baker is a senior figure in the Christian Schools Trust, the largest association of New Christian Schools. It is possible that her position might have discouraged those with negative experiences from responding, just as I declined to participate in Anne Warburton's research because of her affiliation with CEE (see Chapter 1). It is therefore plausible that those with critical views of their schooling were underrepresented in the survey.

2.3 Indoctrination

The academic literature rarely applies the term 'indoctrination' to ACE, but interestingly the instances I found were all from self-described evangelical Christians. Brian Hill contends "ACE stands in direct line of succession to those who sought, by emotional manipulation, to obtain decisions for Christ which by-pass the individual's rational autonomy" (1990, 130). He later expressed agreement with what he says is the view of many secular and Christian educators, that ACE is "indoctrinative rather than educative", before concluding: "educational and biblical grounds come together in outlawing the way these materials set out to manipulate young persons" (1993, 254–255). Similarly, Elmer Thiessen, writing specifically to defend Christian schools against the charge of indoctrination, concedes that ACE appears to be "weak in fostering growth toward rational autonomy and hence should be charged with a degree of indoctrination" (Thiessen 1993, 262).

Most interesting is the perspective of Meredith Murray, author of the only first-person account in the academic literature of studying in an ACE learning centre. Murray, a classroom teacher from Australia, completed ACE's supervisor training as part of her research. This five-day course is delivered in the same way as all ACE education: aspiring supervisors silently complete PACEs in 'offices', before marking their own work from score keys. Murray recalls:

> As the days dragged by I found myself able to answer the questions on the test at mastery level. It frightened me the unthinking way I was acquiring knowledge and disgorging the answers automatically when triggered by key words and phrases. It almost seemed as if the information was going in without being filtered, in a dispassionate mechanical way. In my opinion I was being indoctrinated. (Murray 1983, 52)

While these are the only pejorative instances of the word 'indoctrination' in the ACE literature, other scholars have made related claims. Speck and Prideaux argue ACE exists "solely for the maintenance of religious conversion" (1993, 292). After an ethnographic study of an ACE school, Susan Rose observed:

> The intent of those using A.C.E. materials is to control the thoughts and articulations of students and to censor the kinds of information they are exposed to … Rather than expose students to all sorts of ideas and teach them to analyze their validity and weigh their merits, they prefer to censor the curriculum strictly and protect their children from conflicting, confusing thoughts. The irony is that by purifying the curriculum, they are also simplifying the curriculum in ways that may make it harder for their children to be able to question and evaluate ideas that they are exposed to later on. (Rose 1988, 179)

For some of ACE's supporters, indoctrination is apparently a good thing. Twelves (2005, 260) quotes a parent saying "I appreciate those PACEs, I really do. I think they get positively brainwashed with 'God made heaven and earth'". Elkins (1992, 16) also describes "indoctrinating students to Christian tenets" apparently without intending any pejorative connotations.

46

The new Christian schools more widely strenuously deny indoctrinating students. They argue instead that the lack of Christian teaching in mainstream schools is 'indoctrination by omission' (Baker 2009, 26; Twelves 2005, 19, 51). Baker cites Copley (2005) in defence of this view, although a fuller reading of his book reveals that Copley argues for better education about religions, rather than new Christian school-style discipleship. The new Christian schools deny that religiously neutral education is possible (O'Keeffe 1992), although interestingly Baker (2009, 75) accepts that schools may take a neutral position on the issue of creationism. It is unclear why it is possible to be neutral on this specific doctrine but not on others.

Long (1996) argues that Australia's 'themelic' schools (his own term for the New Christian Schools) are founded on the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, and that this "militates against the possibility of open-mindedness", resulting in a position that is "closed, singular, and anti-educational" (pp. 341-342). ACE and similar systems "leave no concept of doubt" in the child's learning (p. 256), and consequently cannot allow critical thinking in those areas. This, he argues, results in advocates engaging in 'double-speak' about 'protecting' children from non-Christian influences on the one hand, and 'preparing' them for life lived in the world on the other. Because inerrancy is a non-negotiable doctrine and the foundation of truth, there is no need to explore alternative views openly. Because students never experience any real challenge to their basic assumptions or their families' values, indoctrination is "a very real danger" (p. 416).

The philosophical literature on indoctrination is large, and cannot be fully addressed here. This review has considered the literature on indoctrination as it applies directly to ACE and the New Christian Schools. Indoctrination more generally is discussed in Chapter 5.

2.4 Research questions

The literature on ACE is thin and mostly old. Further study needs to establish how much ACE has changed in order to determine how relevant the literature is. Chapter 3 is dedicated to this question, and shows that ACE has changed little since the 1970s.

From the literature review, it is evident that any research which focuses narrowly on the content of the PACE materials alone will be insufficient. Numerous reviews of the PACEs have already been conducted, and they all conclude that they are inadequate. ACE's defenders argue that it is unfair to examine the PACEs alone, because in practice schools supplement them in various ways. Research should therefore look at the curriculum 'in the round', considering all aspects of an ACE schooling.

Most research to date neglects to consider the experiences of students in the schools. Even in ethnographies of ACE schools, students' voices are rarely heard. I do not think any fair evaluation of the system can ignore the views of those who have experienced it first-hand.

ACE maintains that "education is life" (ACE 2011, 1). The system claims not to teach only the mind, but to prepare the whole person for life. Students are better placed to consider whether ACE has helped them in this regard once they have several years' experience of life after school. I am therefore interested in ACE's effects on students' subsequent lives, investigated through their own accounts.

My research questions are:

What is it like to attend an ACE school?
How do former ACE students perceive the quality of their education?
What effects has ACE had on students' subsequent lives?

Chapter 3 Changes to ACE

Most academic research on ACE is now more than 20 years old. It is reasonable to ask how relevant the conclusions of such research are to current ACE schools. Before proceeding with my research questions, it is useful to assess how much ACE has changed, and therefore to what extent old information about ACE can be used as a basis for new research.

In order to do this, I compared recently purchased PACEs with old ones. Obtaining old PACEs for this research was difficult. ACE discourages their reuse, and students are not allowed to keep completed PACEs (ACE 1998, 35). PACEs are not held at legal deposit libraries such as the British Library. A further difficulty is that PACEs are revised only occasionally. At the time of writing, a number of the high school science PACEs had not been revised since 1994; many world history and Bible PACEs had not been revised since the 1970s. Given ACE's respect for tradition and claims to be founded on the 'unchanging standards' of the Bible, this is somewhat unsurprising. *Basic History of Civilization 20*[7] (p. 6) states ACE's rejection of human change emphatically: "The factor in history that is always changing is man's environment. The factor that is always the same is *man himself*. Man has not changed in his anatomy … his physiology … his psychology … [or] his sociology". This may explain why the PACEs change little. Humanity does not change, so educational materials need not change. A further reason for infrequent updates is the expense; an ACE official claimed each PACE cost $24,000 to develop, describing this as "prohibitive" (Davis 1990, 107).

I found some used PACEs for sale online, and I was sent several more by readers of my blog. This somewhat uneven selection formed the basis for comparisons

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[7]   PACEs are referred to by italicised titles throughout the thesis. A full list of PACEs reviewed is found in Appendix 5.

in this chapter. Science and social studies PACEs from number 1085 upwards are split into two parts: the PACE text contains only reading material, and a pullout 'Activity Pac' has activities for the student to complete (ACE 2010a, 42). The student is allowed to retain the PACE text, but not the Activity Pac. Because of this, I was able to obtain some old PACE texts, without the accompanying Activity Pacs. The comparisons that follow of science and social studies PACEs numbered between 1085 and 1109 are therefore based only on the PACE text.

I completed two kinds of comparison: those between revisions within a single edition of a PACE, and those between third and fourth editions of a PACE. ACE releases new editions gradually. The first third edition PACEs came out in 1978, but third edition PACEs were not available in all subjects until 1999 (ACE 2010b). The earliest fourth edition PACEs were released in 2005 (ACE 2010b). At the time of writing, fourth edition PACEs are available for the first six levels[8] of science and social studies, plus a limited selection of "Word Building" (spelling), mathematics, and "Bible Reading". Eight science and 10 social studies PACEs in both third and fourth editions were obtained for comparison. ACE notes on its website (ACE 2016a) that new Word Building PACEs are compatible with previous edition score keys (answer books), indicating that the content of these cannot have changed substantially.

I also compared various staff training PACEs[9], and three editions of ACE's *Procedures Manual* (1987, 1998, and 2010). I found that ACE's furniture, learning centre rules, and staff procedures were consistent across the decades, with only one major change (see section 3.4). The current rules are also consistent with those Hunter (1985) quotes from a 1970s edition of the manual. Of the staff training PACEs, the text for *Parents* (which is for training staff to

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[8]   Since students complete PACEs at their own speed, ACE is ungraded, but PACE 'levels' correspond to US school grades.
[9]   Although designed for supervisors and monitors, it is common for senior students to complete these training PACEs so that they can assist staff in the learning centre.

handle parents, not for familiarising parents with ACE) is unchanged between the 1998 and 2011 versions. Another training PACE, *The Secret of Leadership*, is attributed to Donald Howard in the 1996 version. He left ACE after a divorce in 1998; his ex-wife is now ACE's president. The rewritten (2009) version omits Howard's name but conveys substantially the same ideas. Two more of Howard's PACEs, *Wisdom: A Philosophy for Educational Reform* Parts 1 and 2 (1995) have been condensed into one (*Wisdom,* 2011/2008), again removing his name. ACE's training for supervisors, and the rules staff are expected to implement, have changed little over time.

3.1 Third edition comparisons

Each PACE's contents page gives the dates of first copyright and of the most recent revision (though not of previous revisions). I compared 38 revised third edition PACEs with earlier versions. The changes were sufficiently few and minor that I was able to count the total number of words changed in each case.

Because no digital versions of these PACEs are available, I performed comparisons manually. Where two sections differed, I digitally scanned both pages, copying and pasting the text into a comparison tool at www.text-compare.com. This tool highlights all differences between two blocks of text, facilitating accurate counts. The '# words different' column in Table 3.1 (and subsequent tables) is the sum of all words from the previous version that do not appear in the revision, plus all the new words in the revision. If one word directly replaced another, I counted it as a difference of two words.

Although I double-checked the counts, the comparisons were done by eye and so it is possible some errors remain. Nevertheless, the differences between PACE revisions are shown to be generally minimal, and this conclusion would not be threatened if some numbers were found to be slight underestimates.

The newer versions of PACEs were purchased between 2012 and 2014, and were current at the time of purchase. Looking at the dates of the latest revisions in each table underscores how infrequently PACEs are changed. Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 compare older and newer PACEs for science, social studies, and English PACEs respectively. Where no words were changed between revisions, in most cases the only change was a new front cover.

Table 3.1. Science PACE changes between revisions.

PACE	First copyright	Earlier version	Latest revision	# words different
1088	1986	1986	1998	30
1089	1986	1995	2002	5
1090	1986	1992	1998	0
1091	1986	1992	2007	32
1092	1986	1986	1998	0
1093	1986	1996	2007	7
1094	1986	1986	2006	0
1095	1986	1994	2000	2
1096	1986	1994	2002	11
1097	1989	1989	1998	0
1098	1989	1997	2001	19
1099 (USA version)	1989	1995	2001	74
1104	1989	1997	1998	1
1105	1989	1995	2000	0
1106	1989	1994	2006	0
1107	1989	1996	2001	130
1109	1992	1996	1998	0

Table 3.2 Social Studies PACEs changes between revisions.

PACE	First copyright	Earlier Version	Latest revision	#words different
1086	1990	1990	1998	223
1094	1990	1990	1998	0
1095	1990	1992	1999	0
1097	1994	1997	1999	0
1099	1994	1996	2006	35
1101	1994	1994	2005	0
1104	1994	1994	2004	24
1106	1994	1994	2002	70
1108	1994	1994	2002	30

Table 3.3 English PACE changes between revisions

PACE	First copyright	Earlier version	Latest revision	# words different
1061	1982	1982	2005	25
1062	1982	2001	2009	1
1067	1982	1982	2006	116
1069	1982	1982	2002	25
1070	1982	1982	2005	6
1071	1982	1995	2005	25
1074	1983	1983	1996	8
1075	1983	1996	2006	0
1076	1983	1983	2002	28
1077	1983	1983	2001	33
1078	1983	1983	2009	35
1080	1983	1983	1996	20
1108	1987	1996	2013	107

For reference, I digitally scanned some entire PACEs and copied the text into Microsoft Word to conduct a word count (Table 3.4). Because the OCR software is not 100% accurate, these lengths are approximations.

Table 3.4 Lengths of PACEs

PACE	Approx. word count
Science 1088	10,749
Science 1102	13,775
Science 1107	13,147
Social Studies 1086	14,240
Social Studies 1104	14,423
Social Studies 1106	14,971
English 1108	12,977

In every case except *Social Studies 1086* (discussed in section 3.3), the total number of words changed was less than 1% of the total. Identifying the differences between PACEs was in most cases easy. For all the PACEs first printed in 1992 or before, ACE has used a different font for changes in subsequent revisions. In these PACEs, I did not find a single instance of a variation in the text without an accompanying change of font (although often the font was changed for a large section of text even when only one or two words differed). This means that by looking for the new font, it is possible to estimate the number of changes to the text in current PACEs even without older

versions for comparison. Since this new font appears only occasionally, it is reasonable to assume that the changes observed in tables 3.1-3.3 are representative of revisions to other third edition PACEs. Even when they are revised, these PACEs change little.

Most of the changes are uninteresting, usually for spelling and grammar or factual corrections. Many of the changes to English PACEs are to purge them of the word 'Christian'. Where this referred to a person, it is changed to 'believer'; where it was an adjective, it becomes 'Godly' or 'Biblical'. I can only speculate why. My best guess is that 'Christian' was deemed insufficiently precise, as it also refers to numerous people who are not truly 'saved' according to ACE's theology.

One interesting change is to *Science 1089*, which originally described a cactus "more than 4,500 years old" (p. 28). The 2002 revision changes this to "several thousand years old". It seems relevant that a cactus aged more than 4,500 years would, according to young-Earth creationist timelines, have to have survived a year underwater during Noah's Flood. A larger change is to Science 1107 (130 words). The reason for this is a discussion of cloning. In the revised version, a paragraph is added about Dolly the sheep, the world's first cloned mammal. Perhaps surprisingly, given ACE's conservative stance, the text discusses cloning favourably.

3.2 Fourth edition comparisons

Changes between third and fourth editions of the same PACE are harder to quantify than revisions to third edition PACEs. Although parts of the third edition text have been retained verbatim, much of the text is rewritten for the fourth edition. I compared third and fourth editions of 18 PACEs: four 2nd level science PACEs, eight 4th level social studies and science PACEs, and six 7th level social science PACEs. The selection is opportunistic, based on what obsolete PACEs were available online.

54

3.2.1 Second level

The 2nd level PACEs are almost unchanged between editions. Each PACE is 31 pages long. Of 124 pages examined, 58 are identical in both editions, and a further seven differ by exactly one word. Most significantly, all of the contents pages, which contain the aims and objectives, are identical. Of 100 activities on the summative 'PACE tests', 83 are identical, and eight of those that differ do so by just one word. Frequently, changes in the text are merely grammatical. This is one of the larger changes between editions:

> The fish cannot always hear sounds, but God helps them. God helps them to feel inside their bodies the sounds that are made. (*Science 1017*, 1979, 15)

> Fish are able to hear because sounds travel to them through water. God gave fish a way to hear sounds in the water. Fish can hear the sound of my footsteps and quickly swim away. God helps fish hear and feel sounds in the water. (*Science 1017*, 2010, 15)

3.2.2 Fourth level

In the reviewed 4th level PACEs, more of the text is revised, but once more the content is not substantially altered; again all of the contents pages are identical. Where the text does vary noticeably, it remains on the same topic. For example, the third edition *Science 1047* (p. 7) describes Noah's Ark as equivalent in size to 522 'railroad boxcars'. The same page of the fourth edition instead says the Ark "had much more room than a soccer field".

3.2.3 Seventh level

The 7th level social studies PACEs vary more between editions. These career education PACEs are intended to help students choose and prepare for the 'ministry' God has for them. The third edition, released in 1984, discussed 55

careers; the fourth edition covers 70, of which 28 are common to both. Where a career is carried over from the earlier version, parts of the text are copied verbatim, and other parts vary the language while retaining essentially the same meaning. The range of science careers is expanded, with a lengthy warning to "remember that the Bible alone is the final authority on truth" (*Social Studies 1078,* 4) common to both editions.

Emphasis on 'correct' economic and political principles, and the importance of capitalism and free enterprise, is prevalent throughout. These sections are substantially unchanged from the third edition, although a section on whether women should have jobs has been removed, which read in part:

> God designed woman's first ministry to be in the home. Often, however, God does call a woman to a ministry outside the home when she can still be the right kind of supporter to her husband in caring for the family needs. (*Social Studies 1073*, 1998/1984, 13)

This is not indicative of a general move towards gender equality, however. The section on 'homemaking', aimed exclusively at girls, has been expanded from four to six pages, adding a new subheading for 'mothers' (*Social Studies 1076*, 7–12), and making clear "The wife is to obey, respect, and submit to the leadership of her husband, serving as a helper to him" (Ibid, 8). Speck and Prideaux (1993, 287) criticise *Social Studies 1029* for teaching that the husband is the head of the home. The passage they quote is unchanged in the fourth edition (2012/2010).

3.2.4 Cartoons

ACE aims to instil "Godly character" in students through comic strips (Figure 3.1) which appear at regular intervals (ACE 2010a, 8). These have undergone one major development in the new PACEs with the addition of a new community: Heartsville (*Social Studies 1029*, 7). This joins Highland and Harmony, each of

which has its own eponymous church-school. All of the students and staff depicted in Highland are white, and all of those in Harmony are black. The ethnicity of those in Heartsville appears to be a mixture of Asian and Hispanic (ACE 2010a, 20–23; ACE 2012, 146–150).
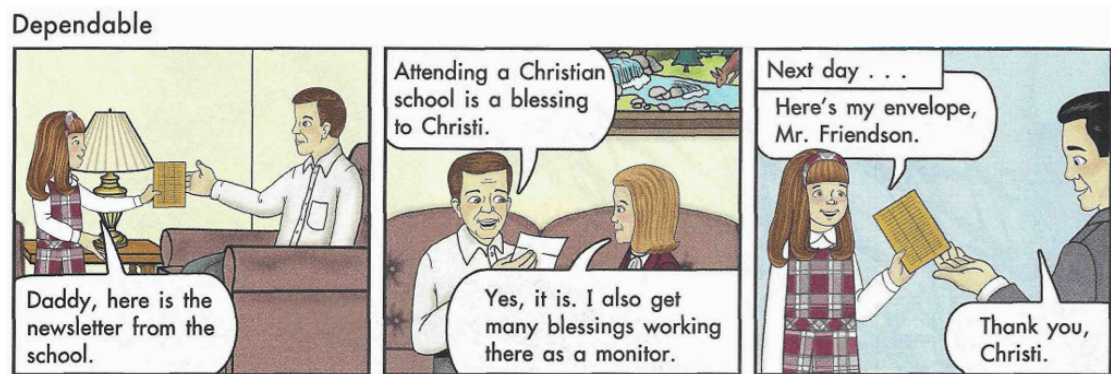
Figure 3.1 ACE 'character strip'

There are 65 'character strips' of two or more frames in the 18 fourth edition PACEs reviewed. Of these, 60 depict the same characters in the same situations as the third edition; 61 have identical dialogue as well. Of the five that feature different characters, three have replaced Highland characters with those from Heartsville (these being the only cartoons to include the new characters). The other two are more interesting. In *Science 1021* (2010, 6, 23) two scenes taking place at Highland Christian Academy now include the Harmony characters Miriam Peace and J. Michael Kindhart, although neither one speaks. These black characters are not present in the otherwise similar third edition versions (2005/1979). This may be a welcome move towards equal ethnic representation in the PACEs. If it is, however, it is unclear why ACE would not take the opportunity to remove the segregated communities from its storylines, or why so few cartoons show characters of different ethnicities interacting.

There are, however, signs of a shift to improve the diversity shown in other pictures in the PACEs. In a number of cases, white children shown in the third edition are replaced by pictures of children of other ethnicities in the fourth edition, and in one case a boy is replaced by a girl. This suggests that ACE is

somewhat aware of the ethnocentrism of the third edition, raising the question of why the changes are so few. Of 65 cartoons reviewed, only six depict characters of different ethnicities mixing.

3.2.5 Pedagogy

Moser and Mueller (1980) note that filling-in-the-blank was almost the sole means of testing learning in the PACEs. Speck and Prideaux (1993, 286) complain that distractors on ACE multiple choice items are frequently meaningless, citing as an example the activity "Jesus died on [the] (cross, toss, chrome)" (Speck and Prideaux 1993, 286). Previews of fourth edition PACEs on ACE's website show an updated version asking the same question, with the options now being "toss, moss, cross" (ACE 2016b).

In the fourth edition, most PACE activities are still fill-in-the-blank, with multiple choice items accounting for nearly all of the remainder. Some activities which were multiple choice in the third edition are now fill-in-the-blank, and this is the extent of the progression. In the 4th level PACEs, distractors on multiple choice items have been changed from the third edition, but still are frequently absurd:

> The guitar shop is in the old business district.
>
> District means (a) a part of a city (b) Pharaoh's robe (c) a tree
>
> (*Social Studies 1045*, 3)
>
> Mr. Carl Linnaeus studied plants and animals.
>
> Carl Linnaeus was (a) a job (b) a platypus (c) a scientist
>
> (*Science 1048*, 25)

While the present sample is small and statistically nonrandom, the uniformity of PACEs reviewed suggests that a larger study would produce similar findings. Contrary to the general trend, I found three instances where ACE's position has

shifted substantially. The changes concern apartheid, corporal punishment, and the Loch Ness monster.

3.3 Apartheid

Social Studies 1086 (1990, 29) states:

> The government must be responsible to the taxpayers who provide the money that the government spends. Since that is true, only taxpayers should be given the privilege of voting …

> The apartheid policy of South Africa is a modern example of this principle. Under the apartheid system, the population of five million Whites controls most of the nation's wealth. If apartheid were done away with, the twenty million Blacks, who are not taxpayers, would be given the privilege of voting. Within a short period of time they would control the government and the means of taxation. "The power to tax is the power to destroy." Heavy taxation could become a burden to the property owners who actually finance the government and provide jobs. Economics is the major reason that apartheid exists. Some people want to abolish apartheid immediately. That action would certainly alter the situation in South Africa, but would not improve it.

Dent (1993) cites a different PACE containing a similar defence of apartheid. He quoted ACE's spokesperson denying that the quotation was racist:

> Ron Johnson, an ACE vice president, said he doesn't consider the passage … to be racist, but in a statement he referred to South Africa as "the best example of an industrialised African nation," and added, "It's not for us to say if apartheid is the consequence, the result or the cause of so much physical abuse of human beings in South Africa."

Dent's article does, however, quote the views of a black student, Priscila Dickerson, who said "I couldn't believe it … It was so racist". Dent also quotes her school principal, who said "Racism still exists, and that's one advantage of using a curriculum like this because we can show students that". The article appeared in the *New York Times*, and was syndicated by the New York Times News Service.

According to its own timeline (ACE 2010b), ACE opened its first schools in Africa in 1983, so it's unlikely that the shift of ACE's position was related to international expansion. When the PACEs were written, ACE's position on apartheid was consistent with that of some other Christian Right commentators. Pat Robertson supported the white regime on economic 'freedom' grounds and because he considered Mandela's "Communist" ANC to be a greater threat (*New York Times* 1988); Jerry Falwell, while branding apartheid "an atrocity", expressed similar views (Falwell 2014).

In the 1998 revision of *Social Studies 1086*, there is a change of tone:

> Since "the power to tax is the power to destroy," white South Africans attempted to create a system that would protect their interests from a nontaxpaying majority. Under apartheid, the economic system in South Africa was controlled by the minority population of whites who, therefore, controlled most of the nation's wealth. Apartheid was excused for several decades because of the advanced industrialization of the nation. However, due to the carnal nature of man, apartheid was also used to exploit the nonvoting black majority. God's Word teaches that no people should ever be wrongfully treated because of their race, since all people are created in God's image. Apartheid was abolished in 1991 and a new government established that provides for equal representation by all races. (p. 29)

The new text still plays down the atrocities committed under apartheid. It might be inferred that it would be possible for apartheid not to "exploit the nonvoting black majority" were it not for the "carnal nature of man", as though were it not for sinfulness an idealised form of apartheid could exist in which races were separate but not exploited. Nevertheless, the revision shows an uncharacteristic reconfiguring of ACE's position. The latest edition of *Social Studies 108* is even clearer, stating apartheid "was wrong" (p. 50).

Given such a marked change in opinions, we might expect to find a transitional fossil between the 1990 endorsement of apartheid and the 1998 rejection. *Social Studies 1099* (1994, 27) does not defend the policy so vigorously as some

earlier PACEs, but does suggest apartheid was beneficial insofar as it "made it possible for each group to maintain and pass on their culture and heritage to their children". This passage is retained in the 2006 revision of the PACE.

3.4 Corporal punishment

From the curriculum's inception, corporal punishment was integral to the system of rewards and punishments built into the program (Hunter 1985, 181). It would be an exaggeration to call spanking central to ACE, but it was certainly one of its distinctive features. In books promoting the curriculum, Johnson (1980) and Dennett (1988) each devote an entire chapter to the subject. A 1980s staff training PACE includes activities about spanking on 12 of its 17 pages (*Discipline: Training PACE 3*, 1981). ACE's insistence on spanking drew attention from the media (Evans 1995; Todd 1984) and academics (Hunter 1987, cited in Speck and Prideaux 1993). Hunter (1985, 181) quotes the 1979 ACE *Procedures Manual* as saying "To rule out spanking is to omit a key ingredient in discipline!". The 1998 revision (ACE 1998, 117) features the same sentence without the exclamation mark. It is perhaps unexpected, then, to find in the 2010 edition what at first appears to be a U-turn: "Corporal discipline should never be used in school" (ACE 2010a, 52).

The 1987 and 1998 revisions of the *Procedures Manual* each feature three pages of instruction on correct corporal punishment procedures. This includes two forms for parents to sign, the first giving the school permission for the school to administer "correction", and the second being a "corporal correction report", informing parents of the infraction, the number of strokes administered, and other relevant details. There are also photographs depicting the punishment, and instructions for supervisors (ACE 1998, 117–118).

In 1998, the School Standards and Framework Act banned corporal punishment in British private schools. CEE responded by holding a protest rally in London at which the lead speakers were Gary and Marie Ezzo (BBC 1999), who advocated

spanking children up to five times a day from the age of 18 months. Several members of the Christian Schools' Trust, an evangelical association which at that time counted some ACE schools among its membership, responded with a lawsuit which ultimately lost on appeal in both the European Court of Human Rights and the House of Lords (*Regina v. Secretary of State for Education and Employment and Others (Respondents) Ex Parte Williamson (Appellant) and Others* 2005) (for a discussion of this from a supporter, see Baker (2009)). The right to spank was seen as a point of principle for these schools. They believed the Bible told them to spank their children. To deny them the right to spank was therefore to deny them the right to practise their religion.

The school I attended responded to the new law by changing its policy: parents now had to commit to administering corporal punishment themselves when the school deemed it necessary. This solution has been tried in a number of other places. In 2007, Drury Christian School in New Zealand was reported to be using this procedure as a way around the law against school punishment (One News 2007). This loophole was closed in the same year (*Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act 2007* 2007), but the school's website still describes its use of both ACE and corporal punishment (Drury Church 2016).

The handbook for Emmanuel Christian School in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa reads:

> **BIBLICAL CORRECTION PROCEDURES**
>
> With regard to recent changes in the South African Schools Act of 1996 that corporal punishment be prohibited in schools, it will necessitate us requesting that when corporal punishment is necessary, the parents (preferably the FATHER) will need to administer the paddling himself at home. (Emmanuel Private School 2014)

Similar policies appeared on the website of Grace Christian School in Dundalk, Ireland, in 2007 ("Prospectus" 2007), and in the 2011–2012 prospectus for the Branch Christian School, Yorkshire (Branch Christian School 2012).

CEE still promotes and distributes the full range of *Growing Families International* child-raising manuals by Gary and Marie Ezzo from its website (CEE 2016). Some of the PACEs themselves explicitly endorse corporal punishment. *Social Studies 1086* (1998/1990, 31) teaches, in a section about the founding of America, that the Biblical use of the rod was an integral part of life in the colonies. The text links the success of America with these and other "Biblical principles" on which it was founded. ACE's recent disavowal of corporal punishment in schools is more likely to be a pragmatic measure than a renunciation of their convictions. Further evidence that this is the case comes from a careful reading of the 2010 *Procedures Manual:*

> Carefully fit the correction to the offense … More serious offenses, such as a moral violation, require the intervention of the principal or pastor/administrator who, together with the parents, determines whether more serious disciplinary measures are necessary. The Book of Proverbs provides excellent guidelines: …
>
> Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. Proverbs 19:18
>
> The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Proverbs 29:15 (ACE 2010a, 100)

These are the same verses used to justify corporal punishment in the 1998 edition. The reference to "a moral violation" is reminiscent of this sentence from the earlier manual: "Demerits are for procedural violations; the paddle is for moral violations" (ACE 1998, 117).

It seems the new wording is designed to comply with the letter of the law. Although corporal punishment remains legal in private schools in most US states, between 1999 and 2010 anti-corporal punishment laws were passed or legal challenges to bans rejected in a number of countries. In addition to existing bans in the UK, South Africa and New Zealand, corporal punishment was prohibited in the Australian states of Australian Capital Territory and

Victoria (2004 and 2006, respectively), in Canada (2004) and Kenya (2010) (End Corporal Punishment 2016). It is unclear when ACE changed its policy; the 2010 manual lists previous editions in 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2007, none of which I could obtain. It is clear, however, that corporal punishment was prohibited in the majority of ACE's largest international markets by 2005. ACE schools are contractually obliged to follow the *Procedures Manual*. It could be difficult for a school following the 1998 edition to persuade school inspectors that they were complying with the law on corporal punishment. The wording of the 2010 edition, then, seems to be a pragmatic change.

3.5 Nessie

As discussed in Chapter 1, ACE received adverse press coverage in 2009 and 2012 for the content of *Science 1099* (29–30):

> Are dinosaurs still alive today? With some recent photographs and testimonies of those who claimed to have seen one, scientists are becoming more convinced of their existence …

> Have you heard of the 'Loch Ness Monster' in Scotland? 'Nessie,' for short, has been recorded on sonar from a small submarine, described by eyewitnesses, and photographed by others. Nessie appears to be a plesiosaur.

Following this media attention, ACE's Australian distributor, Southern Cross Educational Enterprises, released its own version of *Science 1099* (2013). Retailers in the USA continued to sell the Nessie-inclusive version, and ACE's American office told me (telephone communication, July 24, 2013) that the PACE had not been revised. Region-specific PACEs are not unheard of; ACE makes provision for regional distributors to produce local editions of PACEs where the originals have US-specific content (ACE 2010a, 39, 45). I can find no previous record, however, of a region-specific science PACE. CEE now supplies the Nessie-free Australian version to UK students.

ACE in Australia and the UK had more to fear from the Nessie coverage, because it damaged the credibility of their alternative high school graduation certificate, the ICCE. The ICCE is a concerted effort to make ACE a recognised path to university entrance, and its prime movers are Christian Education Europe and Southern Cross Educational Enterprises. ACE in the USA has nothing to do with the ICCE and is little concerned with the views of outsiders, viewing itself as accountable only to its users (Elkins 1992, 235). For its UK and South Pacific distributors, however, ACE's association with Nessie was a liability.

The language of the Australian version is noticeably less strident than the American original. It says "The existence of evidence that could suggest that dinosaurs existed with humans would be an important discovery" (p. 34), a sentiment with which few could argue, while the American original asserts flatly, "That dinosaurs existed with humans is an important discovery disproving the evolutionists' theory that dinosaurs lived 70 million years before man" (p. 29).

The reason for the change appears to be that following criticism in the *Times Education Supplement* (Shaw 2009), UK NARIC removed its endorsement of the ICCE certificate. Brenda Lewis, chair of the ICCE, says that following an investigation, NARIC reinstated its approval of the ICCE, with a disclaimer about ACE's positions on the Loch Ness Monster and apartheid (Lewis 2013b). The revised version of *Science 1099* seems to be written with NARIC's approval in mind; it would not be surprising, therefore, if an ICCE version of *Social Studies 1099*, shorn of apartheid apologism, were also forthcoming.

3.6 Drivers of change

The literature review and my comparisons between old and new PACEs show a company that is strongly resistant to change. Eight independent curriculum reviews and widespread criticism from both Christian and secular educators has had no observable impact on their practice. Elkins' (1992) argument that ACE is

accountable only to its users seems the best explanation for these three exceptions to its general rigidity.

These findings support the use of older studies of ACE as a basis for further research. It seems the curriculum materials reviewed by Speck and Prideaux (1993) and the classroom procedures observed by Rose (1988) are much the same now as they were then. The findings also suggest that research about the experiences of former students in ACE schools is likely to be relevant to the experiences of current students.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Epistemology

This research takes a critical realist position. Critical realism is perhaps most associated with Roy Bhaskar (1979; 2008) and those influenced by him. Maxwell (2012) uses the term more broadly to encompass any philosophy which holds that the world and entities within it exist independently of human perception, but which accepts that absolute knowledge of these entities is impossible, so alternative valid accounts are possible for any phenomenon. A number of theorists have put forward similar versions of realism, including 'subtle' realism (Hammersley 1992) and 'experiential' realism (Lakoff 1987). For my purposes, the differences between these versions are less important than the similarities. All versions retain the possibility of stable knowledge of the world while acknowledging that this knowledge is socially produced and filtered through cultural assumptions. While this knowledge is expressed "in terms of available discourses" (Sayer 2000, 2), nevertheless some descriptions of the world are better than others. I recognise that certainty is unattainable, while still aiming for my research to produce reliable knowledge of the world.

4.1.1 Epistemology of interviews

Byrne (2012, 209) argues that qualitative interviewing is "particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire … (Qualitative interviewing) when done well is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other, particularly survey-based, approaches". Kitzinger (2006, 116), however, describes the difficulty of treating interview data unproblematically as a window into 'what really happened' or even what participants 'really experienced'. Positivist researchers have demonstrated that "a great deal of what people say about their lives is (either deliberately or inadvertently) at variance with the facts". Memories are fallible and participants may have reasons to want to conceal the truth. If this is not

enough, constructivist critiques of the "interview-data-as-resource" (Rapley 2006, 16) cast doubt on the possibility of interviews reflecting interviewees' reality outside the interview. The interview is "a joint accomplishment of interviewer and respondent. As such, its relationship to any 'real' experience is not merely unknown but in some senses unknowable" (Dingwall 1997, 56).

Nevertheless, Kitzinger points out that feminist research has had successes by listening to women and validating their experiences of the world. 'Sexual harassment', for example, was a term that entered the language following research which treated interviews with women as accounts of real events. The findings that came from these women's experiences have led to changes in policy and legislation around the world. Qualitative interviews have also been successful in raising awareness of exploited and marginalised groups (Kvale 2006) and continue to be important in campaigns for issues, including welfare rights and fair trade (DeVault and Gross 2012). Kitzinger (2006, 117) notes that this approach is particularly useful for "opening up research areas and addressing new issues". I contend that the experiences of ACE students, so far mostly unresearched, are such a case.

A related concern of qualitative interviewing is the attempt to 'give voice', which is the act of "empowering people who have not had a chance to tell about their lives to speak out so as to bring about social change" (Bogdan and Biklen 1998, 204). While this idea has also been the subject of vigorous critique, it has yielded successful results (DeVault and Gross 2012; Kitzinger 2006). More than one participant thanked me for "giving a voice" to former ACE students. After I showed her a draft of one chapter of this thesis (at her request), Jayne wrote to me:

> I feel you have given a voice that has simply been strangled by fear and a strange modesty to all of us that have suffered at the hand of ACE. You have truly helped to close one of the most haunting chapters of my life, and I have faced many challenging chapters. I feel a sense of healing within my lanced boils that I am quite sure I would not have experienced without the work that you are doing.

68

The radical poststructuralist view that interview data tell us nothing about interviewees' true feelings denies the emancipatory possibility of telling the truth (or even the truth as perceived by one subject). By contrast, critical or "postpositivist" realism is consistent with using experience as evidence, because "the 'real' … shapes and limits our knowledge-generating experiences" (Moya 2002, 13).

Miller and Glassner (2011) reject the dichotomy between objectivist and constructivist approaches. While taking seriously the critiques of both sides, they demonstrate that narrative accounts from in-depth interviews "provide us with access to realities" (p. 131). They give examples from two research projects in the USA. In one, Miller was able to demonstrate how gender roles in gangs provided some young women with opportunities for empowerment and self-definition. In the second, Miller and her collaborator were able to reveal evidence about how gang rapes ("running trains") are organised and explained by their perpetrators. In both cases, the researchers recognised interviews as co-constructions between interviewers and participants, but they were still able to use the data as evidence about the real world.

In my analysis, I often take participants' words at face value, which has the advantage of being respectful of the participants. Since my research questions are primarily about participants' perceptions of their experience, it is sometimes unnecessary to ask what 'really happened'. In critiquing ACE schooling, however, questions over factual claims are unavoidable. Fortunately, many of the facts about what happens in an ACE school are not in question. The ACE *Procedures Manual* (1998; 2010a) lays out in detail the day-to-day happenings in ACE schools, and the PACEs can be examined by anyone prepared to buy them. Many of the more controversial aspects of ACE—its stances on creationism, homosexuality, and corporal punishment, for instance—are matters of public record. Nevertheless, some of the participants' important factual claims relate to matters external to both the *Procedures Manual* and the

PACEs. Where several participants have independently described similar events, I have taken this as evidence that their accounts are broadly accurate.

4.2 Objectivity

Given my history of campaigning on this subject, I am clearly not a neutral observer in this research. In some ways, this is a strength. Some scholars have argued that legitimate knowledge claims require researchers to "have lived or experienced their material in some fashion" (Collins 2000, 266). My insider experience enables me to empathise more easily with my participants, and my familiarity with ACE jargon meant I could understand their descriptions more readily. Research conducted as if 'from nowhere' has suffered from distortions such as androcentrism and ethnocentrism (DeVault and Gross 2012). Harding (1987, 182) argues that politically motivated research can yield more credible results than supposedly neutral alternatives, pointing to feminists who overturned prevailing views about women. It is not the case that political commitments are incompatible with rigorous research.

The idea of 'objectivity' as neutrality is now widely challenged. It is impossible to achieve "a view from nowhere" (Nagel 1986) or a 'God's eye view' (Putnam 1981) because "No human being can step outside of their humanity and view the world from no position at all" (Burr 2015, 172). Still, even if it is accepted that no research is neutral, this does not grant a licence for prejudice. Hammersley (2011) argues that objectivity does not require researchers to suppress passion or personal involvement in research, but that it does require the effort to avoid practices that lead to factual errors.

I have attempted to follow Alison Kelly's framework for how researchers can simultaneously maintain political commitments and (desirable) objectivity. She argues that the research process can be crudely divided into three stages:

(1) choosing the research topic and formulating hypotheses

70

(2) carrying out the research and obtaining the results

(3) interpreting the results. (Kelly 1978, 227)

She argues that political commitments (in her case, feminism) may enter the research process in stages (1) and (3), but not (2). Walford (2001, chap. 8) gives useful examples of how he has applied this framework in his own educational research. In my case, it is easy to see how this framework applies to my analysis of PACEs. In Chapter 8, I ask whether men and women are equally represented in the PACEs, and whether the depictions are gendered in stereotypical ways. My reason for this investigation is a concern for gender equality, and my evaluation of the results reflects this. In counting and describing the appearances of women in PACEs, however, I was neutral; any researcher would obtain the same results.

Kelly's framework applies also to my interviews, although less neatly. My interest in what students experienced at ACE schools was inspired by my belief that ACE education can be both academically inadequate and personally damaging. In conducting the interviews, however, I was careful to avoid leading questions and not to be judgemental of my participants' responses. It would be foolish, however, to claim that I was neutral. All participants were aware of my views on ACE; most had read my blogs. This informed the nature of my conversations with participants. I am sure some only spoke to me because they saw me as an advocate for those harmed by ACE schooling.

The positivist notion of the unbiased interviewer who elicits 'uncontaminated' data from participants is now difficult to defend (Mishler 1986). Interviewers and respondents develop reciprocal understandings during the course of an interview, so variations in how questions are asked and understood are not 'errors' but data for analysis. My presence in the interview inevitably influenced participants' responses, but the same would be true for any interviewer. I have

taken this into account in my analysis. In some cases, it gave participants confidence to share things they would have not told another interviewer.

While my record of anti-ACE activism improved some interviews, it was occasionally an obstacle. When interviewing Harry, in particular, I felt that he was defensive. He never voiced any criticism of his schooling without either immediately dismissing it or arguing that the identified weakness was in other respects a strength. School rules that he had disliked at the time were "unimportant things that trouble the minds of seven year olds", and the lack of specialist teachers and opportunities to study subjects in depth were plusses because they meant "I remained quite rounded in what I was interested in". I had told Harry that I was especially keen to speak to him because I had so few participants with positive views of ACE. I think this cast him in the role of 'ACE defender' rather than 'former student' speaking for himself. He spoke much more about ACE in the abstract than about his own experience. Where other participants' interviews were full of anecdotes, Harry's contained very few. Eventually, I asked him directly if I was making him defensive:

> Jenna: The only thing that concerns me is whether (1.4) you're, might be being guarded in what you say to me because of who I am and the positions that I've taken on ACE in the past. (1.4)

> Harry: I would say, I mean, in all honesty I've only, I think I've read one of your blogs [*Jenna: yeah*]. So.

> Jenna: Yeah, but you've got an idea of who I am and what I stand for.

> Harry: (1.6) Yeah. But I mean it, I:I (2.3) being completely candid, and this probably doesn't play into your research, I have a perspective. I mean it's, for me it's a question: do I believe that you have an academic interest in exploring this [*Jenna: mm*] or predominantly a desire to undermine and discredit ACE (1.2) and I trust you when you say that you have an academic interest in exploring this, so.

> Jenna: Cool. I'm glad to hear that. Um, (1.5) and er, I believe and hope that you will be satisfied that you've made the right call in that ((*Harry laughs*)).

I tried eliciting Harry's opinions by venturing some of my own. When I suggested, for example, that "parents should do their best to equip children to challenge worldviews that they're presented with", Harry countered that this was still "actively an ideology … just as much as other worldviews" and he questioned whether it was as likely to lead to "happy, fulfilled children" as a religious worldview. I recognised this argument as one commonly used by New Christian Schools advocates. Again Harry seemed to be speaking more as an unofficial ACE spokesperson than about his experiences. In subsequent interviews, I specifically prompted participants to tell me stories.

In practice, my interviewing involved judgements about when to be impartial and when to share my views. In Chapter 14, I argue that my participants' recollections indicate that students have been treated unequally in ACE schools. I was careful not to suggest to participants that this might be the case (and it was not something I had written about), so the fact that several people who did not know each other brought it up independently strengthens my confidence in this finding. Here, a more neutral interviewing technique yielded valuable data.

Elsewhere, it was useful to share more of my feelings. Prior to our first meeting, Erin said she did not think she could remember much about her ACE experience, so before I formally interviewed her we had an audio-recorded conversation where I shared some of my memories, which prompted her to talk about hers. There were also some points where I told participants after they had made a point that I agreed with them, which helped to build rapport and make them feel comfortable sharing their views.

I was not always successful in my judgements about when to express my opinions. I had one notable failure with Stephen. I asked him if there were any aspects of his schooling that he had felt comfortable with at the time but no longer accepted.

Stephen:	I think it would be the whole spiritual side of it (1.2) that at the time I (1.0) either liked or tolerated but now I would see as something I, I, I certainly would not allow to happen with my child.
Jenna:	Yeah. (3.1) That's cos you're a decent parent. May have broken some kind of researcher objectivity ((*laughing*)) there ((*Stephen laughs*)).

Fortunately, some good came out of my mistake. Stephen took the opportunity to explain that his parents had been "largely unaware" of what happened at his school, and that the education he received did not match the school's promises.

Where students told me they had been abused, I made no attempt to be neutral. When Jayne told me how she had been expelled after a member of school staff had kissed her and sent her notes seeking a relationship, I felt that to remain neutral would have been immoral. I also felt she needed support in sharing a clearly traumatic story. I told Jayne:

> I have to, I have to break character here. What [*Jayne: yeah*] happened to you was absolutely disgusting. You did nothing wrong whatsoever. You should have been, like, protected from this [*Jayne: right*] and all of the punishment should've gone on him. This is outrageous.

I still feel that my judgement in that situation was right. My support gave Jayne the confidence to continue sharing personal information, and abuse is not something about which it makes sense to remain 'neutral'. In this sense, my political commitments did also enter the second of Kelly's three research stages.

4.3 Analytic autoethnography

I am in the position of having experienced an ACE education firsthand, something few researchers can claim. Rather than pretend this experience has not influenced my research, I have chosen to make reflection on it an integral part of my analysis. This is not new; there is a large body of social research

which benefits from the author's biographical engagement in a given social world (Atkinson 2006).

Autoethnography is the academic study of one's own experience, usually written as a first-person narrative (Ellis and Bochner 2000). Autoethnographers blur the lines between autobiography, literature, and social science. They emphasise caring and empathy as ways of knowing, and seek to be evocative more than representational. 'Evocative' autoethnographers, however, have an interpretivist epistemology. I was not confident that I could coherently combine such autoethnography with a critical realist epistemology.

Analytic autoethnography (Anderson 2006) is compatible with critical realism. It is characterised by "(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis" (Ibid, 378). While evocative ethnography can include separate analysis (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 757), often theorising is not explicit but rather embedded in the stories (Ellis and Bochner 2006, 444). After arguing that autoethnography requires the writer to be vulnerable and intimate, Ellis and Bochner ask rhetorically "What are we giving to the people with whom we are intimate, if our higher purpose is to use our joint experiences to produce theoretical abstractions published on the pages of scholarly journals?" (2006, 433). I think we may give them quite a lot. I find theoretical insights quite helpful in understanding and coming to terms with my own experience, and by sharing them I hope others will have the same experience. I also hope that by illuminating more generally how schooling can both help and harm students, we can apply these insights to create better schools in future.

By comparing my experiences to those of my participants, I have an additional source of data to check the validity of my conclusions. I thus have incorporated reflections on my own experience not as a separate chapter, but alongside data gathered from interviews.

4.4 Interviews

Research into Christian schools has often taken the form of ethnographic studies (e.g. Green 2009a; 2009b; Peshkin 1986; Rose 1988). Given my record of activism, it was unlikely that I would be granted access to a school for that purpose. Even if I had been, it would not help answer my research questions about the effects of an ACE education on students' subsequent lives. The most obvious means of investigating this was through questionnaires (administered by post or in person) or interviews. While no previous research on former ACE students has used face-to-face interviewing as its primary means of data collection, such interviews have successfully been used in studying children raised in New Religious Movements (van Eck Duymaer van Twist 2015) as well as being a staple technique of research in mainstream education.

4.4.1 Questionnaires

Much research into the New Christian Schools has been conducted using questionnaires, both with current (Baker 2009; Francis 2005; O'Keeffe 1992) and former students (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2007; ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2009). I declined to participate in Warburton's (2005) research in part because I felt her survey questions carried assumptions I did not share. As a result, I found none of the supplied multiple-choice answers applied to me. Where space was provided to write qualitative responses, it was insufficient to articulate my opinions. While such shortcomings could be considerably improved with pilot testing and the use of open questions, some constraint on participants' answers is a feature of the questionnaire format. I preferred to give participants extended opportunities to answer so that if I did unintentionally ask them a loaded question, they had the opportunity to challenge my presupposition. Latour (2000, 115) argues that objectivity is achieved when the "objects" of research are able "to object to what is told about them".

76

A further reason I decided not to use questionnaires is that they are often best suited for the collection of quantitative data (Phellas, Bloch, and Seale 2012). The best quantitative data is obtained when the sample is representative of the population in question. I was unable to obtain any data about the age, gender, ethnicity, religion, or total number of former ACE students in England. This meant that even if I could survey a large number of them, I would not be able to extrapolate meaningfully from their responses to the total population of former ACE students.

4.4.2 Qualitative interviewing

A major reason for preferring interviews over questionnaires is that I wanted, as far as possible, to learn what aspects of their experience my participants considered important. Where a questionnaire might be used to confirm or refute existing ideas about ACE schooling, I wanted my participants to have the opportunity to raise entirely new topics. I also wanted readers unfamiliar with ACE to get a sense of what it might be like to attend such a school. This is better achieved with extended quotations than with a series of pre-written statements alongside percentages indicating participants' agreement or disagreement.

I planned to conduct one-hour interviews which I felt would yield sufficiently detailed responses while keeping the total volume of data manageable. In practice, most lasted longer. I gave all participants the option to stop after an hour, but only one chose to do so. Ten ran past 90 minutes, and Harry's lasted more than two hours. In addition, there were three participants (Erin, Caleb, and Cain) who I interviewed before I finalised the interview guide (section 4.7). I returned to these participants for second interviews. All interviews were audio recorded. Most interviews took place face to face, but five participants were interviewed via Skype.

Because former ACE students are difficult to locate, I had to use opportunity sampling. The initial participants were either people I met during my time in

ACE (either at school or Convention) or people who had contacted me through my blog. My intention was to use snowballing by asking these participants to suggest further people who might consider being interviewed (King and Horrocks 2010, 34). In the end, only two participants were recruited in this way. Two more I met by coincidence, one through a mutual friend and another at a public lecture. The rest either contacted me after reading my blog or I found them participating in online discussions about ACE.

4.5 Recruitment

I never expected that my participants would be statistically representative of English ACE students as a whole, but I did hope to capture the range of views that exist. In this goal I was influenced by the idea of 'theoretical saturation', in which data collection ends when it becomes apparent that no new theoretical insights are being gleaned (Charmaz 2006, 113). I reached theoretical saturation among students with critical views of ACE, but the limited number of pro-ACE participants means that a range of favourable perspectives on ACE schooling are not represented here. Missing too are the views of those who are indifferent to their ACE experience.

I made every effort to recruit participants with favourable views of ACE, but was largely unsuccessful. Some participants are still in contact with old school friends and promised to contact them on my behalf. All were unsuccessful in recruiting further participants. One said friends feared they would be guilty of "treachery" if they spoke to me. Another told me her friends would happily criticise ACE until my name was mentioned, whereupon they stopped abruptly. She said there was a feeling it was OK to talk about ACE's weaknesses with "insiders" but not with "outsiders". One person told me he had made the mistake of mentioning to his mother that I had contacted them. He was told to have nothing to do with me because I was just an angry and unhappy young man.

78

One participant relayed to me the contents of an email from someone who thought highly of ACE, but nevertheless wanted no involvement in any research, "especially with a critic". Someone else with a "very positive experience" at his ACE school contacted me, expressing interest in participating. When I tried to arrange an interview, however, he withdrew, explaining that his siblings still attended ACE schools, and he was worried that his participation in my research might jeopardise their education.

After being frustrated elsewhere, I posted online to a Facebook group called "You know you went to an ACE school when…". This group is not endorsed by ACE, but the group's moderator has stated that he is an ACE employee, and the tone of posts is favourable to the curriculum. My post read:

> I am doing a PhD researching how former ACE students have got on since leaving ACE. I am looking at what you feel about ACE now, and what you think the consequences of having an ACE education have been.
> I am mainly looking for participants from the United Kingdom, but I am interested to hear from anyone interested.
> If you would like more information about taking part, please get in touch.

The initial reaction was positive. In the first comment, someone named a potential participant; the second commenter said "I would love to" and the third invited me to contact her. The tenor changed after a commenter posted a link to my blog, adding: "Prospective participants in this research may be interested to view Jenna's blog to gain an understanding of the nature of the project".

I replied "Thanks [commenter]. In particular, please see this post where I explain about the research itself, with an FAQ." The linked FAQ contained responses to such questions as "I'm a creationist, and you're critical of my beliefs on this blog. Why should I participate when that's your view?" and

"Won't you be biased?" Despite this damage control, the next three commenters attacked me. The longest comment reads, in full:

> And shame on you for couching your request in such a way as to lead people to believe it was a positive thing. You won't find what you're looking for with me. Or I imagine most others. I am very grateful for my ACE school. I left public school struggling and in Special Ed in my Math. I was in 5th grade and didn't even understand multiplication. During my last year of public school my dad also died. So I entered 6th grade in my ACE school struggling and behind in every subject as well as emotionally struggling. Through the love and patience of my supervisors and monitors who invested their lives into my healing, and my ACE curriculum my life turned around. I was able to heal from a devastating loss as well as catch up on all my subjects. I actually learned the things I had missed in public school. I graduated in 1989 having completed Algebra and Geometry. I tested so well on my SATs that I received a scholarship. And I still maintain loving contact with most of my supervisors and monitors.
>
> I am only one story. There are thousands more. If you want a non-biased study for your PhD, you might want to represent the WHOLE truth.

I replied, explaining that I was keen to include participants with views like hers and had no wish to deceive anyone about my views or the nature of the research. I continued by explaining some of the ethical procedures I followed with participants. Still, I suspected I was no longer welcome in the group, so I took screenshots of the conversation. Minutes later, my post was deleted and I was blocked from the group.

A former guest poster on my blog put me in contact with a pastor whose children had been educated with ACE and who was in the process of setting up a school. He responded positively to her initial email. By the time I contacted him, however, he had Googled my name. His reply said "I afraid [*sic*] you will be wasting you time trying to make contact with [daughters' names] etc. We are aware of your efforts to discredit ACE. I have advised all concerned not to communicate with you as it became obvious that you have a hidden agenda".

I contacted Arthur Roderick, head of CEE, to ask for his assistance. I was not expecting a positive response, because I have been forwarded emails from CEE's management describing my work as part of a "spiritual attack" on them. To my surprise, he invited me to lunch to find out more about me and my research, though I cannot tell you much of what he said because he prefaced seemingly every statement with "Don't quote me on this". I argued it would be in CEE's interests to assist me in finding participants, because if they did not there was a real risk I would not find anyone with a positive view of ACE, and their stories would therefore be absent from my thesis. I also argued that while we were unlikely to agree about the conclusions I draw from the data, the data itself would be of interest to CEE. I left feeling optimistic that he might introduce me to some former students. However, I received a follow-up email saying:

> After some discussion with a few in leadership here, the view is, and I concur with this, that with the bias and clear intent to discredit not just the ACE programme but the biblical purpose behind it to equip godly young people we cannot direct them to you to assist you. For the purposes of your dissertation it does not help you to combine both opposition to conservative christianity, and opposition to the methodology.

Having failed here, I attempted to contact people I remembered from church and school who I thought would have positive things to say. Most refused; those who accepted turned out to have more critical views than I expected. One old friend told me I was just angry at God because my dad died when I was a teenager. Another friend said "I've seen what you are capable of, taking people's words and twisting them". The claim that I lie or misrepresent the truth is a refrain in criticisms of me, and it is one I take seriously. I do not believe I have ever distorted anyone's words, and it is not in my interests to do so. I have repeatedly asked CEE to tell me where I have relied on inaccurate information or made false claims, but they have not responded.

Despite these obstacles, I did successfully recruit several participants with a generally positive view of their schooling. These participants, however, all qualified their support for ACE with areas of disagreement and acknowledgement of weaknesses. What I did not find were unabashed ACE advocates. I know they exist; I have met some at church and at ACE's student conventions. Occasionally they turn up in the Facebook group I run, "Accelerated Christian Education Exposed" (which has around 400 members) to argue and sometimes to inform us of our need for salvation. One individual commented on my blog dozens of times, defending every aspect of ACE. He even insisted ACE was right to teach the existence of the Loch Ness monster as evidence against evolution, adding for good measure that Mokole-mbembe (a water monster of the Congo river basin) is also both extant and one in the eye for evolutionists. So extreme was his defence of ACE that it took several weeks of his comments before I concluded he was genuine.

Towards the end of my data collection, I managed to interview someone who spoke in the most glowing terms of her ACE school, its staff, and its beneficial effects on her subsequent life. Three days later, she sent me a text withdrawing consent to use her interview. When I asked whether we could discuss her concerns, she declined. This was my last attempt at recruitment. Doubtless this reticence to participate was worsened by my public campaigning, but other researchers have described their own difficulties gaining access to ACE and other 'fundamentalist' schools (Davis 1990, 11; Peshkin 1986; Rose 1988).

In total I interviewed 23 participants from 10 different schools, of which 14 were male. As well as this gender imbalance, the study also suffers from the fact that all participants were white, and only seven identified themselves as Christian. The difficulties I had in recruiting participants made this unavoidable. Table 4.1 lists the participants.

Table 4.1 Participants in order interviewed

Participant	Christian	Approx years in ACE School	Decades attended
Cain	No	4	1980s, 1990s
Caleb	No	7	1980s, 1990s
Andrew	Yes	3 (+5 home schooled)	1990s
Nathan	No	12	1990s, 2000s
Stephen	No	5	1980s, 1990s
Thomas	No	4 (+1 home schooled)	1990s
Susan	Yes	2 (+1 home schooled)	2000s
Charlotte	Yes	7	2000s
Mike	No	3	1990s, 2000s
Lois	Yes	home schooled[10]	1980s, 1990s
Kaye	No	5	1990s
Erin	No	5 (+2 home schooled)	1990s, 2000s
Harry	Yes	11	1990s, 2000s
Gideon	No	10	1980s, 1990s
Philip	Yes	7	1990s
Alice	No	6	1980s, 1990s
Rob	No	8	1990s
Jayne	No	4	1990s
Lily	No	5	1990s
Jolyon	No	4	1990s
Jeremiah	No	7	1990s
William	Yes	5 (+5 home schooled)	—[11]
Joanna	No	6 (+5 home schooled)	1990s, 2000s

4.6 Ethics

I adopted the British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines (BERA 2011), and my research was approved by the Faculty of Children and Learning Research Ethics Committee at the UCL Institute of Education. I sent potential participants a letter informing them about the research (Appendix 3) and which made them aware that I held a critical view of ACE. I assured them that no one else would hear the recording of their interview.

I aim for this research to improve practices at ACE schools in the future as well as be a useful resource for former students. I am often contacted by people

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[10]   Participant preferred that I did not share precise details.
[11]   Participant did not say.

saying "I thought I was the only one who felt this way". Some of my participants reflected that they found the interview process therapeutic. Jayne sent me several messages expressing the benefit she felt from speaking to me about her experience. Others found it more difficult. Before our second meeting, Cain told me how he had been unprepared for the emotions and memories the first interview brought up, and that he had struggled with anger for several weeks afterwards.

4.6.1 Anonymity

All participants' names have been changed. While it is standard research practice to anonymise participants, it was especially important in this case. Some participants have families who do not know about and would not accept their current views. Two expressed concern during their interviews about what would happen if their families learned what they had said. I have removed details which could compromise their anonymity. This has to some extent compromised the clarity of my analysis for readers. Participants attended ten different ACE schools between them, but I do not name these schools or indicate which participants attended the same schools. I have also not given an exact indication of when each participant was at school. When quoting speech where participants refer to their schools by name, I have replaced this with [ACE school]. This tends to elide distinctions between schools and encourage the impression that ACE schools are homogenous. To some extent, this is reasonable: the highly standardised curriculum and procedures mean that there are more similarities between ACE schools than one might expect from other kinds of school. Nevertheless, some meaningful differences between participants' recollections appear to be more to do with the schools themselves than variations in subjective responses to those schools. I have endeavoured to point these out where they arise.

4.7 Interview guide

The term 'interview guide' is more appropriate than 'schedule' for qualitative interviewing (King and Horrocks 2010, 35). Where 'schedule' refers to a fixed question order (Phellas, Bloch, and Seale 2012), 'guide' reflects the flexible nature of the conversation, where I followed new topics as they emerged in the interviews. I often changed the order of questions if a participant brought up a topic earlier than I had planned to talk about it. I also left out questions if the participant had already addressed that area sufficiently, or if they had made comments that indicated another question was not relevant to them.

I wanted participants to have the opportunity to raise points I had not previously considered and to talk about the aspects of their experience they considered important, rather than those which I deemed relevant. For this reason I decided against structured interviewing. At the same time, I began my interviews with a number of theoretical interests arising from my own experience, the literature review, the emails I had received from former ACE students, and from my recent examination of the PACEs. These interests included 'race', gender roles, sexuality, creationism, politics, and indoctrination. I wanted to capture participants' experiences and opinions relevant to those interests without employing leading questions. I therefore did not ask about them directly, but I included questions likely to elicit participants' views on those matters.

Though I had read Mishler's (1986) and Hollway and Jefferson's (Hollway and Jefferson 2013) arguments for narrative interviewing, I had not fully appreciated the value of stories until I transcribed Harry's interview and noticed their conspicuous absence. Thereafter, I saw the interview guide as a way of eliciting two main narratives: the participants' stories of their time at an ACE school, and their stories of their life since, viewed in light of their education.

I began the interview with warm-up questions for context:

Which ACE school did you attend and when?

How did you come to attend an ACE school?

Whose decision was it for you to attend?

I suspected that some participants might have attended ACE schools against their wills, while others would have been more enthusiastic. I asked whose decision it was to attend the school in case I found evidence that it was meaningfully connected to the participants' later feelings about their schooling.

The next group of questions was intended to elicit participants' memories of the ACE schooling itself:

What do you see as good things/benefits of your ACE schooling? (Alternative wording: "Was there anything good about it? What?")

What, if anything, do you think you missed out on by not attending a mainstream school?

What do you see as the downsides of your ACE schooling?

How did you feel about studying in an 'office'?

What activities do you remember at your school besides PACE work?
        If answer does not elaborate: What other *lessons* do you remember?
        If answer does not elaborate: How did you feel about those?

I used the alternative wording "Was there anything good about it?" with participants such as Cain and Erin, who I already knew had bad experiences of ACE, and for whom the wording "What were the good things about your ACE experience?" might have seemed insensitive.

The next group of questions concerned how successful ACE schools had been in influencing students' beliefs:
        Were you a Christian before attending the school?
        How did attending the school influence your beliefs about Jesus and the

Bible?

Have your views about those things changed since? How?

How did the school influence your beliefs about right and wrong?

Have your views about right and wrong changed since? How?

Where your views have changed, what was this experience like for you?

Were there any differences in doctrine between what your family believed and what the school taught?

Talking about the PACEs specifically, were there any areas where the PACEs differed from what you were taught at home?

Were there any differences between what the teachers/pastors said and what the PACEs said?

Do you remember anything in the PACEs you felt uncomfortable about or disagreed with at the time? … now?

Do you remember staff teaching anything you felt uncomfortable about or disagreed with at the time? … now?

If you disagreed with something, what could/did you do about it?

In practice, I rarely asked all of these questions. Usually participants had effectively answered them before reaching this point in the interview. The questions about discrepancies between the school's teaching and the PACEs were intended to get a sense of the range of views promoted in ACE schools; some ACE schools take positions on some theological or political issues which differ from those in the PACEs. I expected that tensions between messages in the PACEs and messages from school staff would influence how effective the school was in forming students' beliefs, and these questions looked for evidence of this. I also looked for the same differences between the students' homes and the school. The final three questions attempted to discover how free participants felt to discuss or challenge any disagreements they had with the school or the PACEs.

I then asked open-ended questions about how participants' perceived their schooling's effect on their subsequent lives:

[If relevant] How did you find the transition into mainstream education?

What effect do you feel your ACE schooling has had on your life since?

If it had not already been discussed by this point, I asked participants about friendships with people outside their Christian communities:

What did you learn about making friends with non-believers?

How did you feel about this?

How many friends did you have that you didn't know from church or school?

I concluded the interviews by reading to participants eight quotations from PACEs, and asking them to rate on a 5-point Likert Scale how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each:

1) We can be good citizens by helping others.

2) It is a mistake to believe that attraction to those of the same sex is normal.

3) Abortion is murder.

4) If a scientific theory contradicts the Bible, then the theory is wrong and must be discarded.

5) How much we earn is not nearly as important as being honest and moral.

6) The wife is to obey, respect, and submit to the leadership of her husband, serving as a helper to him.

7) The only way a young person can walk with God is to avoid the company of people who disregard God's ways.

8) The degree to which people allow God to rule them determines how far to the right they are on the [political] spectrum.

These statements were mostly selected for both their controversial nature and the fact that they are distinctive to ACE's brand of Christianity. When I selected them, I was hoping to interview a large number of people with positive views of

ACE, and I wanted to see to what extent they shared ACE's worldview. Since I did not succeed in recruiting many such participants, this section proved less important, and I sometimes did not include it in the interviews for reasons of time. Nevertheless, reading these statements did provoke interesting conversations with some participants and produce useful data. Because it came at the end of the interview, this section did not influence participants' earlier responses, so I was still able to see which subjects participants considered sufficiently important to raise of their own accord.

Two statements, numbers 1 and 5, were included because I thought most people would agree with them. Some participants, having been told these statements came from PACEs, quickly chose "strongly disagree" in response to all of them. I suspected that this might be evidence of a kneejerk rejection of everything ACE taught, but since I did not design a way to test that hypothesis, I did not use it in my analysis.

4.8 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a method of identifying and offering insight into patterns of meaning across a data set (Braun and Clarke 2012; Lapadat 2010). While many analytical approaches are linked to theoretical positions I do not share, TA is not tied to any particular theoretical framework (Braun and Clarke 2006), which makes it suitable for integration with my critical realist position. Advocates of narrative analysis have argued that by fracturing the data in categories, TA can rob the data of context and fine detail (Silverman 2011, 75). Having completed my analysis, I feel this critique carries some weight. Some of the emotional impact of the participants' stories was lost in the process of breaking them up by category. Despite this loss, I think that organising the data thematically enabled a clearer analysis of the categories of interest, as well as bringing new categories into focus.

TA categories can be identified either deductively, based on theories the researcher wishes to investigate, or inductively, based on patterns the researcher finds in the data (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Lapadat 2010). The former enables the researcher to replicate, extend, or refute existing research, while the latter gives the opportunity to make new discoveries and "revolutionise knowledge of the topic under consideration" (Joffe 2012, 210). Joffe argues that high quality research therefore combines both approaches. Table 4.2 lists the deductive categories, drawn from the literature review, and the inductive categories, found through analysis of the interviews.

Table 4.2 Categories of Analysis

Deductive Categories	Inductive Categories
Creationism	Charismatic worship
Gender	Character education
Indoctrination	Labelling
Intolerance	Mental health
Perceived education quality	Punishment
Political education	Sex and Relationships Education
Preparation for university	Socialisation

I did not perform frequency counts of words of phrases in the interview transcripts to see which 'codes' appeared most frequency across all of them. The criterion for a category's inclusion was not the number of times it was mentioned, but its importance to the participants and me, and its theoretical salience. The frequency with which participants mentioned a topic is one measure of its importance, and the inductive categories do reflect the subjects participants raised most often. Another measure is the strength of feeling expressed by participants in talking about a subject. Mental health issues, for example, did not come up often but where they did, some participants expressed strong emotions. The inductive categories also reflect my own judgements about what is important, and are based in part on my own experiences of how ACE has affected me.

TA can be conducted at a semantic level, addressing the explicit or surface meanings of the data, or the latent level, examining the underlying ideas and assumptions (Braun and Clarke 2006). My analysis is conducted primarily at the semantic level. This is partly because of my desire to 'give voice' to my participants, and also because my research questions concern the meanings the participants attach to their own experiences. A further reason for favouring a semantic approach is the lack of existing research in this area. It is useful to have a map of the surface terrain before looking deeper.

The first stage of analysis was familiarising myself with the data (Braun and Clarke 2006), which included transcribing the interviews. For this I used Seventh String's Transcribe software, designed to assist with the transcription of recorded music. It allows adjustment of the speed of playback and looping of selected sections of audio as well as selection and precise measurement of sections of the audio. I based my transcription conventions on those used in Conversation Analysis, but did not follow them as strictly as some do. In particular, Conversation Analysis records the length of pauses as short as one tenth of a second. I initially notated any pause shorter than one second with a (.) symbol, but I found this greatly reduced the clarity of extended quotations. For a guide to the symbols used in transcription, see Appendix 2.

The usual next stage of TA is the development of the coding frame, which includes both inductive and theoretically driven codes (Joffe 2012). In Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, this process is separated into distinct stages: searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. However, they stress that this is not a linear process but a recursive one. Similarly, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, 83) stress that the process is "iterative and reflexive", with data collection and analysis performed concurrently. I found this approach useful. I began analysing the data after completing about ten interviews, copying relevant portions of each interview transcript into working documents for each category of analysis. These working documents became the templates for my analysis. They allowed me to look at

participants' comments alongside each other for each category, reducing the tendency to focus excessively on the most recently collected data. As I completed more interviews, I added to the analysis for each category.

In order to reduce negative effects of bias, I used negative case analysis, a strategy borrowed from grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967). I attempted to challenge my working hypotheses about ACE schools by looking for disconfirming evidence in my data set, as well as by looking for participants who could provide such evidence. This explains my number of participants (23). I had planned to stop at 20, but Jolyon, William, and Joanna were added because I understood that they had favourable views of their schooling which might change the understanding I was developing from my other participants.

Chapter 5 Theoretical framework

5.1 Indoctrination

The definition of indoctrination has long been debated (see, for example, Snook 1972). Different scholars have argued that it is best understood in terms of content, method, or intentions (or some combination of these), but there are difficulties with all of these criteria (Callan and Arena 2009; Thiessen 1990), because both true and false beliefs can be indoctrinated, and because regardless of what methods are used or what the teacher intends, the attempted indoctrination may not be successful. Consequently, indoctrination is better understood with regard to outcomes (Callan and Arena 2009; Hand 2003; Taylor 2016). Callan and Arena (2009) argue persuasively that indoctrination results in closed-mindedness, people who are "unable or unwilling to give due regard to reasons that are available for revising their current beliefs" (2009, 111). Taylor (2016, 11) expands on this, describing the closed-minded person as one who:

> (1) lacks the broad motivation to pursue knowledge and understanding, and (2) lacks the specific motivation to give due regard to available evidence and argument when forming new beliefs and understandings and when maintaining or revising already established beliefs and understandings. The agent fails to possess the open-minded motive because s/he: (3) is either intellectually arrogant or intellectually servile.

In Chapter 1 I described my own indoctrinated state as a teenager. If any belief contradicted (my interpretation of) the Bible, I knew *a priori* that it was wrong. I recognise my former self in the 'closed-minded' account of indoctrination, and this is in part why I have used it as a starting point for this theoretical framework.

Psychology has a great deal to say about closed-mindedness. 'Conceptual conservatism' (Nissani 1994)—the tendency to maintain beliefs long after they are decisively refuted—is well described in the psychology literature. A major explanation for this phenomenon is confirmation bias (Mahoney 1977;

Nickerson 1998), the tendency to look for or interpret evidence consciously or unconsciously in ways that confirm existing beliefs. This refers not just to the mundane process of seeking favourable evidence while disregarding contrary evidence. Confirmation bias drives people to interpret neutral or even disconfirming evidence as favourable to their position. Biased observers also scrutinise unfavourable evidence much more closely, finding ways to dismiss or discredit it. Related biases include motivated reasoning, the tendency to reason towards an emotionally desired outcome while maintaining an illusion of objectivity (Kunda 1990) and, alarmingly, the 'backfire' effect, where disconfirming evidence actually *increases* the strength of a misperception (Nyhan and Reifler 2010).

It is clear that closed-mindedness (described by philosophers as the outcome of indoctrination) has much in common with cognitive biases described by psychologists. Cognitive biases are outward manifestations of closed-mindedness. There are several advantages to making this conceptual link. There are those who still doubt whether indoctrination really occurs, or question whether it matters. Pointing out that indoctrination leads to well-understood errors of reasoning helps to clarify its dangers. It is the difficulty of changing beliefs once they are non-rationally held which makes indoctrination such a serious problem (Hand 2003, 95). This link also opens up possibilities for empirical research (by investigating which schools' students exhibit the most cognitive bias, for example).

Confirmation bias, and related reasoning errors, are explained by cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957; Harmon-Jones and Mills 1999), which assumes that people are motivated to keep their beliefs internally consistent. When people are aware of two contradictory cognitions (beliefs, ideas, attitudes, opinions), they experience a psychological discomfort ('dissonance') which they wish to reduce. We experience such a dissonance when confronted with evidence against a cherished belief—a conflict between the cognitions 'I am an intelligent, well-informed person' and 'my belief is probably wrong'. In

94

everyday situations, the response might well be just to change the belief: "If I think the capital of Ghana is Abidjan and I find in an atlas that it is in fact Accra, I do not write a letter of complaint to the publisher of that atlas" (Boudry and Braeckman 2012, 346). Where the individual has an investment in the truth of a belief, whether by public commitment or personal interest, they may instead rationalise away disconfirming evidence. Boudry and Braeckman (2012) provide a persuasive account of how these mechanisms bolster conspiracy theories, creationism, and paranormal beliefs. Far from being as fragile as is often supposed, these beliefs furnish adherents with ample resources for resisting disconfirmation.

The observation that cognitive dissonance is strongest when something is at stake for the believer complements philosophers' claims that indoctrination requires that a belief become "integral to the individual's understanding of who she is and why her life matters so that seriously considering evidence contrary to the belief is threatening to her very identity" (Callan and Arena 2009, 111; see also Taylor 2016, 7). The neuroscientist Kathleen Taylor (2004, 129) describes beliefs as part of cognitive networks. Strong beliefs, which have been reinforced many times or by very strong stimuli, are very deeply embedded. They exist not in isolation, but "enmeshed in a web of connections with other beliefs":

> A devout believer in God does not hold this conviction in isolation from all his other beliefs; rather, it provides the emotional bedrock for much of his existence. Such beliefs can be extremely difficult to change. In extreme cases believers may actively reject reality if it forces change upon them … The analogy of a web is an appropriate one here. Discarding a weak belief is like cutting a thread at the edge of a web: it makes little or no difference to the body of the web itself. Changing a strong belief is like cutting one of the main supporting strands: the entire structure of the web may be changed or even destroyed.

It is in respect of those beliefs closest to the centre of the 'web' where confirmation bias is likely to be strongest. Although my account of

indoctrination focuses on outcomes, I will argue that some methods of instruction are more likely to result in closed-mindedness than others. Cognitive dissonance theory helps to predict what these are. My argument has some similarities to those philosophers who held that indoctrination entailed the use of 'non-rational' methods (e.g. Moore 1972; Wilson 1972), but I do not claim that non-rational methods always result in indoctrination. On the whole, however, it is more likely that rationally-imparted beliefs will be amenable to subsequent rational reappraisal, while those imparted non-rationally will not.

That this is so becomes clearer if we consider non-rational ways of securing mental assent. It could be by appeal to emotion, perhaps by setting the belief to stirring music or by making students fear the consequences of unbelief. It could be because those imparting the belief are important to the student, such as parents. The student either feels that holding the belief will secure their approval, or that abandoning the belief might necessitate revising downwards her opinion of these important people. Assent might also be secured by requiring students to engage in public commitments to a belief (section 5.3.2). In all cases, the student is given an investment in the truth of a belief so that she is likely to resist efforts to disconfirm it.

In arguing that cognitive biases are a symptom of indoctrination, I am not suggesting that indoctrination is the only cause of such biases. People can become closed-minded without help from anyone else (Callan and Arena 2009, 113). The literature indicates that all humans are worryingly susceptible to confirmation bias, and even awareness of this fact does not eliminate it (Tavris and Aronson 2008, 24). If we are all to some extent closed-minded regardless of how we are taught, what use is it to argue against teaching which causes closed-mindedness? The words 'to some extent' are important here. Even when bias cannot be eliminated, it is still worth minimising, and it is still desirable that teaching should not *increase* students' closed-mindedness.

It can be argued that the methods of science are a systematic attempt to overcome confirmation bias (Nickerson 1998). While the history of science is replete with examples of scientists falling short of this objective ideal, science nevertheless provides powerful tools for overcoming preconceptions and prejudices. A good science education can help students become vigilant against the distorting effects of confirmation bias and increase their open-mindedness. Similar arguments can be advanced for history, philosophy, the social sciences, and mathematics. We may take some encouragement from the fact that *motivated* reasoning need not be *biased* reasoning. Individuals may have an 'accuracy motivation' rather than a 'defensive' or 'partisan' motivation (Leeper and Slothuus 2014). Education might actively reduce closed-mindedness by instructing students in the value and skills of accurate reasoning.

While it is possible to indoctrinate true as well as false beliefs (Callan and Arena 2009, 109), some beliefs are more amenable to indoctrination than others. Some propositions are patently false. Others have attached second-order beliefs, such as "it is always wrong/shameful to entertain doubt about this belief" (Callan and Arena 2009, 111). Boudry and Braeckman (2011) refer to these as 'epistemic defence mechanisms', structural features of belief systems which render them more or less impervious to rational argument or empirical evidence. Conspiracy theories rely heavily on such mechanisms. A religion which claims that unbelievers are deceived by Satan is immune to critique on its own terms. Such self-sealing beliefs are intrinsically closed-minded, because accepting them as true simultaneously closes down consideration of alternatives. Any successful teaching of such beliefs must constitute indoctrination.

Hand (2003) argues that teaching for belief in controversial ('not-known-to-be-true') propositions is, when successful, indoctrinatory. If indoctrination entails closed-mindedness, this is not quite right. It is possible to hold controversial beliefs in an open-minded way. It may be that the evidence for a particular proposition is currently not decisive, but on balance I believe it to be true. As

long as I am willing to re-evaluate this belief in light of new evidence, I remain open-minded. I might believe that introducing socialised healthcare would be bad for a particular country. If after the introduction of such a system the cost of healthcare falls while indicators of quality improve, I may be open-minded (by admitting I was wrong) or closed-minded (by stubbornly insisting the new healthcare arrangements are worse).

There is no reason in principle why students cannot open-mindedly accept controversial beliefs as a result of teaching. If teachers present controversial beliefs as things the students *must* believe, or *ought* to believe, they may be guilty of some other moral failure—of misrepresenting the evidence (if that is what they do), or of ignoring students' rights to freedom of belief. It is fine for them to hope that students come to share their opinions on controversial matters (e.g. the existence of God), but where acceptance of a controversial belief is an educational aim, it is unlikely to be achieved for most or all students without indoctrination.

While indoctrination entails a closing of the mind, this closure need not be permanent. Callan and Arena (2009) point out that most members of the Hitler Youth Movement were able to abandon its ideology after the war. The effects of 'brainwashing' by Chinese communists also did not last in most cases (Lifton 1961; Schein 1956), yet any definition of indoctrination that excludes these two paradigm examples would clearly be inadequate.

5.2 Systems of indoctrination

Taylor (2016, 3) argues that indoctrination is "a complex system of teaching in which actors with authority contribute to the production or reinforcement of closed-mindedness". The production of closed-mindedness can be due to features of the environment as well as the actions of those in authority. The insight that indoctrination takes place in systems represents a useful conceptual

advance over earlier accounts of indoctrination that focused narrowly on the relationship between teacher and student. It points to a possible relationship between indoctrination and insights about how power shapes what is thinkable for the individual, such as those by Bourdieu, Foucault, or Lukes (section 5.5).

Thinking in terms of systems illuminates the relationship between indoctrination and censorship. It has been suggested that indoctrination occurs when people have limited or no access to alternative ideas (Flew 1972; Moore 1972). Certainly such an environment is scarcely likely to promote open-mindedness, but as long as people remain within a tightly controlled milieu, we have no means of determining whether they are closed-minded or merely misled. It may be that on obtaining access to unbiased information, they revise their beliefs accordingly. The connection between censorship and indoctrination is that it takes time to become deeply attached to a belief. If I arrive at a particular understanding of the world on Tuesday and it is disconfirmed on Thursday, I will change my mind much more readily than I would for a belief I have held since childhood. Censorship ensures that beliefs are not challenged while they are still being formed. Classroom teachers are rarely charged with deciding textbook content, inviting assembly speakers, or stocking libraries. In an indoctrinatory system, all these people share some responsibility for promoting closed-mindedness.

There remains the question of how indoctrinatory systems impart beliefs. I have already suggested a few ways, but perhaps the most common is by the exercise of perceived intellectual authority. Children do not believe what their teachers tell them because they are gullible, as is sometimes supposed (Sperber et al. 2010), but because it is a reasonable thing to do. Even in highly indoctrinatory upbringings, parents and teachers tell children much about the world that is reliable, making it quite sensible to trust them on other matters. When all intellectual authorities are united in support of particular beliefs, children can hardly dissent. Hand (2002) argues that indoctrination involves imparting beliefs by bypassing reason. Since it is reasonable to trust intellectual authorities, he

argues that beliefs so imparted are not indoctrinated. Conversely, Taylor (2016) argues that appeal to intellectual authority is necessary for indoctrination. I think the disagreement can be resolved by recognising that the processes of assenting to a belief and of closing one's mind to alternatives need not happen simultaneously. Indeed, the process of closing the mind can only begin in earnest once a belief is accepted. It is much easier for the indoctrinator to achieve this closure if the student is not struggling against it. The exercise of perceived intellectual authority is an efficient way to secure this agreement.

5.3 Weapons of influence

Robert Cialdini (2007) argues that non-rational persuasion strategies rely on six main 'weapons of influence'. Because it is not possible for us to deal with our complex environment by thinking through every decision rationally, we rely on heuristics—mental shortcuts which usually produce good results. Two of Cialdini's weapons are particularly relevant to indoctrinatory systems. 'Social proof' is the tendency to judge what is right from the actions of others ('all these people can't be wrong!'). 'Commitment and consistency' is the tendency to behave consistently with our past actions, and to align our beliefs with our actions.

5.3.1 Social proof

Social pressure, including peer pressure, can be important to the maintenance of indoctrinatory systems. In a school system where most or all of the student body as well as the staff subscribe to the same belief system, the core beliefs will be difficult to challenge. When in a minority of one, there is a strong tendency for individuals to express agreement with the group, even when the group is obviously wrong (Asch 1956). Replications of Asch's experiment have not always found the same level of compliance. It appears that the compliance effect is strongest in cultures where the individual's conformity to and harmony with the group are highly valued, and where it is considered socially desirable to place the group's goals ahead of the individual's (Bond and Smith 1996). This

fits with intuitions about the institutional cultures where indoctrination is likeliest to occur.

Outward agreement with the group as a result of social pressure is not the same thing as believing what the group says, and indoctrination is concerned with *beliefs*. However, a minority of Asch's participants reported doubting their own senses rather than questioning the authority of the group. It may be that these individuals are most at risk of indoctrination. Even where compliance does not reflect internal assent, there are ways that conformity contributes to an indoctrinatory environment. The simplest is that dissenting views are not aired. The consideration of alternative ideas essential to open-mindedness is not possible where those ideas are unavailable. In the absence of alternatives, ideological statements can appear to be common-sense facts. Social comparison theory (Festinger 1954) suggests that individuals validate their opinions by comparison to others, particularly those most similar to themselves. An environment where particular beliefs are ubiquitous can give the impression that they must be right because they are held by everyone (or everyone who counts). There is an observable 'bandwagon effect' (Nadeau, Cloutier, and Guay 1993) where individual opinions tend to rally to the majority opinion.

Cialdini's theory of social proof does not require that the 'others' who share a given belief actually exist; it is sufficient that the individual believes they do. It may be that students in an indoctrinatory school harbour varying degrees of doubt, but if they are discouraged from expressing it, the effects of social 'proof' persist.

Compliance can also contribute to indoctrination by affecting the individual's self-perception. Cialdini (2007, 77) argues that "what those around us think is true of us is enormously important in determining what we ourselves think is true". Experiments demonstrate that people labelled 'charitable' subsequently donate more to charity (Kraut 1973) and those who are labelled environmentally friendly are more likely to act accordingly (Cornelissen et al.

2007). The effects of labelling can also be observed in the classroom. Children labelled neat and tidy litter less often than children whose teachers attempted to persuade them not to litter (Miller, Brickman, and Bolen 1975). The same study found that attributing to children the ability or motivation to succeed in mathematics is more successful than attempting to persuade children they possess these qualities.

Imagine a school where communism is the official (and almost universally held) ideology. In this school is a student, Amelie, who is not (yet) a committed communist. For reasons I have discussed, conformity pressures mean that Amelie does not express her doubts about communism. The other students, seeing that she is there and observing nothing amiss about her behaviour, attribute the label 'communist' to her. The other students' treatment of her gives Amelie feedback about herself which influences her to make her beliefs more consistent with their perceptions.

By themselves, homogenous student bodies are not necessarily indoctrinatory, but they can be a factor that contributes to closed-mindedness. On an account of indoctrination that does not recognise the role of systems, this might be considered an unfortunate state of affairs, but not indoctrination. On Taylor's (2016) systems account, by contrast, actors with authority are accountable for indoctrination whenever they contribute to the production or reinforcement of closed-mindedness in students. When those in authority over schools (politicians, school administrators) enact policies that make it less likely that students will have meaningful interactions with those who hold different beliefs, opinions, and values, they contribute to a system where indoctrination is more likely to occur. This is pernicious, especially where it creates a false appearance of consensus on controversial issues.

5.3.2 Commitment and consistency

<u>Induced compliance</u>

Numerous psychology experiments demonstrate that our behaviour can have a meaningful influence on our beliefs. When our beliefs and behaviour do not align, we experience cognitive dissonance. This can be eased either by changing the behaviour or the belief. Where it is not possible or desirable to change the behaviour, there is increased pressure on the belief. Induced compliance experiments (Elliot and Devine 1994; Festinger and Carlsmith 1959; Harmon-Jones 2000) demonstrate that where an individual is required to do or say something contrary to their private opinion, their private opinion often changes to match the required behaviour. Burns (2006) argues that religious studies teachers need to take this effect into account in order to avoid non-rationally influencing their students. Post-decision experiments (Frenkel and Doob 1976; Knox and Inkster 1968; Rosenfeld, Kennedy, and Giacalone 1986) also demonstrate that after making an irreversible decision, people come to believe in the rightness of that decision more strongly. In order to reduce cognitive dissonance, they bring their beliefs into line with their behaviour. As Cialdini argues, once we commit to a certain belief or course of action, we experience pressures to remain consistent with it.

Induced compliance experiments suggest another way peer pressure can contribute to an indoctrinatory system. Peer pressure can influence individuals to change their behaviour, which causes their beliefs to be pressured (by cognitive dissonance) into conformity with that behaviour. The strength of this effect depends on the extent to which individuals perceive their behaviour as voluntary. If a person feels that her behaviour is only because of peer pressure, she may rationalise away the dissonance ('I only did it because they made me'). In an indoctrinatory system, it is more likely that the student is looking to the group to see how to behave. In the Communist school, for example, 'I am a good Communist' is part of the students' identity. Departures from conformity would be seen as violations of being a 'good Communist'. The resulting dissonance would be resolved by conforming once more to the group.

In addition to leveraging the effects of peer pressure, those in authority can use induced compliance directly to influence beliefs non-rationally. Requiring students to make public commitments to a particular belief, or to participate in activities which assume the truth of those beliefs (or for which the rationale is explicitly based in a particular belief) are examples of induced compliance. The effect on students' beliefs will again depend on how far they see their behaviour as voluntary. Where school rules force students to do something, the rationalisation 'I only did it because I had to' is both plausible and readily available. If, however, those in authority convince students that following the rules is desirable—something they ought to *want* to do, or something that *good* people do—then it is likely that these beliefs and behaviours will be mutually reinforcing.

Some scholars have attempted to distinguish indoctrination from conditioning by arguing that indoctrination relates to *belief* while conditioning relates to *behaviour* (Green 1972; Wilson 1972). I do not think the two can be so neatly separated, because of the influence that behaviour has on subsequent belief. Because we are motivated to keep our beliefs and behaviour internally consistent, the two inform each other in a feedback loop. A school system that requires students to participate in activities consistent with a particular ideology, or for which the rationale is explicitly ideological, is contributing to the production or reinforcement of closed-mindedness.

Self-perception

In an indoctrinatory system, there are non-rational pressures to behave in accordance with the prevailing beliefs. I have argued that cognitive dissonance will cause those students who do not initially accept the ideology to modify their beliefs in its favour. A rival explanation, self-perception theory (Bem 1972) suggests people come to 'know' their own feelings by observing their own behaviour (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004). Fazio, Zanna, and Cooper (1977) put forward a persuasive synthesis of these theories, arguing that where initial

attitudes are weak, individuals look to their behaviour to inform their opinions (as self-perception theory predicts) while cognitive dissonance theory applies when pre-existing strong attitudes are present. This is relevant because it is likely that very young children arriving in an indoctrinatory system will never experience cognitive dissonance, because on many subjects they do not have preconceptions to challenge. Here, self-perception theory predicts that their behaviour will inform their beliefs.

<u>Foot-in-the-door techniques</u>

The shifts in belief demonstrated in forced compliance experiments are small. Participants rarely emerge from experiments exhibiting anything like the closed-mindedness associated with indoctrination. If, as I suggest, requiring behaviour consistent with a particular ideology can meaningfully contribute to indoctrination, it must be demonstrated how these small effects can lead to much larger ones.

In a memorable experiment (Freedman and Fraser 1966), participants were asked to erect a billboard saying 'DRIVE SAFELY' in their front gardens. The sign was large enough to obscure the front of their houses. Unsurprisingly, 83% of the control group refused. Two weeks earlier, the test group had agreed to display a three-inch square sign saying 'Be a safe driver'. Of the people who had made this commitment to road safety, 76% agreed to display the giant billboard. This is known as the foot-in-the-door effect, and it has been the subject of considerable research. Subsequent experiments have not found such a dramatic effect as Freedman and Fraser, but the effect itself is well established in a variety of contexts (Burger 1999). Burger's meta-analysis of foot-in-the-door experiments found it is likely to be most effective where, following the initial commitment, participants are explicitly labelled (as 'the sort of person who does this sort of thing'), where participants see their actions as conforming to the norm, and where the subsequent request is essentially a continuation of the original request.

Burger also noted circumstances under which the effect is weakened. When participants feel that they are under pressure that restricts their freedoms, there is 'reactance'—the participants resist this pressure. Similarly, where participants attribute their initial action to external pressure rather than their own free will, they were less likely to agree to subsequent requests. This finding is consistent with another fact about indoctrinatory systems: sometimes there are rebels.

Extrinsic motivators

If inducing compliance can contribute to a shift in beliefs, can this process be enhanced by the use of extrinsic rewards? From a cognitive dissonance point of view, large rewards are counterproductive because they enable the recipient to rationalise their behaviour as done only for the reward. Smaller rewards are more effective in securing attitude change. They do not provide a subjectively satisfying explanation for counter-attitudinal behaviour, so the recipient's dissonance must instead be resolved by changing the attitude (Festinger and Carlsmith 1959).

As Burger (1999) makes clear, attribution is also important. If the students perceive that their behaviour is only done in order to gain a reward, they will probably value the behaviour less. If, however, they think of the behaviour as something they chose for its own sake, with the reward peripheral to their decision, the desire for internal consistency will pressure their beliefs to match their behaviour. It is therefore those who say they were not motivated by the reward who may be the most affected by it, since they do not attribute their compliance to the reward.

Cialdini (2007, 92–93) makes much of the fact that rewards were used to extract desired behaviours from POWs in Chinese communist 'brainwashing' camps. He argues that the communists deliberately offered small incentives such as fruit and cigarettes so that POWs could not later rationalise their collaboration with the enemy as done merely for the reward; instead, they would attribute their

actions at least in part to their true beliefs. However, Edgar Schein, on whose account Cialdini relies, points out that for POWs these small items were highly desirable, and the Chinese sometimes used rewards to elicit co-operation from US soldiers "without caring whether they accepted communism or not" (Schein 1956, 160). Their collaboration, however induced, was a highly effective propaganda tool for influencing other US POWs (Ibid, 156). While often detrimental to intrinsic motivation, rewards are highly effective in securing external compliance. In an indoctrinatory school system, extrinsic motivators can help to make sure that students do not express dissent. This is turn solidifies the appearance that the beliefs are universally shared. Even if this does not change the minds of those who would otherwise have expressed dissent, it stops anyone else present from being infected by the rebels' opinions.

Cumulative effects

Every day in an indoctrinatory school can be viewed as another iteration of forced compliance, conformity, and foot-in-the-door experiments. Every day, students are required to behave consistently with the prescribed beliefs. With the passing of time, they are expected to make deeper commitments. While each individual action has a small influence, the effects are cumulative. They build up to years in which the students' behaviours and memories are dominated by their commitment to these beliefs.

The longer she spends in this process, the more the student finds that she has 'sunk costs' in the truth of her beliefs. It is the foundation of her relationships with others in the environment. If the belief system is exclusive, it may be that these relationships would not survive if she renounced it. Rejecting it would require her to accept that her teachers, parents, and respected elders have taught her a worldview she can no longer accept as true. It would also require her to believe that much of her effort has been of little value. It may be that membership of the group is important to her self-esteem and sense of purpose, so that if she rejects its truth claims she also loses much of her self-worth. Most people hold beliefs along the lines of 'I am not the sort of person that would

dedicate my life to a false belief system', 'My parents would not subject me to a misleading education', and 'My teachers are wise and would not teach me falsehoods'. Rejecting an indoctrinated ideology amounts to saying that these beliefs are to a large extent mistaken. That takes considerable intellectual courage, and it is understandable if there is more than a little resistance.

5.4 Social identity

Identity markers are cues indicating membership of a particular group. They are "the characteristics or identifiers people use in claiming or attributing" an identity (Kiely et al. 2001, 35). Positions on abortion rights and climate change, for example, have become identity markers for how Republicans and Democrats define themselves in the USA (Hart and Nisbet 2012). When beliefs act as identity markers, people are likely to resort to motivated reasoning to defend them. Thus, exposing committed Republicans to messages in favour of climate change mitigation can have a 'boomerang' effect, actually decreasing their support for such policies (Ibid).

Social identity theory (Tajfel 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1979) argues that when put into groups, humans have a tendency to denigrate the out-group and to display ethnocentrism. This effect occurs even when groups are wholly arbitrary; the presence of shared values and other identity markers strengthens the effect. These points have several consequences. Where students are grouped into a schooling system with a prevailing belief system, the distinctive beliefs become identity markers for the group. Cognitive dissonance theory predicts that this will lead to these beliefs being defended even in the face of disconfirmation, while social identity theory predicts that members will tend to denigrate those who do not share their identity markers. Thus an indoctrinatory system is likely to promote two different kinds of closed-mindedness: unreasonably strong commitment to particular beliefs, and prejudice against those who do not share them.

5.5 Power

Indoctrination requires an asymmetrical power relationship between indoctrinators and indoctrinatees. We may speak of totalitarian governments indoctrinating citizens, of the military indoctrinating recruits, or the mass media indoctrinating consumers, but it would be absurd to speak of the reverse. It is reasonable to say that indoctrination represents one instance of the exercise of power.

Lukes (2005) conceptualises power as existing in three dimensions. The first dimension is seen in external conflicts. When two individuals or groups set out to achieve incompatible aims, the outcome can be seen as a success or a defeat for each side. The side which prevails more often in observable conflicts can be said to have 'more' power. The second dimension is the power to control the agenda. In politics, for example, power consists not just in ensuring that the results of individual votes go in my favour (the first dimension), but also in ensuring that the matters which come to be debated are only those which are relatively innocuous to me. If I run a business whose profitability depends on generating large amounts of environmental pollution, I might enjoy the benefits of the second dimension of power by using my clout to prevent anti-pollution bills from reaching Parliament.

It is power's third dimension, however, that is most relevant to indoctrination:

> *A* may exercise power over *B* by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping, or determining his very wants. Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have—that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? (Lukes 2005, 27)

Successful indoctrination has exactly this effect. The indoctrinated are grateful to indoctrinators for leading them to the 'truth'. They resist attempts to correct their misconceptions, and insist that they are happy about their state.

Lukes initially defines power by saying "*A* exercises power over *B* when *A* affects *B* in a manner contrary to *B*'s interests" (2005, 37). Later, he concedes that this definition is inadequate, focusing narrowly on the exercise of power used to secure compliance to domination. For my purposes, however, Lukes' initial definition is sufficient because my concern is precisely with compliance to domination, and how indoctrination might be used to achieve it.

In order to determine whether the exercise of power is in one's interests, we must define what interests are. This inescapably requires value judgements, which leads Lukes to argue that the definition of power as domination is 'essentially contested'—reasonable people with different moral and political views may agree about the facts but disagree about where power lies. If we assume that people's interests are the same as their preferences, indoctrination cannot be an instance of domination—the indoctrinated do not want to have their minds changed. Lukes, however, takes a more radical position: "people's wants may themselves be a product of a system which works against their interests" (Lukes 2005, 38). He therefore speaks of 'real interests'—what people's preferences would be "were they able to make the choice" (Ibid). This leads to the methodological difficulty of establishing the relevant counterfactual. How can we say what a person would do without the effects of power? Lukes acknowledges that this is difficult, but suggests that such determinations are possible by looking at what happens in 'abnormal times', when intellectual subordination is diminished, and the mechanisms of power relaxed.

While judging an individual's real interests requires value judgements, some values are uncontroversial. Most people agree that it is in no one's interest to become a suicide bomber, so it is reasonable to say that recruits to al-Qa'eda and Islamic State participate in their own domination. In Britain, at least, it is now largely uncontroversial to say that gay people defending 'gay cure' therapy, students defending an education that denies them access to well-established

scientific and historical facts, and women who subject their daughters to female genital mutilation are also acting against their own interests.

While it is conceptually possible to indoctrinate someone into true beliefs, in practice indoctrination tends to involve beliefs which are false and harmful. If we accept that it is always in people's interests to be appropriately open-minded, then indoctrination is against their interests regardless of what beliefs are indoctrinated. Both Callan and Arena (2009) and Taylor (2016) make the point that indoctrination compromises not just knowledge but understanding. This is in part because developing a deep understanding of any subject requires one to pursue seriously information and lines of argument that might appear to cast doubt on one's position. Young-Earth creationists do not only have false beliefs, they also have fundamental misunderstandings about geological and biological processes.

5.5.1 Hegemony

When ideologies achieve cultural dominance, they become hegemonic (Gramsci 1971). Gramsci, an Italian Communist Party official imprisoned by the Mussolini regime, developed the concept of hegemony as an explanation of how the ruling classes secure consent to govern. Consent is secured not just through force and violence, he argued, but by making ideology appear as natural and inevitable. In this way ideologies can achieve the status of facts, appearing as taken-for-granted truths. In the course of my interviews, Mike gave an excellent example of hegemony. Describing a non-Christian student at his ACE school, Mike recalled:

> I was like, "Blimey, you know, is this kid alright? Is he, is he all there?" …
> A lot of us used to think, you know, "Well he can't be very well if he
> doesn't believe in Jesus".

Belief in Jesus was so pervasive at Mike's school that unbelief was almost incomprehensible. Mike and his classmates resorted to mental illness in a bid to

explain it. Where an ideology is hegemonic, alternatives become unthinkable. Hegemony can arise when alternative ways of seeing the world are simply unavailable. It can also be produced by marshalling scientific evidence to make ideology appear as indisputable fact; witness the way science has historically been used to 'prove' the inferiority of various ethnic groups, justifying existing systems of oppression (Gould 1996).

5.6 Indoctrination in ACE schools

A consequence of my outcome-based account of indoctrination is that it is not possible to determine whether indoctrination occurs just by looking at a school's procedures or the content of its lessons. There are various methods which I argue are likely to result in indoctrination, and I highlight a few in this section. In some ways, it matters little whether indoctrination occurs. As Hand (2003, 96) argues, "Teaching which *would* constitute indoctrination *if* it were successful is objectionable *whether it is successful or not*". Domination does not only occur in Lukes' third dimension, where power shapes beliefs and desires. It can also be found in cases of straightforward coercion, and forcing individuals into religious practice against their wills is no more acceptable than indoctrination.

5.6.1 Biblical inerrancy

Indoctrination is the production or perpetuation of closed-mindedness. It follows that any system of teaching which presupposes knowledge of a fixed, absolute truth must be indoctrination if it succeeds in its aims at all. The doctrine of inerrancy (that the Bible is wholly without error or contradiction) is the underpinning presupposition of the ACE curriculum and schools that use it. The Bible is presumed to be God's Word and to hold the answer to every question about how to live (Hill 1990, 130). Donald Howard calls it an instruction manual for life (1979, 268) and it is referred to as such in PACEs (e.g. *Science 1095*, 6-7). PACEs regularly contain statements such as:

> If a person says something that does not agree with what God has said in the Holy Bible, then we know the person is wrong … Some science books have mistakes because people have written them, and people make mistakes. However, there are no mistakes in God's Book, the Holy Bible. (*Science 1048*, 19)

As Long (1996, 7) argues, "The dogma of inerrancy is a tool of indoctrination which rules out any idea of openness, diversity or dialogue in education". If absolute truth is known with certainty, as the PACEs claim, then any competing truth claim is known to be false *a priori*. The only value in understanding alternative views is in understanding how to defend against them. Any argument, no matter how well-evidenced, can be comprehensively refuted just by labelling it 'unbiblical'.

5.6.2 Defence mechanisms

Defence mechanisms are features of belief systems that render them unfalsifiable (or at least immune to opposing argument) (Boudry and Braeckman 2011). A defence mechanism regularly employed by ACE is that "sin renders a person incapable of reasoning to a valid conclusion" (Johnson 1986, 163). Versions of this argument appear in various PACEs (e.g. *Wisdom*, 24; *Social Studies 106,* 18; *Basic Old Testament Survey 109*, 3). Such attitudes are evident in Alan Peshkin's ethnography of a fundamentalist school, particularly from a pastor who told him "No matter how good a person you are, you will misrepresent my school because you don't have the Holy Spirit in you" (Peshkin 1986, 12). Susan Rose recounts how an ACE school principal reacted to a critical *Time* magazine article by saying "Of course the article's negative, it's ungodly" (1988, 124).

I often heard this argument growing up, sometimes echoing Dennett's stronger formulation: "human reasoning is deceptive, weak, and worthless" (1988, 17). People in my school said that if parts of my faith did not make sense to me, I still should not doubt, because God was so big that I should not expect to be able to

understand. As *Science 1109* (p. 5) puts it, "Man should never trust his own reasoning—his reasoning may be incorrect because man's reasoning is not God's reasoning".

This line of argument renders the beliefs unfalsifiable on their own terms. It also means that all outsiders' opinions can be summarily dismissed. In one PACE, students read a summary of atheism, agnosticism, pantheism, polytheism, and materialism. Following this, there is just one exercise for the student to complete:

> Complete this statement:
>
> (1)   These views are the views of _____.
> (*Basic Old Testament Survey 109*, 19)

The correct answer is "unbelievers"—all the student needs to know on the subject.

5.6.3 Hell

The PACEs contain reasonably frequent reminders of the existence of hell. In *English 1121* and *Social Studies 1087*, students read Jonathan Edwards' sermon "Sinners in the hands of an angry God" ("God … holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked" [*English 1121,* 18]). In order to grasp the full significance of this, one must remember that salvation in evangelical theology is primarily a question of *belief*. If you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is the son of God, and that God raised him from the dead, then you shall be saved.

Though it was not necessarily a sin to have doubts, everybody I knew agreed doubts were undesirable. They were sent by the devil, or leftover evidence of my sinful nature. Doubts were dangerous, because if entertained, they could

114

result in losing faith altogether, and that (if permanent) would lead to hell. If a doubt reared its head, the best strategy was to do everything possible to push it out of my mind, and to avoid the source of doubt in future. When maintaining faith is a matter of life and death, open-minded consideration of alternative views is unlikely.

5.6.4 Pedagogy

Reviewing ACE's history PACEs, Fleming and Hunt claim "the information provided is so skeletal that real understanding of the cause and effect of events seems impossible in most cases" (1987, 523). Most curriculum reviews of ACE note its reliance on fill-in-the-blank exercises and recall activities. Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of Learning (Krathwohl 2002) clarifies that there is a conceptual gap between remembering and understanding. The ACE system, which consists almost entirely of the repeating isolated facts, does not measure student understanding. Its exclusive focus on recall implies that remembering is the totality of learning, or at least it is all that is valued.

Indoctrination is not simply a matter of producing fixed beliefs; it is also detrimental to understanding (Taylor 2016). ACE, fixated as it is on facts, ignores the project of ensuring that students build up a coherent picture of how these facts are related. Some students may develop such understandings, but there is no scaffolding built into the curriculum to encourage this. This is conducive to producing students with rigid, black-and-white worldviews, for whom all knowledge consists of discrete propositions that can be classified as true or false.

ACE's history PACEs demonstrate how indoctrination corrupts understanding as well as knowledge. It is not just that, as curriculum reviewers have noted, the PACEs sometimes contain incorrect information. ACE relies on a naïve realist epistemology (Long 1996, 62). It therefore assumes that history is the study of facts, which are naturally occurring rather than socially constructed (Long 1996,

251-252; *Social Studies UK1085*, 4). According to ACE's historical narrative, civilisations thrive when they obey God, and are destroyed when they turn from him (Johnson 1987). Harry Brighouse (2005) calls ACE's view "a kind of Christian version of the Stalinist approach to history but without the intellectual subtlety". The resulting narrative says that both the Roman and British empires thrived because they embraced Christianity and declined as they turned from Christian morality. The greatness of the United States is because it was founded on biblical values. PACE authors show unrestrained admiration for colonialism, which is taken as evidence of God's blessing (e.g. *Social Studies UK1091*, 2; *English 1142–1144*). Such a view of history relies at best on a selective reading. Inevitably, it compromises students' understanding of what historians do as well as furnishing them with a misleading view of world events.

ACE science relies on the same naïve realist epistemology, in which scientists conclusively prove things by observation and experiment. The theory of evolution is therefore unscientific (because it cannot be definitively proved). In attempting to discredit evolution, however, the PACEs distort what evolutionary theory says. They claim, that if evolution were true, dogs should give birth to cats (*Science 1096*, 18) or birds should change into frogs (*Social Studies 1097*, 11), and that the discovery of a live plesiosaur would refute evolution (*Science 1099*). This form of creationism attempts to make biblical inerrancy hegemonic by giving it the appearance of scientific 'proof'. Again, the attempted indoctrination results in distorted understandings as well as false beliefs.

A related criticism of ACE pedagogy is the lack of problem solving and critical thinking exercises. I have sometimes wondered if this is a deliberate action on ACE's part. If you want students to hold their beliefs steadfastly, depriving them of the skills to question those beliefs is an effective way to go about it. Ironically, Donald Howard accuses public schools of doing just this, preparing students for "the coming totalitarian government", adding "For a people to be prepared for slavery, it is necessary only that they not be independent thinkers" (Howard 1979, 285). There is no need to resort to conspiracy theories to explain

ACE's approach, however. It is more likely that the PACEs simply reflect their authors' inflexible view of knowledge and learning. Regardless of the reasons for ACE's lack of inquiry-based activities, the fact remains that students who are not taught or encouraged to ask questions will be less likely to do so.

5.6.5 Induced compliance

ACE schools start the day with a group Bible reading and act of worship. Many of them also recite pledges of allegiance to the kingdom of Jesus Christ (or the Christian flag) and to the Bible (ACE 2010a, 143). Failure to participate is a punishable offence (Ibid, 101). At least some ACE schools issue what are effectively contracts for students. The ACE *Administration Manual* (2012, 91) contains a model "Standard of Conduct" for new students to sign, which includes the following questions:

> Do you attend church regularly? Where?
> Are you a Christian? How do you know?
>
> Do you accept the Bible as God's Word and submit yourself to its principles as final authority?
>
> Do you sincerely pledge allegiance to the Christian and national flags? …
>
> Will you promise not to draw, wear, or display in any way anti-Christian symbols?

At my school, students over 12 had to sign an annual charter. For the 1997/1998 school year, this reads:

> I desire to be at [school].
>
> I am bringing myself into agreement with the Lord under my parents' direction that it is right for me to be at [school].
>
> I submit to the Principal and staff of [school] as they stand in place of my parents in authority over me while I am at school.
>
> I intend to set a high standard in my looks and behaviour for the younger students to imitate.

I set my heart to work hard to fulfill my potential in my studies.

I agree to abide by the uniform rules and standards.

I set my heart to pray about my future and to seek God's will for my life. I realise that this will require me to take decisions and make changes in the way I am now and I commit to these things in the knowledge that as I do so I am building towards that future.

I intend to serve [school] this year in the following ways: I will [three lines were included for the student to complete]

I commit to a regular prayer and Bible study time.

Since most ACE students are Christians on arrival, it is unlikely that participating in declarations of faith causes them cognitive dissonance. For them, these activities serve as reinforcers and strengtheners. A doubting student, however, would experience dissonance over the gap between her private misgivings and public affirmations of belief. To the extent that she accepts her participation in these actions, they would have a non-rational influence on her beliefs.

5.6.6 Rewards

ACE operates a privilege system. High achieving students can attain three levels of reward (ACE 2010a, 118–119). Students on the lowest level, 'A' privilege, must memorise the month's Bible passage, complete a minimum number of PACEs, and not have received more than 20 minutes of detention the previous week. In return, they receive 5 extra minutes of break time each day and one afternoon of extracurricular activity per week. Students on the higher 'C' and 'E' levels of privilege get longer breaks and increased freedom in return for better behaviour and increased academic achievement. 'E' privilege students receive, by ACE standards, an enormous amount of latitude—they can leave their seats without permission, and even leave school premises for approved activities. To receive 'E' privilege, students must participate in 'church-related service' (which my school and the *Procedures Manual* [ACE 1987, III E-5] referred to as

"Christian service"). While not all qualifying activities are specifically Christian (visiting the elderly, for example), most are.

One rationale for the privilege system is to increase students' academic motivation. The evidence strongly suggests this will be counterproductive, because extrinsic rewards negatively impact intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 1999; 2001; Lepper, Keavney, and Drake 1996). The question remains, however, whether ACE's system of rewarding students for demonstrations of Christianity increases their religious commitment. As argued in section 5.3, this depends in part on whether students perceive the rewards as large or small, because large rewards tend to increase short-term compliance while harming long-term motivation. 'A' privilege clearly provides only small rewards—the extracurricular activity 'reward' would be part of the normal timetable at most schools. 'E' privilege, however, offers quite substantial rewards within an ACE context. It is likely that the effects will vary depending on the student. Whatever its consequences for individuals' faith, the system is likely to be effective in silencing dissent.

I was on 'E' privilege every week for most of my ACE tenure. I am certain that had I been asked in 1997, I would have told you that memorising scriptures and 'Christian service' things I did because they were good and right, not to be rewarded. They were important to my self-image. I believed I was a good person, and good people do good things for their intrinsic value, not for what they can get in return. This meant that I rationalised my behaviour as something I would have done anyway. I think ACE's rewards and punishments effectively manipulated my beliefs about myself as well as my behaviour. I did, however, regard completing PACEs as something I did only for the reward, and my motivation to complete them was very low.

5.6.7 Indoctrinatory systems

Many ACE schools are inseparable from their sponsoring churches. They are referred to as church-schools, and often the pastor is the head of both church

and school. Several participants argued that the church and school were all the same thing, and it would not be possible to make sense of their experiences by artificially attempting to study their schooling while ignoring their churchgoing. Some participants were unable to remember what they had learned in church and what they had learned in the school. Some church-schools even extend their influence into the home, with restrictions on students' television watching or music listening (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2007; 2009). Even where this is not the case, the purpose of the New Christian Schools is to provide continuity between the values of the school and the home, so it is assumed that these are similar (Baker and Freeman 2005).

With very few exceptions, New Christian Schools only employ Christian staff (Walford 1995, 17). ACE's *Administration Manual* also urges schools to "Keep the student body as pure as possible!" (ACE 2012, 125), and their admissions policies mean non-Christian parents are unlikely to apply. A typical example states: "we would expect at least one of the parents to be a practising Christian, and both parents should be happy for their children to be educated within a Christian framework as outlined in the School's Statement of Faith" (Maranatha Christian School 2015, 16). Of the ACE schools Walford observed, 42% did not accept non-Christian applicants at all (1995, 24).

Alan Peshkin argues that the fundamentalist school he observed, Bethany Baptist Academy, was a 'total institution', starting with Goffman's definition of the total institution as a place "of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (Goffman 1980, cited in Peshkin 1986, 261). Although Bethany Baptist Academy was not a residential facility, Peshkin argues it fits every other aspect of this definition. Unlike other forms of total institution such as prisons, Bethany's citizens did not wish for greater contact with the outside world, and they do not regard its socialisation practices as 'mortifying'. Wagner (1990) argues 'total institution' is not an apt description because Christian schools compromise with

the external culture in myriad ways, but Peshkin acknowledges this permeability with the outside world. He also records the pastor saying that the degree to which Bethany succeeds in creating a 'total atmosphere' is largely dependent on how supportive the students' homes are. However, Bethany's "aspiration to totality extends to most all behavior and thought, everywhere, at all times, throughout the entire life of everyone affiliated in any capacity with their total institution. That, indeed, is totality!" (Peshkin 1986, 265).

In total institutions, the prevailing ideology becomes hegemonic. Both Peshkin (1986) and Rose (1988) detail the extent of censorship in the Christian schools they observed. Censorship is a big part of the sales pitch for ACE schools; parents are told "We must protect our most precious possessions from the 'garbage' that is destroying a generation" by making sure they "know nothing about evil" (ACE 2013a, 15). Walter (2005) also describes censorship at an English ACE school, where staff said they would not put *Harry Potter* in the school library because "It is a book without proper values".

The total institution is the ideal type of an indoctrinatory system. Within its sphere of influence, its ideologies are unchallenged. In practice, this totality is never completely achieved, but my participants describe very controlling environments. Students have little choice but to believe because alternatives are suppressed. It always surprises me that some people doubt whether students actually believe what they are taught in ACE schools. What else would they do? While three strong characters among my participants said they rejected their school's teachings, the rest expressed sentiments similar to Kaye's: "I was young. I was impressionable … I just believed everything they said to me". It makes little difference how open-minded one is if alternative ideas are inaccessible. In practice, hegemony can easily lead to indoctrination because (as Mike's incredulity at his classmate's unbelief demonstrates) one ideology becomes so normalised that alternatives seem implausible.

Chapter 6 ACE's strengths

I loved my ACE school to begin with. I felt the staff cared about me personally and that the students cared for each other in a way that was more like an extended family than a school. Mike recalled being stunned by the contrast with his previous school, where he had been severely bullied:

> They had a lot of compassion, had a lot of love. They were very um, it was very family-orientated, and I really (1.5) I, I suppose I, I excelled really at the school …
>
> It kinda blew me away, like, I remember the first time I got a migraine in school um and I sat down at a chair, and you know all these kids started coming out of nowhere saying "Oh can I pray for you or sit with you? Are you OK? Are you feeling alright?" … I'd say that was a really good, positive thing for me actually was the er, yeah, was the care that people put across to you, and especially some of the kids. I couldn't believe how nice they were … It was just a kinda nurturing, loving environment.

It would be difficult to over-emphasise how different this atmosphere is from that which obtains in many large mainstream schools. I remember it as almost intoxicating at first. To me, the near-silent learning centre with its quiet music and supervisors who had known me from birth imbued the school with a sense of peace. Everyone was extraordinarily polite. The idea that ACE schools are like families is one CEE is keen to promote. One promotional video includes a student from an ACE school saying:

> I like the school because of all the individual attention you get from the teachers, and all the children there become like brothers and sisters. (CEE 2012a, 13:00)

Charlotte again described a "family-like atmosphere", and appreciated how the lack of defined year groups and the small size of the school encouraged friendships between children of different ages. Harry agreed:

> So you're six, and you're friends with this thirteen year old, and you played football with them because they put up with you getting in the

way of their football game. Like, it's just a lovely, really nice thing at that school that looking back on you really appreciate.

Staff at ACE schools are often volunteers. Salaries, if they are paid at all, are frequently minimal. I found out after leaving that my supervisors had been claiming benefits the entire time they worked at the school. Lily thought her supervisors were paid "fifty or sixty pounds" per week. Joanna noted that this inspired a particular motivation from supervisors:

> The teachers that were there were very mo— I think they were very, like, keen to be there because i— because it was a Christian environment, because they believed in it … I don't really know that they were getting even paid that much, but they were kind of doing it because they wanted to do it. And you, you really kind of got that from them.

Peshkin (1986, 86–88) observed a similar dedication from the low-paid staff at Bethany Baptist Academy, who viewed their work as a calling rather than as a job. It is interesting that the ACE system benefits from intrinsically-motivated staff while insisting on the necessity of extrinsic motivators for students. Harry added that most staff had children of their own attending the school, inspiring even greater commitment.

Several participants appreciated the low ratio of students to staff. Stephen noted that this went some way to mitigating what he saw as poor teaching. The smallness of the schools meant also that students could forge close relationships with staff, as Harry emphasised:

> Teachers were often parents, so [*Jenna: right*] um like, I just really like the fact that I know my friends' parents quite well as a consequence of that. I relate to them in a way that most people wouldn't in quite a, like, obviously, it's a respectful relationship, but now it's much more of a peer-to-peer relationship. But like it's:: (1.4) I feel like it promotes engagement with a family rather than like breakdown between generations.

Many of these advantages are as a result of the small size of ACE schools, rather than being distinctive of ACE. Harry, for instance, felt that he had been given more opportunities in music and drama than he would have at a larger school where there could have been a less "supportive atmosphere", or these activities might have been reserved for particularly gifted students.

It is not just the small size of the schools that create these positive effects however. It is also their Christian ethos. Staff are particularly driven because they are doing God's work. The family atmosphere is furthered by appeal to the notion that everyone in the school is part of the 'family of God'. I remember noticing how polite other students were at my school. No request was ever made or granted without the requisite pleases and thank-yous, and when children filed out of the learning centre, the first boy to reach the door usually held it open for everyone else. Three participants commented on the absence of bullying in their experience. Whatever sociological explanations might be offered for this good behaviour, there is no doubt that within the schools the explicit rationale is that this is how *Christians* behave.

On my arrival at the school, I felt that the kindness, politeness, and obedience I observed around me were hallmarks of a proper, lived Christianity. These other children, uncorrupted by secular influences, were acting as Christians should, and I aspired to be like them because I wanted to be a good Christian.

6.1 Pro-ACE participants

Seven participants (Lois, Gideon, Mike, William, Harry, Tim, and Joanna) I recruited specifically because I understood they thought positively of ACE. Once I interviewed Mike, it became clear that his positive view had been somewhat changed by subsequent experiences (Chapter 10), and Lois was home-schooled, leaving five with mostly positive views of ACE schooling. Harry spoke about his views very much in the abstract; there were few anecdotes in his interview. Consequently, I asked the others to tell me stories, and the resulting stories,

rather than emphasising ACE specifics, tended to emphasise the ways their school experience was much like any other:

> Jenna: Could you tell me a story perhaps that illustrates, um, something positive you experienced while you were at the school.

> William: (2.1) Er (2.2) well ((*laughs*)) obviously had lots of fun with friends. Um (2.4) er I don't, well, it's just, just normal, normal kind of childhood stories of er: y'know friends playing together and, and stuff.

Joanna struggled to give details about positive aspects of her experience, but said it was "always really good fun. I have really good memories of it". When I asked her for stories, she talked about cookery lessons and playing netball and rounders. Gideon also focused on the normality:

> I struggle to imagine that it was really any different to most people's experience … of school in general [*Jenna: right*]. Yeah, I mean a— if I think about the things that I cared about (1.3) Um, we always used to play football when, when, when we came in in the mornings.

Philip, once he had mentioned how he did not experience the social exclusion he had suffered at his previous school and praised the public speaking lessons, said "It was school, at the end of the day … Most of the rest I would regard as fairly neutral". Of his attitude to the school's strict rules, he said "Personally, that's what I think in every authoritarian situation I've been in". For Philip, the ACE school was just one of many such places.

Harry and Gideon also both described how they had found ways around the learning centre rules.

> Harry: Dividers are no obstacle to:: annoying or flirting with people that sit around you, so ((*laughs*)). S— merely a, a, you know, an encouragement to be more creative in the way that you interact

with people … Just cos you're sat in a, in a little compartment doesn't mean that you're isolated by that fact.

I suggested Harry must have received a lot of demerits. He replied, laughing: "Uh:: no. I didn't get caught as often as I might". Although three other participants referred to passing notes, Harry and Gideon described flouting the rules more daringly:

> Gideon: I remember [my best friend] and I … had a system whereby if you pull up twice on the desk, that was the signal that we needed to have a quick chat. Um, so it was like two pull-ups, lean back when the teacher's looking the other way, quick chat, back in.

Where those with negative experiences of the school recalled rigid discipline and a restrictive environment, Gideon's experience of school "was a sort of continual (1.0) er continual testing of boundaries". Those with positive views were also the only ones who described mocking the PACEs while they were still at school:

> Harry: Almost everyone that's done PACEs laughs at them in certain areas. Like even, e:ven the most hardcore homeschooler must, like, agree that parts of them are ludicrous.

> Philip: The Wisdom packs basically feature cartoons, um, between a group you were supposed to emulate to, um, and a group you were supposed to avoid … My friends in school we just spent our time mocking a lot of that.

> Joanna: We would like, on a regular basis just mock the little cartoons in the PACEs because they were just so cheesy and just so kind of (1.0) weird.

All six of the favourable participants made remarks along these lines. Counterintuitively, it may be that these participants were able to maintain positive views of ACE in part because they took the curriculum less seriously than those with negative views. I do remember mocking the PACEs while I was

still a student, but I was offended by the PACE cartoons, where these participants sounded wryly amused. Harry also remembered occasions when, in order to pass a PACE test, it had been necessary to write answers with which he disagreed. Harry thought this was unimportant (even beneficial, because it showed him the existence of different beliefs), while Stephen had a very different response:

> I actually found it quite upsetting to have to write the wrong answers in the book. And it got to the point where I just disengaged from, from the material. I, I just robot-like wrote in what was necessary to pass the test (1.5) because there was no point knowing it.

An important difference here is that Harry appeared to be referring to occasional (mainly theological) differences with the curriculum, whereas Stephen had by this point concluded that ACE's entire approach to science had "no coherency" and "no systematic framework".

In Chapter 14 I discuss the perception, widespread among my participants, that favouritism is common in ACE schools. If this is indeed the case, one would expect those with the most positive experiences of ACE to be those who were treated favourably. These participants felt able to mock their PACEs and break learning centre rules apparently with little punishment. Other participants found the rules totally inflexible. As Andrew put it, in the offices: "You couldn't move. You move, you get a demerit".

6.2 Christian distinctiveness

Interestingly, the Christian component of ACE schooling was rarely highlighted as a positive by participants, even those with a positive view of ACE. Only Lois, who was home-schooled, brought it up first when asked what she saw as the positive aspects of her education:

> I'm still a practising Christian, so for me like the scripture memory was the biggest thing that I think has sort of stuck with me [*Jenna: mmhmm*]

through the years, so just all the different scriptures that we learned on so many different subjects. I sort of find that as I go through life I face different challenges. Those scriptures come back to my mind at the right time.

This is almost certainly an instance where my participants are unrepresentative of ACE students more widely, but it was nevertheless interesting that so few participants chose to highlight it. Of the non-Christian participants, only Joanna mentioned the Christian component favourably:

I guess it [ACE] is very positive. Like the Christian message is always there all the way th— through, so that's, that's quite positive cos I guess it gives you some principles and things to kind of think about, and that's, that's always good.

I asked her why this was, given that she is no longer a believer. She replied "I love my family, and a lot of my family, um, still are very strongly Christian … I think that there's a lot of good in Christianity". Gideon, by contrast, argued that the positive values were not distinctively Christian ("It could've been a Hindu school and I believe that the same principles and values could still have been imparted"), while Philip, a Christian, was ambivalent: "To be honest it [the Christian ethos] wasn't a selling point; it wasn't a disadvantage".

Harry, who had retained the faith of his childhood, nevertheless did not initially raise any spiritual aspects when asked about the positive aspects of his schooling. I asked why that was:

(1.1) Yeah. I guess I'm thinking about it more of an educational perspective rather than a:: life as a whole? … I am a Christian and I'm still a practising Christian now, and I do value the: um, the input that gave me? [*Jenna*: *Mm*] But I would see it in a much more broad sense as I do think the school built good character … Looking back I think that is fundamentally important … I look at the lives of, um (1.3) the group of friends I have from school, and, like, you can see that there's been really solid character input, um, in them.

While not all participants experienced ACE's character training positively (section 11.3), Harry spoke about it repeatedly. He also said that most of his conversations about his schooling were with non-Christians, so he would "use character language rather than religious language", although later he expressed appreciation for the scripture memorisation at his school.

6.3 ACE distinctiveness

Every ACE student is equipped with a goal chart. On this chart, students write the number of pages they intend to complete in each PACE the following day. On completing the goal, they cross off the goal and set a new one for the following day. Any incomplete goals are set as homework, which incentivises students to work quickly since they can avoid homework entirely by completing all their goals. The rationale for this is that students learn to take responsibility for their own work (ACE 2010a, 88–92).

There is good evidence that appropriately challenging goals enhance student achievement (Hattie 2009, 163–167), and those participants who had learned to set suitable goals were grateful for this aspect of their education. Eight participants mentioned ACE's goal system favourably, saying it had given them the ability to set meaningful targets as adults. Jayne, who was otherwise overwhelmingly critical of ACE and her school, said:

> I would say it's almost to the point of outstanding (1.3) and it kinda pains me to say this, a little bit [*Jenna, laughing: right*]. But (1.4) the fact that I was in a position to (2.0) see what needed to be done and break it down into goals that were achievable has had a very good influence on my professional life.

Nathan acknowledged that "There's all sorts of ways it can go wrong" but that in his case the goal setting had been implemented well and helped him. He contrasted this with his experience as a secondary school teacher, where students were supposed to have homework diaries checked by a form tutor: "Often that isn't something that happens very rigorously; they're not used that

often; often homework slips, it's very difficult to chase up; teachers avoid setting homework because of it".

Only Caleb expressed strong disagreement with the goal-setting system. He said monitors changed his goals if they were not adequate, leaving him with no agency. Since students have to take home incomplete goals for homework, "realistic goals were punished, and unrealistic goals were punished. There was no escape".

Beyond this, there was no consensus among my participants about any positives of ACE. Eight participants said they enjoyed working in an office, although ten said they did not, sometimes quite vehemently (Jeremiah: "If you want to … teach kids stuff, you can't have them just fucking blinkered"). Six participants said the PACE system had taught them to learn independently, although this was quite a qualified endorsement from some of them, and is somewhat offset by those participants who felt it had exactly the opposite effect. Five said ACE had helped their grammar (English PACEs focus intensively on traditional grammar exercises).

6.4 Drawbacks

I noted in Chapter 3 that Harry did not say anything that might be construed as critical of his school without arguing that it could also be interpreted as a strength. In this regard, he was almost a mirror image of Caleb, who found nothing positive in his ACE experience. When I asked him to think of positives, his answers were initially facetious ("It's a great talking point in pubs on a Friday night"). He conceded that ACE's speed-reading computer programme had helped him, and he suggested that aspects of ACE's structured self-study had similarities to the Open University, with which he had successfully completed several higher education courses. He quickly added that these were not "taught desperately well by ACE" and were not "unique to ACE". From here, Caleb moved the conversation to ways in which he thought his education would have

been better at a mainstream school. In the end, I took to suggesting some positives to test his response:

> Jenna: It could be:: a sense that the teachers were particularly devoted to the s— to the school because they felt it was their calling. Or it could be that there was a sense of community that came from the shared faith of the school, uh or a lack of bullying because of that …
>
> Caleb: You say something like the sense of community [*Jenna: yeah*]. (1.3) Flip that coin, and you've got isolationism. (1.1) And when you talk about devotion to: the school slash church slash, you know, whatever going on. That's actually: could be flipped as insularity and obsession, and closed cultishness.

I believe the participants like Harry and Gideon who say their schooling contributed to a sense of security growing up. At the same time, my own feeling is closest to those of Caleb, Cain, and Erin, who struggled to think of anything positive to say about their experience. Even the first 18 months or so in the school, during which I was extremely happy, confirmed in me many beliefs which later caused me great unhappiness. Early in my research, my PhD supervisor asked me if there was anything good I took from the experience. I replied that there had been no bullying at my school. On further reflection, I have realised that I bullied several students during my time there, so that cannot be a positive.

Caleb was not alone in feeling that the positive things about his ACE school were merely the flipsides of the harmful aspects. Alice said she had not considered her ACE experience negative until she became a teacher herself many years later:

> You are in a world that you don't leave very often. You're in a world that's very loving. Very caring. Very cotton-woolly. Very controlling. Um, you mix with the church kids. You go to church with the church kids. You go on holiday with the church kids. You learn with the kids. And it feels a very safe place, and it's manufactured that way. So it's almost like a drug. As long as there's nothing too upsetting, you might not wanna break out.

Like several other participants, Susan described the school as like a family, but she did not mean it as positively as some. She said that on her arrival this "tight-knit" sense made her feel like an "outsider":

> Susan: It also means that um all the good points you get with a family you also get all the bad points. So um, nothing is separated from the school in your home life. So um, your home life is essentially the school's business as well so you can't do anything out o— outside of school without the school knowing about it …
>
> Jenna: It sounds like you're describing quite a lot of control.
>
> Susan: Yes. Um when a— when I say family, think of it like you've got lots of um very involved aunt and uncles essentially instead of teachers [*Jenna: mm*]. Aunts and uncles. So you'd get the same sort of level as of discipline as well like you might from your parents and things. Um (1.7) probably, possibly more than your parents ((*laughing*)) thinking about it.

Some positives the participants raised had no obvious drawbacks. Success in sports, good quality lessons, excellent teachers, and meaningful friendships are all real benefits that some participants gained from their ACE schooling. Interestingly, however, the majority of positive points raised are not distinctive to ACE or to faith schools. Some are distinctive to small schools (the sense of community and knowing everybody), while others could be found at any good school.

Chapter 7 Perceptions of education

The clearest divisions between participants were over the quality of education they had received. All participants' schools combined PACE work in the morning with supplementary afternoon lessons. Participants who were generally happy with their schooling experience were also much more positive about the supplementary lessons their schools provided. Joanna, Gideon, Harry, and Philip described dedicated, involved teachers and excellent learning opportunities. The majority were less generous:

> Jenna: What do you think you missed out on by attending an ACE school rather than a mainstream one?
>
> Cain: My education.
>
> Kaye: A decent education.
>
> Stephen: A quality education.

Nathan, who has worked as a secondary school teacher, spoke at length about his ACE experience's deficiencies (as compared with the state schools he has experienced) in English, science, history, geography, religious studies, physical education, art, design technology, and extracurricular activities. He also lamented his ACE school's lack of resources:

> I was amazed when I first went into a state school. So you see, they've got all the machinery, they've got, I mean there were lasers, and all sorts, it was insane!

Others who did not use that particular question to voice their reservations about their education were elsewhere uncomplimentary, such as Alice:

> When I changed [to the ACE school], I have no memory of learning … I think that my brain went to sleep. (1.3) The:: ability to build on previous learning experience, to develop my mind, to grow (1.8) it fell asleep.

Alice, like Nathan, is a teacher and contrasted her experience of ACE with her current ideas about educational best practice. Andrew also had classroom teaching experience and Susan was in the process of completing an education degree, and they both talked about how ACE is out of step with currently dominant theories of learning.

A frequent problem mentioned was that staff tended to be volunteers from the churches associated with the schools, so the quality of additional lessons could be quite uneven. Sometimes a particular subject stopped abruptly when a particular teacher ceased to be available. My school briefly had an arrangement with a local secondary school to use a science laboratory for one afternoon each week. This ended when the science teacher left the church. Thereafter a keen amateur taught practical science in a kitchen. One parent volunteered for a period of perhaps half a term to give us poetry lessons—I remember she told us nothing about scansion but insisted that verse had to rhyme or "it's not really a poem".

Towards the end of my time at the school, the number of volunteers grew smaller and the finances more stretched, and I remember several afternoons where planned lessons were cancelled without notice, leaving us to complete PACEs instead. Thomas characterised his school's supplementary curriculum this way:

Thomas:	It was all very … (1.2) very short sort of periods of time. So we did, like, a little bit of art … I'm trying to remember how long it lasted … It felt like a couple of weeks … You know s— the teacher'd leave or something … Um, I think we had like one creative writing lesson. Um—
Jenna:	A single lesson.
Thomas:	A single, a single lesson and then that was never carried on.

Thomas reported similar situations for science and sport lessons. Many participants had similar experiences:

> Nathan: We did some languages (1.1) never tended to stick very long. We'd do a bit of li— one language, and then the teacher would get bored, or leave, move away, whatever. Get annoyed with the kids.

> Stephen: The teacher w— were really varied because basically it was whoever within the church was willing to do teaching [*Jenna: mm*]. (1.2) Um so the science teache:r (1.2) he was very good. (1.4) Um he was a qualified teacher um (1.7) and he had a passion for his subject and for learning … We had a succession of English teachers, none of whom were really any good, none of whom lasted more than two terms.

Jayne remembered a drama class, which she thought was a one-off. The lessons Rob and Mike remembered were somewhat makeshift:

> Rob: We did environmental studies, but that was with [a woman] who was from the church, again … She used to take us to the park. But her environmental lessons basically consisted of you know, "let's look at this tree, let's learn the name of it". Then she would say some, "Isn't God great that he made this tree?"

> Mike: I remember Year 11 music, making a drum out of a Pringle can. I was just like "What is this? This is not Year 11 music, this is crap!"

Because of shortages of staff and small numbers of students, sometimes class activities involved the entire student body:

> Jenna: How young were the youngest?

> Rob: (1.0) Er, five, six? … Little kids, alongside me and [girl] who were, you know, 14, 15 or whatever [*Jenna: yeah*]. All the in the same room. And then when you'd get to music lessons … the kids'd be on like rattles or whatever, and like one of us would be on the piano or something, or the recorder or whatever.

Susan's experience more than a decade later was similar:

Susan: Practical science would generally be done on a whole-school level. So all the children from about age three to 18 would, things like um biology we'd go out with the entire school into a field and find (1.2) insects and things like that …

Jenna: How, how on earth did they differentiate? Did they differentiate?

Susan: There was no differentiating. It was—

Jenna: Three-year-olds and 18-year-olds were doing the same activity.

Susan: Yes. I mean, the, the individual teachers might have explained things slightly different but there was no differentiating in the activities at all … We all went out and found different insects and brought them back and then um we, I don't know, s— did something like we drew a poster on the insects we found or something. So that was the same from age three to 18. Probably, us, we were expected to put a bit more information in than a three-year-old obviously, so that, that's an element of differentiation.

Susan did note that in her experience such whole-school activities were not the norm. Usually, classes were divided between children over 12 and those younger. Her story reminds me of the two terms of 'craft, design, and technology' I received, which were also done on a whole-school basis. One of the central arguments of ACE is that adequate classroom differentiation is not possible, hence the need for individualised instruction. It is ironic, then, that ACE schools have supplemented the PACEs with groups involving huge differences of age and ability.

Jolyon felt that the teaching at his school was generally excellent, but that staff would bring their "strange ways of behaving into the school". Some of them, he felt, took lessons as an opportunity to share a "doctrinal bee in their bonnet". Nathan experienced this dramatically when a church member used a history lesson to share his pet conspiracy theory. Nathan tried to recall the details:

There were definitely, there were flying pyramids … You know, some alternative explanation for existence of the pyramids … I'm trying to remember what the connection was with Nepal … or Tibet …There was

some connection with Buddhism, um and I've got images of flying monks ... I want to say there was some sort of alien involvement.

The teacher's ideas were not widely shared within the church. Nathan, however, remembers "swallowing it hook, line, and sinker". He recalled "telling people about it and being mocked … I mean people within the church … That was quite disturbing to me, the fact that I was being called and seen as gullible".

Susan had a similar experience:

> I think the supervisor of our class at that point was um a missionary who'd come over from a different country and I think he was about 20, 21, or something like that. Just finished ACE himself [*Jenna: right*]. Um, like before he went to university type thing he'd decided to come over for a couple of years and do this. So um the sort of lessons we got from him were essentially ones that he'd Googled.
>
> I remember specifically we had a geography lesson that supposed to be on um climate change and taking care of the world for God and God's children or something … It ended up just being him how he'd researched and got in— very far into the um climate change denial blogs online. So he gave a whole speech about this then we had to go look it up for ourselves.

The headteacher found out about this. Susan's impression was that "he couldn't say he didn't agree because they had to show a joint effort" so instead "he gave a speech about how that was just one opinion on it".

7.1 Positive experiences

In stark contrast to these negative memories were the experiences of Harry, Jolyon, and Gideon, who described well-structured lessons from expert teachers. One of ACE's selling points is that no formal qualifications are required to teach in the system, but participants were quick to emphasise their teachers' credentials. Gideon referred to "trained" music and drama teachers and another who had an English literature degree; Philip mentioned a teacher with

"a background in drama" and another who was a "qualified counsellor". Harry stressed that "our school had qualified teachers", and later again referred to a "qualified physics teacher" and another who "I don't actually know if she has a science qualification, but sh— like, she was a fantastic teacher. She's got some degree in computer science or something".

Philip and Gideon recalled excellent training in public speaking. Gideon in particular felt that his personality meant public speaking was "not a natural thing for me to do", but he recalled winning speech competitions, which he did not think he would even have entered had he attended a mainstream school. Philip concurred:

> One of the teachers there had a background in, er, drama [*Jenna: yeah*] and her training for Convention was brilliant. Um, I got quite a lot of (1.0) useful, um, help on public speaking. So the time I went to university and had to do presentations [*Jenna: yeah*], I was definitely ready for that.

Gideon also felt that his school had helped to develop his critical thinking skills. I was intrigued by this, because I had always felt exactly the opposite.

> We did quite a lot of Shakespeare in, in afternoon classes at school … That was a type of analysis that was almost entirely absent from the PACEs [*Jenna: mm*]. Um (2.1) and tha— I, I enjoyed that.

Jolyon spoke the most extensively about the quality of education he received. Most of his memories were about additional lessons; he regarded the PACEs as poor but peripheral. When Jolyon attended, the school entered students for GCSE examinations, and many of his memories were about preparation for those ("I got all As and Bs except in maths where I got like a Z or something"). The other lessons he recalled were mostly good ("I think the educational standard was pretty good … Arts teachers were a bit useless, but they were trying really hard … It was a good school"). In particular, Jolyon described a series of classes on 'worldviews' which he found particularly helpful:

138

They sort of taught us about different religions, different ideas like um utilitarianism or atheism or agnosticism or whatever, quite thoroughly … They taught us a bit about evolution and all these different ways of looking at the world. But what was fantastic about it, and I think I really benefited from this, and I definitely agree with it, is they helped us to understand that people from different backgrounds or who have different beliefs have different views of the world, *world views*. … And that helped me really s— s— to think critically when I was thinking about Christianity. And I think that [the headmaster] when he was constructing these lessons … I think he (1.9) knew that, that (1.1) that he was helping us think critically … I think that he wasn't there just to brainwash us. He was actually trying to educate us, albeit through his Christian sort of way of looking at things …

They did present it as the absolute truth. Unquestionably, they were like "Christianity is the d— is the truth and the Bible is the Word of God" and all of that. But they didn't want to hide other ideas from us.

Jolyon's account of these classes is somewhat at odds with the rhetoric in ACE promotional materials. He was anxious not to overstate his case ("I don't wanna get too hung up on that because I might be … misremembering") but even so he clearly remembers something quite different from most other participants. This is a reminder that ACE schools are not homogenous. Other participants described both questioning and the discussion of alternative ideas being entirely closed off.

Falling between the polarised camps of Mike (whose supplementary lessons were "atrocious") and Harry (who felt they were excellent) was Joanna. Joanna thought the lessons were "good" and the teachers "really good", but acknowledged there was "no kind of real, like, curriculum that they were following". She had good memories of an art teacher who told her there was no such thing as a mistake. Joanna's recollection of her reaction on moving to a mainstream college was revealing, however:

"Oh my god, we're actually being taught by a teacher! Like, there's a teacher, who's standing at the front of the class actually trying to teach us something, and we're learning!" and st— I mean obviously I had been in classes before kind of, but it was really nice to kind of have a teacher who (1.3) I don't know, was kind of guiding you through something a bit

more coherent [*Jenna: right*] um, than like the afternoon classes which I described before.

7.2 Transitions to university

Five participants went directly to university after completing their ACE education: Lily, Nathan, Gideon, Philip, and Erin. Of these, Gideon and Philip excelled while the other three struggled or dropped out of their courses.

> Lily: I would really struggle when I got to uni, because I wasn't spoon fed. I wasn't told what to do, and I wasn't ready for working out how I had to do it myself [*Jenna: right*]. It was a huge shock. Whilst I was, I wasn't shy of doing the work, I wasn't lazy, I just didn't know where to start with it all.

Fortunately, Lily had a "really nice" tutor who "could obviously see that I was completely out of my depth". He told her "I'm here. Just pop in every day", which Lily did. He "babysat" her, until after the first term Lily started to adjust to university life.

Erin was less lucky. While in ACE, she had believed she was "something of a genius" because she had scored highly on PACE tests and been ahead of what was expected for her age. University was a shock:

> Coming out of the ACE system, I did go to university, and I lasted five weeks before dropping out feeling like a complete failure, feeling like I was actually stupid, feeling like I wasn't at all academic. Um, and that, I just, I couldn't possibly cope with university, and there must be only very very intelligent people who go there.

Nathan also went directly to university having completed his NCSC certificate. He abandoned his first degree, feeling that he had not received adequate careers advice. Nathan and Lily both said that certain degrees and career paths had been discouraged or ignored by their teachers because, as Nathan put it,

they were not "seen to encourage continuing within the teachings of ACE and the church-school". Nathan also felt unprepared for university itself:

> I didn't have any of the study skills needed for university. Um (1.1) I sat in a lecture entirely passively. I didn't take notes. I didn't know how to take notes. I didn't know how to learn by listening … When it came to (1.9) u:m: (2.8) managing my own schedule when it was a changing schedule I found that stressful … When it came to independent research as well (1.6) I mean a lot of the time I just didn't do it, because I couldn't get my head round it and I hated it and I saw the whole thing as rather strange I guess … I just hadn't had to go and get books from a library before. I hadn't had to, you know research independently on my own, or certainly not in a creative and non-formulaic way. Um, and so I struggled massively with that. Um (1.8) I guess on larger projects I was given I struggled because it wasn't already automatically chunked down for me into prescribed units.

My best friend at the time, in his words, "flunked out" of university at the end of his first year. I told him it was not his fault; I felt ACE's combination of rote learning, minimal extended writing, and no extended exams was no preparation for the English university system. Some former ACE students perform well at university, however. Philip felt ACE was "a good grounding" for his degree ("I got Firsts when I put my mind to it"). Gideon excelled on his undergraduate course. In speaking to him about his experience of the PACEs, it becomes clear that he approached them creatively:

> I was constantly qu— I, I remember, when I was 12, I (2.5) I had been reading about (2.1) doing physics, and reading about colour (1.2) and I realised that (1.2) colour is a secondary property of, of physical objects. I remember (1.7) I remember talking to my parents one weekend about what that means in practice, the fact that it's not, when you turn the lights off, it's not that the grass (1.3) it's not that you can't see the green of the grass, it's that the grass actually isn't green, because colour is a reflective property … That sort of caused me to question a whole bunch of things stimulated by that (1.7) by, by the stuff I was learning in school.

In this extract, Gideon describes drawing a conclusion not explicit in the PACE text, thinking analytically about what he had read, and relating this to his pre-existing knowledge. He also mentions having stimulating conversations about

his learning with his parents. These skills are all beneficial to students at university level, but none is required or even encouraged by the PACE assessments, which ask only for verbatim recall. It is possible for a student like Gideon, with an inquiring mind and encouraging parents, to learn deeply from PACE material, but it is also possible to be like Lily and Erin, who believed they were learning to a high level because of their high test scores, but had not been encouraged to think. It is even possible to be like Susan, who did not even read her PACEs—she said she only "skimmed" the text in search of words to put in the blanks.

These participants' stories illustrate that PACE test scores are not a valid indication of students' university preparedness. It is unfair on students to send them to university when they are not ready. A worse problem, however, is that low PACE test scores are not a meaningful indicator either. Stephen's school told him he should be "a butcher or a carpenter" because "I couldn't read good". Fortunately, Stephen rejected his school's assessment of him and pursued his ambition to become a scientist. He completed a PhD and has had a distinguished career, yet if his PACE scores were to be believed, Stephen should not have achieved this.

7.3 Transitions to other schools

Thomas, Kaye, and Alice all left ACE schools in time to take their GCSEs in mainstream schools. When Thomas moved schools, he felt he was so far behind his classmates in many subjects, particularly arts and languages, that before long he stopped attending those lessons altogether:

> Knowing what level everyone else was I felt like not only was I actually um sort of behind, but also I'd, I'd em— over-emphasised that in my own head as well, so it was sort of emotionally very difficult … as well as also not, not having those, sort of any skills in those subjects.

Thomas felt in particular that ACE left him unready for classroom discussion:

142

> The sort of attitude at [my ACE school] was very much sort of children should be seen and not heard, and n— so I sort of didn't, I wasn't very um outspoken, uh and I was sort of quite anxious not to:: not to sort of express my opinions.

Harry, however, felt diametrically the opposite. On moving to a sixth form college, he was surprised how "hesitant people were to ask questions or make suggestions". Harry, by contrast, was uninhibited about expressing himself ("I'm sure ((*laughing*)) some teachers would be loathe to receive quite as many questions"), and he felt sure "my schooling had certainly encouraged that or allowed me to develop in that way".

Compared to the softly-spoken Thomas, Harry was clearly the more extrovert individual, and it is plausible that their respective ACE supervisors had different attitudes to student questioning. It may also be, however, that the differences here are due to the different labelling each experienced in their previous schooling (Chapter 14). Where Thomas was labelled a "bad kid" and felt punished even for things that were not his fault, Harry's family occupied a prominent position in the church-school.

Even in those subjects he did attend, Thomas never felt that he made up the lost ground. Even now he has completed a degree, he says he always feels that he is "on the back foot" academically. Similarly, Kaye felt ACE left her at a disadvantage after moving into mainstream education in Year 9:

> I've ended up with Ds and Es at GCSE [*Jenna: yeah*], er, if not didn't even do the subject, wasn't interested in it, didn't know nothing about it [*Jenna: yeah*]. Um, so that set me up that I could only do hairdressing or beauty at college, instead of like, I wanted to be a teacher [*Jenna: right*] you [*laughing*] know. There's no chance I could ever of been a teacher.

Kaye felt that with the right preparation, she would have been "capable of doing pretty much what I want". She pointed out that she had achieved merits and distinctions in her hair and beauty qualifications. Where she had missed out

on distinction grades, she said, it was because she was marked down for using the US spelling and grammar she learned from ACE. Three other participants noted the PACE's US spelling. Stephen found it a further obstacle to success. Harry said his school changed the score keys to UK spellings where relevant. Jayne said she was given conflicting instructions by two supervisors as to whether to use British or US spellings, and was punished by one supervisor for doing what the other had told her.

Susan never gained her ICCE qualification despite completing the PACEs, and went to college to do an Access course. She found the transition "very difficult". She was one of seven participants who commented on ACE's lack of essay writing, and one of four who complained that ACE had left them under-prepared for extended examinations. These responses were typical:

Lois: I do remember the first time I was given an essay assignment. So we'd had a lecture [*Jenna: mm*] and then our tutor said "Right, for next week I want an essay on [topic]". And I was like, "Er, but you've not taught us anything about [that]". He was like, "That's right. Go and find out". I'm like "What do you mean, go and find out?" ((*laughs*)) … To me the concept of me having to go and find information was like "Well that's a waste of time. Why don't they just tell me what I need to learn? Then I can learn it".

Joanna: I had an opinion of myself that I was intelligent, and you know that I had, like, attained quite a lot of knowledge. Um (1.9) but I recognised very quickly that the way of, that the way that A Levels were gonna be assessed I didn't actually know a lot about how to do that. Because what happened was I was handing in these essays to my teachers and I was getting like C grades [*Jenna: right*], and I, I was just like "I'm not a C grade student! I'm not a ((*laughing*)) C grade student!" kinda thing. And so what I did was I literally just like asked my classmates around me like, "How come you're getting an A?"

Harry pointed out that while he had struggled with essay writing after leaving ACE, current ACE students are required to produce additional coursework

essays for the ICCE. None of my participants had completed these ICCE essays, but shortly before completing this thesis I met an ICCE student who told me he had copied his essays from Wikipedia and received 'A' grades. Jayne, Mike, and Philip all said their ACE schools had given them some essay writing preparation. Mike qualified this ("I can remember getting some essay skills and stuff like that but not a massive amount"), while Jayne said she gained her writing skills only because she was set essays in detention. As she was in detention most of the time, she had a lot of practice.

Joseph, on the other hand, felt he was ahead of his peers on making the transition to mainstream school:

> I saw such a marked difference between myself and other, and the majority of like my year at school when I went to secondary school. Obviously, you know, I'm not the only, I wasn't the only cookie in the jar, but there was like (1.1) me and twenty to thirty other students who were, who were kind of self-motivated and, y'know able to read something and take it in. Whereas i— it seems like majority of other people in the year group (1.0) were, y'know could read something and immediately forget it, kinda thing … I'm really grateful for that as, as a life skill, and considering what my, what my parents have told me how I, you know (1.1) and how I know I acted as a child, I could s— I could definitely see myself in a:: uh in like a primary school (1.0) early secondary school environment just not doing very well at all because I could play the system.

"Playing the system", however, is exactly what many participants did in ACE. When students go to mark their own PACE work against the score key, it is trivially easy to look ahead and memorise the answers on forthcoming pages. Eight participants mentioned cheating in this way, and a further two mentioned being aware of others doing it. Even advocates of the ACE system seem aware of this. The generally pro-ACE Facebook group "You know you went to an ACE school when" hosted a thread in which numerous members admitted to such dishonesty ("I haven't scored correctly since 2nd grade … and I still had like I think a 95% average every year :D"). The *Procedures Manual* insists that proper scoring is a necessity: "It is crucial to a student's learning that he finds all

answers from PACE content and not from the Score Keys! … [Cheating] will impede his academic learning!" (ACE 2010a, 110). It does not, however, suggest any methods to prevent cheating other than punishment of those caught in the act. This type of cheating, however, is almost impossible to prove. Cain said he was paddled when a supervisor suspected him of cheating even though he had not done so. I, on the other hand, cheated prolifically during my ACE tenure, but was never suspected because the teachers were not surprised by my correct answers.

Some of the difficulties encountered by ACE students transitioning to the English National Curriculum are because of differences in the content of the curricula. Others are because of the inaccuracies or misleading information sometimes found in PACEs. Many more difficulties, however, arise because the PACEs do not require students to apply or even understand the material. The tests therefore do not discriminate between those like Philip and William, who made sense of the information in the PACEs, and those like Kaye who did not:

> You were never learning, you were just loo— reading through sentences to find the word, to the answer [*Jenna: yeah*]. And then you had to learn that for the test at the end … I didn't find that an effective way of learning.

Chapter 8 Gender

8.1 Benevolent, hostile, and ambivalent sexism

When women are seen as inferior to men, it is almost universally recognised as sexism. In ACE, and in other conservative Christian literature, however, women are depicted not as lesser but as special. Glick and Fiske (2001, 109) call this 'benevolent sexism', which sees women as "pure creatures who ought to be protected, supported, and adored and whose love is necessary to make a man complete". Benevolent sexism has three components (Glick and Fiske 1996): protective paternalism (men should protect women), gender differentiation (women and men are suited for different roles), and heterosexual intimacy (women fulfil men's romantic needs). Benevolent sexism reinforces gender inequality by implying that women are weaker than men and by assuming that women are better suited for domestic roles while men are better suited to high-status leadership roles. It thus performs a neat ideological trick: by depicting men's protecting and providing for women as self-sacrifice, it perpetuates male dominance while appearing to be an act of generosity.

Benevolent sexism is insidious because it is often not recognised as prejudice at all (Barreto and Ellemers 2005). Benevolent sexists appear more likeable than the stereotypical misogynist, and so those who are exposed to their views are less likely to challenge them. Men who place women on pedestals view it as cherishing them, while women (at least those who conform to traditional roles) have the promise that men will protect and provide for them (Glick and Fiske 2001).

Although benevolent sexism can stem from genuine positive feelings towards women, it has negative effects. It predicts the endorsement of gender stereotypes and sexist beliefs (Barreto and Ellemers 2005; Glick and Fiske 2001). Those with benevolent sexist attitudes are more likely to blame rape victims who violate gender role expectations (Abrams et al. 2003; Viki and Abrams 2002). Benevolent sexism negatively impacts women's cognitive performance

more than hostile sexism does (Dardenne, Dumont, and Bollier 2007) and research has also linked benevolent sexism with sexual harassment, attitudes that legitimise domestic violence, and lower participation of women in politics and the economy (Barreto and Ellemers 2005; Glick and Fiske 2011).

'Hostile sexism' refers to attitudes and behaviours more usually associated with sexism. It includes the idea that women try to control men, whether through sexuality or feminist ideology. Individuals who exhibit a high degree of both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism exhibit ambivalence towards women. Ambivalent sexism can be achieved without cognitive dissonance by compartmentalising women into different categories (Glick and Fiske 2001). Rather than thinking of 'women' as a whole, they are stereotyped into subgroups such as 'housewives', 'temptresses', 'mothers', and 'career women'. Those who challenge or steal men's power (seductresses and feminists) attract hostile sexism, while those who reinforce gender conventions and serve men (mothers, wives, and romantic objects) attract benevolent sexism. In this way, ambivalent sexism acts as a system of rewards and punishments for women to maintain the status quo of gender relations.

8.1.1 Ambivalent sexism in PACEs

I looked at the cartoons in a selection of English, Social Studies, and Science PACEs to see how women are represented. The selection was not random; I used the same ones obtained for my comparison of old and new PACEs (Chapter 3) and my evaluation of the ICCE (Appendix 4). There is a larger sample of English PACEs because this is the only subject to include cartoons in all levels. In social studies, cartoons stop after the seventh level; in science, they stop after the eighth.

I examined every 'character strip' in each PACE separately, noting the gender of each character. In addition to character strips, English PACEs also include cartoons used to illustrate grammar rules; I did not count these. In Table 8.1,

'sample' refers to the number of PACEs examined, while 'population' is the total number of PACEs in that subject to feature character strips.

Table 8.1. Cartoon representations of gender by subject

Subject	Male:female %	Sample/population
English	67:33	55/144 (38%)
Science	72:28	20/96 (21%)
Social Studies	71:29	11/78 (14%)

Every character in every strip was counted, even if that character had previously appeared in another strip in the same PACE. Using this method, there are 458 character appearances in the 162 cartoons, of which 67% are male and 88% are white. If instead we calculate the percentages of cartoons to feature one or more characters of each gender, Table 8.2 is the result.

Table 8.2. Cartoons featuring one or more of each gender by subject

Subject	One or more males (%)	One or more females (%)
English	81	56
Science	94	46
Social Studies	87	44

Women and girls are clearly underrepresented in the PACEs examined. Furthermore, the activities illustrated are gender stereotypes. In the majority of character strips, no action is depicted; characters simply sit and talk. Where action is depicted, however, it is gendered. In the PACEs examined, the three most common activities for male characters are playing sports (depicted in 18 character strips), manual labour (15), and preaching (12). Female characters are not depicted doing these things. Conversely, women and girls are shown knitting, sewing, or embroidering nine times, preparing, serving, and/or clearing up food eight times, and brushing their hair three times. Male characters are not shown doing these activities. In one cartoon (*English 1073*, 23), Ace volunteers to do the washing up for his mother because she is tired, but it is clear that this would ordinarily be her responsibility. It is also common for the character strips to depict scenes in which men talk while women are silent,

particularly at home. This, according to ACE, "illustrates the father as the teacher" (ACE 1983, 24). Some character strips praise women for their submissiveness (e.g. Figure 8.1).
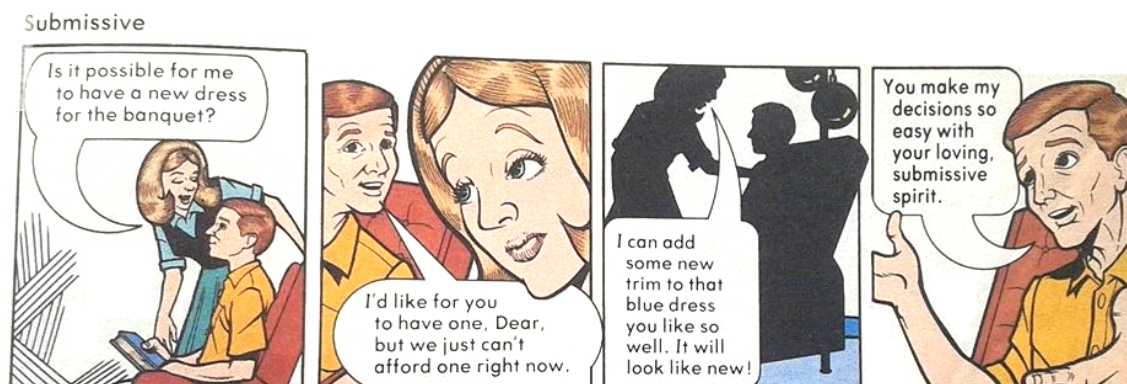
Figure 8.1 ACE character strip depicting wife's submission.

It is also noteworthy that the PACEs always use masculine pronouns when referring to a person of non-specified gender (e.g. "Remember, if you do not help your employer make a profit (money), he does not need your services." [*Social Studies 1073*, 2009, 3]). This is also a feature of many ACE supporters' speech, evident in a video from a CEE training event where the speaker says of a non-specific ACE student: "If he won't submit to you, a supervisor, who's caring for him, that he sees, how will he submit to God, who he doesn't see?" (Boulton 2013, 8:20). There is evidence that even in explicitly gender-neutral contexts, male pronouns can lead readers to assume that a male is referred to. Thus the generic 'he' can be a cause, as well as a symptom, of sexism (Moulton, Robinson, and Elias 1978; see also Martyna 1978; Schneider and Hacker 1973; Clason 2006). I cannot speak for ACE users more widely, but for me the PACEs' use of masculine pronouns was a point of pride. It symbolised the rejection of feminism and political correctness.

Inculcation of gender roles begins in ACE's pre-school curriculum. A lesson plan for nursery students instructs supervisors to:

> Discuss Daddy's roles, such as: protector, provider, leader, hero.

Discuss Daddy's "tools," such as: screwdriver, hammer, Bible. (Daddy needs his Bible most of all.)

Discuss Mama's roles, such as: helper, cook, cleans house, washes and irons clothes.

Discuss Mama's "tools," such as: mixing bowl, spoon, Bible. (Mama needs her Bible most of all.) (*Kindergarten with Ace and Christi 4*, D2-Butterfly-11)

The overwhelming majority of interactions between males and females in the PACEs depict chivalry, a form of benevolent sexism. In a cartoon in *English 1069* (p. 7), Ace Virtueson is shown walking on the side closer to the road to protect his mother from traffic. In *English 1073* (p. 16), he runs outside with an umbrella to escort the pastor's wife from her car to the house. In *English 1106* (p. 1), a boy gives his sister his coat because she is cold. Throughout the PACEs, girls model traditional gender roles and are rewarded with favourable treatment. There are a range of theological and scientific justifications for this, from God's creation of Eve to be Adam's "help meet" in *Genesis* 2 to *I Peter* 3:7, which refers to women as "the weaker vessel". 'Scientific' justifications come from biological sex differences which make gender roles appear innate. Together, these factors worked to make inequality appear the natural state of affairs.

The PACEs include only one woman who defies expectations of traditional gender roles. Susie Selfwill, a girl who rebels against God, appears periodically in PACE cartoons and is always shown in a negative light. While this could be seen as part of a general antipathy towards sinners, much of what Susie does 'wrong' involves flouting expectations of a 'godly woman'. She is shown adjusting her hair as she walks past a group of Christian girls—the sin of vanity (*Math 1085*, 44). She flirts with a Christian boy (*English 1113*). This is subsequently described as "the flattery of strange women" (*English 1114*, D), a reference to Proverbs 5: "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell". The PACEs

model ambivalent sexism—benevolent sexism to women who observe 'Christian' standards of behaviour, and hostility to those who do not.

When I was at my ACE school, I was an ambivalent sexist, dividing the world into 'good' Christian girls and 'worldly' women. The 'good' Christian girl was the "virtuous woman" of Proverbs 31, whose "price is far about rubies", who "worketh willingly with her hands", and served her family faithfully. 'Worldly' women, by contrast, would try to steal my purity and tempt me into sinfulness. They were enticing, but they were to be feared. This binary view of women is sometimes called the "Madonna-whore dichotomy" (Glick and Fiske 2001, 109), and it was in this case justified by the idea that the Proverbs "strange woman" was the default female state unless a woman was 'saved' by becoming Born Again.

8.2 Modesty

The women's clothing guidelines for ACE's student Convention begin:

> An image of Christian discretion and modesty is to be portrayed. All female sponsors, coaches, and students must wear dresses, skirts (which are no shorter than the bottom of the knee, standing or sitting), or culottes … Slits must be no higher than the bottom of the knee. Dresses and blouses must come to the neckline in front (to the clavicle bone) and back (to the bottom of the neck), without see-through material. Standard schools shirts with collars are acceptable. TIGHT, FORM-FITTING ATTIRE and fad extremes are inappropriate and will not be allowed. (CEE 2014c, 8)

My ACE school regarded these standards as more conservative than strictly necessary, but nevertheless thought modesty essential. It is normal for schools to have dress codes, but in ACE schools the girls' dress code can carry implicit, and sometimes explicit, connotations of girls' 'responsibility' not to incite male lust. Erin described how she went to school wearing a vest covered by a cardigan, which she and her mother had thought was within the dress code. That morning, however, her supervisor took her aside:

She was quite nice about it, she said um, "Probably not", I'm paraphrasing, "probably not aware, but when you lean forward, you can actually see down your top, and we don't", I can't remember her exact words, but it was along the lines "we don't want to give boys impure thoughts" … I felt quite ashamed, but thought I'd been left at that, and for some reason, I don't know why, I was pulled into the pastor's office after school, and given another talking to.

This emphasis on modesty can override even considerations of mobility or weather-appropriateness. Alice recalls how during a school camp involving "outward bound activities":

I remember one clear case of a girl wearing a top that showed her shoulders, and she was taken over to one side, and given a really stern talking-to, er, about her immodesty. And a— an awareness of not causing men to stumble, but men were never, none of the boys were ever spoken to about their behaviour.

Seven of the eight women interviewed from ACE schools said modesty teachings had negatively affected them in some way. Four said it continued to affect their clothing choices now, even though they had rationally rejected the idea or even wanted to wear previously disallowed clothes.

Erin: The whole dress code side of things, I still can't shake off. If I'm wearing something that I might think is inappropriate, things too low cut or sort of a skirt that's too short, I still [*Jenna: yeah*] feel very awkward going out in it.

Lily: My husband'll say ((*laughs*)) "That is the least flattering thing you've got." It's like, "It's a bag. You've got a nice figure. Put something else on." And I'm like ">No but it's, but it's too tight! It's too tight!< It's too form-f—" I re— I remember the phrase from convention, "outfits must not be form-fitting" [*Jenna: yes*], at the time thinking "I don't really know what that means", but now kind of being aware of what that means and thinking, I'll pick something up and go "No, no. It's too form-fitting. It's too short. It's too low." And that's still having that issue about, it's not what I like or I'm comfortable in. It's that someone else might pass judgement on what it is that I'm wearing.

Kaye said she was still affected by modesty guidelines depicted in PACEs (e.g. Figure 8.2). Jayne described being given a detention for wearing makeup to school, despite not actually wearing any. The supervisor rang Jayne's mother, who confirmed that she had not applied any makeup that morning.

> She still gave me the detention, and said that I just needed to be very careful about how I, um (1.2) dress myself in the morning to make sure I was not being provoking [*Jenna: provoking?*]. Provoking. Um, and I'll never forget that because my mom even to this day we joke about provoking.

Figure 8.2 ACE character strip depicting modest dress.

Tied up with the idea of modesty is the notion of godly behaviour. Again, the emphasis is not just on decorum but also preventing male lust:

Charlotte: One of my teachers, one of my male teachers once told me off, um, for flirting with a boy who was about four years older than me. I think I was about ten or eleven at the time. And I hadn't been flirting, we were like play fighting. And it's like we're *children* play fighting. [*Jenna: Yeah.*] And I got taken to the side, and basically told not to be a hussy. [*Jenna: Right*.] Um, which is ((*laughs*)) ridiculous, really.

Jenna: He was reading something sexual into your [*Charlotte: yeah*] behaviour.

Charlotte: Absolutely, yeah.

From this exchange, it might appear that I imposed my interpretation on Charlotte, but at the end of the interview she returned to the subject without my prompting:

154

Jenna: Is there anything else that you'd like to mention, or talk about?

Charlotte: I think one thing that I'd perhaps like to touch on a little bit more was what we talked about, about um, the: kind of, I guess the, almost the sexualisation that I experienced, and you know, teachers always reading things into my actions and my words.

Jayne had a similar experience. Before coming to her ACE school, she had been a keen sports player; she called herself "the tomboy" of the family. At her ACE school, there was no sports team for girls. Her dad insisted she be allowed to play hockey with the boys' team, despite staff protests that this was not 'appropriate'. She also played basketball with the boys during break times, always her first choice of activity when meeting new friends. This led to other students branding her "whatever the [school] term was for a slut", among other accusations:

> It did not take very long for (1.2) w— some of the other students to come and say to me, well you really shouldn't do that because that's what the boys do. Um, and there was another girl who also did the same thing (1.0) a:nd I remember hearing them talk about her as, um, a 'Jezebel' (1.8) … she was going to, out there to play basketball because she wanted to show off her body. We're all wearing the same thing [*Jenna: yeah*]. You know. ((*Laughing*)) How can you show off your body in that godawful uniform? I don't know. But, and I remember hearing that and thinking (1.4) "well they're gonna say the same thing about me, but I just really wanna play basketball cos it's fun".

Jayne's situation worsened after the other girl stopped playing sports.

> I feel that I missed out on opportunities to really, um, know myself because I was made to be self-conscious of (1.8) my sex a lot sooner than I should've been. Um (1.4) just the fact that (1.8) you know I couldn't just go out and, when we had our, um, breaks I couldn't just go out there and play, because I was thinking about how it would be perceived. So, and as a child you, you don't think about that. When you're, when you're 12 you're supposed to just go and, and play. You're not supposed to worry about what people are labelling you as when you go play.

155

The idea that women's sports are dangerous to moral health is an old one in ACE. Ronald Johnson argues (1980, 69):

> Girls who perform as athletes or cheerleaders in the presence of males soon lose their inhibitions. They become calloused about immodesty. Their sense of purity is weakened.
>
> Boys who watch females during aggressive athletic or cheering activity find their thoughts drifting from interest in the game to interest in the girls. Even the purest boy cannot for long cast his eyes upon physically active girls without experiencing fleeting or lingering thoughts not directly related to the sport taking place.

In reality, the ACE approach to women's sport is not quite so rigid as one might infer from Johnson's argument. At ACE's International Student Convention, held in the United States, females may participate in track, though not field, events. At its European equivalent, almost all events are open to girls, even swimming[12] (CEE 2014a, 4–5), an indication of how ACE in the UK has a comparatively more open, 'evangelical' character compared with the US's fundamentalism. That said, I remember that girls from my school struggled to find acceptable clothes in high street shops, such were the modesty standards for participation.

Jayne referred multiple times to being referred to as a 'slut' and a 'Jezebel'. The latter refers to the wife of Ahab in the Book of Kings, who made her husband abandon Yahweh in favour of false Gods. II Kings 9:30 refers to her wearing eye makeup, which is why her name is sometimes used to imply sexual immorality. Alice described how the term was used at her church:

> People were told very specifically what to do with their, their life. And this boiled down to control your wife. If your wife was outspoken or had questions, or was strong character, they were accused of being a Jezebel (1.2) of being (2.0) wicked. (2.0) You ((claps hands)) keep them in line. It was like the man's role to keep them in, in line, and to tame them and to

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[12]   A recent graduate of an ACE school who I met too late to interview for this thesis told me boys were not allowed to watch the girls' swimming.

control them. So I was very aware of a sense of, of control, being controlled and toeing the line.

Alice and Jayne both describe ambivalent sexism, with good Christian women placed on a pedestal and 'Jezebels' demonised. The rationale for female modesty is benevolent: women are valuable creatures whose purity must be protected. The secondary rationale, that immodest women provoke men to lust, implies hostile sexism towards such women. It is also closely connected to the 'rape myth' that immodest women who experience sexual harassment or assault are 'asking for it' (Edwards et al. 2011). Jayne's story illustrates how these related issues can combine in an ACE context.

When Jayne was about 13, a young man who had largely completed his ACE studies elsewhere moved to her school, where he completed some ACE 'college level' courses while also serving as a supervisor. He started to talk to her "a lot" and waited for her outside her piano lessons. When they were caught talking alone in a room after a lesson, Jayne was punished because she was viewed as "the instigator". After graduating from the school, the 'college' student continued as a staff member, which is not uncommon because the only required qualification is ACE's week-long supervisor training. He continued to send her notes and "just expressed a lot of interest".

The supervisor turned up at her house while her parents were out, and when she did not answer the door, he left her a note along with a flower and a ring. He also waited for Jayne outside her piano lessons. On one such occasion, he kissed her—Jayne's first kiss. When Jayne's mother found a letter from the supervisor which said he wanted to give Jayne a "hickey" (love bite), her mother rang his mother about his "completely inappropriate" actions.

He got another staff member (also a former student) to pass Jayne a note which said he saw her as "the perfect wife" and that he wanted to marry her. After this note was discovered, Jayne was suspended from the school. The decision to

157

punish her for *receiving* a romantic note only makes sense within the narrative of her as a Jezebel. Jayne was told to make the communication stop (the assumption being that it must be her fault):

> You know I was just, you know I was a kid. And I, I didn't really understand what was going on fully either [*Jenna: no*]. Um so, you know I, I knew I was receiving these notes, and I knew it was nice, and, you know I (1.0) just (1.6) didn't really know what to do with it.

When the supervisor continued to send her notes, Jayne was expelled. The supervisor continued to work at the school.

In Jayne's case, a number of factors increased the risk of her harassment. Authoritarianism, hostile sexism, and acceptance rape myths are all predictors of sexual harassment (Begany and Milburn 2002). Authoritarian personality types were first proposed by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sandford (1950) who argued that they develop as a result of harsh, punitive child rearing of the kind endorsed by ACE. Benevolent sexists, meanwhile, are more likely to blame the victim in cases of acquaintance rape (Abrams et al. 2003). Thus ACE schooling made it more likely that some boys would engage in sexual harassment and also more likely that girls would receive the blame.

Susan recalled specific lessons about gender roles:

> We used to have lessons separately with the boys and, boys and girls to talk about the different roles that we— basically in normal school it would've been like sex ed [*Jenna: right*]. But we got taught about the different roles that men and women have. So men could be preachers and, um, and could take care of their families and such, and be the head of their family. Women could be mothers and various things. And then we got, um I remember one of the women asked "Well um, what if I want to be a missionary?". And the teacher replied, well, you can be a missionary but women have different roles for mission work, so you could do teaching, or you could um go out and er help the other missionaries that are going out preaching, cook for them and things like that ((*both laugh*)).

158

There is some variation between ACE schools on the precise role of women. In a letter to his local newspaper, the principal of an ACE school in Hertfordshire wrote "the submission of women has more to do with medieval thinking than the Bible, and is not taught here" (Neale 2014). Another participant, Harry, argued that any such messages in the PACEs were offset by the fact that some ACE schools have women in positions of leadership. He could have strengthened his case by adding that since Donald Howard's divorce, ACE's president has been his ex-wife, Esther. Clearly, ACE does not teach that all women should submit to all men. The schools themselves take a range of positions on the role of women, and these are not always organised neatly along the Reformed/Charismatic lines characterised in Chapter 1. Contrast the experiences of Nathan and Stephen:

Nathan: I was in a group which was, you know, women could speak and do bits of leadership and so on an— as well, so it, you know, certainly less traditional, le— i-i-in that respect. I'm not saying it didn't have elements of sexism, but I'd perhaps, you know, not to the extent that ACE has.

Stephen: There were a lot of things where the teachings within the PACEs, and within the church, were (2.2) exactly in lockstep. So, so for example the uh, the role and position of women, the generalised misogyny (1.1) that, that was identical within the PACEs and the:: the church. So although the church was Charismatic (1.3) um it, it was socially conservative.

Only one participant, Jolyon, specifically said he never felt aware of sexism at this school ("I definitely never ever got any tiniest inkling that women were supposed to behave … in a demure, kind of Christian woman kind of way"). All the women I interviewed mentioned their school's teachings on the role of women, and some described its continuing subsequent negative influence:

Kaye: I ended up um (1.1) being quite a bit of a pushover. I've been in very violent and abusive relationships, um, since because of the way that (1.6) that we weren't allowed boyfriends. I hadn't learned how to judge who was the wrong or right people [*Jenna: mmhmm*]. Um (1.5) er, I became very much of a pushover and attracted men that would kind of empower me. I was taught that you should obey your husbands or whatever [*Jenna: right*] um, so like, that kind of works for boyfriends, cos I don't really know many people that get married these days.

Jenna: So when you say em— boyfriends that would empower you [*Kaye: mm*], you actually mean

Kaye: Bully.

Erin talked in detail before we began recording about how she had felt unable to say no to men. This might also be attributed to ACE's emphasis on obedience (section 12.3), but for her lessons on wifely submission were also relevant:

I would be curious to know what'd happen if I hadn't gone to ACE and then had met my first husband. (1.6) Um, because it was this weird, no I'm not supposed to have sex till I'm married, but I'm also supposed to do what the man says. So end up having sex, because that's what the man wanted, but we're not married.

Erin felt guilty for having sex, and when she became pregnant, she felt obliged to get married. Later, her husband became abusive. Regardless, she stayed with him for a long time: "I didn't want to be the one to break up the family".

Jayne also entered marriage with a sense of obligation to be an obedient wife. She felt this came not from her family but from her ACE school, because her parents did not hold that view and had always been "very open" about working through their problems, "so it wasn't like I didn't have a good example of what family life or marriage was about". When her husband was unfaithful, Jayne developed an obsessive desire to clean her house's skirting boards ("baseboards"):

> I was like ah, I'm outta my mind. This is crazy. I need to stop. But I couldn't. So I called my Mom, and I was like, Mom, you've gotta get over here. It's like, I think I've just, I, I, I'm do— I'm jus— I don't know. I've cracked. ((*Laughing*)) It's like I need to be taken somewhere so that I will stop cleaning these baseboards, because I, I'm just losing it. I ... was very coherent when I told her. I said I feel like if I can clean these baseboards, that everything will be OK. And so she came over and, um, I just could not stop doing the— cleaning these stupid baseboards until she finally coaxed me and she's like, OK, you've gotta stop. Um (1.0) but something in my mind clicked to where I really thought that maybe because I wasn't a good enough (1.2) wife (1.1) that's why my husband had been unfaithful.

Doing this research has made me aware of sexist thoughts I still have—ideas I have consciously rejected but which still hang around as habits of my mind. Some of the men I spoke to described a similar difficulty, like Rob:

> I hate to say it but I know that in me there is a slight sexist or misogynistic, um, streak which I have to manage. ... It is because you are brought up to think actually, you know, women should submit ... If you're told that on a daily basis, it is gonna affect you in a certain way [*Jenna: mm*]. So I just have to realise that those sort of initial thought that come in have to be managed.

In writing all this, I am aware that everything sounds somewhat straightforward. ACE presents its own theology as black-and-white, which makes simplistic interpretations tempting. Reality is not so simple. Evangelical women sometimes endorse traditional gender roles while finding opportunities for empowerment within their churches (Bryant 2009).

When I was 14, a friend from church complained to me that PACEs made her feel she had to be "barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen". This girl was not exactly a feminist: our church, like most of its kind, taught that the man was the head of the household and the husband the head of the wife, and she had never disputed those ideas in my hearing. She nevertheless looked for ways to widen her opportunities within that religious framework.

My school, similarly, taught male headship, and both the pastor and headteacher were men. At the same time, their wives were powerful women, and I never doubted they were in most respects running the show. As Harry pointed out, the ACE schools King of King's in Manchester and Regent's Academy, near Lincoln, have women in positions of authority. Brenda Lewis, head of the former, is also chair of the ICCE board. At the same time, these women's positions of power are in teaching, which is traditionally gendered as women's work. Of the platform events at the 2015 ESC (which include poetry reading, group Bible speaking, and ventriloquism), only one was designated male only: preaching (CEE 2014d).

To varying degrees, ACE schools teach a patriarchal ideology, and the comments of my participants reflect this. What is absent from my data, which might be found by observations of current ACE schools, is the way female staff and students in these schools find opportunities for empowerment, resistance, or reinterpretation within that framework.

8.3 Sexual purity

ACE schools frequently teach that dating is an ungodly way to look for a husband or wife, and instead advocate courtship:

> Courtship is **a relationship between a man and a woman in which they seek to determine if it is God's will for them to marry each other**. Under the protection, guidance, and blessing of parents or mentors, the couple concentrates on developing a deep friendship that could lead to marriage, as they discern their readiness for marriage and God's timing for their marriage. (IBLP 2011)

This view of romance discourages (or, at its extremes, prohibits) any kind of physical intimacy outside of marriage. For this reason, many ACE schools implement the 'six-inch rule', this being the minimum allowable distance between boys and girls. One ACE school taught its students "The intimate side of the relationship will be kept to the wedding night. This includes kissing and

cuddling" (Dover School for All Nations 2014, 7). The book which launched the notion of courtship to fame was *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* (Harris 1997), although the ideas had been circulating in conservative evangelical circles long before its publication and have been influential far beyond the readership of the book. The set of ideas is sometimes referred to (particularly by those who reject it) as 'purity culture'.

Two participants, both from the same school, mentioned *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, but participants from almost every school mentioned similar ideas. At my school we listened to *Searching for Your Mate*, a series of audiobooks by Virginia Maasbach, whose church operated an ACE school in Kent. We learned that God would bring the right person to us in His perfect timing, and our job was to keep ourselves pure until God revealed them to us. Until then, dating (if it happened at all) would either be with a chaperone or in groups. In the most extreme versions of courtship, the first time a couple will be alone together is on their wedding night.

Sometimes this teaching combines with other Charismatic teachings to dramatic effect:

> Jolyon: This one woman, [name] had a prophecy that she knew the names of the people that her kids were going to marry and they were in the school. She actually knew this. God had told her, and there was another woman who'd had the same thing. And they knew the names of the kids, I think, might even have been told to the kids. It was *bonkers*.

Despite seeing this as "bonkers", Jolyon was nonetheless influenced by the school's teachings on relationships:

> The big thing that I took years to shake was my attitude towards sex and relationships. Had a really naïve view of what relationships were all about. And I felt that there was this one person out there waiting for me, and it sort of, I think I could've enjoyed being at university a lot more if I had maybe realised that er (2.4) that that whole, I was very naïve in my thinking about that.

Parents at Jolyon's school circulated a tape "about the evils of dating", according to which:

> If you fancied somebody, that was a terrible term to use because that's like you fancy an ice cream, and it's just so frivolous and and so at odds with what a true Christian should be um (1.1) saying when they're talking about relationships. God has this special person that's ordained for you. This was around the same time as these parents had these prophecies.

The tape taught that after every relationship breakup, you lose a piece of your heart, so that when you eventually marry you would not have a complete heart to give your spouse. Jolyon's mum, however "just thought it was hilarious", and they still joke about it today.

> Jenna: But nevertheless it did, it impacted, it impacted you in that way you had that idea of the idealised relationship.

> Jolyon: Mm. Mm. Definitely. I was incredibly naïve and inexperienced, and I basically had no idea about relationships and girls and things, and it took me years and years and years to f::: to figure it all out. And I had my first proper girlfriend was when I was 30. So you know er that's er pretty pathetic. So um, y'know, and I, I kind of I ki— don't know if I can completely blame that on the school [*Jenna: mm*] because as I say I was kind of a bit churchy before that and it definitely kind of carried on afterwards (1.3) I don't know why that particular way of thinking, it was *that* that was the hardest to get rid of.

Gideon described similar feelings:

> Gideon: I believe that (1.4) the: (3.6) the model about, the model related to relationships, um, sexual relationships, that I was given was inhibiting for me [*Jenna: mm*] … Like, relationships are messy: and, um, and deeply imperfect … And the model of relationships that I had (1.3) sort of enshrined them, particularly the marriage relationship as a um (1.1) as this sort of (1.0) almost like perfect, holy circle.

> Jenna: God I relate to this.

> Gideon: (1.4) And th— the danger of that is expectation [*Jenna: mm*]. Cos what it does is it (1.0) it creates (1.2) an expectation for what that experience is likely to be like [*Jenna: mm*] um, that doesn't match with the psychological reality of what it's actually like … Um (1.4) and (3.1) the problem for me is that I'm an idealist, so I lapped this stuff up … It has created a lot more pain for me than I think would've been necessary if I had just a more realistic view of what relationships (1.4) were actually like.

Like Jolyon, the teachings of purity culture continued to affect me long after I had consciously rejected them. In my early twenties, I found myself frozen at the thought of going on so much as a date, because I felt that going on a date was the first step to getting married, and I couldn't cope with the pressure. Like Gideon, I feel I lost out on opportunities for happiness.

These ideas are found in the 'Wisdom' inserts that accompany high school English PACEs, and seem to have been taught in additional lessons at every school attended by my participants. Purity culture appears to unite rather than divide the Reformed and Charismatic factions in ACE schooling. Susan was taught that the ideal was to "move from friendship into marriage" without dating, and God would tell you when you've met the right person.

Purity standards have harmful consequences for those who fail to live up to them. Those who are impure—especially girls—can be seen as damaged. Christian teaching maintains that they can still be forgiven, but that God's forgiveness does not remove the consequences of our sin. When we are repeatedly told that our purity is 'the most precious gift' we could give our future spouse, and that if we are pure we have a right to expect purity from them, it is not difficult to see how victims of rape and sexual assault can end up feeling, like kidnapping survivor Elizabeth Smart, that they are "a chewed-up piece of gum" (Dominguez 2013). Charlotte described how her mother, who was an ACE monitor, was distressed by these lessons. She had endured a

difficult first marriage, and felt the PACEs depicted divorced women as "used goods". Charlotte too was upset that "people who were in charge of my education could think such sort of cruel and completely unfounded things".

8.4 Sex education

Unhappiness with sex education in mainstream schools is a commonly cited reason for parents to choose ACE schools or home schooling (Baker 2009, 65; Dennett 1988, 16). Some schools leave sex education entirely to parents as a matter of policy. In Kaye's case, this was taken to an absurd extreme:

> I remember starting my period at nine years old at that school. I didn't know what it was. I cried my eyes out. I just started bleeding everywhere, and they didn't tell me what it was. They just said "ask your mum when you get home".

Alice described how the first time she heard about sex at school was in an exam during one of the school's supplementary science lessons. It asked students to describe in their own words the journey of the sperm to the fertilisation of the egg ("I sat there and I thought, when exactly did we learn this? Was I ill that day?"). Eventually a girl put her hand up and complained that they had not been taught the material for the exam.

> The science teacher said (1.0) I want you to answer it in your own words as best as you can (1.8) and later, she told us that we needed to go home and ask our parents (1.5) and that was sex ed. (2.8) End of. That was the beginning and the end of sex ed in that school [*Jenna: right*]. Yes. And I didn't ask my parents. I didn't have that kind of relationship with them [*Jenna: yeah*] to feel comfortable.

Alice got married hastily, age 21, "because sex was wrong" outside marriage. Although she was still married and did not express regret, I felt she was saying she would have made different choices had she been equipped to do so.

Lily described a run-in with an Ofsted inspector on the subject, describing herself as "terrified" of anything outside the school's teachings:

> I was 15. He said to me, um, what sex education have you had at school? And I said "Um, my parents will teach me about that." And I remember clearly saying to him, because I've got the superior attitude down by this point, I said, "It's not appropriate for you to talk to me about this". And he said, "It is, isn't it, because I need to know what you've learnt". And he was obviously aware that I was getting really *we must not talk about this*. And I said, "I think you need to speak to pastor, pastor about it". And he said, "Are you refusing to answer questions?" and I said "No, not until I've spoken to the pastor about it". So I made a "I'm going to his office" and all high and mighty flounced off from this meeting with this inspector as if he was clearly beneath me and the pastor, and went to him and said "he's asking me this and this". I wouldn't say it to him. I had to write it down the question he'd asked me. "You were right to come. I will deal with him immediately." (1.4) So I was then validated, you see. "You shouldn't be saying that to teenage girls! That's disgraceful! Ask somebody questions like that!" Um, so obviously I answered all those questions with my behaviour didn't I?

Where there is sex education, it stays within a conservative moral framework. At East London Christian Choir School, senior girls have been taught "the blood shed when virginity is broken on the marriage bed is part of the blood covenant made between you and your husband under God, and if the blood is shed elsewhere it will weaken the covenant" (Walter 2005).

Charlotte described the lessons she had as "quite body-shaming". She said "They teach you kind of (1.0) especially for the girls I feel, to not really respect and enjoy what they're teaching you is a God-given gift". Alice noticed that among her peers, some girls "ended up being pregnant as a teenager and (2.5) didn't want to be". Two girls from my school unexpectedly became mothers soon after leaving; a third joined them in her early 20s, which kept the church gossip lines lively. A sex education based only on what not to do has a less obvious cost, however. It can prevent people from experiencing the pleasurable and fulfilling adult sex lives they might otherwise have enjoyed. I asked Jeremiah what effect he felt his schooling had on him now:

Jeremiah:	Um (8.8) I can (1.9) the main thing I can think of is how I view sexual relationships. It's something I can't get out of my mind. But (3.4) it was wrong. Anything, being close to someone of the opposite, or the same, ((*laughing*)) especially the same sex is just (2.0) really bad [*Jenna: right*]. Um (2.4) and the
Jenna:	So (1.6) do you still feel like it's really bad?
Jeremiah:	No.
Jenna:	But it still affects you?
Jeremiah:	((*Laughing*)) But there, there's something in the back of your mind that's just always there.
Jenna:	Right. So if you try and have a sexual relationship, there's part of you that feels it's wrong?
Jeremiah:	(5.2) I suppose. I don't know. I can't, cos it's, it's in the back of your head. It's not something you think about. It's something ingrained into you.

Mike told me he was "proper devastated" when he was told he had to wait until marriage for sex: "It was like 'Oh! So what do I do with these feelings then?'". His sex education lessons consisted of a guest speaker who talked to them about his pornography addiction. This is an unhelpful start, especially as the literature supporting the notion of pornography addiction arguably suffers from "poor experimental designs, limited methodological rigor, and lack of model specification" and it is questionable whether visual sexual stimulation meets the criteria for addiction (Ley, Prause, and Finn 2014, 94; though see Phillips, Hajela, and Hilton 2015 for a counterargument).

Regardless of whether 'addiction' can be a helpful way to conceptualise pornography use, addiction requires "significant adverse personal and social consequences" (Phillips, Hajela, and Hilton 2015, 181). By contrast, the teaching Mike received demonised behaviour whose only negative consequence was guilt caused by the belief the behaviour was sinful. In other words, this kind of

teaching offers a solution to a problem of its own making. Pathologising natural sexual desires is, however, a powerful tool for indoctrination. Mike continued:

> Trying to stay pure was a bloody nightmare. Um (1.4) y'know ah:h es— especially with masturbation cos I just used to, like for *years* I beat myself up about it, you know I re:ally, you know and even, even within my Christian friend circle, we'd all used to talk about it, and how we all struggle, and you know, "We'll get through this". And it was, it was like a proper, you know (1.2) I dunno, like an AA meeting for ((*laughing*)) masturbation pretty much. It was, it was *ridiculous* in hindsight, but at the time we're all really worried about it.

The difference between me and Mike is that he felt able to talk to his friends about masturbation, whereas for me it was a topic of such shame that I never spoke of it. According to ACE's version of the gospel, humans are in their natural state inherently bad. When we are Born Again, we 'die to the flesh' and become 'alive to the spirit'. However, there is a continual struggle between the spirit-filled 'new man' and the 'old man' of the flesh. Because masturbation and even natural sexual desire were defined as sins of lust, I was reminded multiple times a day of how desperate and depraved I was. My own thoughts provided me with constant proof of my own need for salvation. Like St Paul in *Romans* chapter 7, I did the things I hated.

In this case, however, the things I hated were not harmful to ourselves or others. They were not things I'd come to hate of my own accord or by rational persuasion. I'd been taught to hate them, sometimes by a conspiracy of silence implying some things were too shameful even to speak of, and sometimes by propaganda. Every time I 'fell', I experienced a shame spiral that sent me running for forgiveness from the very source of my shame. The religion manufactured its own demand. Research indicates that similar feelings of shame are common among religious people who consider themselves addicted to pornography, even if this usage is not negatively impacting other areas of their lives:

> Some have cited personal religious values as providing a conflict between their VSS [visual sexual stimulation] use and feeling unable to stop. Religious conflict was the main reason cited for problems viewing VSS in one study. Those who want treatment for sex addiction are also more likely to be members of organized religion and hold strong religious values … Far more people report a feeling of inability to control their VSS use, than actually report life difficulties resulting from their use. (Ley, Prause, and Finn 2014, 97)

8.5 Gender and sexual orientation

Caleb described how at his school "as soon as the bell went we were divided by gender … There were s— stairs both sides, and so you had the boys' stairs and the girls' stairs. So yeah, we weren't even allowed to walk down stairs together". While Caleb's was the only school to do this, it is emblematic of the gender policing typical of ACE schools. A lesson plan for ACE pre-school students includes a dressing up game. The text instructs the supervisor "Be certain to reinforce the masculine and feminine roles by asking the individual children to dress up only in items appropriate for a boy or a girl" (*Kindergarten with Ace and Christi 2*, 2001/1986, D1-Review W9-14).

In this world where gender roles are seen as divinely ordained, there is no space for those who do not fit neatly into their assigned boxes. The most visible are gay and bisexual people, but it could also be a boy who wants to play with dolls or, as we have seen, a girl who wants to play sports with boys. I have so far only met one transgender person from an ACE school, Rick. He was born intersex and assigned female at birth, but he always felt he was a boy. Being made to be a girl made him feel "like it was wrong to be myself".

Although Rick's ACE school was in Australia, I feel it is important to include his perspective here to remind readers that there are people for whom conformity to ACE's gender binary is not just difficult, but impossible. I'm aware that including just one trans person risks being tokenistic, or presenting Rick as though he speaks for all trans people. Despite these risks, I feel it is better to

include his words than to ignore his existence. My conversation with him took place using an online messenger.

> Jenna: Who knew, besides you, that you were a boy?
>
> Rick: Well I told everybody but mother told me I just needed to have a good fuck. Sorry but that's what she said …
>
> Jenna: Did you tell anyone [at your ACE school] you weren't a girl?
>
> Rick: There no, I did not have the guts to tell them.
>
> Jenna: I can understand that. Do you remember any lessons or anything anyone said about gender, either in the PACEs or elsewhere?
>
> Rick: I honestly don't try to remember anything from then. I remember being angry over the little comics in the workbooks because of the girls always in dresses and skirts and only the boys having fun. Just found it soul crushing that I was expected to be a cook, a cleaner and babysitter for life.
>
> Jenna: OK. Last time I spoke to you, you were going through some mental health problems.
>
> Rick: Yes.
>
> Jenna: This is a loaded question, so feel free to disagree: Do you think your education had anything to do with that?
>
> Rick: I think it had a bit to do with it, yes. I wouldn't hate myself as much if the standards pumped into me were not so high and unrealistic.
>
> Jenna: What kind of standards do you mean?
>
> Rick: Being all neat and trim, being a "lady", always being the one at fault when something goes wrong. Your husband is not happy *it's all your fault*.

Rick's parting comment was "I wish I had the opportunity to get to know myself growing up instead of wasting all those years pretending to be somebody else then I wouldn't have to spend so much time questioning myself and what I say/do". Of course, there are not many mainstream schools that handle transgender issues well, or where students who identify as neither male nor

female are well accommodated. My intention in pointing out how ACE made Rick feel excluded and "wrong" is simply to point out that such a rigid gender binary can have consequences the schools may not have considered.

If ACE did consider what to teach about trans and intersex people, there is no guarantee they would come to an inclusive conclusion. They clearly have thought about gay and bisexual people, and their conclusion is not kind. *Science 1107* (p. 2) defines homosexual as "having unnatural sexual feelings toward one of the same sex". It goes on to tell readers that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for the sin of homosexuality, before finishing (p. 10):

> Since God never commanded death for normal or acceptable actions, it is as unreasonable to say that homosexuality is normal as it is to say that murder or stealing is normal.

Lily mentioned her supervisors telling her about the 'successes' of Christian 'gay cure' ministries. ACE schools' insistence that non-heterosexual orientations are learned behaviours has caused confusion for students who experience their sexuality as an inherent part of themselves:

Caleb: At the same time I was struggling with my sexuality. (1.0) Well, I say struggling with it. I was, I, I really wasn't struggling with it that much at all. I knew I liked guys. The problem I was having is that obviously that was completely incompatible with everything that I knew and certainly everything the school stood for [*Jenna: yeah.*] And, and obviously problems with sexuality was on the list of things that you could get immediately expelled for.

Jenna: Mmmm. Yeah absolutely.

Caleb: So you couldn't even bring it up to talk to someone about it … I remember the … pastor of the church (1.0) um, telling us about it and you know. It was, it was about choice and people were *choosing* to do this and it was obviously a *bad* choice that they were making in life. (1.0) Um, but that wasn't something that I was choosing and therefore I clearly wasn't *that*. So what was I?

Caleb stressed, however, that his experience took place in the early 1990s, when homosexuality was still a taboo in much of wider society and state schools were forbidden from 'promoting' homosexuality under Section 28. However, Erin had similar recollections from her experience of ACE in the late 1990s:

> I have known since I was eight that I am bisexual [*Jenna: yeah*]. And reading the PACEs, I can't remember quite how old I was. I may have been about 12, maybe a bit older, and it's, it was talking about how homosexuality is a learned behaviour. I remember thinking, you know, I don't know anybody who is gay. I have never seen any gay behaviour. How can I possibly have learned this? [*Jenna: Right*] And just felt really bad. … Up till then, I'd always thought, well they, they wouldn't lie to me, but then knowing in myself that I am this way, and then going kind of round in a cycle. But they wouldn't lie to me. But I am this way. But they always tell the truth. But I am this way. And I never really resolved that [*Jenna: right*] at school, anyway.

Teachings about homosexuality in ACE schools appear to have been quite stable over time. Charlotte, whose ACE experience was the most recent of any of my participants, also alluded to homophobic messages at her school.

Andrew was my only participant to have come out as gay while maintaining a Christian faith otherwise similar to the one he grew up with. Andrew didn't know he was gay until after he left school, although he did have a memory from that time of seeing a man and feeling "very curious", although he didn't attach any meaning to this event until years later. Apart from that:

> I was very late. With regards to coming out, with regards to, um, sexual feeling, with regards to having a crush, really. I mean there were odd like, silly schoolboy crushes, but in terms of actually fancying someone or s— you know, somebody. It was non-existent, and the reason why is because I lived that sheltered life.

For these participants, lack of information and the culture of their schools combined with homophobic messages from the school and PACEs (although Andrew said he did not remember those) to inhibit the development of their

173

sexual identities. Rob, however, had an entirely different experience of discovering his sexuality. He described his pastor first.

> He was just so full of hate that his whole, his *whole* ministry was about, mostly about homosexuals, how a— we'll burn in hell, and that sodomites and dying, all that sort of stuff. And their whole Gospel is built upon shouting at people in the street cos they'd go, they'd go out preaching every weekend. They go out protesting Prides [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride parades].

Rob showed me a video of his former church protesting a Pride, waving placards while the pastor preached at the revellers. One sign said "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the dead were judged", which shows more effort on punctuation than one usually sees from homophobic signs. Rob says as a child he went to more Prides as a protestor than he has as an adult participant:

> I remember them taking, they used to pile us all into a van (1.7) um and drive us down to like London Pride and make us all stand on Trafalgar Square, holding their hands, and they'd say stuff to us like "don't go anywhere cos these paedophiles will get you".

Rob explained that these outings took place in the guise of church trips rather than school trips, usually at weekends, but because the church-school was a single institution, this effectively made no difference. He thinks that, despite his school's hatred, he never internalised the homophobia, or indeed most of the church's beliefs, which he explains is because he had some experience of the outside world, not having started ACE until he was eight, so "I think they probably got me a bit too late", and also because:

> I question a lot of things and even though I was brought up by my mother to believe homosexuality was wrong, I've always known what I am, and I knew that that's fine with me. I just, you know, they're never gonna change what I am. So I, I feel sorry for people who aren't as strong of character who couldn't, who couldn't make a change or ma— or walk away from it, but when I was a teenager and I eventually left

there I was like, this has been a really bad episode. This has been completely wrong.

Rob constructs his identity as being almost bulletproof, but his account was not completely consistent. At times he hinted at vulnerability, although this was followed by a return to his themes of always having known what he was, and his church being hateful. I asked him, given his sheltered upbringing, how he knew what being gay was:

> I do— I don't know. I think um (1.9) I di— I probably didn't know. I knew that I was different, and I knew that. I probably went through a, a very very small phase of thinking, "fuck, this is really bad". I'm not sure, this is against, you know, it's again— this is gonna get me in, all I could think was "this is gonna get me in a lot of trouble" [*Jenna: mm. Right*]. I'm like, I'm, I'm having this fee— these feelings and I'm a bit worried that anyone finds out I'm gonna get in lots of trouble [*Jenna: mm*]. Um, but I kinda knew what I was. I— o— I've just, it's, it's like when somebody who's straight knows that they're straight all the way through. I knew that I was gay all the way through, and even though I might not be able to label it, I knew, I knew enough about what being gay is from them [*Jenna: right*] that I knew I was one of what they hated.

While Rob has always been confident of his identity, the other gay and bisexual people I spoke to struggled to find confidence in their sexual identities. Erin, who is bisexual, told me that after the breakup of her first marriage, she had the opportunity to have a girlfriend, but Erin "completely just ran the other way" because she felt so much guilt at the possibility. Even if she were single again, she does not think she could be in a relationship with another woman: "Even if my Mum was out of the picture, and I was in another country and I met another woman, I think I would just feel too ashamed and too guilty, and worry that I'd be going to hell".

More than a decade after leaving school, Mike still does not understand his own sexuality, which was complicated by the sexual abuse he had suffered before attending the school. Mike had told me while he was at the school he "was

living in (1.4) in a world of just (1.9) continuous fear, really … fear of hell". I asked him what had made him afraid of hell.

> It's what I'm trying to work with at the moment really and have been for the last couple o' years is um (1.4) my sexuality. Like, cos, like, partly cos of what happened to me being abused, and just. I dunno, could be the way I, you know I, I don't know what to label myself but I probably may be bisexual, but I'm not really sure. And that was always a big thing for me cos it was just like "Oh crap, if they found out about this" …

> So that, that, that has always been a, that, yeah that was a big fear for me. It was just like, crap, you know. (1.2) I can't, I literally, you know if, if ((*exhales*)) if I wanna take that step, and I don't know whether, you know, or whatever, of labelling myself in that way or what, but that was a big thing, cos it was *so::* much homophobia, um, within the school when I was there, um, and just about every church that it was associated with.

While he was at the school, Mike did not remember his abuse, so the school could not reasonably be expected to help, but it is clear that the education he received compounded his problems.

Caleb's first sexual experiences were with another boy at his school. His church taught that there is no hierarchy of sin, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Consequently, Caleb says he felt no more guilty about this than he would any other sin. Later, however, he began indulging in "risky behaviours", because:

> You're talking about somebody who's got no self-esteem at all. That's why people tend to get involved in risky behaviours is basically completely lack of self-esteem. Doesn't matter if I do this. I'm not worth anything.

Like Caleb, Rob attributes his lack of self-esteem to his church-school:

> That unfortunately has led to me having not gr— not going out with the best boyfriend material (1.5) because I, because you are taught that you're not good e— you know, to have that whole s— "you're a sodomite, AIDS has been sent by God, so you know, they deserve it". To

be told if you ever, if you ever ge— were gay be hung from a tree in the back garden. All these kinda things that you are taught and told by these people who run this school (1.2) it is gonna affect you, knowing what you are from a very early age. And I, unfortunately I have taken that into relationships, where I go out with guys who are not good enough (1.2) but they're kinda guys that I kinda think I deserve, if that makes sick sense. … But that again is because you're kind of been brought up in this church where: you have no s— they, th— this church and school where it's just no self-worth sort of thing really [*Jenna: mm*]. It's r— that's probably the biggest effect that it still has on me today.

Susan had left her ACE school for a job with Christian Education Europe when she began dating another woman. When her boss discovered this, he took her aside to inquire whether the "nasty rumours" were true. When she confirmed they were, he began questioning her:

> "Why do you think this sort of thing is OK?" ((*Laugh*)) "You do realise that we can't have you in a place, in a family environment where you could influence the minds of sh— of children", which seems kind of ironic to me ((*laugh*)).

She was fired from her job, but that did not end the involvement of CEE staff in her life. Prior to our interview she had told me she'd been beaten for her sexuality, so I asked about that:

Susan: Yeah. Not actively by the people from there but it was encouraged by them from there.

Jenna: So (1.5) and the reason that you were being beaten is because you were in a same-sex relationship.

Susan: Yes. (2.0)

Jenna: And um.

Susan: Because there must have been demons involved. (1.1)

Jenna: And demons can be removed by beating flesh?

Susan: Well the— they can be removed by the own person's willpower and that sort of thing could help motivate them to …

Jenna: Alright so, so who was if you don't mind me ta— asking about this

Susan: {Mmhmm.

Jenna: {Who was, who was beating you?

Susan: Oh that would be my mum ((*laugh*)) [*Jenna: right*]. But um, it strongly encouraged by the people [*Jenna: right*]. Mmhmm.

Susan: {By the people from [inaudible]

Jenna: {And you said they were coming round to your house.

Susan: Yeah pe— um during work the work times um either [boss] by himself or with his wife, or with other people from the office [*Jenna: mm*]. So people I didn't particularly know that well but from the office would, er, come round and talk to me and they'd use incentives like "Oh if you" um "say that you were wrong then you can have your job back" and things like this ((*laugh*)).

Chapter 9 Punishment

In October 2015, Lucas Leonard, 19, was beaten to death in a counselling session at Word of Life Church in New Hartford, New York, where "authorities said he was punched, kicked and whipped with an electrical cord for more than 12 hours until he died" (Mueller 2015). His brother Christopher, 17, was hospitalised with severe injuries. Word of Life Church is a church-school which uses ACE (Boyle 2015).

Clearly, ACE does not endorse such brutality. It draws a clear distinction between abuse and godly discipline. The *Procedures Manual* (ACE 1987, 1998) instructs staff never to strike a child while angry, to use six strokes or fewer, and to reassure the child that he [*sic*] is loved. It is doubtful, however, whether these measures do in fact mitigate the harmful effects of physical punishment even if followed. While there is mixed evidence that parental warmth[13] may serve to moderate spanking's deleterious effects, a cross-cultural study in eight countries found increases in anxiety over time for children whose mothers were high in both warmth and corporal punishment (Lansford et al. 2012). Straus, Sugarman, and Giles-Sims (1997) found that corporal punishment is a statistically significant predictor of antisocial behaviour regardless of the emotional support provided by parents.

ACE advocates might argue that the *Procedures Manual*'s instruction that supervisors should reassure students that they love them after each paddling stops students feeling rejected. My participants report that this is not always the case. When I asked Jeremiah why he got paddled so much, he replied "I can only assume they just didn't like me". A friend wrote to me describing her experience: "Straight after being paddled [the supervisor] asked 'Do you believe that I love you?' and I said 'no', because obviously I knew that she hated me,

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[13]   Every recent study on corporal punishment I found related to its use at home, not in school. This section proceeds on the assumption that findings from these studies can be extrapolated to a school context.

and she said 'YES I DO LOVE YOU!' and it was just weird and confusing for a small child!"

The results of studies of corporal punishment display a consistency that is unusual in social science research (Straus 2001). Nevertheless, there remains a minority of academics who defend the use of 'normal spanking', which they distinguish from abuse (Baumrind, Larzelere, and Cowan 2002). 'Normal spanking' for these purposes is performed infrequently, with an open hand, not an implement such as a rod or paddle, and consists of two strokes or fewer. The methods endorsed in the *Procedures Manual* and in the most popular conservative Christian child-rearing manuals all qualify as abusive or "excessively severe" (Larzelere and Kuhn 2005, 3).

In any case, my participants reported that their schools had gone beyond their self-defined limits for non-abusive spanking. Kaye described "three massive bruises … I think they were about the size of a melon, and I'm not exaggerating, for about two weeks after". Jeremiah found blood on his leg after one paddling. Cain was forcibly restrained while another staff member paddled him (section 10.4). Rob said of his pastor "He would kick you. He would shove you. He would push you". Rob felt he was singled out for punishment: "I think he used to see that I had some spirit about me and I just wasn't gonna fall in line like his kids". During PE lessons:

> We had to run around ma— mats, and he would run behind me a::nd kick me, constantly kick me all the way around, trying to make me run faster and faster and faster. And then, in— I would just be booing [crying] by the end of it … And if, then if I just went down or fell over, he would just put me on an exercise bike … And then as I was on the exercise bike he would come over and turn the dial up harder and harder to make i— cy— the cycling harder and harder.

It is not surprising that punishments have escalated in this way. A recent study found that mild spanking in one year is a risk factor for severe spanking the following year (Lansford et al. 2012). As the AAP argues:

Although spanking may immediately reduce or stop an undesired behavior, its effectiveness decreases with subsequent use. The only way to maintain the initial effect of spanking is to systematically increase the intensity with which it is delivered, which can quickly escalate into abuse. (American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health 1998, 726)

This is why I think it relevant that Lucas Leonard died at an ACE church-school. I also think it reasonable to draw attention to this case:

The religious parents of a teenage boy who forced him to destroy his Manchester United replica shirt because of its "ungodly" red devil motif have been convicted of child cruelty …

The court heard that the boy, who cannot be named for legal reasons, was made to kill his pet chickens and stand outside for hours in freezing weather with no socks on …

They had taught the youngster at home since he was 10 under the "Accelerated Christian Education" system and he had experienced little contact with the outside world. (BBC 2001)

When I began interviewing, I expected to find more evidence of ACE schools employing policies of this type. In a popular child training manual, ACE's former vice president of finance endorses civil disobedience where necessary on the issue of corporal punishment (Fugate 1998, 192). Peshkin (1986, 108) quotes the principal of Bethany Baptist Academy as saying "We'd close down before we gave up the paddling policy", and my school saw it as similarly essential. Stringer (2004, 21) describes her ACE school's efforts to reform a boy with Asperger's syndrome:

He was verbally very intelligent with a reading age of about a ten year old, but with social skills more akin to those of a four year old. He had little regard for authority, and concentration on his work was poor.

His parents agreed to work closely with the school, and to follow advice given … The staff used the wooden spoon during the first term as a form of correction, (now forbidden by law – I do not know how we would have managed without it) usually for rudeness and disobedience.

Because ACE and its supporters had expressed such commitment to the paddle, I expected to find some evidence of its use in schools since 1999. In fact, I found little such evidence, although that may be because of my participants' ages. More than half had left ACE before the corporal punishment ban came into effect. Only two of my participants' ACE tenures began after 1999. One of these, Charlotte, did not mention the paddle at all. The other, Susan, mentioned it several times, in addition to the beatings she described in Chapter 8. She described a visiting speaker at opening exercise who said "Obviously we're not allowed to use physical discipline at school but if your parents do this then know that that's what God wants". Susan said that sometimes staff made "offhand remarks" like "A few years ago we'd be able to paddle you for this offence". She later clarified that this particular line usually came from one supervisor "while she was screaming at us".

Although I was not paddled at my school, my perception was that the paddle was used frequently, bolstered by older students gleefully swapping stories about their own or others' paddlings. Susan mentioned hearing older students joke about being paddled "as if they deserved it essentially, like it was a rite of passage [*laugh*] to be paddled with a wooden spoon", which echoes my experience.

In Parsons (2000), a former ACE supervisor reports that at her school at least one child received the paddle on most days, and on average each child was paddled once a month. This matches my perception of how often the paddle was used at my school. My fear subsided after about a year at the school, when I realised that I could successfully avoid it, but initially it was a constant worry in the back of my mind. Andrew said his school "put the paddle on a pedestal". Although he never got it, he "was scared to death to get the paddle. Because the paddle was there in the middle of the school, floating [*laughs*]. D'you know what I mean? Shining and gold".

I did not directly ask my participants whether they had been paddled in school, but six said they had. All six felt they had been paddled for trivial offences.

> Jeremiah: I dunno what we were doing but there was some flour on the table in front of me and they told us not to touch the flour (1.6) but I made little dots and circles in the flour [mimes putting these dots in with his finger] (2.5) and I got paddled for that.

Jeremiah was five when this happened.

> Thomas: I had someone at the school run out the door, run towards, sort of run into me basically, and my fingers got caught in his shirt. Um, and his like button came off. Um, and then, and then, like, I remember he told the teacher that, he sort of said, "Oh you know it wasn't, wasn't Thomas's fault you know we were just running around". But they thought that he was, you know, it was my fault, I must have been acting sort of maliciously in some way in order to do that. Um, and I got paddled for that.

Kaye got the paddle after she had found the drawer where staff kept the merits and stolen 300, which she spent in the school's merit shop. Caleb was paddled for repeatedly forgetting to take his flag down after his supervisor answered his questions. A friend sent me a list of things she remembered being paddled for: "dragging my gym bag along the floor cos it was too heavy, drawing a cat on my PACE, and for saying I haven't had a biscuit when actually I had". Another friend told me by telephone that he, too, had been paddled for lying about having eaten a biscuit (he had eaten it from his lunchbox on the way to school).

Staff's blind faith in the paddle meant that it continued to be used even in situations where it was obviously not having the desired effect. Cain said he was paddled "twelve to fourteen times" in ten days; later he repeated "in ten days I got paddled twelve times and got 32 detentions". This could be an exaggeration to make a point; in a subsequent interview he said "I managed to get nearly 21 detentions in one bloody week … They were giving me detentions on detentions

man. They tried to have me in on a Saturday at one point". Similarly, Caleb described getting "the cane" five days in a row for the same offence.

Jeremiah recalled being caught cheating on a spelling test. He had hidden his notebook under the PACE test. Discovering this, the supervisors took him from the learning centre to be paddled. On his return, Jeremiah collected his notebook and resumed cheating on the test. He was duly caught and paddled again. Nothing in these accounts suggested that the supervisors seriously explored alternatives to paddling these children, nor that they investigated the reasons why paddling was not producing compliance.

9.1 Other punishments

In addition to detentions and the paddle, participants mentioned various other punishments. Cain said "They locked me in a room for hours and hours and hours on my own". The room was bare and contained only a table and chair. Lily also saw children "locked in rooms" as punishment. This is also a common feature in emails I have received from former students in American ACE schools. Parsons (1987, ix) describes how at one US Christian school a rebellious teenager was locked in "an isolation room" with nothing but a chair and a Bible until she "broke".

Jeremiah was also given an unusual punishment after he kicked another boy to stop him from using a water pistol:

> Obviously I got in trouble for that cos it's a bad thing to do, but um (3.4) [two supervisors] (3.9) got me alone in the dormitory and made me kneel for a very long time while they lectured me about why what I did was wrong. (2.2) And then I was kneeling for so long all the blood ran out of my legs. (1.5) So I went to stand up and I just fell over, because, beca— um, my legs were numb. (1.0) And then they took me outside, and (1.4) went about (3.6) twenty metres apart. (1.0) And I had to walk between them (2.3) back and forth for a very long time.

Cain had vivid memories of numerous other punishments. He described a school camp at which he and another boy were made to stand facing a wall and lean their heads against it. On that occasion, the staff had forgotten about them and gone to bed, leaving them there "for five hours … It was only the fact that my mum came out from where she was sleeping and saw us and put us to bed that we:: got to go to bed that night". Although being forgotten was unusual, the punishment itself was not: "They loved stress positions". He also saw preschoolers placed on a naughty step with a toy in front of them. If the preschoolers touched the toy, supervisors shouted at them.

Possibly the most memorable event of my entire ACE experience was something for which I was not actually present. Its significance in my own mind has grown to the point where I rarely think about my school without remembering this story. Before I began at the school, the staff had been preparing students for a group reading from the biblical book of *Joel*, chapter two, in an activity known as 'choral verse'. The entire school recited the verses in unison, with accompanying actions. One of the accompanying actions was to extend their arms out in front of them, palm up, with hands at about eye level. If you try holding this position you will find that your arm quickly becomes heavy. Unsurprisingly, the children had difficulty holding the position for an extended time. One afternoon, the supervisors decided to make everyone stand in this position for a fixed amount of time. If anyone was seen to lower their arm at all, the time started again for everybody.

No one I spoke to remembered exactly how long this had gone on for. One participant said it was forty-five minutes. Another remembered that at least one child had started crying. I know about this because the supervisors talked about it during at least two subsequent sessions of choral verse while I was at the school. At the first, I remember a supervisor saying "It was a matter of tears for some of you", with a heartfelt smile. At another, she invited an older student to share his memories of the event. I remember him joking "I don't know how long it was. It seemed like two hours, but it was probably really

about three hours". On one of these occasions, after reminding us of the event, she said, "That might be a good thing for some of you", adding as an afterthought "Perhaps we'll do it this afternoon". In the event we did not, but I remember my sense of dread, my certainty that I would not be able to cope.

At a subsequent school fun day, teachers were showing us old photos from the school—our bald headmaster when he had hair, the first ever school photo, that kind of thing. Among these was a photograph from the choral verse rehearsal with everyone holding their arms aloft. Someone had thought the event worth immortalising. One participant claimed to have a copy of this photograph.

Another participant said that while he remembered the *Joel* 2 rehearsal, he thought this was something staff had "repented of" since it did not happen again. I would like to believe him. The way I heard the event described and the way the photograph was saved for posterity makes me think that, far from repenting of it, the staff saw it as representative of the school ethos. After I posted a version of this story on my blog, a student from another school emailed me, correctly guessing the name of one of the staff involved. My correspondent said this supervisor had done something similar during a rehearsal at her school, where the supervisor now worked.

9.2 Shaming

Some ACE church-schools have used shame as a punishment. Rose (1988, 105-106) describes how, after being expelled from the school, a pregnant girl was made to apologise for her sin in front of the church congregation. In Parsons (2000), Rachel describes an episode at her school.

> June [supervisor] had Luke up in front of the whole school. He had been mocking and she didn't know how to stop it. So she made it public and I was on duty that day. I remember fighting back the tears. My little boy stood up in front of the whole school and she did it in the name of Christian love. She said to all the children, 'Luke needs your help. He

can't stop mocking and using his tongue as a weapon to hurt people. And so I want you to go up to him and tell him that you love him'. It was very moving in one sense, but later I thought, Was that right? Was that of God? To make a public spectacle of him?

The only participant I asked directly about this was Cain; it was on my mind since I had recently read Parsons' book. I wondered whether he had witnessed anything similar. He related:

Cain: It generally happened outside of [the school] on the grass in the summer. And they would make anyone who had been, who'd got a large amount of demerits, or had been particularly rebellious as they liked to say it [*Jenna: yeah*], and they'd get us to ask for help from the school by saying "I'm a sinner, please help me find my way to the light" or something to that description.

Jenna: And what, would you have to describe what the sin was?

Cain: No [*Jenna: OK*]. No. That never happened. But the uh, you had to ask for help from the school and it was rather humiliating [*Jenna: now—*]. And that would cause complete segregation. In the school. No one would come near ya.

Unprompted, Kaye described her humiliation at being singled out in a school assembly after it was discovered she and another boy were in a romantic relationship:

I don't know if we were even holding hands or anything. It was just so innocent. But, er, I think the teachers got wind of us dating and the pulled us into, er, a full school assembly, and addressed the whole school about how you shouldn't have girlfriends and boyfriends until you've met the right person, and that you should be married before you even do anything, and, you know, it's, and saying about how wrong it is to have partners, and introduced the six-inch rule.

9.3 Verbal punishments

While I never received the paddle at school, I vividly remember an occasion when two supervisors took turns shouting at me. At times their faces were

inches from mine as they screamed. I began crying shortly after they started and continued sobbing uncontrollably the entire time they were shouting, which did nothing to soften their tone. I did not know then, and I can only guess now, exactly what I had done to deserve this. After they had finished shouting, I was made to apologise to two students who had witnessed my alleged misbehaviour. I was still crying at this point, but I was not given a break to collect myself. I managed to stutter out my apologies in staccato sobs, aware all the time that I would have to try again if I was judged insincere. Sincerity was not altogether easy since I was still unsure of the nature of my offence, but my apologies were accepted and I was allowed to go and wash my face.

Prior to my doctoral studies I had never seriously considered that shouting at children might be verbal abuse. It was commonplace at my ACE school, but there were also teachers quite fond of shouting at other schools I had attended, so I thought little of it. Reflecting on it now, I can think of almost no circumstances when it would be acceptable to speak to a child the way those supervisors spoke to me that day. Other participants alluded to similar abuse. Mike described a supervisor who "could be really nice but then all of a sudden she just could turn into a demon". Cain spoke of staff "emotionally battering" him. Susan said of one supervisor "If you hadn't had this particular teacher scream at you, you weren't a true [ACE school] student". Charlotte recalled seeing "teachers reduce students to tears in the middle of classrooms. Bullying them, basically". Stephen said of one of his supervisors:

> I remember her as being (1.2) abrasive and shouty and not at a:ll interested in the kids. Um, I'm, I'm sure she didn't shout and scream and throw things constantly, but that's (1.1) that's what I remember of her character.

9.4 Jeremiah

Several of my participants described frequent paddlings at school. I have selected Jeremiah as a case study of a student who received excessive

188

punishment. After leaving his ACE school, Jeremiah had several brief, unsuccessful attempts at attending more mainstream schools:

> I didn't know how to fit in with (1.1) because I felt that I'd come from somewhere where (2.1) very sort of enclosed (1.5) place (1.0) just completely distant from the outside world, into a place where everyone was normal. And I didn't know how, I was 11, 12 then (1.4), I didn't know how to fit in with (1.7) other kids. (1.3) I wanted to. I wanted to make friends (1.1) s:o I tried to make people laugh. (4.6) And well, in [ACE school] you're just in your office all day, just with the blinders on. Um (1.1) but, but in a public s— in a public, state, normal school, (1.0) you, you got whole, you've got everyone around you, and you can just say things. So I did. (1.1) And I got in trouble for that (1.8) and er (2.1) the teachers didn't like me, so I got (1.5) kicked out of every school I went to after that.

He was expelled from the first school for disruptive behaviour and vandalising desks ("I was trying to make my peers like me"). He noted that he thought he may have had ADHD, although he was not diagnosed. He was excluded from his next school for disruption as well: "Cos I was bigger than everyone else, I got accused of bullying, when, well, I, I obviously don't think I did it, but they said I did".

After this his mother tried to send him to a "special school", but after three weeks he refused to attend. He then went to a boarding school where he was again "kicked out" after a year: "Outside school hours, I just went off and, drink, smoke, go, um, to the petrol station, get some petrol, make petrol bombs". Although he said he was never caught making bombs, Jeremiah was discovered having drunkenly vomited at school, which ended his tenure there. After a similarly unsuccessful stint at one final school, he was home schooled with private tutors.

Jeremiah clearly felt that the ACE school had contributed to his later difficulties, but beyond not knowing how to fit in after starting his schooling in a "very enclosed place", he was unable to account for why he had struggled so much to

adjust to mainstream education. Earlier in his interview, however, Jeremiah had guessed he had been paddled twice a week on average during his time in ACE, starting when he was five or six until he left the school aged 11. He described one occasion in which the pastor broke the paddle, and resumed the punishment after finding a replacement. When Jeremiah touched his leg after the paddling, he found blood. He was also frequently paddled at home, which he said happened because the church-school had "brainwashed" his mother.

The behaviours Jeremiah describes—vandalism, making petrol bombs, drug and alcohol abuse, and possibly bullying—are examples of externalising behaviours. These disorders are characterised by children acting negatively on the *external* environment, and include aggression, delinquency, and hyperactivity (Liu 2004). There is a wealth of evidence that corporal punishment in childhood is associated with increased externalising behaviours (Bender et al. 2007; Ma et al. 2012; Straus 1991). It is not possible from such research to demonstrate a causal link conclusively. However, prospective studies, which monitor aggression and corporal punishment over time, cast doubt on the hypothesis that aggressive children receive more corporal punishment. Instead, they consistently suggest that corporal punishment causes increased aggression (Durrant and Ensom 2012; Straus 2001; Taylor et al. 2010). Maltreatment in childhood is also related to later difficulty relating to peers (Lynch and Cicchetti 1991).

There is ample evidence to suggest harsh discipline contributed to Jeremiah's later problems at school. Many experts argue that corporal punishment makes other forms of discipline less effective (American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health 1998; Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health 2009; Waterston 2000). It may be that in addition to contributing to Jeremiah's behavioural problems, the punishments administered by his ACE school militated against his future schools being able to discipline him effectively.

Chapter 10 Charismatic worship

Of the ten ACE schools attended by participants, seven had a clearly Charismatic orientation. A distinguishing feature of Charismatic Christianity is the belief in (even expectation of) prophecies, miracles, visions, and hearing the voice of God. It is common for Charismatic ACE schools to try to include these in the school day. Dennett (1988, 67) describes the ACE school where he was headmaster:

> At the King's School we have experienced many examples of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of both children and staff. Sometimes it has been spectacular, as when twenty-two children came forward for healing and *all* were healed, either on the spot or during the day. …

> There have been seasons when assembly has gone on into the first period because of the prophecies, messages in tongues, words from the Lord and visions.

I should stress this is not the case at all ACE schools. Caleb described his church-school as "post-prophetic", meaning they believed the era of the prophets had passed, along with manifestations such as speaking in tongues described in the book of *Acts*. At least seven of the ten schools attended by my participants, however, were open to the supernatural events Dennett describes.

Hearing the voice of God seems to be common among not just ACE schools but also the new Christian schools more widely. Baker and Freeman (2005) relate accounts of the formation of seventeen of the new Christian schools. Twelve of these stories report the school founders hearing directly from God. At one, "John heard the Lord ask him to take the school on to secondary level" (Baker and Freeman 2005, 108). At another, "Norma asked the Lord how she would know if this was his place for them. Immediately she felt the Lord give an answer, 'You will see red.'" (Baker and Freeman 2005, 82). Baker and Freeman relate these stories as though hearing God speak is commonplace.

In my Christian circles, it was accepted for sermons to relate entire conversations between the preacher and God. I sometimes heard preachers stop mid-sentence, as though interrupted, and say, "What's that, Lord?" This might partially explain why even evangelical critiques of ACE schools struggle to gain traction. No argument can trump "God told me to do this".

At Alice's school, students were actively taught to hear God:

> Alice: I remember being part of a whole class situation (1.9) where we were taught that it was important to hear the voice of God and that we needed to do this and practise it. (1.9) If you didn't hear the voice of God and had nothing to say, (2.3) you were somehow um (1.4) it was, it was not a (1.2) it was not something that I would want to admit.
>
> Jenna: (1.7) Yes.
>
> Alice: So I remember (1.9) conjuring up an image in my mind (1.1) of (2.2) sin being like rubbish that we would throw away in the wastepaper basket. … And it was important for us to verbalise and share with others what we thought God was saying to us (1.0) [*Jenna: right*]. It relied heavily on our imagination which I had, and I still do to this day have a very active imagination and healthy imagination. But instead of applying that with creative writing or drama skills it was developed with imagining what God would be saying to you [*Jenna: right*]. It wasn't um, something that you kept to yourself or anything personal. It was very important to share (1.1) and model to the other learners. And this was from the age of seven, so from when I started.

When I asked how Alice distinguished between the voice of God and her own imagination, she replied "by the reaction and validation of the adults". At the time, however, she "didn't question it and thought it was a normal part of education". She explained it was vital that every supposed word from God "matched the Bible", but besides that she recalled no real guidance on how to tell God's voice from her own. "It wasn't really explained. It was just modelled. So in a way, my sceptical mind would say it was learned behaviour".

I also remember a devotions class where we discussed how to hear the voice of God. I said God's voice always sounded slightly different from my own thoughts. Someone replied that the principal said God would always speak to you in the voice most like your own, which now strikes me as extremely convenient.

Susan started at her ACE school in her teens, and by the time she arrived it was assumed that students would know how to hear from God. The school taught that God would tell them when they had found the right person to marry. I asked how, and she replied:

> I felt like I was a f— like an outsider here cos I didn't know ((*laughing*)) how God was supposed to tell you. That was just something that they'd use in these exact terms every time, the same sort of phrasing.

10.1 Prophecies

Besides private communication with individuals, God would often speak in the form of public prophecies. These became prominent at Jolyon's school during the Toronto Blessing, a mid-1990s Charismatic revival characterised by ecstatic behaviours including being 'slain in the spirit' (falling down because of God's power), laughter, speaking in tongues, and shaking (Poloma 1997).

Manifestations typical of the Toronto Blessing initially happened only in the church which ran Jolyon's school. Because most of the school children and staff attended the church, however, it crossed over into the school, especially during assemblies: "There was lots of shaking and stuff, and they had little kids prophesying". Jolyon thinks assemblies like this happened for a period of "maybe a year". One prophecy was especially memorable:

> God told them they had to move to a different building. And there was this particular building in [location] that they wanted, and God had told them they were going to be there, and he'd prophesied it and they were sure about it. (1.2) And they made a huge fuss about this, and then it all fell through. … And at no point did they say (1.5) "how did we, misunderstanding [*sic*] God's call?" You know, what, they, it wasn't that

I'm expecting them to say, "Oh, it's all a load of bollocks", you know, "clearly this prophecy thing is nonsense, and let's ju—" because they weren't gonna do that. But at least they should've said "What went wrong? Did we somehow mishear God?" There was none of that. They completely forgot about it instantly and then just carried on with the new prophecy of what God wanted them to do.

Prophecies were not uncommon at my school (I delivered at least two during before-school prayer meetings). Often, they would follow a period of praying in tongues, with the prophecy said to be the interpretation of what had already been said in spiritual language. Mike was another recipient of such prophecies:

Mike: I think the worst of it all was that false hope that it gave me was that kind of (3.9) [exhales] They used to, they, they used to build us up you know, and me specifically, which was, really used to weird me out. They really used to bang on about how I'm gonna be an amazing tool for God and I'm gonna end up building churches. You know, they, they said all kinds, they used to prophesy all kinds of crazy stuff about me.

Mike: {Yeah

Jenna: {Was this in the school?

Mike: Yeah, in the school, yeah. And then, and then obviously, like, the teachers that were in the school, and, and different people in different families, that, you know they were all aware of this, so that they built that up with me after the school, and in the different churches and just really built up this false self basically, like this completely just (1.3) crazy. … They were literally, like making me believe that I was a prophet.

The view that ACE schoolchildren will be "an amazing tool for God" is a common one—the objective is to produce students who change the world for God (Parsons 1987, 6; Twelves 2005, ii, 288). Lily describes getting the impression she "was going to save the world singlehandedly". Alice felt "you were part of a movement of somebody else's wonderful idea of how you were going to change the world".

10.2 Speaking in tongues

> Kaye: I was forced to speak in tongues, because everybody else was doing it, [*Jenna: mmhmm*] and it made me feel quite uncomfortable. Um, I had a lot of problems in my past, and, er, it made me very emotional, because they made me cry. Um (1.4) and I think it made me think about things that I wouldn't of thought about. I was supposed to be at school learning, not thinking about problems and talking to God and things, you know? Like obviously it might help some people but (1.0) I was from a housing estate and have lots of issues in my life, and that wasn't helping me.

Kaye attended a Charismatic church not connected to the school, where "everybody" spoke in tongues, but where, unlike at school, she had the choice not to join in. "I was nine, being forced to speak in tongues, you know. I went to church. They should've accepted I was already going to church". She said she did not know whether praying in tongues was truly a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, only that "it's confusing".

For some students, the school's emphasis on speaking in tongues produced a conflict with their own or their family's values. Andrew came from a Pentecostal background where praying in tongues was an event reserved for special moments in services, always followed by an interpretation. He was therefore uncomfortable in a school where praying in tongues was said to be a gift for all believers to use frequently. Jolyon found it all nonsense:

> I remember … investigating whether or not I thought I had the gift of tongues, and I gave it a go. You know, shallabingbong balla balla balla, and it never really came. [*Laughing*] And you know how they say you're supposed to just make some funny noises and then it'll sort of become tongues, and this [*Jenna: mm*]. I always thought that was bogus and ridiculous.

10.3 Healing

Charismatic Christianity emphasises miraculous healings. Baker and Freeman (2005, 88–89) report a series of miracles happening during a skiing trip by The

River School (a New Christian but not an ACE school). This emphasis on healing can threaten children's safety, as it nearly did in Lily's case when she needed major surgery. "A couple of people in church were very, um (1.1) against me having any conventional medicine … I was supposed to have, you know, believed for my healing". The night before her surgery was scheduled, one of the school monitors approached her, saying she should not go into hospital because the monitor "had been told [by God]" Lily would be healed. Fortunately, Lily's dad overheard this and took her home immediately.

It does not seem common for these schools to encourage healing *instead* of medical assistance. Baker and Freeman's 'miraculously healed' children were taken to hospital on being injured. As my participant Stephen put it, "Healing was an emphasis, but I don't remember anybody not being taken away in an ambulance when they split their head open". Where PACEs refer to medicine, they do so positively. Nevertheless, in some cases, as Lily's experience illustrates, seeing doctors can be painted as a lack of faith.

10.4 Demons

All my participants, Charismatic or not, came from schools for whom demons are literal beings who can attack and even possess humans. These beliefs are shared by Reformed and Charismatic Christians (Long 1996, 303). In Chapter 8, Susan described how her attraction to another woman was attributed to demon possession. Alice said her school attempted to cast demons out of her friends. When I asked her to say more, she did not want to talk about it. Rob's church-school elders described his behaviour as "full of the devil" and "devil-possessed". He could not remember the pastor ever calling him possessed, but the pastor did say Rob was "doing the devil's work". Acting on church doctrine, his mother on several occasions tried to cast demons out of him, shouting "Get thee behind me, Satan".

At Mike's school, "They used to do some pretty heavy kinda spiritual stuff with us, um, like, hands-on praying and stuff, like, really intense things of, like, trying to pull demons out of kids". Mike explained that churches he attended later attempted "exorcisms" on him. He thinks all this "kinda started in [the ACE] school". Prior to attending he had been a fairly nominal Anglican. The school was "the source", because it introduced him to doctrines, people, and churches that affected him profoundly:

> Within the school they taught us a hell of a lot about Satan. It was really pretty full on. Um, especially one teacher, er [name]. I remember she was always banging on about Satan and, and talking a— and, and not in the, like, red devil, kind of horns and all that kinda stuff. Like, a proper entity that is comp— pure white light, um, and er yeah, can attack you at every corner. And it just, it really, it, it, it got so deep into my psychology that it um (1.1) that when ov— over the past couple of years uh:, when I've been … trying to work with the trauma that I've been through in my childhood, um: (1.7) that trauma manifested itself as Satan. So it's a bit like because I was taught about this, you know, real paranoid kind of idea of this entity going around and stuff, trying to get me and that, it became very real. Like su— well I mean it's pretty real for a lot of people but i— it came overly real for me, because my mind's eye was s:o, like, overactive.

During this period Mike broke up with his girlfriend because he believed she was possessed. He ended up in a psychiatric ward following this breakdown (Chapter 11).

Cain described numerous stays in psychiatric wards and mental institutions. At school, he heard he was possessed so many times he started to believe it. Initially, he says, the school "was great, it was lovely":

Cain: Then I started messing up because as I got older, uh, as I hit into puberty my mental health kicked in (1.4) And I was autistic. And Aspergic. (2.1) So, and they didn't have any idea of how to deal with that so they turned round and decided that rather than me being a problem child who was awkward (1.5) I was a possessed child, who was dark. (2.1) And that was the point that everything went from being "la-de-da" to "oh my god, I'm in with psychos".

Jenna: What did you do that that led to them concluding that you were possessed?

Cain: (3.4) I questioned everything. Being, cos I've had these conditions, you know, I looked at what they were saying and went (1.1) "why? (1.1) But that doesn't make sense". You know, and as I said, because I constantly asked them questions and I made them justify their points.

Cain also referred to other actions that might have influenced the supervisors' assessment. Once, he slapped a girl: "But in all fairness she kicked me in the nuts first. But they didn't see her kicking me in the nuts. They saw me get up and slap her". He had a friend with whom he had "a couple of fights":

That was the problem I had see, if someone did something like that, like, nicked something of mine, I wouldn't be, I'd, I'd be like 'give it back', they'd be like 'no', and I'd be like *bang*.

On one occasion, he fought back when the headmaster tried to paddle him:

Cain: I went straight for him, and him and m— my stepdad had to pin me down. He didn't get the hits that he wanted. He still gotta hit me, cos my step dad pinned me down, but he didn't get what he wanted.

Jenna: And what did he want?

Cain: (1.8) To punish me (3.1) and he didn't get the opportunity because I fought back [*Jenna: right*], and showed that I wasn't afraid. His response to that was to say that I was evil, would never be a Christian, could never possibly be a Christian, because there was something in me that fought back and rebelled against Christianity.

Cain initially said the school tried to perform "exorcisms" three or four times, but later in the interview he said it was twice. Cain described the pastor and principal, headmaster, and some other staff standing around him in a circle, "praying and, like, trying to get the Light to shine upon me".

The supervisors' damning words acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy for Cain, who believes himself to have been possessed: "But whatever it was I was possessed by was bloody well protecting me, not fucking hurting me". Later he referred to the thing that possessed him by a name that he said it gave itself. He described a ritual in which he conjured this being: "From the age of 20 to the age of 25 I was possessed". Cain's interviews were punctuated with accounts of supernatural things he had witnessed or done, such as seeing auras and channelling their energy to repel enemies. This interest, he said, came from the school: "They told me about all these powers that were demonic [*Jenna: mm*]. It was a bit like they gave me an advert".

10.5 Risks

This form of religion is particularly challenging, because it is in tension with the demands of a good education. The custom of treating testimonies uncritically as proof of divine manifestations is at odds with the need for students to develop healthy scepticism about extraordinary claims. Exorcisms are incompatible with a reasoned understanding of the causes of mental health issues and behavioural difficulties. Believing that God is speaking to you may threaten the epistemic humility that an open-minded student needs. These religious practices are a threat to students' rationality. Under normal circumstances, the solution would be to keep teachers' religious practice out of the school, but the New Christian Schools deny any possibility of compartmentalising religion from classroom practice (Pike 2004). Some argue the solution is to leave the decision to parents. In this instance, that leaves some children to grow up believing they are demon-possessed.

Chapter 11 Mental health

The depression I experienced while I was in ACE and the years immediately following is the most obvious harm I experienced from the school. I wrote about killing myself several times in my diary entries and I still have a suicide note that I drafted in 1999. I never asked participants about their mental health, but it was the subject of some of my most moving interview exchanges. Ten participants referred specifically to mental health problems they had experienced.

Nathan described drinking excessively, adding that depression was a factor in his alcohol abuse. Erin referred to self-harming by cutting her wrists while she was at the school. She put this down to not fitting in with the other girls, as well as being told that homosexuality was unnatural. Caleb said he was "almost certainly chronically depressed" while at the school. The uncertainty is because the church-school did not believe in mental health problems, so he never received help. Two participants described vomiting every morning before school, and a third said his stomach "dropped" every time he approached the school. Stephen said he experienced what he would now call anxiety and depression, although he clarified "I wouldn't like to say that those mental health problems were primarily because of [ACE school] [*Jenna: mm*], but [ACE school] is certainly part of the environment and experience which informed those".

Some of the women I interviewed described an obsessive perfectionism that they felt the school had caused or encouraged. "My chronic fatigue was definitely as a result of being taught to work myself till I was half-dead", explained Charlotte, who said the school had pushed her hard-working tendencies "toward the obsessive".

> They teach an unhealthy work ethic, and they encourage people who already push themselves hard to push themselves harder. Um, the people that I know who have the very kind of um (1.7) are very dedicated to working hard, to looking after other people, to doing their best, and the system has taught them to push that button constantly,

and never give themselves a break. Never put themselves before others. Um (2.2) and when you do that for long enough it makes you ill.

Lily also described a tendency towards obsessive neatness, and in section 8.2 Jayne talked about her compulsive house cleaning. Jayne recounted a conversation with her therapist in which she said she felt compelled to clean because her husband's unfaithfulness was because she had not been a good wife (as defined by the PACEs) and because in ACE:

> You set your goals, you know, and you achieve them, but at the same time, you are not praised for achieving them. You are asked more [*Jenna: right*]. Um, and so there's never that sense of accomplishment. There's always that sense of "Go. Do more. Do more. Do more".

There is little chance of students with mental health problems finding the help they need in an ACE school, because in this culture mainstream understandings of mental health are rejected entirely. ACE's 'college-level' *Basic Introduction to Christian Counseling* PACEs (hereafter '*Counseling*') refer to "mental illness" in quotation marks, before stating "Battle lines are drawn. The fight is on between Christianity and modern psychiatry. They are opposite as day and night, good and evil" (*Counseling 1*, 6). One question reads:

> There may be several things wrong with the so-called "mentally ill," but the one cause that must be excluded in most cases is <u>mental illness</u> itself.[14] (*Counseling 1*, 25)

The mentally ill are described as using "bizarre behavior" to "divert attention from … deviant behavior" and "camouflage their sin" (p. 23). The PACEs use as a textbook Jay E. Adams' *Competent to Counsel*. This style of counseling can veer towards the pugilistic: Adams' techniques are known as 'nouthetic confrontation', with 'nouthetic' coming from the Greek word 'to admonish'. Students must mark this statement true or false: "The merciful counselor has a

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[14]   Underlined text indicates a blank to be completed by the student.

nonjudgmental attitude toward his client's lifestyle and behavior" (p. 46). The correct answer is 'false'. Adams argues that mental problems are the result of sin, and the solution is to confess this sin. Even where Adams acknowledges that sickness may be real (as in the case of psychosomatic conditions), he still considers that sin is the root cause, so the route to cure is confession.

It is unclear how influential Adams' methods are on English ACE schools, nor how widely the (elective) Counseling PACEs are studied. Such ideas are not limited to PACEs, however. One participant referred to studying Larry Crabb's (1988) work during afternoon lessons at school. Crabb's 'Biblical counseling' differs from Adams' in that Crabb believes psychology can provide some valid insights (so long as these are measured against the Bible), whereas Adams sees psychology and the Bible as necessarily in conflict. Like Adams, however, Crabb rejects the mainstream conception of mental health, arguing that mental problems are the result of sin. Both deny that help is available outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ, rendering help unobtainable to anyone who does not share (or has substantial doubts about) their faith. By emphasising depravity and blaming mental problems on sin they further stigmatise mental illness.

Lily did not mention Adams or Crabb, but talked about how seeking secular help for mental problems was not done at her church-school:

> Everything was supposed to be about faith, and believing God to heal everything. You know, it *is* all about your relationship with God. If something's gone wrong, it's because you need to study the Bible more, you need to pray more. Um, and you wouldn't seek any health, help for anything, um, because it's all about believing for best possible health. And if you go to church all the time, and you read your Bible all the time, and you pray all the time, everything will be fine. And if anything goes wrong in your life, it's as a result of you not doing these things enough.

In evangelical circles like these, it is still widely held that demons are a cause of sickness, particularly mental illness. An article in the Christian Medical Fellowship's (UK) student journal claims "It would seem reasonable to argue

that demon possession may be an aetiological factor in some cases of mental illness, but it may also be an aetiological factor in some non-psychiatric conditions" (Cook 1997). In section 10.4, Cain described how his school attempted to cast demons out of him for behavioural problems that would more usually be referred to mental health professionals. After a year at his ACE school, Cain said:

> I was breaking down. I was having nightmares. I was having what they call grand violent delusions. I mean, I was going home and all I could dream about was killing and murdering everyone in the school.

He described, somewhat vaguely, a history of criminal activity and trouble with the police:

> One thing I've learnt is that I've got that thing in my mind and when it says "run" I run away, and when it says "fight" I fight. And unfortunately, when it says "kill" I generally give it a good go. Which is why I've got mental health, mental health records, just because it's, you know, as they say it's unpredictable how I'll react to any and all stimuli … Been in and out of psych hospitals up until I was 21. After 21 I got a nice little letter from the, uh, local mental health team saying they didn't have a facility that could, uh, deal with my symptoms and my condition.

Cain said this history means he is now unable to get a job. He described the ACE school as "the start of where I got twisted":

> I did things, I did things that if I had a conscience, I should feel guilty for. But, again, it was the [school staff] that burned my conscience out of me [*Jenna: yeah*]. Cos they just made me feel bad all the time. It was always like, y'know, you've done wrong, you're bad, you're bad you're bad. My way of dealing with it was to go "Well fuck you, I'm just not gonna feel anything".

Mike also described a spell in a psychiatric ward, although in his case it is likely that he had an underlying problem that his school could not have known about. Mike explained that he had been sexually abused by his brother and cousin from a very early age until not long before starting at the ACE school. At the

time he started at the school, however, he did not remember this abuse. As he puts it:

> So it was just like, my brain was trying to process [the abuse] and then all this stuff gets put on top of it. And then yeah, for the last ten years like, ten, fifteen years I've, I've suffered with all sorts of horrible kind of visions because of the mythology.

By "all this stuff", Mike particularly means the graphic descriptions of Satan, God, angels, and demons he learned at the ACE school.

> When I started to face up to, to a lot of the things, and I, I basically decided [inaudible] that was it. I'm gonna tell them everything that they told me not to do. I'm gonna (1.5) do witchcraft, I'm gonna, I'm just gonna look at everything. I'm just gonna try:: everything. And I, and I, I got to a point where I was basically just wanting to channel Satan and and speak to him and all this kinda crazy shit. And the more and more I did that, the more and more I found out that I was just facing myself and what had happened was the whole idea of Satan had um, basically was the face of my trauma. (1.1) So getting rid of that, and like coming out of the Christianity, helped me actually see myself as myself for the first time ever, and this was like, just this time last year. I had quite a big mental breakdown, um, because all this stuff [memories of abuse] was coming up.

This recent breakdown was the second he had experienced. The first had happened ten years prior:

> Just two years after coming out of the school I ended up having a f:f massive mental breakdown where I literally believed that I was seeing angels and demons everywhere. Not like I see you in the flesh and so, it's just a very powerful mind's eye experience, but constant. So it was basically like (1.4) part of my brain was literally just living in the Christian mythology … It was something that I trusted in so much and that was what was really frightening about ending up in hospital, because like a— at the age of 17, where all of a sudden I'm, you know, I believe I'm being attacked by all these entities and stuff, and it was just, a:ah it was horrible.

In this period, Mike broke up with his girlfriend because he believed she was possessed. It was following this breakdown that Mike was admitted to a psychiatric ward:

> What was really scary, one of my best friends from [the ACE] school at the time, his father was a nurse on the ward. … I couldn't believe it. He, he couldn't have read my notes, cos I was just basically saying "keep all Christian stuff away from me, like, I can't deal with any of this". And he:, like, he did a, he did a nightshift, um, one time and er, he encouraged me about like, I was, couldn't sleep, freaking out, and, like one o'clock in the morning, and he actually encouraged me to read the Bible, like, on a psychiatric ward when they fully know well that I'm suffering with delusions of Christianity and ((exhales)). It was, yeah, a real nightmare.

This story is also indicative, however, of a way this type of faith can lead people to act contrary to reason. The nurse recommended Bible reading when Mike's medical notes stated biblical images were fuelling his delusions. In Chapter 9, I discussed how staff persisted with corporal punishment in cases where it was obviously ineffective. In both cases, faith in a particular course of action overrides the clear evidence of the situation. It means that in cases such as Mike's, where the religious teachings are clearly unhelpful, the proffered solution is likely to be more of the problem.

Chapter 12 Socialisation

One belief ACE espouses is that God loves everybody and made humanity in his image. If emphasised, this has the potential to promote tolerance and respect for others. Other aspects of ACE's theology include the beliefs that unless Born Again humans are evil, that Christian children must be protected from evil, and that the Bible contains absolute and final truth so that all other knowledge is inferior at best. When emphasised, these beliefs are the seeds of intolerance.

In my first week of ACE school, the principal took the boys aged 11-13 (a group of five) for a devotions class in which she preached a sermon she called "Birds of a Feather Shall Flock Together"[15]. The reason this was so significant to me is partly an accident of timing. I moved schools mid-way through the academic year. My first ever devotions lesson was for the others just one among many. It's possible I'm the only one who remembers it. On the other hand, it's also possible the principal chose the sermon because she knew as a new arrival from a state school I would have non-Christian friends. Either way, she preached a sermon in which she marshalled such verses as "Evil company corrupts good habits" (*1 Corinthians* 15:33) and "Friendship with the world is enmity with God" (*James* 4:4) to persuade us not to be friends with non-Christians. I was somewhat taken aback; my old friends hadn't seemed evil. I did see those friends a few more times after that, but soon all of my friends were either from school or church. As a result, my only knowledge of non-Christians came from the stereotyped depictions in PACEs, the pronouncements of my supervisors, and the somewhat restricted range of films and television programmes I was allowed to watch.

The PACEs themselves included regular exhortations to avoid contact with non-Christians. In *English 1086*, page 10 is titled "How Can I Be Happy?", and all the

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[15]   Actually, I don't remember if the auxiliary verb was 'shall', 'should', or 'must', but I'm certain there was an auxiliary verb. It wasn't simply "Birds of a feather flock together".

sentences relate to avoiding the companionship of "the un-Godly". In *English 1092* (p. 34), students parse the sentences "I will not spend time with people of unGodly character. My friends will be faithful Christians." I was interested to what degree my participants felt their schools had discouraged them from socialising with non-Christians. I expected the answer would be complex, because conservative evangelicalism holds in tension two competing ideas: the requirement for evangelism demands that Christians interact with the unsaved, while the desire for purity demands separation. The biblical injunction to be "in the world but not of the world" is frequently cited. As Caleb put it, "There was this weird dichotomy though where … you had to remain isolated and pure but at the same time you were supposed to reach out and invite people to youth group". Jeremiah remembered "We went out street preaching and stuff. Everyone outside was degenerate, and we needed to either help them or withdraw from them".

I discussed with all but four of my participants what their schools had taught about being friends with non-Christians. Of the nineteen who discussed this subject, sixteen agreed that their schools had discouraged friendships with outsiders to varying extents. Of the four who did not discuss it, three (Stephen, Alice, and Rob) described such social isolation that I did not think this question worth asking. The three who stated they had been encouraged to maintain friendships with non-Christians (William, Gideon, and Harry) were also the three who were the most generally positive about their ACE schooling.

Of the sixteen who thought relationships with outsiders were discouraged, most felt this pressure was strong. Kaye said unbelievers were spoken of as "the way through to the devil". Jayne said supervisors told her "It's easier for them to influence you than you to influence them, so to abstain from any interaction". Charlotte concluded, "You're just taught that it's not the done thing. You don't socialise with people who aren't your own kind". Cain was not allowed to be friends with any non-Christians: "But [my friend] faked being a C— faked doing

the, the whole prayer and shit (1.7) in front of my stepdad, and uh, so I was allowed over at his house".

Most participants did not say that they had been told not to interact with unbelievers at all, however. Susan described a chapel service in which she heard that she *should* "interact" with non-Christians, but this did not mean that she had to be "actively friends with them". Supervisors had said, "When you turn a lamp on in a dark room you can see that the light touches the shadows but it doesn't *combine* with the shadows". Since Susan moved to the ACE school only at 13, initially she had a number of outside friends, but "it sort of became more awkward to hang out with them the longer I was in ACE". Her ACE peers did not express disapproval that she had these friends, but they were surprised if Susan socialised with non-Christians on Sundays, saying "But Sunday's a Christian day!" Susan finished:

> You tend to want to separate yourself from that part cos as a teenager you want to fit in with the people you're seeing every day, [*Jenna: right*] rather than, er, the people you're only seeing on the odd weekend or whatever.

Jolyon had mixed memories of his school's position. When I asked him directly what he had been taught on this subject, he said it was "fine" to have non-Christian friends. Elsewhere, however, he indicated that his school had reservations about the students mixing with outsiders. Before he went to the school, his parents had been homeschooling him (not using ACE) together with some other families, but they had no access to sports facilities. Someone had suggested they contact the ACE school to see whether they could join them for PE:

> And they were absolutely not up for it because we were kind of outside kids (1.0) and I was from a Christian background … but the other kids weren't, so I think they sort of, "Ooh, we don't want our kids mixing with these people".

Jolyon had another memory that suggested his school had painted an unflattering picture of the world beyond its doors:

> I'm er dimly aware (1.6) that something there, maybe the PACEs or some magazine, or maybe even things that people have said gave the kids the impression that when we went to university, especially, we would be (1.3) confronted with all these terrible people trying to tell us all these awful evil things and lead us astray. And we had to prepare ourselves for this awful, um, sort of, er, exposure to the, the, or terrible, fallen real world.

I asked him how this memory could be reconciled with his earlier generalisation that there had been no such dire warnings, and he repeated that he could not remember where exactly he had gained this impression. Jolyon was not alone in receiving this impression though; I recognise it, and Lily recalls being warned that at university: "Everything around you is gonna be horrendous. There's gonna be, you know, people drinking, people having sex before marriage. It's going to be terrible. You will be tempted. This is a test". In a CEE training video, ICCE chair Brenda Lewis (2013a, 4:40) says:

> There are, as we've already said, big questions to resolve for Christians thinking of sending their children to university. Two years ago, two of my sons started at university. One was put in a house with 12 other Christians and, you know, about 70 other people as well. And by the end of the first week many of those *'Christians'* ((*she makes air quotes*)) were engaged in all sorts of immoral and even perverted activity. And by the end of the first term only two of them were left, and that was my son and his friend from our school. And both deeply disillusioned, really, about other Christians.
>
> My other son found himself put in a tiny flat with four other boys, one of whom claimed to be a Christian but was actually a practising homosexual, and that upset him profoundly. Of course other people go to university from Christian schools and have a really happy time.

Gideon, Harry, and William, contrary to the majority of my participants, insisted that their schools had not stressed this isolationist tendency. To the degree the schools had taught this, it had been overridden by their parents. All three

recalled attending events outside of school, such as boy scouts and football teams, which provided the opportunity to socialise with other children from a variety of backgrounds. Harry and William, still Christians, recalled the separatist teachings in the PACEs but both (particularly William) argued this was not a genuinely Christian view. Harry pointed to "the radically inclusive life of Jesus", while William said the idea Christians should not befriend non-Christians was "just stupid" because "The whole Christian message is, is spreading God's Word to other people so how can you do that if you don't interact with them?"

12.1 Rules about external conduct

When Thomas became a teenage father several years after leaving his ACE school, his former supervisor phoned him about it. Because ACE schools seek to form students who lead Christian lifestyles, they seek to influence students' behaviour at all times. Susan said "Your home life is essentially the school's business as well, so you can't do anything out o— outside of school without the school knowing about it". She described a birthday party at which her parents had been drinking alcohol in the presence of some school children; school leaders met with her parents to reprimand them. She also received a detention for hosting a sleepover that included both boys and girls.

Alice had previously described how dating was not allowed in her church-school. I asked her how, then, people were expected to find their spouses. She replied:

> I felt like the elders and adults had a huge amount of influence and sticking their noses in, in terms of shaping your love life. They had a lot of say. They had a, they had almost like an ideologi— idea of what it would be like for you, and they had a lot to say and you had to respect them [*Jenna: right*]. Um, they would intervene if they weren't happy about anything.

Rob described how, at the pastor's behest, the church families destroyed their televisions (although the pastor's children kept theirs). Donald Howard (1979,

247) preached that television is antithetical to Christian education, but most of my participants were allowed some TV. Caleb was allowed to watch just one programme per week, but most went to schools like mine, where television was permitted but certain shows (*Friends*, *The Simpsons*, and *Power Rangers* among them) were discouraged.

Lily described hers as a "very closed" community where "They don't really appreciate you spending any time with anybody outside of the church". This was not limited to non-Christians; it "didn't go down well" when Lily was invited to other churches' youth groups, and they "don't like to be associated with anybody" from the other local churches. Parents who did not send their children to the school were accused of not having "complete trust and faith" in the church, and subsequently left. The result was that all of Lily's church, school, and social activities took place within one small circle. Not every church-school is that closed—Joanna mentioned attending another youth group without issue—but most participants' social experience was framed by the school.

12.2 Subsequent effects

Because the students have restricted interaction with non-Christians, their perceptions can become warped. Lois made this point:

> I think one of the massive issues with the upbringing as a whole was the concept that Christians are good, non-Christians are bad [*Jenna: right*]. And there's the church and the ACE thing where everybody's good, and then everyone outside that is kind of bad, horrible, heathen [*Jenna: right*]. And it was certainly never communicated in those terms, but that's definitely what I picked up. And it wasn't until (1.0) I was 14 I started working in a factory [*Jenna: right*] and I met dozens and dozens of um teenagers in the same boat as me and just got talking to them and realised that they're perfectly lovely people.

For Mike, the school's rejection of non-Christians became an issue after he left the faith:

I could talk about some of the best friends of my life I made then, but cos I'm not a Christian now, they don't really want anything to do with me … If you were deemed to live a kinda lifestyle that they didn't agree with, that was it. They cut you off … The isolation that that caused me was ((*exhales*)) proper, yeah, really, really quite brutal really. Um (1.8) and I think er (5.0) yeah, that, I think it's just sad that, you know, I spent so many years amongst so many different people and now I am rejected by all of them. It's just proper rubbish.

For others, the effect of the isolation has been to make them feel like strangers in their own country:

Stephen: I missed out on (1.3) teenage socialisation. (2.0) Uh, even now I often find myself in situations where (1.0) it's like being, er someone from a different country in England (2.0) cos I lack the social co-ordinates that everybody else has. (1.4)

Jenna: What do you mean by social co-ordinates? Sorry to spoil your metaphor by making you spell things out.

Stephen: (1.4) So um (3.7) pop songs. (1.7) Right so I, I don't know what year a whole load of pop songs happened in because we didn't do pop, cos that's Satan. (1.6) Er there were a bunch of TV shows which were the wallpaper of the life of people roughly my age. And I didn't watch those shows because they were from Satan [*Jenna: yeah*]. Um. (1.2) Various things that happened in the news (1.2) we didn't talk about because it was a bad thing (1.4) but those were the sort of things which would sort of punctuated the timeline of other people growing up. (1.9) So, so even now people mention a s— a pop song or, or, or an event or something (1.1) and they have a, it is part of their personal timeline. In a way for me it's a bit of social history that I've had to learn about second hand [*Jenna: right*]. (1.2) I, so I've had to learn English social history for foreigners.

Andrew made the most direct connection between his education and what he perceived as his own lack of social skills:

You put me in a room with a group of adults and I can't mix [*Jenna: Really*]. Yeah. Because I don't know how to converse. ((*Clears throat*)) And that is to do with childhood …

I have friends that could walk into a crowded restaurant, um, and they could walk through the tables to someone stood at the end and go, "Oh, hi, um, have you got a table for two?" [*Jenna: mm*]. No problem. But I couldn't do that. If I looked into a restaurant which was full of people, I would feel completely intimidated ... And this has a bearing on to with, what I think, the whole fear side of things that the ACE curriculum has established in, in me.

Andrew's description resonates strongly with me because I spent much of my time at university drinking excessively in a bid to overcome my social anxiety, and my diary entries from that period are often about how my difficulties were caused by my time at the ACE school.

Ten participants said they struggled socially after leaving their ACE schools. Seven said they had difficulty making friends. Cain "got in a fight" on his first day at his post-ACE school and from then on "bunked off", going to a local library rather than the school. Joanna struggled to understand a classmate's humour, because sarcasm had been so rare at her ACE school: "Whenever she said something sarcastic I was like [*credulously*] 'Oh really?' [*laughing*], and she was like '*No, Joanna!*'".

Charlotte and Kaye were intimidated by the size of their new schools. Of her attempts at socialising, Charlotte said "You just don't know how to interact with the rest of the world". Kaye felt she "obviously appeared quite weird, the way that I'd been, erm, brought up at [the ACE school]. Like as a, as a person, I wasn't, like, normal". Once at a mainstream secondary, she quickly abandoned her Christian school's morality:

As soon as I left that [ACE] school, I then had several boyfriends. I was intimate straight away. Uh, didn't care about what they said about waiting. Um (1.7) er, I took drugs. I just didn't, didn't, didn't give a shit, really …

> Because they were so strict on us [*Jenna: yeah*] as children, and they were keeping us i— you know, in this strict regime [*Jenna: yeah*] um, that when you got a bit of freedom, it was just like "To hell with all your stuff, I'm just going for it".

Lily felt her ACE schooling left her "just not prepared for life". She didn't know how to make small talk with her university friends ("I sat by myself quite a lot"), and when her university halls organised a freshers' social, she was nervous about attending:

> I remember just feeling horrendously ill about going to this social, thinking "I'll go, I'll make friends, but I know there's going to be drinking there >whatamigonnado whatamigonnado whatamigonnado<?!"

Her first encounter at the freshers' tent only confirmed her fears:

> I walked into the fre— [laughs] freshers' tent and um the first thing I came across was [the] gay bar. And there were two guys wearing nothing but thongs, platforms, and um, wings, and they were spraypainted from head to toe. And I must've stood there looking like a train was about to hit me for a good long while ((*Jenna laughs*)) because one of them did, a few of them did say to me in true queen fashion, "Close your mouth, you'll catch flies". And I just had to walk past. I was like "Oh my goodness, where have I come? They were all right. I should not be here" … The whole thing was a massive culture shock.

Not everyone described such problems; Harry gave me the impression his transition to A Level studies had been smooth. Gideon and William also mentioned no such difficulties in making friends. These three also said their parents had given them social opportunities outside of their ACE schools.

12.3 Christocentrism

Despite the individualised education, ACE schools are far from individualistic places. Individualism is seen as 'humanism' and antithetical to Christianity. Nor do the schools consider themselves 'collectivist', a term which smacks of communism. In her study of 13 Christian schools (four of which used ACE),

Wagner (1990) terms their orientation 'Christocentrism', a position of being "bent to God" and admitting "I can do nothing myself" (Ibid, 79). From this perspective, individualism is sinful selfishness, while collectivism places trust in unreliable, sinful humans. Instead, one must depend entirely on God. Wagner (1990, 80) notes that "dying to self" is the goal of Christocentrism. This is sometimes explained by the acronym JOY (Jesus, Others, Yourself—in order of priority) (Ibid, 78), or by writing the word 'sin' as 'sIn' (Long 1996, 52).

Ideally, Christocentric people give no thought to their own desires. They live to serve God, even to be a "slave" for God (Wagner 1990, 79, 86–90). This, for me, was the central paradox of the Christian life. Non-Christians believed themselves to be 'free' because they could do whatever they wanted, but they were really slaves to sin. There were many things I could not do as a Christian, but I knew true freedom was servanthood. Wagner argues "just as people who have grown up in collective cultures do not see themselves as denying and individualistic self, neither do Christians see their denial of self as a loss of freedom" (Ibid, 89). I do not think this is quite right. I often heard sermons warning against the longing for a false 'freedom'. I sometimes resented servanthood, but this resentment was itself a vestige of my 'sin nature', a sign that I had not fully 'died to self'. It was the devil trying to sell me the lie that doing what I wanted would make me happy. I needed to conquer those thoughts to experience true joy.

To foster this attitude of servanthood, students are first trained to be obedient. CEE's *Learning Centre Handbook for Staff and Students* contains a list of behaviours for which students should be rewarded with merits, one of which is "unquestioning obedience" (Boulton 2004, 33). "Instant obedience" is required primarily to God (ACE 2010a, 159), but because students are taught to treat "adult authorities as those God has placed in that position to care for his soul" (ACE 1998, 130), in practice obedience to God means obedience to certain adults. Alongside this, students learn other traits of godly servants.

It might be thought that ACE's emphasis on character training is one of the strengths of the curriculum. Each PACE promotes one of 60 traits of Jesus. Certainly everyone desires that children should learn to be moral, kind, citizens. In practice, however, 'character education' implies a more controversial set of values. Kohn's (1997) critique of the Character Education movement is aimed at variants practised in mainstream American schools, but his central arguments apply equally to ACE. These include:

1. These programmes are more about promoting obedience than cultivating virtue.
2. The methods employed can lead to indoctrination.
3. The reliance on rewards and extrinsic motivators is counterproductive because they make students value less what is taught.
4. The assumption is that people do bad things because of bad character, meaning that political or socioeconomic factors are not addressed.
5. Such programmes assume that people are fundamentally bad.
6. The values taught tend not to be uncontroversial, shared values, but rather conservative ideology.

In ACE's case, there is the further difficulty that the character traits to be inculcated are depicted as exclusively Christian virtues, with Bible verses used to illustrate and reinforce them. The Bible is portrayed as the only source of morality. In ACE, character training serves to reinforce the idea that one cannot be good without Christianity and disparages non-Christians. Even if the traits themselves were uncontroversial, the way they are presented is divisive. In fact, many of the traits (as defined by ACE) are controversial. They include:

> *Compassionate*
> Giving whatever is necessary to meet another's needs without expecting anything in return
>
> *Humble*
> Recognizing my weakness and showing awareness, as a little child, that God and others are responsible for the accomplishments in my life
>
> *Meek*
> Yielding everything to God, including the results and thought for self
> (ACE 2010a, 154–157)

This is to say nothing of more obviously controversial traits such as 'deferent' and 'submissive'. Few would disagree that children ought to be compassionate, patient, or respectful, but ACE takes these characteristics to extremes. Any virtue pushed to excess becomes a vice, and the way they are presented in PACEs (and at my school) leaves little room for healthy moderation. One of the 'character traits' ACE seeks to inculcate is 'available': "scheduling my priorities to fit the desires of others" (ACE 2010a, 154). Lily described how this affected her:

> And I remember having 'available' in my, the little poster in my office when I first started there. And basically what they translated that to be was like you kn— you're a doormat. You know, when we say being 'available', that means you do what we want when we say it, and that is being available. And to a 13 year old, like, "OK. Well these sixty character traits you've got to live by. They want me to music practice tonight and I've got this to do and I've got that to do. I've got my homework to do". And they'd say to my mum, "Well there's not really any point her coming home, because she might as well stay here, do her homework, and she'll already be here for music group and you just take [Lily's sibling] home and then you'll come for me later". Meant that some days I was there from 8 o'clock in the morning till 10 o'clock at night.

Lily took an unpaid Saturday job at the church, which meant she was in the church-school every day, with two services on a Sunday. For her, being 'available' meant having no time to consider her own wants or needs.

In practice, serving God means serving others. Godly leaders know how best to serve God, which is one reason for the emphasis on obedience. A reasonable reading of these character traits, then, is that all thought for one's own desires must be surrendered in service to God, via God's appointed leaders. Selflessness is a valuable quality, but the way this is taught in the PACEs borders on self-abasement, creating situations in which people can be exploited.

Charlotte recounted how her school had "work days", events at which parents and students worked to maintain the school buildings and grounds. While these

were ostensibly voluntary, Charlotte described "a lot of pressure" to participate, saying the school expected students and parents to do whatever additional work it required of them:

> If my dad could go in on the work days and if he could dig up the whole drive and lay down a new level of gravel, th— they'd get him to do it [*Jenna: mm*]. And they would not give a shit about the consequences for that individual. So long as it benefited them, they didn't care.

Mike echoed these sentiments:

> They did get my mum to, you know, work for free at the school, like they did, like, majori— like, pretty much all the parents, that was a part of being at the school, you had to help out. You had to be a part of, like, um I think it was, like, checking PACEs and stuff like that and (1.6) general work like that, or or cleaning the school at weekends and stuff, like, cos they didn't have any cleaners or anything. Yeah majority of, yeah and, and any work that needed doing they, they sometimes tried to call in my dad … [to] do things for free.

As well as describing his family donating large sums of money to the school, Jeremiah recounted a similar experience:

> It was really cultish … I mean my father was ill at the time, and they wanted [my mother] to work there as a teacher, um (2.1) for no pay. (3.0) And (2.9) I think (my gr—) I'm trying to remember what she told me now, but um (2.4) she was really pressured by [the supervisors] and [the pastor and his wife] (3.0) to do more work there, and not look after my father.

An ACE staff training PACE, *The Secret of Leadership*, contains the headings "Greatness begins with servitude" and "Greatness is developed through service" (p. 1). It teaches that in order to be successful, you must seek servanthood, and God will promote you. It reads:

- You never achieve greatness until you decide that you don't want it, that you want to be a nothing.
- You never discover the secret of leadership until you want to be a servant.

…
- None of God's leaders ever chose to be leaders.

(*The Secret of Leadership,* 2011, 7)

It is in this context that the schools' 'requests' for parents to work unpaid must be understood. This is not an environment in which one can lightly refuse requests from God's chosen leaders. Even in the unlikely event that the leaders acknowledge that a situation is less than satisfactory, complaining is not tolerated since everyone must be 'content' ("Understanding and accepting that God has provided everything I need for adjusting to circumstances around me" (ACE 2010a, 154)) and 'patient' ("Accepting a difficult situation with calm endurance without complaining or losing self-control" [Ibid, 158]). 'Godly character' can become a stick with which to punish those who are not submissive enough. It is not sufficient to obey reluctantly, either—service must be joyful, which "shows on the countenance" (Ibid, 157).

Such environments can quickly become stressful. One former ACE supervisor described her school as "a regime of being ruled by fear" (Parsons 2000, 36). Several of my participants used similar language. Charlotte said her school had "a culture of fear" while Andrew was "Always fearful. You know. I was fearful when I was learning, I was fearful when I was not learning".

It is the attitude of submissiveness and self-denial that most continues to affect me today. I still find myself agreeing to do things without first thinking about the cost to myself, and later resenting it. I resent other people who are able to refuse polite requests; I still regard such requests as obligations. Lily described the same problem:

> If anybody asks me to do something that I genuinely don't want to do, or can't do, of wh— I have to come up with some amazing reason of why I can't do it. Me just saying, "Sorry that's not convenient" or "I'm afraid I can't" isn't good enough. You know, I've got to think of some really elaborate reason or genuinely come up with something. And if I do have a good reason, I'm really relieved.

Lily continued "Not that I never help my friends—" before realising that even as she was talking about it, she felt the need to justify herself. My inability to think of my own desires has been a source of conflict with my partner, who more than once has said in frustration "You're just so *subservient*!" I have been equally frustrated by her ability to think of herself and, if it suits her, refuse my requests. It has taken me a long time just to persuade myself that this section is worthy of inclusion in this thesis. Even now the thought of prioritising my own desires feels forbidden.

Were I still in an ACE environment, my resentment would itself be a sin. If I overcame this resentment, and realised that I was now successfully living as a 'good Christian', I would be in danger of the sin of pride. There would permanently be some sin I was committing to remind me of my own unworthiness and prevent me developing a high opinion of myself. The beliefs militate against the development of healthy self-esteem. Kaye and Erin both described how they had been in abusive relationships, and put this down to ACE's teaching about how wives must obey their husbands. It might plausibly also be due, at least in part, to the fact that ACE discourages all students from being assertive.

Accounts of the New Christian Schools such as those by Stringer (1998; 2004) or Baker and Freeman (2005) agree that parents and staff involved in such schools make 'sacrifices' to do so. One participant, Harry, expressed a more charitable interpretation of ACE's character training (which he strongly endorsed) and of his school's reliance on volunteers:

> I'm very appreciative of the education that I've had. Um (1.9) I think it's p— I think it prepared me well for what I went on to do in terms of further studies and in terms of life more broadly [*Jenna: mm*]. Um an— uh— I mean, I think tied into that is an acknowledgement of the sacrifice of my parents and my friends' parents and what they gave up to ensure that we had such a positive environment to study in. So financial and

time probably I woul— I value more than the fact that they did— so my mum didn't work and then my dad contributed from his salary.

It is understandable that parents would commit their time and skills to bettering their children's education. Of course, Harry's and Jeremiah's accounts are not mutually exclusive. It is possible that some parents might find themselves inspired to commit everything to the betterment of the school, while others feel coerced to do the same work. It is also conceivable that those who believe they are serving God might put considerable pressure on others to participate.

12.4 Safeguarding

ACE views children as inherently sinful (Elkins 1992; Murray 1983).Its attitude to children is best portrayed by their *Parents* staff training PACE. This contains a section headed "Handling Slanted News!", which reads:

> Explain to the parents how important it is that they adhere to these guidelines.
>
> 1. Give school staff the benefit of the doubt.
>
> 2. Realize their child's reporting is emotionally biased and probably lacking all the facts.
>
> 3. Realize that the school has a reason for every rule and that school rules are enforced without partiality.
>
> 4. Support the administration and contact the staff for complete information. (*Parents*, 15)

The *Administration Manual* instructs schools to tell new parents "I promise I won't believe everything [your children] tell me about you, if you promise you won't believe everything they tell you about me", before continuing:

> Explain that if [parents] hear criticism, they should have the grace to do one of these things:
> - Support the school.
> - Contact the school to verify the facts. (ACE 2012, 125)

In ACE schools, then, students are taught to obey staff without question, and parents are instructed to treat their child's word as untrustworthy while staff's words are authoritative. This is a situation in which abuse can flourish.

In November 2004, three former Victory Christian Academy students stood outside their old school holding a placard alleging that Michael Palmer, Victory's founder, was a rapist (Escobedo 2004). One of them, Rebecca Ramirez, said Palmer had raped her while she was a student at the Florida school in 1992. In December 2013, five women travelled to Bienville, Louisiana, to file a police report of historic sexual abuse and forcible rape by Mack Ford, pastor and principal at New Bethany Home for Girls (Catalanello 2014). Mechille Searles, who also alleged that Ford had raped her at New Bethany, killed herself in August 2012 (Victimized No More 2013). In January 2015, Johnny Beserra pleaded guilty to molesting six children while volunteering at El Monte Christian Academy (Masatani 2015). All of these are ACE schools.

These cases all come from the United States. In 2010, however, an English former ACE teacher was jailed for sexual attacks on a student in the 1980s (Fleetwood Weekly News 2010). His victim said she decided to come forward because of "an extremely disturbing story I'd heard through an old school friend, which led me to suspect he'd used his position of trust to abuse other young girls" (Rounds 2013).

Of course, sexual abuse occurs in many schools, both religious and secular. My contention is not that sexual abuse is more widespread in ACE schools than in other types of school, rather that it happens and that ACE's understanding and practice of authority is conducive to it and militates against its speedy detection and subsequent prevention. Donald Howard asserted that Christian schools are exempt from such atrocities: "With thousands of schools … We haven't had one report of a teacher attack, not one report of one rape in a Christian school" (Howard 1979, 266). There is perhaps an attitude that because the staff in these

schools are saved by the transforming power of Jesus Christ, they would not do such things. This is not always the case.

There is insufficient evidence to say how widespread sexual abuse in ACE schools has been. Sexual predators are known for finding environments in which they can exploit the vulnerable, however, and ACE's policies provide little defence against this. ACE teaches students to treat those in authority with "deep respect and honor mixed with wonder, awe, and love" (ACE 2010a, 158). Students are told the value of unquestioning obedience on the one hand and denied access to sex education on the other. If a dispute does arise, the *Administration Manual* instructs schools to "offer the opportunity for the student to explain the incident in front of his parents and the school staff member(s) involved" (ACE 2012, 125). In a case of possible sexual abuse, this would be a wholly inappropriate course of action. Fear of being disbelieved or blamed often stops victims of abuse from reporting (Lievore 2003).

Chapter 13 Indoctrination

My participants almost universally agreed their schools had been centres of indoctrination. Many participants referred to indoctrination unprompted. Three called their parents "brainwashed" by the influence of the church-school. Nathan described "a degree of mind control". Mike accused his school of "brainwashing" him. Without being asked, four participants described what their schools did in general as "indoctrination", and two more stated they had personally been indoctrinated. Other participants used words amounting to the same thing: Kaye, for example, said staff "forced you to be a Christian".

Those who felt negatively about ACE tended to raise the subject of indoctrination without prompting. I made a point of mentioning this to participants who were more positive, saying "Some participants have used the word 'indoctrination' to describe their experience. How do you feel about that?" Even these participants agreed that indoctrination took place. They differed from the others in their moral assessment of indoctrination. Lois felt "every school and every parent … indoctrinates their child in some way". For William, "You definitely could say 'yes this is indoctrination'", but, he maintained: "Surely parents, if they want their child to learn all about their religion alongside their education, um, then that's their right to do that". Gideon's response was more nuanced:

> If we're talking specifically about religious doctrine, [*Jenna: mmhmm*] then that act of (1.2) of persuasion (3.0) that a particular set of religious tenets are true um definitely occurred in my school … I guess indoctrination (4.9) It carries with it (2.5) the implication that there is no room to question (2.0) and in the context of those tenets there was no room to question. (1.6) Um (2.6) that is kind of (1.8) I think, I think (1.4) any fundamentalist (1.8) ethos has a core that is unque— unquestionable …

> So those, those tenets were indoctrinated. (3.3) Um (3.6) but I don't see that as an inherently negative thing. (1.1) Um I think if the (1.2) if (1.6) if the a:h encouragement to question in general is shut down, that's a deeply negative thing … I guess, to, to summarise (1.3) I think indoctrination (2.2) doctrination happened, and happens. The question

is what are the doctrines and how much scope is there outside of those to cre— to create an atmosphere of inquiry and creative thought … In my experience, there was no sense in which the school shut down questioning outside of those things.

Only Harry baulked at the term. He took the view that indoctrination was usually a pejorative term used by those who rejected an idea. He could imagine that if he had rejected Christianity "I may perceive it as manipulative and um (2.5) y'know, all-consuming [*Jenna: mm*] which I don't think it was, but I'm sure I coul— y'know, I might look back on it and remember, highlight certain aspects of it". Since he was grateful for his faith, however, he preferred to speak of "being supported in the development of that idea" or "given the foundations". Harry argued that because the schools were upfront in telling parents and students that they would be taught Christianity, this "removes any guilt". He added:

> To percei:ve it as indoctrination [*Jenna: mm*] miscategorises (1.7) Christianity, in that I would say (1.0) a secular school or a multicultural school has a particular ethos of its own with which it indoctrinates individuals.

Earlier in the interview, I had noticed that Harry avoided the subject of religion when talking about the benefits of his schooling. Given his personal faith, I found this surprising. When I asked him why, he initially explained that he tended to have these conversations with non-Christians, and so he tended to avoid "religious language". He continued:

> I do think that the school played a really important role in my spiritual development (1.7) Maybe I'd like to:: (1.7) maybe I downplay that in my own mind, y'know, cos I don't wanna feel that I was, you know, set on this inevitable course that has come to its fruition.

He added that while he felt the school "laid a really strong foundation … of faith", he knew people who went through ACE and were no longer Christians. I

understood this as an argument that his schooling had not in fact been indoctrination.

Because most participants come from Christian families and attended church regularly in addition to attending an ACE school, it is hard to separate the influence of each of these factors. Usefully, however, three participants came from religious backgrounds quite unlike those of their ACE schools. Their biographies give some insight into the way ACE can influence beliefs.

Susan described herself as "a huge atheist" when she moved to the ACE school. Consequently, she "really wasn't pleased about" being sent to a Christian school. The ACE school was reluctant to accept her too, because her parents were "lapsed Catholics" rather than Protestant Christians. Lily was from a nominally Christian background; her parents were "fairly regular churchgoers to our local Methodist church and Salvation Army … the kind of people who asked what their religion is they'd say C of E". Mike had grown up in an Anglican church. When Mike's grandmother died, she left his family some money to send him to a Christian school. She had been "a Methodist kinda Christian" though her faith "wasn't full on" like that he would encounter in ACE. Mike's story is detailed more fully in Chapters 10 and 11. All three were of secondary school age when they moved to ACE schools. Each ended up becoming involved for a period in much more conservative and intense forms of Christianity than they had previously.

On her arrival at the school, Susan quickly felt social pressure to join in religious activities: "Even when I got there as an atheist I sort of wanted to, um, go to the Bible clubs and things after school because that's what everyone else was doing". She was initially "uncomfortable" about the idea of creationism: "It was one of those things where I didn't want to speak out about it because I didn't know enough about it to not look like an idiot in front of them, essentially". She did not even know what creationism entailed until at 14 she was sent to a preschool class to listen to the children read.

226

Although Susan's parents were lapsed Catholics, they were quickly drawn into the religious milieu around the school. They began attending church, as the school required, but Susan initially refused. She invented excuses to explain why her Bible appeared to be in new, unread condition. Susan explained what it was like to be an atheist in this environment:

> Susan: It's very difficult not to want to change your thoughts [*Jenna: right*]. So they, they don't sit you in a room and force you to agree with them. They make it so you want to agree with them essentially. Or they make an atmosphere of um whe:re if where you can either make yourself excluded or you can join in with everyone else [*Jenna: right*] essentially.
>
> Jenna: So if you continued to be an atheist—
>
> Susan: Then I would have essentially felt excluded. Mmhmm. Cos mo— most of the after school things they do would be Bible clubs or, um, most of the outside of school things they do would be things like beach missions and things like that, so there would be nothing to join in if I wasn't.

It's indicative of how strongly Susan was influenced that having started off an atheist, "uncomfortable" about creationism, she later made a Convention presentation "debunking the myth of evolution". At the same time, however, her parents were increasingly drawn into the church, so it remains difficult to separate the influence at school from the influence at home. Lily, however, became increasingly involved in church activities without her parents.

After she started at the ACE school, Lily soon began attending the associated church, while her parents continued to attend their Methodist church. Lily accepted what the school taught, while her parents were not fully aware of what was happening:

> The manipulation was probably subtle, to the point where I didn't feel the need to come home and say it. Just thought, this is, you know, this is what they want us to do at school. And because I'd get these glowing

reports and they all thought I was marvellous, it's like "Well what's the issue with school?"

After a while, her parents moved to the school's church. Their involvement ended when Lily's father questioned the pastor about a theological point in his sermon. The pastor took this as a challenge to his authority, and the next service "was entirely aimed at" Lily's father, who walked out with the rest of her family mid-service while Lily remained on the front row. She recalled her response:

> I just didn't really question it because I was, felt I was so indoctrinated I was staying in a situation where I was now torn between my father being insulted publicly, and me questioning what they'd said, so it was just not talked about [*Jenna: mm*]. And then they didn't really go [to the church] after that … So yeah, they did not drink the Kool Aid. I did.

Lily continued to attend both the church and school, despite her parents' reservations ("I think they felt very trapped"). By this point Lily's peers in mainstream education had already begun preparing for GCSEs, so she could not move to another school without being held back a year. Instead, her dad volunteered to coach sports at the school, "keeping an eye on it". He made efforts to broaden her reading and open her mind at home. He contrasted Microsoft Encarta with her grandfather's 1937 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to point out that human knowledge and ideas change over time, unlike ACE's static view of the world. At the local library, he showed her "book after book after book" in an effort to convince her that the Earth was older than 10,000 years:

> [My dad said] "Can you see why carbon dating works? Can you see who, all these people who studied it? Can you see that there are, like, thousands of people who've worked on this, and one person who's worked on your PACEs?" ((*laughs*)). And I was like, "Mm, yeah still, it's, you know, PACEs so it's gotta be right".

I asked Lily to clarify whether she had believed the PACEs or her father:

> I think at the time, I thought "Well, I'd better do what the PACEs say, because I'll get the test wrong", because there's no room for argument is there? …

> There was probably that room of saying "OK, well it's probably somewhere in the middle then", looking for compromise, because I think there's probably an element of panic, isn't there, when you're first realising this that I've been believing for quite significant period of time is now nonsense.

When I asked what she meant by indoctrination, Lily initially responded "Just being told things over and over again and thinking that was the right way, that you know, what they were doing and what they were teaching, it had to be right". She then explained that the people running the school were "manipulators". As a singer, Lily particularly responded to the music:

> Being a teenager ruled by emotion, of, I, "this feeling is nice, singing this music", and the way the meeting goes [*Jenna: yeah*]. Kind of thought "Well this must be right then. It feels right, so it must be".

The music was orchestrated so that various moments appeared to be spontaneous acts of worship or divine manifestations. These were in fact carefully planned, as Lily discovered when she joined the band:

> We had different stages, and it was all printed out on sheets, and it would be on floor in front of the monitors … So we would stand on stage, the monitors in front of you, we'd have all these charts of what you were doing when. Um, [the worship leader] was good at making it look spontaneous, but it was very very rehearsed.

Lily also suspects that the pastor attempted to use other control techniques:

> When you sat in [the pastor's] office th— there were rows and rows of massive mahogany bookcases behind him. And um, he had loads of books um on NLP, on all kinds of Neuro Linguistic Programming and all sorts … So in hindsight there was probably a lot of that going on, of that's how, you know, this information was implanted, that it probably wasn't that overt.

A fourth participant, Jolyon, also came from a much more liberal Christianity than ACE. Unlike Susan, Lily, and Mike, however, Jolyon did not think he had been indoctrinated. He argued his headmaster "wasn't there just to brainwash us … I never really felt that I was being propagandised". Later, however, he said ACE education "does seem like a little bit of an abuse because you're not giving them the opportunity to really (1.3) make their own mind up about things". I asked him how he could reconcile these seemingly contradictory statements. He did not feel that any indoctrination was intentional. Instead, it was an inevitable consequence of the church-school structure:

> When they're at school this is their world. When they're at home, this is their world. They go to prayer group, they go to church on Sunday, they hang out with all these same people and they're completely immersed in it … So in a way no, they're not being given the opportunity to look at things rationally and to actually decide whether they want to adopt this worldview.

Jolyon had not attended the same church as his classmates, and he felt this was a crucial difference:

> I think because I didn't go to the church, and my parents were quite open-minded, I think I was more robustly, I, I was able to defend myself against it better, whereas the other kids kinda weren't because they were more, well exactly as you said, they were more in the bubble.

He nevertheless described himself embracing some of the school's ideas, such as creationism, that were not shared by his parents or church. He also felt "had I not gone to the school … I think that probably those ideas would've taken less of a hold on me because they weren't so c— so consistently in front of me".

13.1 After-effects of indoctrination

Lily's story seems the most clear-cut case of indoctrination, because of the way her involvement in the church persisted despite her parents' attempts to

change her mind. It was Lily, however, who described the easiest and fastest transition out of her former faith:

> I went to university. And I went to the Christian Union on the first day, and then I never went again, and I never went to church again. And it just, I dunno. It was just like, it was like a switch.

For Mike, by contrast, the prophecies he received at the school and at the churches he subsequently attended have contributed to his long-standing mental health problems (chapter 11) as he has wrestled to come to terms with his experience. When we spoke, he was still trying to find an understanding that made sense to him:

> It's difficult to for me, cos I tried to call my ath— myself an atheist for a while but it just didn't ((*laughing*)) work, cos I've just had too many like, crazy spiritual experiences where, you know it could just be all in my head or it might not be, but (1.8) the way I, I see it is that it's what I've gotta work with, so, you know, and I don't, don't really know how to change it so I kind of see it both ways? And that's where I kinda sit with it, instead of trying to kinda say "No" outright, "There's no such thing as God" or whatever.

Susan still considers herself a Christian, although "definitely not a fan of religion in general". She agreed when I suggested she would not be a Christian according to ACE's definition. I asked whether she considered her faith a positive thing to come out of her experience. She said the school had "opened her up to the idea" of Christianity, but "I'm not sure I was um (1.0) I was completely a Christian when I left the school". I asked her how she could be an ardent believer in Christian creationism without being a Christian:

> I guess it depends on your definition of a Christian. I think by the time I left the school I was completely indoctrinated into that this all literally happened. (1.0) Um (1.2) what I wasn't so sure about is whether I um wanted to be a part of it or not. Which I know seems strange if you consider creationism to be real, because the whole idea of hell and that sort of thing, but that's just how I felt at the time ((*laugh*)).

For Jolyon, there was a slow process of deconversion, not a "reverse road to Damascus" experience. He felt his school caused him to form very "black and white" patterns of thinking. This, he said, had been the aspect of his ACE schooling that had been the hardest to overcome. In his twenties, he rejected Christianity in favour of "militant atheism":

> The way that I was thinking, as an atheist, was exactly the way that I thought as a Christian. It was all completely black and white, and lacked any sort of real subtlety or any kind of proper (1.2) um, understanding of the world … I realised, probably way over ten years after being at [the ACE school], that I was still thinking in the same way even if I didn't have the same beliefs. And so that took me a long time to, to kind of get rid of.

Since this period of militancy, Jolyon has found what he considers a more nuanced approach to the world: "I'm more a kind of agnostic I suppose. I probably am an atheist, but I think that I kind of can see benefits in certain religious expressions".

For those participants who had rejected their faith, the process had generally been long and difficult. Gideon described this struggle most vividly:

> The experience for me of (6.4) of (1.9) transitioning from the faith of my childhood (1.2) to the worldview of my adulthood (1.2) um (1.2) was both (2.5) a very:y (1.4) was both a very exciting and terrifying and painful (2.1) and stimulating (1.6) and (1.5) disconcerting experience [*Jenna: mm*] that happened over period of (1.3) five to ten years … The experience of ha— the experience of converting from one worldview to another (1.3) is an extraordinary experience …
>
> It's almost more like, a— bungee jumping or something. It's sort of completely throws you out of ((*cough*)) your state of comfort into a h— into a whole new world [*Jenna: mm*], and that is, it is terrifying. It's exciting and everything else. Um (2.6) I feel very fortunate that I (1.6) had the chance to experience that. (1.3) … Um (3.3) and and life, the kind of bittersweetness of life is encapsulated really nicely in (2.0) in (1.2) the deconstruction of a worldview, and a reconstruction of a new one.

Talking to Gideon helped me to remember the intense feeling of liberation I felt as I took steps out of my fundamentalist world. I remembered the euphoria I felt while listening to music I used to think was demonic, and the joy I felt in nightclubs I had always thought were full of sinners trying to drink away their miserable existences. I recalled laughing to myself when I woke up on a Sunday morning and realised I could do whatever I wanted, and the joy of allowing myself to think critically about questions that had previously been off-limits.

Prior to talking to Gideon, I had focused exclusively on the painful elements: fearing, before I fell asleep, that I might be going to hell; wishing God had made me less bright, so it would be easier to have the unquestioning faith he required; the sense of grief and loss at the years I had wasted. Gideon, by contrast, was determined to see the good in his experience.

Nathan described a similar struggle to mine. "I think like most post-fundamentalists I didn't cope very well. Um, I:: er coped with alcohol mostly", he said, describing drinking two bottles of wine before starting on vodka. "I have (1.0) stomach issues now partly as a result of that. I can't really drink at the minute." Yet Nathan also described the joy of being able to stretch his intellectual legs for the first time. This came up after I commented that I thought my ACE education had left me with "a black hole in my critical thinking skills". Nathan replied that he didn't think it had in his case, with one exception:

Nathan: I think for me there was just a black hole over a certain area of life, you know over my religious beliefs essentially where I didn't engage that critical thinking in that area [*Jenna: right*]. [*Laughing*] One of the effects of my degree was to get me to engage critical thinking in that area … I went along to the debating society at uni and saw, saw some more sort of critical thinking and argumentation there and um (2.2) I d— yeah I don't know how much of that I had after ACE. I mean I, I wouldn't say it was a black hole. I had some. It's something which I've really, really developed since. And very much enjoy developing [*Jenna: yeah*]. Um I think partly because I can and because I, I am able to, I think.

Jenna: When you say you are able to, do you mean as in you have the ability, or you have the opportunity?

Nathan: Uh, as in it's not anathema … There was I guess a d— a degree of mind control such that I just wouldn't question and was brainwashed really not to question certain areas of my beliefs. And it's the freedom I feel of being [*laughing*] outside of that um that yeah, it's real joy to be able to be critical of u:m, you know, other power structures in society as well.

The recording of Thomas's interview had too much wind noise to transcribe our conversation about his deconversion, but his account lacked the negative elements of mine and Nathan's. Instead, he referred to an "almost enjoyable" journey to "discover all these things". He referred to learning about evolution and gaining access to other ideas that had previously been off-limits.

A consistent theme was how participants continued to be non-rationally influenced by old beliefs despite their conscious efforts to reject them. Four women described how they still struggle to choose clothes without worrying about falling foul of ACE's modesty standards (section 8.2). Jeremiah mentioned "something in the back of your mind" that inhibited his sexual relationships. Rob described "a slight sexist or misogynistic, um streak which I have to manage". Erin talked about her inability to pursue a romantic relationship with another woman (section 8.5). She is now a vocal supporter of women's rights, particularly abortion rights, yet she told me of a time she had wanted an abortion for herself and felt unable to do so:

I felt like an awful human being for even considering an abortion … I think that [having the abortion] would've just mentally destroyed me.

Jayne, who had been told at school she was a "slut" and unfeminine for wanting to play sports with boys, still felt some embarrassment for taking part in 'masculine' activities:

> I ride a motorcycle. (1.2) Um, this is my, one of my greatest hobbies. I love it. I just absolutely love it. (3.6) Most the people I work with (1.5) don't know that I ride a motorcycle (2.6) because I'm ashamed of it because it's a boy thing … It'd be really fun to ride with people but I'm nervous about the connotation, cos it's so in my head … The motorcycle's just a small example … I play sports and, you know play tennis with my Dad, play racquetball with my Dad, but (1.6) you know I've got (1.3) other friends who … go and they, they bowl and they do other stuff. I just can't let myself (2.8) go and enjoy that without feeling, like, that little nagging voice in the back of my head … I just don't know what it would take to get rid of feeling (2.3) bad about being myself.

Jayne used the phrase "ACE guilt"—a play on the popular notion of 'Catholic guilt'—to describe the irrational fears she and other former students experience. It was this ACE guilt, she said, that made her feel that it must have been her failings as a wife that caused her husband's infidelity.

What Jayne calls her ACE guilt, I think of as 'ghost beliefs'—ideas which continue to affect me even though I consciously reject them. Like Jeremiah, I have experienced guilt and confusion about sexual relationships. Shortly before I started this PhD, I awoke in the night briefly convinced I was going to hell. I realised recently that whenever I meet a person who seems 'nice', I automatically assume they are a Christian. If this nice person turns out to be an atheist or humanist, I am surprised. Even after being a humanist for six years and meeting hundreds of nice humanists—and more than my share of not-nice Christians—my prejudiced assumptions remain. My participants' and my ghost beliefs persist because they were so deeply ingrained that removing them is no simple matter. Since they were not rationally implanted in the first place, the beliefs are not easily susceptible to rational reappraisal.

Chapter 14 Labelling

My interest in ACE schools began because I thought my experience had been damaging. Once I began researching other people's experiences, I realised I had got off lightly compared to some. The stories of people very favourable to ACE and some of my participants' experiences are sometimes irreconcilable. Some of the disagreements can be explained by differing subjective preferences, but not all. At times, it is as though individuals from the same school are describing entirely different institutions. In the course of my research, I have heard particular supervisors described in such conflicting language that were it not for the names given, I might assume different people were being discussed. One was described variously as an "utter psychopath", as one of the staff who "poured their love and care into me", a "particularly helpful" teacher, and as someone who frequently screamed at students: "Not just shouting. It was screaming".

I remember my supervisor matching all of those descriptions at different times, so these disagreements might partly reflect differences in emphasis. My evidence suggests, however, that students at the same school could be given radically different treatment. I had not seriously considered this possibility until Stephen raised it:

> There was a general trend where if (1.1) the family was um (1.0) high up in the church (1.0) then the children would receive the best possible care and attention at school. (1.0) And if the child was from a family within the church who were bottom-rung (1.1) then within the school they would be largely ignored and it would be things which went wrong which were noticed. (1.0) They wouldn't be, so if the parents had positions of authority within the church, the children would be given positions of authority within the school to train them up to take over their parents' posts.

Participants from different schools made similar points without prompting from me. Charlotte observed:

> You had the favoured children, the children of the certain trustees, of certain high-ups … people who were related to people that mattered, people who were related to people who gave a lot of money to the school. They got away with blue bloody murder … As much as there were children who were protected by their parents, there were children who were damned almost by their social status. There were a couple of um (1.2) families and children who were sort of particularly vulnerable to sort of um excessive punishments I guess from certain members of staff because the staff just didn't like them.

Jeremiah felt that the families who ran the school singled out their own children for particular privileges and "favourable treatment". Once three participants had independently and without prompting made this point, I began to ask about it directly. The first participant I asked agreed his school showed favouritism, but the next said "I don't think that was an issue at all".

I later interviewed another participant from the same school who (unprompted) listed "the key families in the church, who were the church elders of course". The first surname on the list was that of the participant who had said favouritism was not an issue. The participant described the privileges enjoyed by members of these "key families":

> The parents were in a position of kind of importance in the school and their kids always got a pass. If they were badly behaved they would be overlooked. And their, if they, if it was their kid's word against some other kid's word, they would be the one who would, er there was a lot of injustice, as it were, in the school because of this.

The participant described specific instances of injustices before adding:

> Now the boys, the older boys especially, have all become these sort of major patriarchal important people in their churches. They're exactly as I would expect them to be as adults. Really successful. Unbelievably self-confident.

In 2014, the BBC ran some coverage of my criticism of ACE. The individuals selected by CEE as success stories do little to dispel the idea that the schools

favour the children of important staff. On *Newsnight* (Katz 2014), CEE was represented by John Lewis, whose parents founded King of Kings School and whose mother is chair of the ICCE Board. To bolster his claim that ACE schools produce successful individuals, John talked about his siblings. On *The Jeremy Vine Show* (2014), CEE's spokesperson was Giles Boulton, whose parents are both on the ICCE Board and whose mother conducts CEE's school inspection visits. For a story on the BBC website (Johns and Hallett 2014), CEE did not provide an interviewee, so I put the journalist in touch with Ben Medlock, who has a PhD from Cambridge University. Ben's father and mother were headmaster and supervisor respectively at Victory School in Bath. His father is now headmaster at Maranatha, CEE's 'model school'. Demonstrating successful student outcomes at a CEE staff training event, Brenda Lewis (2013b) read out a testimonial from Charlotte Dennett. Charlotte's father has been at various times the headmaster of an ACE school, a manager at CEE, and an author of UK PACEs.

A former CEE staff member (Gregg 2014) has described discrimination and favouritism she says she witnessed at ACE student conventions:

> As an arts judge I was often told which pieces were 1st, 2nd or 3rd and to mark them all accordingly. If I were to disagree, I would be overruled. Often if a better work was to win, rather than a favoured student, we were given a good reason such as it didn't honour God as to why we had to disqualify the work …
>
> I once was head judge for Web design. There were only four entries and one was outstanding. The last place went to a favoured student whose website was childlike with broken links, poor navigation and looked awful. Unfortunately, this entry was also up for an ICCE credit and didn't make the grade. The favoured school complained as the student wouldn't graduate without his pass. I stood my ground and was overruled. A credit was given to an unworthy student.

While the majority of participants agreed that there had been favouritism within their schools, there was some disagreement about its basis. The main reasons cited were status within the church and money donated to the school, but neither of these was a foolproof predictor of preferential treatment. Lily

was promoted as "the golden girl" although her parents were not in favour at her church. Jeremiah's family donated huge amounts of money but he said he was still singled out for excessive punishment. Rob noted that his pastor's family received special treatment, but he also described how the pastor's youngest son "would question things" and as a result "get beaten up by his dad". This is why I found Jayne's explanation of the hierarchy at her school most plausible:

> Instead of there being a popularity scale about um (1.1) beauty or about, you know, being trendy or dressing well, it was like a righteousness popularity scale [*Jenna: right*]. Um, there's people who were so godly (1.8) they were the ones who were favoured [*Jenna: right*]. Um, and you didn't even necessarily have to be godly. You just had to say the right things, do the right things.

It is not surprising that supervisor-parents might view their own children as more godly, nor that the children of generous donors might also be viewed more positively, while still plausible that rebellious or challenging children might be seen as ungodly even given those advantages. In this way, Jayne's theory can account for all my other participants' observations. It also seems to me, within an ACE context, almost uncontroversial. Through its privilege system, ACE is designed to give better treatment to 'godly' children (section 5.6.6). This can cause problems for children who gain a reputation as 'ungodly'.

Thomas's family moved to England from another country while he was young. After a short spell in a mainstream primary school, his parents moved him to an ACE school when he was "about ten". Thomas felt he was "branded as having a bad reputation" soon after arriving at the ACE school when he was "behaving in a way that had been normal" at his previous school. I asked him for an example of this normal behaviour:

> You know, saying something like 'oh my God' was quite common, didn't even sort of think twice about that, and then sort of going into [ACE school] and that was, you know, um, I remember sort of saying that and, and the other kids sort of s:: stopping speaking in shock [*Jenna laughs*].

You know, at my age I, I sort of just didn't really realise it, and then sort of some, someone told a teacher, and so there was a number of little things like that.

From then on Thomas felt he gained his reputation from "just not really understanding what the protocols were in the [ACE school] bubble":

I just felt I was constantly in trouble. Er, and I sort of took that on board not as something that was sort of unfair but, but I just sort of like accepted that so looking back … I think took on took on that persona for myself as one of them the people who weren't good and … had that as "Oh well, I should behave like that" so there's a self-fulfilling prophecy I suppose.

Thomas's story had striking similarities to Jayne's. Jayne felt she was "labelled" because of playing sports with boys (section 8.2). Both Thomas and Jayne mentioned circumstances in which they felt singled out for punishment. Thomas had been kicking a football with friends when someone (he could not remember who) kicked the ball into a lightbulb. Although several boys had been playing, only he was punished. When Jayne began receiving unwanted romantic attention a supervisor, "they automatically believed that [she] was the instigator" because she was "so quickly labelled in a bad way".

Thomas and Jayne each said that by the standards of most schools they were very well behaved. Both also described how they nevertheless took their labels with them to subsequent schools. Jayne says:

I spent so much time (1.0) being labelled as the rebel and as, um, y'know, black sheep (2.3) that (1.0) when I met people who truly were rebels, (1.6) I thought well, "Hell (1.4) I'm already labelled (1.2) why the heck not?" Um, and (1.0) I really, uh, I would, I went, I just went crazy with it (1.1) I really did. So (1.6) you know, I spent (1.0) the majority of my time drunk or high on something while I was there. Um (1.1) so [laughing] this point I didn't show up for a lot of my classes.

Thomas also says he skipped lots of classes at his subsequent school, although he said this was because his ACE education had left him so far behind that he saw little point in attending. He then unexpectedly became a father aged 20. I asked him whether at the time he had believed he had done something wrong. Again, Thomas felt he had been acting in accordance with his label. It was "wound up in this idea of … feeling like [he] had to be rebellious" and this was a way to justify his "bad reputation" to himself.

Cain, too, appears to have suffered from early labelling. He said that when, after a long period of struggling, he started to succeed at maths, he was paddled because his supervisor believed he was cheating. One of Cain's memories seemed pivotal to him in hindsight:

> Cain: I remember, right, the pinnacle moment was when I turned, when I proper started turning nasty to everyone in [the ACE school], and to my family, was when … [supervisor] had just paddled me, and she said, and she was having a discussion as if I wasn't in the room, and she turned around and said [to another supervisor and Cain's stepfather] that there was a darkness inside me that she didn't think would ever s— ever be moved. And that I would amount to great evil, and stuff like that. And that stuck with me. That proper stuck with me. And—
>
> Jenna: How did that make you feel?
>
> Cain: Well, up until I was 21 I was the monster she created. Y'know. There was nothing, and I mean nothing I didn't do. Y'know I had no morals, I had no code. I was an animal.

Other participants shared memories of their peers who had been negatively labelled. Jolyon described a boy who at the time had "seemed like the devil" but in hindsight "just had lots of energy that he couldn't really direct". As a result, "he had real trouble after he left because he'd been branded as this bad kid and he kind of believed it". Lily described a boy who was paddled "very very regularly" and who left home and the church as well as changing his name as soon as he left school. Lily still sees him occasionally. He is "very friendly … but

he's not quite right, bless him … I don't know what he does. I mean, he's clean, and tidy … I don't think he's homeless".

While being labelled ungodly has the most obvious potentially negative consequences for ACE students, the opposite label had its own difficulties for Lily. In section 12.3 she described how her commitments at the church-school meant she was there seven days a week, sometimes for twelve-hour days. Her achievements at ACE Conventions were videoed and played on screens in the school building "at weird times". At 17, Lily found the pressure "a bit much":

> I was forever pushed forward as golden girl. Of, y'know, getting all the PACEs right, sing in the worship group at church. Um, to the point where if anybody came to look round, um, I was always moved to like weird places. And like, so I'd sort of be in prime spots, when everybody came to look round. And then he'd do, the pastor'd do this really weird, sort of like "Oh who would you like to speak to?" and it was never gonna be anybody except me … Um, so it was, it was, I could tell even at that age, it was really staged and very strange. But he was so flattering with "you're doing such a good job", you know "this is such a good promotion for the school and church" and blablablah that I thought I was doing the right thing. You know, so you'd just kind of go along with it.

Lily also struggled with the church's plan for the rest of her life. She wanted to go travelling, which the church opposed. They also wanted her to apply to universities nearby so she could continue to attend services: "The fact I wanted to go to uni and get a degree was just something that happened to be doing on my pathway to heaven, bringing as many people into their church and their way of thinking as possible". The church had a plan for her life in which Lily had little say:

> It just felt really suffocating … Ultimately, at the age of 16 and 17 thinking "I wonder if I'll have a boyfriend cos where will I meet him?" And then starting to think "Will I have a family? Because if this person just doesn't walk through the door by coincidence, will I never have children of my own?" And f— starting to feel a bit panicky about >"Where will I go to work? Because they want me to be here and I don't think I only want to work here"<. Because they wanted me, [the pastor]

told my father about a year before I went to university that he saw me being the principal of that school.

At my school, model students aged 14-15 were awarded 'pastor's honour roll'. These students were a bit like prefects in mainstream schools, with the additional responsibility of modelling 'godly character' to the rest of the school. I still remember my sense of betrayal when I discovered that these students used to swear in casual conversation when they thought they were not overheard. I now realise that modelling 'godly character', particularly ACE's version of it, is not a reasonable expectation of a 15-year-old.

I was a favoured child at my school too. My dad founded the associated church and had been its pastor for many years. One of the school's supervisors had been the attending midwife when I was born; another became Born Again at a service in my parents' living room. Although my family no longer attended the church, when I returned to the school my parents made donations to the school in addition to the fees. More importantly, I was good at following the rules. In ACE schools, children's godliness is largely measured by their obedience. This presents a problem for ACE's policy of rewarding godly behaviour, because it means that godliness can be faked.

After about 18 months at the school, I developed a cynical attitude and wanted to rebel. My rebellion mainly took the form of kicking school doors open and writing sarcastic answers on the blanks in my friends' PACEs. I didn't become any less favoured in this time (I earned the highest level of privilege almost every week), in part because I knew how not to get caught. Philip, also favoured at his school, put it this way:

> The reason you play the game is cos you think you have to. You're not being authentic. You're just, you're just managing youself … I was a goodie little two shoes [*Jenna: mmm*]. I ((*laughing*)) totally was, of the highest order. I was a nice boy and I knew how to pretend to be. Fact is though that you're a teenager under rebellion so you find covert ways of doing it.

Gideon also said he largely avoided trouble when he was at school because he was "smart", although he then changed this to "pain averse", mentioning other students he thought were "very smart" but who nevertheless were paddled often:

> I largely avoided the things that would result in (3.7) in being called out. (1.8) I think that's what it was. So I, I (2.7) testing boundaries, you can either test it and retract, or you can test it and be clumsy and get caught. I was the former.

The difference between the 'godly' and 'ungodly' kids is not necessarily that the former have a better attitude. It may be that they are just better at avoiding trouble. While Philip "knew how to pretend to be" a nice boy, Jeremiah (who was paddled frequently—section 9.4) described an apparently sincere trust in the staff's judgement:

> Jenna: Did you: feel, when you were being punished, it sounds like you were being punished a lot. (1.7) Did you ever feel it was justified?

> Jeremiah: (8.6) Mmm. (5.0) Justified. (2.7) I suppose I did. I thought (2.4) I didn't know ((*laughing*)) I didn't know what. (1.5) I, I relied on adults and teachers to, to judge that for me [*Jenna: right*]. I didn't know. So whatever they said or did, I thought it must be justified.

Jeremiah, in common with others who were frequently paddled like Cain, Caleb, and Thomas, described not a rebellious attitude so much as an inability to satisfy the staff's demands. Several participants observed how difficult it is for dyslexic students to succeed in ACE because it relies so much on reading. Incorrectly scoring your work leads to demerits, which can build up to more severe punishments. Students with other kinds of learning difficulties such as ADHD might be similarly disadvantaged. It may be significant that all my participants who successfully avoided severe punishments at school were 11 or

older when they started. They were old enough to grasp quickly how the system worked and how to 'play the game'. Frequently, students deemed rebellious were in fact either unable to understand what was expected of them, or unable to do this. For some, this became a label that was difficult to remove.

Labels affect staff expectations of students' behaviour, and this in turn influences how staff interpret students' actions. Jolyon described how at his school, scoring violations were treated as instances of dishonesty for most students, but for favoured students they were assumed to be innocent mistakes. Scoring violations therefore become further evidence of a 'bad' child's badness, but did not affect the reputation of 'good' children.

Young offenders who perceive themselves as labelled 'delinquent' report higher levels of delinquent activity and problem behaviour (Cechaviciute and Kenny 2007). The way one perceives oneself is called a 'self-concept'. Adolescents who believe themselves to be labelled 'delinquent' have a more negative self-concept than do unlabelled adolescents with similar records of delinquent behaviour (Al-Talib and Griffin 1994). Those who feel labelled 'ungodly' in ACE schools experience a similar impact on their self-concepts. These students are also likely to be punished more often. The frequent punishment fosters the belief that they must be truly bad and outcasts, and these beliefs in turn inform their future behaviour (Huesmann and Podolski 2003). ACE schools deliberately label children as 'godly' in a bid to set them on the 'right' path. Those who do not meet the criteria for godliness can be set on another course entirely.

I witnessed the effects of labelling on another student when I reported finding a half-eaten apple in the boys' toilet. The school had fruit break at 10:00 every day, and leaving fruit uneaten was a serious offence (in the past a supervisor had interrupted PACE work to lecture us about it). When I told two supervisors about it, one looked at the other and said "Right, I'll talk to Joshua. You get the others". Joshua was a boy who seemed to be in detention almost every day. There was no evidence of his guilt, but the teachers suspected him immediately.

I knew he was innocent, because the unfinished apple was mine. I guessed (correctly) that I would not be suspected. By 'get the others' the supervisor meant round up the rest of the students. We were given a reminder lecture on the necessity of showing our appreciation for God's provision, and our parents' hard work, by eating all we were given.

Defenders of ACE might argue that no one is 'godly', but for the blood of Jesus, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). As *English 1077* (p. 6) reminds students, "Vile and sinful people are we". Nevertheless, ACE appears to believe that all have come short, but some have come shorter than others.

Susan Rose argues "Rather than utilize the 'tracking system' which separates the different social classes within a heterogeneous public school, Christian schools tend to select a relatively homogeneous student population, most often drawn from the ranks of the sponsoring congregation" (1988, 204). Because the school she observed served a working class community, and because ACE best prepares students for "the army, the factory, or the automated office" (Ibid, 211), Rose suggests that ACE schools might serve to socialise children into working class roles. Rose omits to consider the ACE school's own 'tracking system'—privileges. Students who show sufficient academic aptitude, obedience, and 'character' are afforded considerable freedom and prepared for Christian leadership roles. Those not on privilege, by contrast, cannot even leave their seats without permission and have little agency. Because the students awarded privileges are often the children of wealthier and more powerful parents, the privilege system serves to reproduce existing inequalities within the church.

Chapter 15 Conclusion and Discussion

In Chapter 2, I introduced three research questions, which I now discuss in turn.

15.1 What is it like to attend an ACE school?

An ACE school is a place where the religious ethos permeates every aspect of the school day. Sometimes this can have a touching quality, as when younger children volunteered to pray for Mike's migraine, and sometimes it is more malign, as when Kaye was "forced" to pray in tongues. This religious emphasis means that the act of worship that begins the school day may on occasion be extended into the morning's academic time if the staff feel God is so guiding them. It means that staff may use lessons ostensibly about science or literature to expound theological points. The Bible is quoted frequently, as justification for almost everything that happens in the school. Even PE sessions have religious overtones—they may begin with prayer, and have moral or spiritual lessons drawn from them. However much the school values other forms of learning, the spiritual is always prioritised over the physical, and the eternal over the temporal.

For ACE students, the boundaries between school, church, and home are often blurred or even non-existent. Learning centres are usually on church property and sometimes in church buildings; the church pastor is often the principal or holds another senior role in the school. Many parents volunteer in the school, so it is common for one's supervisor or monitor also to be one's parent. The schools see themselves as being responsible for the student's entire life, so it is normal for the schools to enforce rules for behaviour outside of school, such as proscribing certain television programmes. Students may even be disciplined for behaviour that takes place off school property, as when Kaye was punished for seeing a boy outside of school, or Susan's parents reprimanded for drinking alcohol at party with students in attendance.

Because of these blurred lines, many participants expressed difficulty distinguishing between the effects of their school, home, and church. This is not a weakness on the part of this study. A major part of what it is to have an ACE schooling is to live in a protective bubble away from the sinful influences of the world. While it might be possible to isolate the effects of just the schools by interviewing those rare students who attend ACE schools without going to church or having a Christian family, their experiences would be atypical. Much of what it is to attend an ACE school is to be deeply absorbed in a subculture where almost everyone espouses the same beliefs and values. Friendships with non-Christians are discouraged except for the purpose of evangelism, and unbelievers are regarded warily. Isolation allows doctrines which outside of this subculture would be controversial or even laughable instead to appear as universal common sense. Those who share these beliefs feel a sense of safety and support, while those who doubt them are either pressured into conformity, like Susan, or punished and ostracised, like Cain.

A difficulty in generalising about what it is like to attend an ACE school is the perception, widespread among former students and some former staff I have spoken to, of extensive favouritism among staff. This claim is lent credence by the fact that numerous participants raised it independently and without prompting. Participants had various explanations for why this might be the case—children of senior staff, of powerful families within the church, of financial donors to the school, and of higher academic ability were variously identified as the beneficiaries of this favouritism. Special treatment is written into the ACE system through a system of privileges that reward students who memorise the Bible, exhibit good behaviour, and perform Christian service. I have argued that within the ACE system, exhibiting 'godly' behaviour is seen as legitimate grounds for preferential treatment. As my participants described, those with higher social standing or ability were more likely to be perceived as 'godly' and earn rewards, while the 'ungodly' were duly punished. Although paddlings were not restricted to students labelled 'ungodly', those so labelled described the harshest corporal punishment. Those labelled 'godly', meanwhile,

248

are singled out for privileges and prepared for 'Christian leadership'. This goes some way to explaining the irreconcilable accounts from those with favourable and unfavourable views of their ACE schooling.

Perhaps surprisingly, participants had comparatively little to say about the most obviously distinctive parts of an ACE school—the offices, the PACEs, and the score stations—even when I asked questions specifically about them. Whether positive or negative, participants' memories of their ACE schools were dominated by their relationships and interactions with staff and other students. ACE schools are small, close-knit communities, and some participants described a loving atmosphere with staff who cared deeply about their wellbeing. Some described a family atmosphere, enhanced by having parents working in the school, and by seeing the same people in church activities. As a result, staff have a much closer relationship with students than might normally be expected.

There is, however, a particular image of the ACE supervisor which I heard repeatedly from participants. It has also been raised frequently in conversations I have had with former ACE students from other countries. These students describe authoritarian, disciplinarian supervisors who regularly resort to shouting or even screaming and, at least prior to its being banned in English schools, made extensive use of corporal punishment. It is not surprising that authoritarian personalities might be drawn to ACE, which is based on an authoritarian reading of the Bible and has its own litany of rules and regulations to implement. The ACE system gives such characters a great deal of power. The churches that run ACE schools are often non-denominational, their leaders accountable only to God. Students, meanwhile, are frequently reminded to submit to authority without question.

I believe the accounts of participants who recall extremely loving supervisors just as much as I believe those who described their supervisors as "terrifying". I witnessed both at my ACE school, often from the same person, sometimes within minutes of each other. The extremes of love and strictness are sides of a

coin, the love a reward that is earned by good behaviour, and the punishments justified as acts of 'love' necessary to keep students on the path to righteousness.

Across all ACE schools, self-denial is encouraged and living as a servant to others elevated as the ideal. While unselfish behaviour is praiseworthy, ACE's literature and my participants' accounts veer towards self-abnegation, at the expense of healthy assertiveness or self-esteem. They are places where, as at Alan Peshkin's Bethany Baptist Academy, questioning is acceptable only if done "in the right spirit" (Peshkin 1986, 44). Questions seen as challenging the school's orthodoxy are not tolerated. Because of this emphasis on total obedience, along with the schools' tendency to involve itself in families' personal lives, students can have few personal boundaries. Lives are given in service to God and by extension the church-school, and taking time to pursue one's own wants or needs is considered selfish or rebellious.

ACE schools take a very conservative line on sex and sexuality. The PACEs propound male headship and traditional gender roles, and participants report that these were reinforced by school staff. While sex education is likely to be left to parents, it is common for the schools to discourage all dating and almost all physical contact with the opposite sex (often enshrined by the 'six-inch rule'), preferring a model of courtship in which one must remain entirely pure until God reveals the one you will marry. Participants blamed these attitudes for their discomfort with romantic or sexual relationships. ACE schools deny LGBT relationships any legitimacy, and if they speak of them at all it is in harsh and often homophobic terms.

While religious belief can help individuals recovering from trauma, there is growing recognition that controlling and dogmatic religious belief can itself be a cause of trauma (Stone 2013). Religious Trauma Syndrome is most likely to affect those who are "raised in their religion, sheltered from the rest of the world, very sincerely and personally involved, and/or from a very controlling

250

form of religion" (Winell 2017). Those involved in monitoring ACE schools, and in helping their students, should be aware that ACE students experience all of these risk factors.

Writing this thesis, I have often thought about the suicide note I drafted at 14. I almost died in my ACE school. There are suicidal people in mainstream schools too, of course, and their rates of suicidal ideation are about the same as in New Christian Schools (Francis, Penny, and Baker 2012). Teenage depression needs to be fought in all its forms. The stigmatising approach to mental health in ACE schools may make staff blind to this fact, particularly where religious beliefs are a cause of the depression.

15.2 What effects has ACE had on students' subsequent lives?

The participants favourable about their ACE experience described it preparing them well, as Harry put it "in terms of further studies and in terms of life more broadly". The majority of participants, however, described a range of lasting harms—Thomas's perpetual feeling that he was "on the back foot" educationally, Andrew's social anxieties, and Mike's mental health problems. Following a delinquent youth in which he acted on a negative self-concept he learned in school, Cain is now unable to work.

My most important findings concern the effects and after-effects of indoctrination. When indoctrination is successful, the immediate effect is obvious: closed-minded belief held irrespective of evidence. This research, however, has revealed secondary effects of indoctrination. Once people overcome the indoctrination sufficiently to evaluate their beliefs critically, rejecting those ideas they find to be false or unhelpful, they nevertheless continue to be affected by irrational feelings of guilt, shame, or fear. I have termed these hangovers of indoctrination 'ghost beliefs'. They are most strikingly embodied by Erin's inability to pursue a much-wanted same-sex relationship or to get an abortion. Despite her being rationally persuaded that

each was an acceptable course of action, she found herself paralysed by a fear of going to hell.

Ghost beliefs take various forms. One participant had been taught that art should be created only to glorify God, and he now struggles to pursue his artistic talents for his own enjoyment. Lily, Erin, and Kaye feel uncomfortably or worried about wearing 'immodest' clothing, even though they would like to. Rob struggles with residual negative attitudes to women. Jeremiah found himself sexually inhibited by "something in the back of your mind". Jayne hides her passion for hobbies she worries are 'unfeminine'. I continue to struggle with assertiveness and with negative stereotypes about non-Christians.

It is difficult to see how anyone could consider these ghost beliefs a success. For conservative Christians, it is faith that is crucial to salvation. I, like most of my participants, now reject this version of Christianity. By ACE's account, most of us are destined for hell. We find ourselves in a kind of limbo, not qualifying for salvation, but nevertheless experiencing psychological pressure to follow a belief system we can no longer accept. To varying extents, we are inhibited from acting rationally and from pursuing our own visions of a flourishing life.

It should be recognised that allowing schools to promote ideas such as homophobia and sexism is not only damaging in the short term. The sexist and homophobic messages my participants took from their schools continue to affect their confidence and self-esteem.

Although the majority of participants did not appear to be suffering from the primary effects of indoctrination when I spoke to them, several told me that they had continued to believe what ACE had taught them for many years after leaving school. Even though the indoctrination was not permanent, it informed their early choices over matters such as what to study at university (or perhaps to attend a Bible college instead), what career to pursue, and whom to marry. They thus find themselves in their late 20s or 30s, on a life course whose

trajectory was determined, or at least markedly influenced, by indoctrination, with little preparation for any other kind of life.

Harry and Lois credited ACE with supporting them in their Christian faith and were grateful for the large body of scripture they had memorised in their time at the school. For them, the legacy of ACE is a stronger foundation for their Christian faith. Those who regard this as a success for ACE should also bear in mind cases where it has had precisely the opposite effect. Cain, who recalled being told he was "evil" and "would never be a Christian", expressed something close to hatred for Christianity. When I asked them to evaluate sentences from PACEs, Kaye and Jayne exhibited almost kneejerk rejection. When ACE does not succeed in instilling an unshakeable Christian faith, it sometimes instead produces vehement opposition.

As I write this, I am also corresponding with another former ACE student who feels her potential for success and happiness has been destroyed by her schooling. She sees no possibility of being happy. Her words remind me of Jayne's comment, "I just don't know what it would take to get rid of feeling bad about being myself". For those who do not feel the benefit of their ACE schooling, the costs can be high.

Some ICCE holders find that they are unable to get into the university or course of their choice because the ICCE is not formally recognised. As a result, they either must return to college to gain university-entrance qualifications, or settle for a second-choice degree. Had they attended a mainstream school, they would have had a wider range of employment and educational opportunities on leaving. They can feel that in addition to being robbed of a normal adolescence, their adulthood continues to be affected by the constraints of their education.

Many participants have rejected their school's faith, either for a more liberal version of Christianity or for no religion. Because the communities they grew up in are intolerant of unbelievers, they frequently do not tell their families about

their views. Two participants asked that I anonymise them sufficiently that their families would not identify them. These outcomes, of course, can affect anyone from a closed religious community regardless of where they went to school. They can be more difficult to cope with, however, if one is also facing financial pressures that are worsened by a lack of qualifications.

Winell (2017) argues that Religious Trauma Syndrome particularly affects those leaving fundamentalist religion, and can lead to four key areas of dysfunction: cognitive (including difficulty with decision-making and critical thinking), affective (including anxiety, depression, anger, grief, guilt, and loneliness), functional (including nightmares and sexual dysfunction), and social/cultural (including rupture of family and social network, employment issues, financial stress, problems acculturating into society, and interpersonal dysfunction). Some former ACE students face these problems while simultaneously having to overcome the limitations of a subpar education. It is a mountain to climb.

15.3 How do former ACE students perceive the quality of their education?

I focused primarily on students' perceptions of their education outside of the PACEs. As noted in the literature review, the PACEs have been reviewed numerous times and found lacking. ACE's advocates maintain, however, that the schools offer a rounded education when the PACEs are considered along with the other lessons and activities provided. From my participants' accounts, however, it is clear that this is far from always the case. Although some participants described excellent teaching, others experienced haphazard supplementary lessons from teachers who lacked both experience and resources. At times, lessons were used only to reinforce a particular theological view, so while the delivery varied a great deal from the PACEs, the content differed little.

Various participants saw their school's shortcoming as the cause of subsequent academic difficulties. Erin, for example, dropped out of university after a few weeks and has struggled to gain employment with her only qualification being the little-known, unaccredited NCSC. She now plans to earn a science degree, but to do that she first has to return to college to gain skills and qualifications that would have been part of a normal secondary education at most schools. Nathan dropped out of his first university course before going to on to complete a second. He suggested, however, that he would not have chosen either subject had he had access to careers advice. Others had not gone to university at all, or had struggled through their degree programmes. For these participants, there is at the least a suspicion that they have been deprived of opportunity. By failing to prepare them for further academic study, or to introduce them to a full range of academic possibilities, ACE has robbed them of career opportunities. Some, like Lily, still feel that they have never made up the gaps ACE left in their learning, particularly in science. This feeling of their own ignorance is a regular source of doubt and frustration. It leaves them feeling, as Thomas put it, "always on the back foot".

Harry and Gideon credited their ACE schooling with preparing them for success at university and in their subsequent careers. Philip described excellent teachers and learning opportunities, while all admitted their schools lacked the resources of state schools. These students, however, met the criteria to be labelled 'godly' at an ACE school. It may be that ACE schools make more of an effort on behalf of 'godly' students, and also that excelling within the ACE system is taken as evidence of godliness.

15.4 Indoctrination

In Chapter 5 I defended the view that being indoctrinated is best understood as an extreme state of cognitive bias. Indoctrination can be seen as the manipulation of cognitive dissonance. In ACE schools, I argue that this often takes the form of requiring students to behave as though they hold particular

beliefs. Students whose private opinions and public actions conflict with this public behaviour experience cognitive dissonance, which they resolve by changing their opinions to be more consistent with their actions. Across years in an ACE school, these episodes can build up to an almost unshakeable belief.

This unshakeable belief, often mentioned by philosophers as characteristic of indoctrination, is best understood as motivated reasoning. The indoctrinated are so committed to their beliefs that they interpret almost all incoming data as supportive of their position. They find excuses to dismiss contradictory evidence, or else reinterpret it in their favour, while treating uncritically any information apparently supportive of their views. They seem to be impervious to argument, even exhibiting a 'backfire effect', where disconfirming evidence actually strengthens their belief.

I cannot find any previous synthesis of the literatures on cognitive biases and indoctrination, so I see my attempt only as a positive first step. Nevertheless, I think that psychological research has much to offer philosophical theorising about indoctrination. The study of cognitive bias is a mature field with a wealth of experimental support. Understanding that indoctrination involves a number of well-understood psychological processes helps to clarify the concept and offers the possibility of better ways to combat it. Cognitive dissonance theory helps to identify factors likely to cause indoctrination, which can then be avoided. Valid tests exist for measuring degrees of cognitive bias (Aczel et al. 2015) which could be adapted to measure indoctrination. Meanwhile, research on how to overcome the backfire effect (Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson 2010) offers promising ways to communicate effectively with those who have been indoctrinated.

15.5 Accounts as evidence

Part of this research relies on the accounts of former students in ACE schools. Many participants left school more than a decade ago, and research on memory

gives us many reasons to treat eyewitness testimony with caution (Kitzinger 2006). I cannot ignore the fact that even my own memories are selective and influenced by my biases.

Given that all this is the case, I must be circumspect about the conclusions I draw based on these accounts. The accounts are not the sole source of data, however. I drew much information about how ACE schools function from ACE's *Procedures Manuals* (1998, 2010), and from the writings of school staff (Baker and Freeman 2005; Dennett 1988; Stringer 2004; Stringer 1998). Thanks to the standardised curriculum, many of the facts about what takes place in ACE schools are not in dispute. Further, some things that might be considered controversial or dubious (such as corporal punishment, ecstatic worship sessions, or the rejection of homosexuality) are explicitly defended by the schools' advocates. Participants' accounts therefore primarily serve the purpose not of establishing what happened in ACE schools, but of showing how the individuals respond to and feel about those experiences. For this purpose, interviews are well suited.

I have, however, relied on participants' accounts to support some factual claims. Most notably, I have taken their descriptions of favouritism and of mistreatment by staff as evidence that these things really happened. I have not relied on a single account, however, but on independent reports from numerous participants. Even then, my argument is supported by showing how ACE's written policies can be conducive to such outcomes.

When I started my research, I worried that because some participants had read my blog, in some cases they would simply reflect my own views about ACE back at me. Had this happened, it would not necessarily have invalidated the research. It would be reasonable for people with similar experiences to reach a shared conclusion. However, although participants' accounts often powerfully resonated with my own experiences, they rarely overlapped with my blogging subjects. I had written mostly about the pedagogy and content of the PACEs,

particularly about young-Earth creationism and biased political content. I focused on these areas because I could provide proof for them; I was worried readers would disbelieve anecdotes based only on my memories, which are so far outside most people's experience.

Creationism and ACE's politics turned out to be relatively unimportant to most of my participants, and the interviews changed my mind about what are the most important areas of ACE to critique. Instead, participants' descriptions of how they had been affected by teachings on gender, sex and relationships, by living within a subculture in which everyone was Christian and non-Christians were regarded with suspicion, and by their relationships with staff. Participants described these things with remarkable consistency, despite having attended different schools and despite, to my knowledge, not having heard any similar descriptions from others. This provides good evidence that these things are a pattern across ACE schools, and not merely tricks of memory.

15.6 Discussion

15.6.1 Ethical dilemmas

In presenting these arguments, my various ethical responsibilities as a researcher are in tension. I have a responsibility to my participants to avoid causing them harm and to treat their interviews with respect. I think Harry and Gideon, in particular, will find my conclusions unacceptable or even offensive. Given the conflicting opinions of my participants, however, it would be impossible to reach any conclusion acceptable to all of them. I also have an ethical responsibility not to present a distorted or partial account of my findings (BERA 2011). While the most obvious risk here is of presenting a one-sidedly critical account of ACE, it would also be unethical to minimise or overlook the harms some participants describe in order to spare the feelings of others. Ultimately I feel it would be disrespectful to my participants and an abdication of my responsibilities as a researcher to present any conclusion other than the one I am most persuaded is supported by the evidence.

15.6.2 Educational concerns

Broadly speaking, my criticisms of ACE can be reduced to two points. The first is that the curriculum is narrow and often factually incorrect. It appears to conceive of learning as consisting only of rote regurgitation, at the expense of critical thought, creative expression, problem solving, inquiry, or group interaction. The second is that it attempts to indoctrinate children into a fundamentalist worldview. Participants in this research have found themselves disadvantaged by both.

It is not a coincidence that both defects appear in the same curriculum. This is partly because ACE's educational style is driven by religious considerations: Donald Howard (1979) used scriptural justifications for ACE's pedagogy. It is also because the requirements of an excellent education are somewhat in conflict with promoting belief in the literal truth of the Bible. Students must be protected from the kind of free inquiry that might cast doubt on these beliefs. Potential threats, whether from history, science, philosophy, or theology, are purged from the curriculum. As Alan Peshkin says of fundamentalist schools in general: "The Christian school is closed to experience that will compete, it is believed, with the ways of their singular truth. Thus, marked as taboo is much of the world's art, literature, music, and dance" (Peshkin 1993, 305).

This brand of education prioritises preparation for purported eternal life in heaven over preparation for success in this life, so that academic shortcomings can be overlooked if the religious nurture is seen as adequate. ICCE chair Brenda Lewis has stated:

> I knew it was possible for some of my own children to gain the world if they gave up ACE and went to the famous local school where a quarter of the sixth form go to Oxford. They were bright; they could go to Oxford, perhaps become professor of classics or medicine. But then suppose they lose their faith in the process, and at the end died and went to hell. What would it have profited them and what would it have profited me? (Lewis 2013c, 3:19)

In the same video, Lewis quotes numerous testimonies from successful ACE students who credit their schooling with enabling their subsequent success. This success, however, is secondary. The primary purpose was to ensure that they would believe in Jesus.

Even for those students who genuinely find ACE's brand of Christianity fulfilling, ACE provides a narrow education. The commitment to young-Earth creationism excludes not just the theory of evolution, but also much of archaeology, geology, cosmology, ancient history, linguistics, and other disciplines that cannot be reconciled with a 6,000 year timeline. ACE's limited practical science substantially reduces the chances of students going on to succeed in related subjects at university. Its English course, with an emphasis on mechanical grammar drills and only a narrow range of Christian literature, does little to promote joy in reading and writing. In every subject, ACE provides a dry curriculum based on the memorisation of received knowledge, with minimal opportunities for creativity, discovery, or collaborative learning. Haro Van Brummelen (1989), whose thinking has been influential on other New Christian Schools, criticises ACE on these latter grounds.

It might be asked whether it is possible for schools to deliver a high quality and rounded education while fully utilising the ACE curriculum. In my view, this is unlikely. In order to give the average student enough time to complete the PACEs by the age of 18, about half of the school timetable needs to be devoted to PACE work. That leaves a restricted amount of time for lessons the PACEs do not provide, such as physical education, group activities, art, music, drama, practical science, essay writing, literature, and PSHE. If students are to be disabused of ACE's one-sided and skeletal view of world events (Fleming and Hunt 1987), schools must also provide additional history lessons. It is difficult to imagine how to fit all this into an afternoon timetable, before we even consider the chapel and devotional sessions ACE schools are expected to provide. All this presupposes that ACE schools want to provide what would be considered a balanced education by mainstream standards, itself a doubtful proposition.

While my experience is that schools sometimes adopt ACE primarily because it is an affordable option, presumably any school adopting the curriculum is largely sympathetic to ACE's ideas about education.

I argue that ACE's academic shortcomings are sufficient to disqualify it as a system of education even before considering the potential harms of fundamentalist indoctrination. This view appears to be shared by many Christians who have evaluated the PACEs (Moser and Mueller 1980; Hill 1993; Long 1996; Hunter 1985; Murray 1983; Elkins 1992; Van Brummelen 1989). ACE 'success stories' about former students who achieve highly at university do not disprove this argument. It is no secret that some people are able to overcome the challenges of an inadequate education. Individuals from under-performing state schools sometimes go on to succeed at elite universities, and no one takes this as evidence that such schools should not be improved.

Regrettably, some who might otherwise be sympathetic to this point will be put off by my criticism of fundamentalism. My interviews with participants have persuaded me, however, that the risks of fundamentalism are too great to limit this thesis to a critique of ACE schools' educational limitations.

15.6.3 Satisfied students

Any attempt to draw conclusions from this research is vulnerable to the criticism that it includes few participants who view their ACE schooling favourably. Undoubtedly, many such people exist. They may well be the majority. How can a study which largely excludes them make any claims about ACE schooling as a whole?

Here it is necessary to consider what it means to be 'happy' with one's ACE education. Hand (2003, 90) argues "teaching for belief in not-known-to-be-true propositions is indoctrinatory". Since there can be no rationally decisive argument or evidence for not-known-to-be-true beliefs, those seeking to impart

them must bypass reason, and this, Hand argues, "is precisely what is meant by indoctrination" (Ibid).

ACE, however, does not limit itself merely to not-known-to-be-true beliefs. Many of ACE's claims are demonstrably false. One such proposition, that the Bible is inerrant (including on matters of history and science), is the foundation for the entire worldview ACE seeks to impart. Numerous others flow from it, including ACE's justifications for rejecting evolution, women's rights, and LGBT equality. Plainly, demonstrably false beliefs can only be imparted by bypassing reason.

Students who believe themselves to have benefitted from their ACE education, then, either have been indoctrinated into at least some false beliefs, or else they reject ACE's worldview but consider their education beneficial in other ways. Neither appears to be a promising defence. The latter case amounts to saying that ACE is beneficial when it fails to fulfil its stated aims.

The spectre of indoctrination raises a problem for evaluating these schools. Had someone asked me in 1997, I would have told them I was flourishing in my ACE school. Now I would say that perception of flourishing was a misguided product of indoctrination, and that I am much closer to flourishing today. Some people are wholly unable to live a flourishing or even tolerable life within the confines of a conservative Christian worldview, and there is no way to tell who these people will be when choosing their schooling. It may not become evident until much later. The best way to guard against such harms is to equip students to evaluate and pursue their own conceptions of a good life, which ACE manifestly does not do.

Indoctrination can make people act contrary to their own interests, as powerfully (and unintentionally) illustrated by Stephen Dennett (then an ACE headmaster). After a chapter describing the importance of corporal punishment to a Christian upbringing, he quotes his daughter saying to him: "Daddy, I know

that when you're disciplining me, it's for my own good, so don't ever stop" (Dennett 1988, 99).

It is easy to understand how some would not view themselves as harmed by their ACE schooling. There is much to appreciate in the distinctive atmosphere of a small Christian school. For those who are not gay, who are happy with their assigned gender role, who do not have mental health or behavioural problems that might be mistaken for demon possession, who are good at obeying rules, who do not seriously doubt the inerrancy of scripture, who learn well by reading and memorising, and who find church attendance rewarding, ACE schooling is no doubt an enriching experience in many ways.

Even those who do not view themselves as harmed by fundamentalism, however, have learned beliefs which can potentially harm others. Those who share ACE's worldview are more likely to oppose LGBT and women's rights, to privilege the rights of Christians over those of others, to use corporal punishment on their own children, or to oppose the teaching of evolution in schools.

It should also be noted that while this study does not include many participants who had the best experiences of ACE, it also excludes those with the absolute worst. In my travels I have met some who refuse to talk at all about their ACE experience because they find it too traumatic. I am also aware of some ACE users, particularly homeschoolers, who are especially world-rejecting and eschew contact with secular culture as far as possible. These students would not attend secular university and have few, if any, opportunities to reach outside of their subculture. Their stories are unavoidably absent.

15.6.4 Positives

My research has supported the findings from earlier research that New Christian Schools can have a strong sense of community and be a haven from

certain kinds of bullying. One New Christian School graduate said the school's atmosphere gave her "the freedom to be myself" (ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker 2009, 232). I do not dismiss these feelings, but it does appear that many of the ACE schools' positives emerge from the negative aspects. The sense of unity and shared values simultaneously makes heretics of those who do not believe—the strong 'us' stands in opposition to the godless 'them'. The peace and relative absence of playground fighting is in part the product of a harsh, autocratic milieu. The privileges enjoyed by particular 'godly' are contrasted with restrictions on the 'ungodly'. The children's politeness is symptomatic of excessive deference to authority, and their chivalry is a form of benevolent sexism that perpetuates gender inequality. I am doubtful that the strengths of ACE can be entirely disentangled from its harms.

15.6.5 Applicability to other kinds of school

When I gave participants free rein to discuss the aspects of their education they felt were important, they chose first to speak about the harmful effects of a fundamentalist upbringing. While many felt disadvantaged by their academic education, this was a lesser concern. In participants' accounts, the school ethos and atmosphere, the makeup of the student body, and the pastors' and supervisors' behaviour were more important than the content or style of the curriculum. This suggests that similar criticisms are likely to apply to theologically similar Christian schools, even if they use different curricula.

Although reporting of their criticisms was somewhat muted, the New Christian Schools graduates surveyed by ap Siôn, Francis, and Baker (2007, 2009) raised many of the same points as my participants. Reporting of these surveys does not identify which schools the respondents attended. However, it is a minority of CST schools that use the ACE curriculum, so it is likely that at least some of these criticisms were coming from students who had not used ACE. This supports the view that students from some other kinds of Christian school may face the same difficulties as my participants. Further evidence for this comes

from Peshkin's (1986) ethnography of Bethany Baptist Academy, which despite its setting in a non-ACE school has many striking similarities to my participants' accounts.

There is no reason to think that these findings are peculiar to conservative Christianity. To the extent that a school is fundamentalist, it is likely to be harmful. Sexism, homophobia, indoctrination, isolationism, science rejection, and the scorning of unbelievers are common to fundamentalisms of all varieties. It is these ideas and practices that have most harmed the ACE students I met, and Christianity has no monopoly on them.

15.6.6 Regulation

Alan Peshkin (1993) argues that fundamentalist schools should be permitted and largely unregulated for the sake of pluralism, even as the schools themselves reject the pluralism that makes possible their existence. He makes an exception, however, in cases where the schools' "action or inaction is, by clear legal and moral standards, injurious to children" (Peshkin 1993, 312). In this thesis, I have presented evidence that students in ACE schools have been harmed physically, psychologically, academically, and spiritually. Nevertheless, the question of how far to regulate them is a difficult one, because of the need to balance parents' rights against children's rights. In the case of children from closed, world-rejecting communities, there is also a need to balance children's interest in having strong familial and community relationships with their right to be prepared for a life outside the community if they so choose.

James Dwyer (1998) denies that parents have any rights over their children at all. He points out that there is no other area where liberal societies recognise the right of one person to control another. In the past, societies have accorded masters' rights over their slaves, and older conceptions of marriage gave husbands certain controls over their wives. He argues that just as we now see

these arrangements as unethical, we ought to reject the notion of parents'
rights.

Brighouse and Swift (2014), however, demonstrate that Dwyer's position is
untenable. Children have the right to be parented: to be cared for and to have
decisions made on their behalf when they are not yet capable of making these.
They need some of this paternalistic treatment to come from one or more
parents, because their healthy development requires a strong loving
relationship with a primary caregiver. In order to carry out their responsibilities,
parents must be granted some rights over their children, although these are
always constrained by what is in the child's interests. Children have an interest
in developing a meaningful relationship with their parents, which gives parents
a right to share interests with their children and to shape their children's values.
Children have a right to a relationship that is spontaneous and genuine, and for
parents to hide their beliefs about religion from their children would obstruct
this relationship. Thus, parents have a right to share with their children their
conception of a good life, including their religious views.

Parents' rights to shape their children's values end, however, when they inhibit
the children's autonomy. Brighouse and Swift define autonomy as the "capacity
to reflect on one's life-choices, to be aware that it is possible to live one's life in
many different ways, to make a reasoned judgment about which way is right for
one, and to act on that judgment" (Brighouse and Swift 2014, 15). The exercise
of autonomy, on this conception, requires the ability for critical rational
thought, as well as the emotional capacity to subject one's commitments to
scrutiny and, where necessary, revision. Clearly, closed-mindedness, the result
of indoctrination, is antithetical to autonomy. Brighouse and Swift offer two
main reasons why autonomy is important to wellbeing. One is that modern
societies change rapidly, and the autonomous individual is better equipped to
adapt to these changes and make choices in the face of them. The second is
that people vary, so that "Conceptions of the good that can be endorsed and
followed without alienation by some people may clash with the needs of

others" (Ibid, 167). In other words, if parents raise a child within a lifestyle and worldview where the child cannot flourish, the child needs the capacity to find a way of life they can endorse 'from the inside'. The examples they give are particularly relevant to the present study:

> A homosexual who experiences his homosexuality as unchangeable simply cannot live, from the inside, a way of life that requires heterosexual marriage. He will be alienated: it may be a very good way of life, but it is not one that *he* can endorse, and therefore not one that *he* can live well. Similarly, some religious ways of life that impose on women the duties of modesty and fidelity in marriage conflict with the natures of some women who are raised in those religions. Again, autonomy is not a necessary condition of being able to find a way of life that fits with one's constitution, but it is extremely important for those not lucky enough to be raised within a way of life that fits them well. (Ibid)

It is clear that ACE education militates against students' autonomy, and for some participants this has resulted in exactly the situations Brighouse and Swift characterise. ACE schools, in the form I and my participants experienced, exceed the bounds of parents' rights. There is a compelling argument for the state to protect children from such harms through stricter regulation and inspection.

15.7 Inspection

In May 2016, I read the most recent Ofsted inspection reports of 14 English ACE schools. One school was rated outstanding, one satisfactory, one 'needs improvement', and one inadequate. The other ten were all rated 'good' overall. None of the issues raised by my literature review or by my own research were addressed at all in these reports. Even for the school that was rated inadequate, it was the planning and leadership that were criticised.

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations SI 2014 No. 3283, paragraph 5, require that where political material is presented in English schools, students receive "a balanced presentation of opposing views". This is

unlikely to happen in many schools using the ACE curriculum. PACEs are filled with political commentary and make no attempt at neutrality (Parsons 1987; Paterson 2003). This could theoretically be balanced by staff, but it would require supervisors to be looking over students' shoulders, ready to provide an alternative point of view. This would undermine the claim the system makes to being 'accelerated', and, if implemented rigorously, it would require learning centres to employ more staff with greater expertise than is usually the case. It would also defeat one of the curriculum's purposes. This type of Christianity has political implications, and transmitting those values is central to the schools' purpose. Yet only one school's inspection report mentioned politics at all: "The school has an extensive range of policies which are effectively implemented to ensure that the promotion of extremism in political views is prohibited" (Bean 2015, 5).

The Independent School Standards also require schools to promote "mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs" (para 2). Judging from both the content of the PACEs and my participants' descriptions of their schooling, the last of these is unlikely to be promoted in many ACE schools. Only one inspection report makes any comment on the PACEs in this regard: "pupils have an indepth understanding of religious and cultural diversity which is covered well in the ACE curriculum" (Killman and Smith 2013, 5), a baffling claim. Almost all the other reports state that the schools generally promoted respect and tolerance. Only one inspection report recognises the potential issue, and quickly brushes it aside:

> Pupils have clear moral values heavily influenced by their religious beliefs. In discussions and in their writing, pupils expressed very strong views about abortion and creationism and evolution. Very occasionally, and without realising it, this involves lack of respect for those who hold different views. Teachers quickly recognise this and successfully redress it so that the pupils learn how to develop more considered views. Teachers always provide a balanced view. (Armitage 2014)

268

This is also the only mention of creationism in the reports, and there was no consideration of the ways in which the teaching of creationism might interfere with a broad and balanced science education. Another inspector, claiming the school helped develop "an understanding of the diversity of cultures and beliefs in the wider world" pointed to students' attendance of European and International Student Conventions, where "they meet and work with students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds" (Young 2011, 5). The report does not mention that these conventions are only open to ACE students.

The Independent Schools Standards also require that teaching does not discriminate against pupils contrary to the Equality Act 2010. Protected characteristics under the Equality Act include sex, sexual orientation, and religion. PACEs contain discriminatory language about women, homosexuals, and non-Christians, which none of the reports mention. Only one mentions homosexuality or sex education at all:

> The curriculum includes sex and relationships education: pupils are taught that same-sex relationships are sinful but are equally supported to consider and accept that not everyone within the wider society will agree. (Killman and Smith 2013, 6)

It is not impossible that schools might attempt to redress sexist and heterosexist content in the PACEs, but it is unlikely that a school strongly committed to gender equality would choose the ACE curriculum in the first place. Also, given the frequency with which sexual stereotypes appear in the PACEs, it must be asked how successful such attempts would be. Ofsted's inspectors do not display great awareness that this is an issue.

In December 2016, it was reported that Ofsted had inspected ten ACE schools on the same day, rating all but one 'inadequate' or 'needs improvement' (Willgress 2016). I have been unable to find the tenth report, and a colleague received an email from Ofsted detailing only nine inspections. Most of these had been downgraded from their previous results. The fact that such snap

inspections occurred, and that the inspections were consistently critical, suggests that Ofsted's approach to ACE is changing.

The reports were not consistent in their criticism of ACE, however. Some reports (Varney and MacLachlan 2016; Farr 2016; Henderson 2016) were deeply critical of the curriculum itself, but one referred to "the good quality of teaching in the PACEs" (Frater 2016, 3) and another said students receive a "very good … academic start in life" (Mackenzie 2016, 4). It is not easy to see how these discrepancies can be reconciled, even allowing for differences between the schools. One also criticised the school for "an approach that is too far removed from the active promotion of respect for gay and lesbian men and women" (Varney and MacLachlan 2016, 9), while no other report mentioned homosexuality at all. Some reports praised the schools for promoting tolerance, while making no mention of intolerant content in the PACEs. There is still considerable progress to be made.

15.8 Funding

A more radical solution to the problem of ACE schools would be to give them money. Many of the weaknesses identified in ACE schools are down to a lack of finances, and New Christian Schools in general are poorly funded (Walford 2000, 19). State funding would enable them to employ more and better-qualified staff, to purchase equipment for practical science and sports lessons, and to acquire more suitable buildings. ACE itself opposes all state funding on the grounds that it might also involve state regulation (ACE 2012), but the schools are more open. At least nine ACE and ten other New Christian Schools have applied to become Free Schools, although all have been rejected (British Humanist Association 2013). In the early 1990s, supporters of the New Christian Schools successfully campaigned to make faith-based schools eligible for grant-maintained status, although none actually gained this status (Walford 2000). Dwyer (1998) suggests that providing funding to private religious schools could

be a way to justify legally the regulation he thinks necessary. The problem is that the schools seem unlikely to compromise their policies sufficiently to provide the kind of education the state could legitimately fund. An obvious reason why all ACE Free School applications have been denied is that teaching creationism is illegal in state-funded schools. It is obviously right that state schools do not teach pseudoscience, but creationism is central to ACE schools' mission.

15.9 Recommendations

I think it unlikely that ACE or the schools that use it would follow my recommendations. The evidence suggests that ACE listens only to its users, and even then changes its policies infrequently. As a result, I can see little prospect of change without legislation. Here we must be cautious. If all ACE schools were to close, it is possible that many of the students would be withdrawn into home schooling, where regulation is more difficult and the quality of education could be even worse (Green 2015).

Nevertheless, here are some possible recommendations for change:

1) All schools must prepare students for nationally recognised qualifications. The ICCE is not a nationally recognised qualification. Although NARIC's endorsement carries some weight, NARIC is not an accrediting body for English qualifications. Ofqual is the regulator for examinations and qualifications in England, and it has never assessed the ICCE. Accredited qualifications appear within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which the ICCE does not. Five participants described difficulties in gaining entry to tertiary education or employment as a result of their ACE-based qualifications, and three described struggling at university because their education had not prepared them for degree-level study. Requiring all schools to prepare students for nationally recognised qualifications at 16 and 18 would reduce the risk of these outcomes.

2) Introduce a statutory requirement that religious education include a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Such a regulation would greatly diminish the likelihood of indoctrination and increase the likelihood that students are autonomous. Such education need not, as critics argue, be relativist. In fact, asking students to think critically about whether their beliefs might be wrong requires us to reject relativism, because the idea of 'wrong' presumes the possibility of truth (Law 2006). A balanced presentation should also allay the New Christian Schools' concern about 'indoctrination by omission'. We would need to clarify what is meant by 'balance', and about which religious views deserve consideration. Nevertheless, the requirement for a balanced presentation of political views is intelligible even though politics is a controversial subject, and the same is possible for religion.

3) Introduce equal admissions and employment policies in all schools.

As it stands, private religious schools frequently discriminate on the basis of religion for both staff and students. As I argued in Chapter 5, this makes the development of an indoctrinatory system more likely. Schools whose staff hold a variety of religious and political beliefs are more likely to enable their students to consider different points of view. Students who go to school and make friends with those of different beliefs and backgrounds are more likely to relate to them as people than as members of a rival group. Christian schools who wish to avoid indoctrination would do well to try to appeal to non-Christian students and parents.

4) Require that all school staff have accredited professional qualifications.

In making this recommendation I am swimming against the current tide of government policy, but the abuses and failures of Chapter 7 would be less likely to happen in a school with a number of professional staff.

5) End compulsory acts of worship.

Where acts of worship take place, schools should provide a genuine opportunity for students to abstain (perhaps facilitated by providing a non-perfunctory alternative). If acts of worship are compulsory, then students are being denied freedom of conscience.

6) Ofsted should train its inspectors in understanding indoctrination and issues relevant to conservative Christian schools.

I do not think any of these recommendations would be acceptable to the Christian Schools movement. If legally enforced, I expect any of them would be sufficient to make some parents remove their children from schooling altogether. I do not think there is an easy answer, but the way forward should involve consultation with stakeholders including current and former students, education professionals, parents, and the schools themselves. I suspect the answer is to regulate private schools closely, and ensure this is matched by a corresponding increase in regulation of home schooling.

15.10 Recommendations for further research

We should take seriously those who experience bullying and exclusion in non-Christian schools. I know from experience how difficult such bullying can be. I also know, because I did it, that evangelical children sometimes share their faith in antagonistic ways. Further research should look at the reasons some evangelical children feel excluded in mainstream schools, so that we can make common schools the truly inclusive places they should be.

There is also little research about the parents who send their children to ACE schools. We do not know what their reasons are for choosing such schools. Not all are fundamentalists. Two of my participants said their parents were to some extent misled about what their ACE school was like. Some of the families at my school were from less conservative churches. If we learn why parents choose

such schools, it may be possible to make reasonable accommodations so that they will keep their children in mainstream education.

I focused narrowly on ACE schools, rather than independent Christian schools more widely. At the start of my research, I thought the ACE curriculum was the root of the problem. Having completed my interviews, it seems that the school ethos and the attitudes and actions of staff were often more harmful than the content of the PACEs. New Christian Schools are fairly diverse, and it would be wrong to assume that they are all ideologically similar to ACE schools. Some of them undoubtedly are, however (Walford 1995). Further research should determine to what extent the issues I have identified in ACE schools apply to other independent Christian schools.

My research did not include any observations in current ACE schools. Peshkin's (1986) and Rose's (1988) ethnographies are excellent, but they are now old and both were conducted in the USA. A similar ethnography of an English ACE or New Christian School, conducted by a disinterested party, would be very useful. In particular, I would welcome research that suggests how the benefits of ACE schools could be retained while losing the negatives.

The present study applied only to England. The number of ACE schools in England appears to be in sharp decline. Globally, however, ACE is still expanding. It is therefore important to discover how many of my findings are relevant in other countries. Cross-cultural research would be welcome.

Finally, further research should find out why Ofsted inspections of ACE schools have failed to identify these issues. It may be that there is some weakness in the inspection framework. It could also be that inspectors are biased in favour of the schools. The author of one of the inspection reports I read was Stephen Dennett, author of Dennett (1988), former CEE employee, and ICCE board member. It is important that inspectors are independent of the schools they assess. The disparity between Ofsted's reports and my research raises questions

about the suitability for unconventional schools of Ofsted's inspection framework.

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Appendix 1 Guide to Abbreviations and Glossary

Abbreviation	Full title	Definition
ACE	Accelerated Christian Education	Producers of self-paced, individualised Christian curriculum
CEE	Christian Education Europe	ACE European distributor, based near Swindon, UK
ESC	European Student Convention	Annual competition between European ACE schools, organised by CEE
ISC	International Student Convention	Annual competition between global ACE schools, organised by ACE
ICCE	International Certificate of Christian Education	Certificate awarded for completion of ACE curriculum plus some additional coursework
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre	Government agency which judges the comparability of international qualifications
NCSC	National Christian Schools Certificate	Name given to ICCE before 2004; did not include coursework
Ofsted	Office of Standards in Education	English schools inspectorate
PACE	Packet of Accelerated Christian Education	One of the workbooks that constitute the ACE curriculum
SCEE	Southern Cross Educational Enterprises	ACE distributor, Australia and South Pacific

Flag
Each ACE student is equipped with two flags, the Christian flag and the national flag. The Christian flag is raised to attract attention from supervisors, and the national flag to attract attention from monitors.

Learning centre
A classroom in an ACE school, equipped with offices and one or more score stations.

Monitor
Roughly equivalent to a teaching assistant in a mainstream school, monitors assist the supervisors in running the learning centre. They may answer students' requests to leave their seats (e.g. to score their work).

Office
A learning carrel in an ACE learning centre. A desk facing the wall, with vertical partitions separating it from neighbouring offices.

Opening exercise
Morning assembly at an ACE school, consisting usually of prayer, a Christian song, Bible reading, a short speech or sermon from the supervisor, and announcement of the results of the previous day's PACE tests.

Score key
A booklet containing the correct answers to PACE questions.

Score station
A table with an upward sloping surface at which ACE students stand to mark their own work from score keys.

Supervisor
Roughly equivalent to the teacher in a mainstream school, although the supervisor's job is not to deliver lessons, but to ensure that students follow ACE procedures correctly, and to provide assistance when students request it by raising the appropriate flag.

Word building
The name of ACE's spelling PACEs.

Appendix 2 Transcription conventions

This is a guide to the symbols used in transcribing interviews with participants.

(1.6)	Pause length in seconds (pauses shorter than one second not transcribed)
I sai—	Speech cut off abruptly
to::	Colons indicate lengthening of the previous sound (additional colon indicates a longer sound)
Jenna: {Did Susan: {Yeah	Lines beginning { were started simultaneously
>I just wanted<	Words spoken faster than surrounding speech
(hope)	Speech was hard to hear on the recording, and the transcription is a best estimate
[convention]	Non-italicised words in square brackets are added explanation of what the participant said
((*laughing*))	Italicised words in double brackets indicate non-verbal actions
[*Jenna: yeah*]	Interjection by the interviewer
(*)	Indicates a glitch in the recording caused by Skype problems

This system is based on the conventions used in Conversation Analysis. Adapted from http://homepages.lboro.ac.uk/~ssca1/notation.htm (accessed 11 May 2016).

Appendix 3 Information letter given to participants

Dear [participant],

Thank you for considering taking part in my research into the experiences of former students in Accelerated Christian Education. I am extremely grateful for your interest. Before you decide whether to participate, you should know more about the research and how your data would be used.

Very little research has been conducted into experiences of ACE, so almost nothing is known about how former students view their education and its impact on their subsequent life. I believe my finished thesis will give us a valuable insight into the outcomes of students from Christian schools, helping us to see what the schools do well and what they could do better. Without you, this research would not be possible.

I am asking you to take part in an interview. If you decide to participate, this letter explains how your interview will be used. If you agree, you will need to sign the attached consent form.

Anonymity

Unless you expressly wish otherwise, the data from your interview will be used anonymously. Your name will be changed in all published research (you can choose your pseudonym if you like). Details which might give away your identity will be omitted. Names of other persons referenced in the interview will also be changed. Your privacy is important to me and if you have concerns at any stage I will be happy to discuss the best way to resolve them.

Audio

The interview will be audio-recorded, and a transcription of your interview will be made. Your name will be changed on this transcription. The audio recording will be stored securely, and only I will have access to it. I will not play it to any third party.

Approval

I will send you the transcription of your interview for your approval. It is important to me that you feel fairly represented by my research. If you say anything in the interview which you would later prefer to remove or change, you have that right.

Publication

The primary purpose of the interview is for inclusion in my PhD. This will be available publicly online and from the Institute of Education, University of

London library. Other researchers will be able to quote from it in their research. I may also use your interview data in publications subsequent to the PhD.

My views on ACE

You may be aware that I have a critical view of ACE. I make no secret of this, but the interview will not be used to try to persuade you to agree with me. In fact, it is important to have participants who disagree with me, so that what students feel are the main benefits or blessings of ACE will be fairly represented in the research. Your views will be treated with respect, both in the interview and in the thesis, and you will have the opportunity to approve (and suggest changes to) your interview transcript. I am also bound by BERA's ethics research code to represent you fairly (see below).

Research ethics

As an academic researcher, I am bound by the ethical guidelines for educational research of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). You can read the latest version of these at http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines.

In accordance with these guidelines:
- You have the right to withdraw from the research process at any time.
- I am bound not to 'sensationalise' my research, compromising its integrity for public exposure.
- I am bound to represent my findings fairly, and not to distort them by selectively publishing some details and not others.

Time commitment

Initially, I am asking you to take part in a one-hour interview. The questions will be open-ended to allow you to discuss the aspects of your life (as it relates to ACE) which you consider important.

After the initial interview, I may request subsequent interviews for clarification or more depth. It will up to you whether you take part further; subsequent interviews will also follow the procedures in this agreement.

If you have any further questions about the research process, please feel free to ask. You can contact me by phone on [number], or email [address].

Yours sincerely,

Jenna Scaramanga

Appendix 4 Validity of the ICCE

Introduction

The International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) is a secondary school qualification offered to students completing the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum. Seven levels are offered. This paper examines the General and Advanced levels, which UK NARIC has benchmarked as comparable to Cambridge International Exams 'O' and 'A' Level standard respectively (NARIC 2012a). Because ACE is self-paced, the age at which students graduate may vary, but the ICCE board expects average students to complete the General certificate when aged 15–16 and the Advanced certificate when aged 17–18 (CEE 2012b, 17). This paper discusses the content and validity of these certificates. Four ICCE subjects are examined: English, social studies (history and geography), science, and biblical studies.

The ACE curriculum consists of PACEs (Packets of Accelerated Christian Education), which are self-paced, self-instructional workbooks, typically around 40 pages in length, which take students approximately two weeks to complete (ACE 2010a). At the end of each PACE, students take a test. It is the scores from these tests which form the overwhelming majority of ICCE assessment. The grades on the ICCE certificate are reached by calculating student's mean PACE test score for each subject.

Although ACE is an American curriculum, the ICCE was started by ACE's UK distributors Christian Education Europe (CEE), and is not used in North America (ICCE is available in four regions: Europe, Africa, Australasia, and Southeast Asia). The ICCE claims to be "an alternative to secular qualifications" so that "with the appropriate ICCE certificate, ACE graduates need never return to state schools to gain college and university entrance qualifications" (CEE 2014b). The ICCE's chief moderator has claimed that more than 90 universities in the UK and 30 in other countries have accepted ICCE graduates (L. Boulton 2014a). In 2010,

236 ICCE certificates were awarded, of which 115 were at General level and 22 at Advanced (Lewis 2013b). In 2011, 274 certificates were issued, 157 General and 38 Advanced (White 2012). These were the only years for which data could be obtained. The sources do not specify whether these are worldwide or UK-only figures.

The reasons for the ICCE's existence become clearer from listening to two of its board members. Writing in response to the introduction of GCSEs, Stephen Dennett (now ICCE educational consultant) stated:

> It is clear that GCSE poses a severe threat to the Judaeo-Christian ethic and to *traditional* education, in the best sense of the word … Whatever happens, one truth remains: there can never be a truce between Zion and Egypt. A commitment to the kingdom of God is a declaration of war on Satan, the Prince of this world. Nowhere is that more true, at present, than in our national examination system. (Dennett 1988, 121–122)

More recently, addressing parents and other stakeholders, ICCE chair Brenda Lewis has said:

> What's the alternative to doing ICCE Advanced certificate? You know what it is. Sending the children out at 16 to do A levels. An A level in biology? That's not going to be Creation-based is it? Nor is geology, nor the social sciences …

> [Before the ICCE's introduction] we wanted to do everything thoroughly, so we took our children off [the ACE curriculum] at 11 and taught them for GCSEs. And God bless them, they did extremely well at GCSE. But do you know what the real result was? We had students who were not much better or much different from state school students. (Lewis 2013c)

Intended uses

A promotional video gives some insight into the intended uses of the ICCE:

> [ICCE] is a Christian alternative to conventional qualifications, such as GCSEs and A levels … [The General certificate] is designed for average ability pupils and covers a standard and amount of work similar to 9 GCSEs grade A*-C … The advanced certificate is the board's university entry qualification. (DoverSchoolUK 2013b)

It is clear that the ICCE is intended to replace GCSEs and A Levels, national exams taken by students in England and some other countries at 16 and 18 years old respectively. ICCE advertising in Africa and Australia emphasises that it is intended to provide students with access to tertiary education (ICCE 2012a; ICCE 2012b). Students from ACE schools apply to university using their ICCE certificates, yet there is little information available to university admissions tutors about the content or structure of the qualification. As a commercial, in-confidence document, UK NARIC's benchmarking study is not available to the public, and NARIC's international comparisons database (NARIC 2012b) provides only limited information.

Curriculum theory

Accelerated Christian Education rejects virtually all mainstream curriculum theory (Berliner 1997). It has been vigorously criticised by secular academics (Berliner 1997; Fleming and Hunt 1987; Paterson 2003; Speck and Prideaux 1993). Defending the company from one such critique, ACE's vice president responded:

> We respect the right of Fleming and Hunt to disagree with us, but we ask that they evaluate our material from something other than the conventional viewpoint. Our material is *not* written with conventional viewpoints in mind.

Similarly, ACE's Australian representative has argued "ACE is not 'on about' education in the sense that educators would understand, nor is it 'on about' schooling in academic things. ACE is a Christian Character training program designed to turn out Christian leaders" (Murray 1983, 71). Because the authors

of the curriculum reject mainstream educational theory, this examination does not attempt to evaluate the ICCE qualification within a framework based on current assessment theory. Instead, I have tried to evaluate ACE's assessments on their own terms, investigating whether they achieve their objectives.

Validity

In order to judge an assessment's validity, there must be an explicit statement of the proposed interpretations and uses of test scores (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education 1999, 9). It is not tests themselves that are valid or not, but the inferences drawn from them. Without knowing what uses a test is designed for, it is impossible to validate. Therefore test publishers need to "provide enough of the right kind of information for other stakeholders to evaluate their products and to use them appropriately" (Newton 2012, 18). Markus (1998, 80) argues that validity cannot be claimed in the absence of an argument justifying the inferences to be made from tests.

In the case of the ICCE, it appears that no such argument has been made. There is no reference to validity on the ICCE website, nor in the *International Certificate of Christian Education Procedures Manual* (CEE 2012b). I can find no clear statement of the proposed interpretations and uses of ICCE test scores. I am equally unable to find any validity argument for the ACE curriculum on which the ICCE is largely based. Elkins (1992) argues that ACE does not consider itself accountable to anyone except its users, which may explain why the curriculum has not undergone a process of external validation.

Because there is no available validity argument for either ACE or the ICCE, and no statement about the intended inferences to be drawn from their test scores, it is not possible to evaluate the validity of the ICCE curriculum. Since students are applying to university on the basis of these qualifications, however, it would still be useful to understand what the tests measure. I have attempted to do

this by comparing PACEs' stated learning objectives with the activities in PACE tests.

PACE learning objectives

Historically, validity was defined as "the degree to which a test or examination measures what it purports to measure" (Ruch 1924, cited in Newton 2012, 3). While most validity theorists no longer consider this a sufficient definition, it remains an important component of validity. If tests do not measure what they purport, inferences based on test scores will inevitably be faulty. It is therefore worth investigating whether the PACE tests succeed in measuring their stated learning objectives. This could not be done in every case, because not all PACEs used in the ICCE contain measurable objectives. PACEs numbered 1097 and above, however, contain learning objectives of the form 'When you have successfully completed this PACE, you should be able to...' followed by a list of (mostly) specific outcomes. We can then evaluate the PACE tests by asking whether they measure the knowledge and skills listed in the objectives.

Before discussing how well the PACE tests measure the stated objectives, it is useful to understand what these objectives are. A useful way to classify the types of objectives is by the action verbs used (e.g. '*Memorise* the eight parts of speech'; '*Name* the parts of a typical neuron'). I listed all of the verbs in the objectives for the examined PACEs and counted their frequency.

Table 1. ICCE General: five most common verbs in PACE objectives.

Verb	Appearances
Identify	61
Describe	41
Learn	34
Understand	29
Name	28

Table 2. ICCE Advanced: five most common verbs in PACE objectives.

Verb	Appearances
Identify	78
Explain	72
Describe	47
Understand	47
State	43

Having examined these objectives, we need to determine what kinds of activity would indicate successful completion: what must the student *do* to demonstrate they have fulfilled the objective?

The *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Bloom 1956) provides an established and comprehensive framework for identifying instructional objectives (Gronlund and Brookhart 2008). This taxonomy divides learning into a hierarchy of eight dimensions: knowledge (remembering), comprehension (understanding), application, analysis, synthesis (combining previous learning or producing something new), and evaluation. It is possible to categorise learning objectives using the taxonomy by classifying action verbs into each level (Almerico and Baker 2004). Verbs such as 'learn', 'list', and 'memorise' relate to the *knowledge* level because they require only recall, while 'explain' or 'paraphrase' are at the *comprehension* level because they require students to demonstrate understanding. I classified all of the verbs in the PACE objectives into Bloom's Taxonomy in this way. Numerous lists exist for this purpose; I

referred to examples from Cornell University[16] and the University of Greenwich.[17]

While much of this project was straightforward, some verbs are not easily classified. Depending on context, 'identify' can indicate knowledge or comprehension. If I teach students the characteristics of a mammal, and ask them to identify the mammals from a selection of animals using this information, they demonstrate comprehension. If instead I provide them with a list of mammals to remember, and then give them the same activity, they demonstrate only knowledge (recall). In most instances, PACEs use 'identify' to refer to knowledge rather than comprehension activities. Some PACE objectives defy categorisation, either because of vagueness ("to have a general idea of", *Basic New Testament Church History 130*) or by referring to spiritual rather than academic aims ("to apply God's promises to your daily life", *Science* [Chemistry] *1127*). These were omitted from my analysis. Tables 3 and 4 show the results of this classification.

Table 3. Learning Objectives in ACE PACEs by subject

	English	Social Studies	Science	Bible	All
Knowledge	154 (64%)	104 (47%)	147 (38%)	114 (57%)	519 (50%)
Comprehension	4 (2%)	105 (47%)	192 (50%)	71 (36%)	372 (36%)
Application	35 (15%)	0	37 (10%)	6 (3%)	78 (7%)
Analysis	4 (2%)	14 (6%)	7 (2%)	8 (4%)	33 (3%)
Synthesis	20 (8%)	0	0	0	20 (2%)
Evaluation	22 (9%)	0	0	0	22 (2%)

Table 4. Learning objectives in ACE PACEs by ICCE certificate level

	General	Advanced
Knowledge	254 (62%)	265 (42%)
Comprehension	119 (29%)	253 (40%)
Application	28 (7%)	50 (8%)
Analysis	3 (1%)	30 (5%)
Synthesis	9 (2%)	11 (2%)
Evaluation	0 (0%)	22 (3%)

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[16]   https://www.cte.cornell.edu/documents/Assessment%20-%20Blooms%20Taxonomy%20Action%20Verbs.pdf, retrieved 13 May 2016.
[17]   http://cms1.gre.ac.uk/mmt/news/Blooms.html, retrieved 13 May 2016.

ACE has been criticised for its neglect of higher-order thinking skills (Berliner 1997; Speck and Prideaux 1993). Looking at Tables 3 and 4, it becomes clear that the PACEs, in the main, do not aim to develop higher-order thinking skills; overall 86% of learning objectives are at the knowledge or comprehension level. This is one example of the "philosophical differences" between ACE and many mainstream educators (Johnson 1987, 520).

Measurement of objectives

Having established what the PACE objectives are, I now turn to the question of whether the PACE tests successfully measure them. To investigate whether PACEs' assessments are aligned with their objectives, I selected for examination one quarter of the available PACEs in each subject. The PACEs were chosen using a random number generator. The results of this investigation are found in Table 5.

Table 5. Learning objectives in PACEs by subject

Subject	Number of objectives	Measured	Inadequately measured	Not measured
Biology	30	5	17	8
BLOC	21	5	10	6
BNTCH	12	1	7	4
BNTS	20	12	3	5
English I	14	9	2	3
English II	13	8	2	3
English III	11	3	2	6
English IV	10	3	4	3
History	7	1	5	1
Geography	15	4	6	5
Physics	34	6	14	14
Total	167	45 (27%)	69 (41%)	53 (32%)

Based on a sample of 25% of PACEs (3 out of 12) in each subject. List of PACEs examined appears at the end of this Appendix.
BLOC: Basic Life of Christ. BNTCH: Basic New Testament Church History. BNTS: Basic New Testament Survey.

'Measured' in Table 5 means that the PACE test contains one or more items that, if completed successfully, would demonstrate satisfactory mastery of the objective. 'Inadequately measured' means there is at least one item on the test relevant to the objective, but correctly answering the question would be insufficient to demonstrate full attainment of that objective. 'Not measured' means that there were no items on the test relevant to the given objective.

Inadequately measured objectives are most often those requiring comprehension or a higher-order thinking skill, but which are assessed using recall only. *BNTCH 129* has the objective "to discuss the Anabaptist movement". The test has three relevant items, but none of them allows for discussion: the student must match 'Anabaptist' with the term 're-baptizer', and answer two true/false questions on the subject. In *English 1121,* objectives include "To learn how to evaluate literature" and "To read and evaluate American literature from the Colonial Period", but the test only requires students to complete from memory rules for evaluating literature (underlined text indicates the blank to be completed):

> (1) Exercise discipline and control over <u>what you allow to come into your mind.</u>
>
> (2) Distinguish between <u>the foolishness of this world and the wisdom of God.</u>
>
> (3) Reject that which <u>glorifies sin.</u>
>
> (4) Read what is <u>profitable for spiritual growth.</u>

In some cases, objectives are measured by the test, but only thinly. In *Science 1099*, objectives include "To describe the class of fish that includes lampreys and hagfish" (Agnatha), "To describe fish such as sharks, rays, and skates" (Chondrichthyes) and "To describe bony fish" (Osteichthyes). Test item 12 (worth 2.5%) duly asks students to "Describe the three classes of fish". However, the answer required is "Agnatha do not have jaws … Chondrichthyes have cartilage skeletons … Osteichthyes have bony skeletons". This is a thin kind

of 'description', and it is doubtful whether these are sufficient definitions. By the PACE text's own account, members of class Agnatha also have cartilage skeletons, so the descriptions fail to distinguish between the classes. Nevertheless, these objectives were classified as 'measured' for the purposes of Table 5, since students' knowledge of the PACE's descriptions is tested.

The large number of PACE objectives that are not thoroughly measured by the tests can be explained by the number of recall activities in the PACE tests. Overall, 50% of PACE objectives are at the knowledge level (Table 3), and therefore can adequately be tested by recall activities. The rest of the PACE objectives are at the comprehension level or above, so they require other kinds of test activity in order to measure them. In the PACEs and PACE tests, however, non-recall items are rare. Tables 6 and 7 show that in most cases, the tests consist exclusively of recall activities, mainly fill-in-the-blank and multiple choice.

Table 6. Recall test items in PACEs by subject, ICCE General certificate

Subject	PACEs examined	Population	% Recall Test Items
English	24	24	49
Geography	6	12	100
World History	12	12	100
British History	12	12	100
Earth Science	12	12	100
Biology	12	12	99.75
Literature	6	12	100
BNTS	12	12	100

BNTS: Basic New Testament Survey

Table 7. Recall test items in PACEs by subject, ICCE Advanced certificate

Subject	PACEs examined	Population	% Recall Test Items
English	24	24	82
Physics	3	12	82.5
BLOC	3	12	100
BNTCH	12	12	100
HOC II	1	12	100
Economics	1	12	100
Chemistry	1	12	78

HOC: History of Civilization.

The non-recall activities in English tests at general level are mostly technical grammar exercises. The majority involve sentence diagrams, pictorial representations of sentence structure based on the system devised by Reed and Kellogg (1880). Other activities involve the application of grammar rules, such as adding missing punctuation to given sentences or underlining words which ought to be capitalised. In *English 1095*, students are asked to add the missing addresses, salutation, and closing to a pre-written business letter. Earlier in the PACE, students are given the opportunity to write their own letters, but these do not form part of the test score. At general level, only two PACE tests offer students the opportunity for extended writing: *English 1094* and *English 1096*. In the former, 40% of available marks are for preparing and writing 'an interesting paragraph'. In the latter, 30% of marks go to writing a three-paragraph biographical report on Florence Nightingale. The creativity of this activity is somewhat curtailed, however, by the fact that students must complete the report using a supplied outline. At Advanced level, all examined English tests require only recall or comprehension except *English 1144*, for which 30% of marks were for giving a six- to ten-minute speech. This is the only speaking activity in any of the examined PACEs. In the examined physics and chemistry tests, non-recall activities were all for mathematical calculations.

Objectives as measures of PACE content

It might be argued that the learning objectives apply to the entire PACE workbook, so it is unfair to look at the tests in isolation. While this is true, there are several reasons to doubt that completion of a PACE necessarily entails the satisfaction of its objectives. The first is that, in some cases, the PACEs contain objectives which are satisfied by none of the PACE activities. Seven of the examined English PACEs included an evaluation objective. Of these, four contain no evaluation activities. The opportunities that do arise are quite restrictive. *English 1121* (p. 16), intended for students in their third year of high school (Year 12), asks: "Do you think 'Housewifery' is a good title for the poem? Why, or why not?" There is one line on which to write the answer.

Insistence on verbatim recall

An easy way to distinguish understanding from parrot-fashion repetition is to ask the student to explain in her own words. This is discouraged by ACE, however. If a student uses a synonym rather than the exact word given in the score key, she loses half a mark (CEE 2010, 41). In the case of these examples:

> Love is not an emotion, but a conscious _____. (*Science* [Biology] *1107*, test item #30)

> After nine generations of history, God decided to destroy mankind and Earth because of man's _____. (*Social Studies* [Geography] *1097*, test item #8)

The correct answers are 'choice' and 'unrepentant wickedness' respectively. The student would be penalised for writing 'decision' and 'sinfulness', even though these answers demonstrate adequate understanding. This incentivises unthinking memorisation.

Since PACE activities typically require only verbatim repetition, completing the PACE without understanding will not hinder the student's progress. Some students might conclude that learning consists only of recall and remain unaware of gaps in their own understanding. ACE suggests supervisor "quizzing" of students to avoid this (ACE 2010a, 108), but since no record is kept of these informal quizzes, they cannot be used as evidence of the validity of the ICCE. With the only requirement to teach in an ACE school being a week's training (ACE 2016c), the quality is likely to be variable. One ACE school's inspection report is consistent with what might be expected of this system:

> The oral discussion that they have when revising for their tests, helps to develop their understanding. Nevertheless, the recall that they have of the content that they have studied, for example in science, history and geography, varies too widely. Some pupils remember the subject matter in detail and show understanding and interest. Others have only partial recall, which is sometimes too muddled to result in understanding. (Schenk 2009, 3)

Retention

From the style and content of the PACEs, I infer that ACE believes the purpose of academic education is the mastery of a body of facts. If this is the case retention of those facts becomes a critical issue. The PACE assessments do not give any indication of the students' long-term recall of information. Each PACE test asks questions only about material from the current PACE; a PACE typically takes 2–3 weeks to complete (ACE 2010a, 85). Students take the tests whenever they are ready (ACE 2010a, 109), usually the day after completing the PACE. This system encourages cramming (or 'massed presentation'), which is likely to reduce long-term retention (Bahrick and Hall 2005; Dempster 1988).

Critical thinking

None of the examined tests included the opportunity for analysing or evaluating. Apart from the mentioned exceptions in *English 1094, 1096,* and *1144*, none involved any creating. If the PACE tests provide evidence for anything, it can only plausibly be remembering and sometimes understanding. If readiness for university involves the development of skills of analysis, creativity, and evaluation, the ICCE seems unlikely to constitute suitable preparation.

Still, it could be argued that university preparation ought to focus on learning and understanding a body of knowledge, and that the skills of application, analysis, and evaluation can be developed later. The PACE tests might plausibly provide evidence that this kind of learning has taken place. I will therefore consider the validity of this argument.

Validity threats

A validity threat is any piece of negative evidence that may undermine inferences drawn from an assessment (Crooks, Kane, and Cohen 1996). Crooks, Kane, and Cohen's framework breaks the process of validation into a chain of eight linked stages: administration, scoring, aggregation, generalization, extrapolation, evaluation, decision and impact. There are particular threats to

the validity of conclusions based PACE test scores at the administration, scoring, aggregation, generalisation, and extrapolation stages.

Administration

A potential threat to test administration in ACE is that only one test exists for each PACE. If a student fails the test, they repeat the PACE before taking the same test again. If she passes on the second or third attempt, the passing score is recorded with no penalty; on fourth or subsequent attempts, the mark is capped at 80% (CEE 2012b, 79). This means that a student who failed the first time will be able to prepare for the test knowing exactly what questions will be asked, but the mark will not reflect this.

Scoring

The usefulness of scores is threatened if it is possible for students to answer correctly without employing the attribute the test is intended to measure. It must be asked, therefore, whether it is possible to pass ACE tests without understanding the material. There are reasons to doubt this beyond those already discussed.

Multiple choice questions on PACE tests sometimes include implausible distractors. It is universally acknowledged that distractors must be plausible for multiple choice questions to be effective (Haladyna, Downing and Rodriguez 2002, 314). Examined PACE tests included items such as:

The leader of the Katanga Province was _____.

a. Patrick Henry b. Mohammed Ali c. Moise Tshombe

(*Social Studies* [World History] *107*, test item #6)

When an actor speaks to himself alone on the stage to let the audience know what he is thinking and feeling, he is (giving a soliloquy, faking insanity, a poor actor, about to be killed).

(*English 1135*, test item #8)

At times, distractors seem to be chosen in order to reinforce the authors' ideology rather than to measure learning:

The title of Charles Darwin's famous book was

a. *Top Banana in the Jungle*

b. *The Origin of Species*

c. *Nobody is Going to Make a Monkey Out of Me*

(*Social Studies* [World History] *106*, test item #21)

(Gregor Mendel, Adolf Hitler, Charles Darwin, Charles Mendel) formulated the theory of evolution. (*Science* [Biology] *1107*, test item #1)

PACE tests also make frequently use of association activities, where students match words with their definitions from two lists, or events with their dates. Other activities include fill-in-the-blank items where answers are chosen from a list. These have the common flaw that answers are not independent of each other (Haladyna, Downing and Rodriguez 2002, 314). One incorrect answer can jeopardise other items; in other cases, students can find answers by a process of elimination. This makes the assessment in part a measure of test-wiseness.

Aggregation

When all tasks have been scored, they can be combined together to produce totals. If scores from excessively diverse tasks are included in one total, the correlations between tasks may be low and the resultant score incoherent.

Alternatively, if diverse tasks are given inappropriate weights, the total may be misleading.

An ACE selling point is that no distinction is made between religious knowledge and subject-specific knowledge; religious lessons are integrated into every academic subject. Most tests also contain at least some questions of a religious nature. This means that a student's knowledge of the Bible, or of fundamentalist doctrine, can affect their test scores in such unrelated disciplines as science and geography. Scripture memorisation is part of assessment in all PACEs numbered 1085–1096, and in every English PACE. In the British history PACEs reviewed, Scripture memory formed a mean of 2% of the total marks; in Earth science, 2.5%; in English, 3.7%. These may seem like small amounts, but in the ICCE, grade boundaries are very narrow (Table 8).

Table 8. Grade boundaries for the ICCE

Mean test score	Grade
98 – 100	A*
96 – 97.99	A
92 – 95.99	B
88 – 91.99	C
84 – 87.99	D
80 – 83.99	E

(CEE 2012b, 54). NARIC (2012b) lists the same grade boundaries but does not include the A* grade.

English PACEs numbered 1097 and above contain 'Wisdom inserts'; pull-out comics designed to impart godly character. From PACE 1100 onwards, questions about these inserts form part of the PACE tests. In the examined English tests that included Wisdom questions, they formed a mean 7.6% of marks. On these PACEs, then, scripture memorisation and Wisdom questions made up 11.4% of the total score, while each grade boundary is just 4% wide. In the reviewed English PACEs numbered 1121–1144, there were further questions of a devotional nature, not labelled as 'Wisdom'. In *English 1130*, 30% of marks were for questions related to 'The Bible or Evolution', a speech by anti-evolution campaigner William J. Bryan. Example Wisdom questions include:

Of the following, all but ____ are necessary elements of wisdom.

a. discerning what is right and wrong from God's viewpoint

b. debating in our own minds to determine what is right and wrong

c. doing what Jesus would do if He were in our circumstances

d. determining to obey God regardless of the consequences

(*English 1100*, test item #34; correct answer is 'b')

True or false: Responsible Bible-believing citizens should refuse government handouts. (*English 1108*, test item #24; correct answer is 'True')

If an ICCE student's Record of Achievement shows a 'C' grade for English, then, it is possible that the student in fact gained full marks on the English activities, and only lost marks on religious questions. The ACE aggregation offers no way of knowing.

In addition to Scripture memorisation, tests frequently contain questions of religious belief that appear for purely devotional reasons. Although these are matters of faith, each question has only one 'correct' answer. Examples include:

True happiness can only be found <u>through faith in Jesus Christ.</u>
(*Science* [Biology] *1105*)

True or false: Our peace – as Christians – is in Jesus Christ.
(*Social Studies* [World History] *107*)

Because God desires fellowship with all men, it is our responsibility to <u>take His message to those who have never heard</u>.
(*Social Studies* [Geography] *1097*)

These questions make up only a small minority (2–3%) of marks in most subjects, but this is enough potentially to change a student's overall grade (see Table 8). Those evaluating ICCE grades should bear in mind that the test scores combine religious learning with the academic disciplines.

Generalisation

Generalisation is the assumption that scores are indicative of a student's predictive performance in the assessed domain. It is theorised that test items represent a random sample of questions which might have been asked; scores are taken as an indication of the student's likely performance in this wider pool of questions. In the case of PACE tests, however, students have an excellent idea of which parts of the PACE will be on the test

Each PACE contains three review sections called 'checkups', and a final review called a 'self test'. Checkups are typically two pages long. Questions for both the self test and test are drawn exclusively from the checkups. This is not stated explicitly, but before taking the test, students are advised in each PACE to revise the checkups. This means that, although PACEs are typically 40–50 pages, students need revise only six pages to gain a perfect test score. Since this is the case in all PACEs, it is probable that at least some students will pay less attention to the other 'unimportant' material.

In some subjects, they need not revise even this much. In the World History PACEs, 94.5% of test marks go to questions repeated from the self test (usually three pages). In British History, it is 100%. Even if their supervisors do not point this out, it is inconceivable that at least some students will not notice this pattern. Students usually take the self test the day before the test (CEE 2010, 39) and mark it themselves from an answer key. They have, in effect, a completed test from which to revise, making it doubtful whether students' test scores would generalise to performance in other contexts.

Extrapolation

The assessed domain is a subset of the target domain, and test scores are used to extrapolate from the former to the latter. If the test questions are not

representative of the target domain, such extrapolation may be unwarranted; this may be exacerbated if performance on included tasks is not well correlated with performance on the excluded tasks (Crooks et al. 1996, 275). The ICCE does not clearly specify the target domain for each of its subjects, but it might reasonably be assumed that such terms as 'English', 'history', and 'geography' refer to the understandings of experts in these subjects in mainstream academia. Many ACE subjects, however, define their areas more narrowly than is usual, and in some cases reject important findings and methods from their disciplines. Those making decisions based on ICCE test scores should be aware of differences between ACE's version of academic disciplines and those in mainstream schools.

The most obvious point of departure is science; ACE rejects all aspects of science which do not conform to its literal interpretation of the Bible. This also affects the study of ancient history, since ACE believes the Earth to be approximately 6,000 years old, and that a global flood destroyed civilisation 4,500 years ago. Even in areas unrelated to creationism, many ACE subject areas are notably unlike the same subjects as conceived in mainstream education. Although there is limited discussion of geographical features such as plate tectonics, ACE's geography course mostly consists of memorising the names and locations of countries, an emphasis on the work of missionaries in on each continent. The study of human geography, vital to the subject in most British schools, is skeletal or absent. ACE's English programme focuses much more on traditional grammar, and much less on literature and creative writing, than do most schools.

Impact

The final step in the validity chain considers the impact of the assessment regime on students. "The effort involved in the assessment process can only be justified if the assessment leads to worthwhile benefits for students or other stakeholders" (Crooks et al. 1996, 279). It seems evident that assessment which rewards rote learning while ignoring or penalising other kinds of understanding

presents the student with a distorted view of what learning is. Most importantly, the ICCE's weaknesses seem most likely to impact students of lower ability. The ACE system does not provide students with coherent frameworks to make sense of the facts they memorise, nor encourage them to make connections between disparate areas of learning. It is plausible that some students might succeed in understanding the material and could excel despite the system's weaknesses. Others, however, are at risk of mistaking rote memorisation for genuine learning, of struggling with long-term retention, and of lacking a coherent framework within which to make sense of the facts they learn. These students could be hindered from reaching their academic and personal potential.

Coursework

NARIC (2012a; 2012c) stresses that the ICCE qualification involves more than just the ACE materials, and its comparability statement is for the entire ICCE, and not PACE tests in isolation. This analysis has not considered what impact the compulsory coursework elements of the ICCE might have on its validity. It should be noted that these elements are weighted at just 2% of total assessment at General level (CEE 2012b, 54). At Advanced level, one-third of units are coursework, but according to CEE (2012b, 54) at Intermediate and Advanced levels, coursework is graded pass/merit/distinction but has no formal weighting and no impact on the student's subject grades or overall grade.

No example essays were available for review, but the majority of assignment titles appeared credible. They included study of classic literature and practical science, which are notably absent from the ACE curriculum. Nevertheless, there may still be cause for concern with some aspects of even this. Past essay titles have included 'In what ways, if any, was Alexander the Great a type of the Antichrist?'. In both English and science, one essay option involves arguing against the theory evolution and defending creationism.

In general, there is insufficient evidence available to comment on the validity of ICCE coursework. Potentially, the essays could go some way towards making up for the lack of extended writing opportunities in the PACEs. It is difficult to see, however, how these coursework items could compensate for all of the weaknesses I have identified in ICCE assessments.

Conclusion

In the absence of a validity argument for the ICCE, it is impossible to assess its validity closely. On the available evidence, however, it is difficult to see how the ICCE can provide valid evidence of readiness for university. Four specific threats seem to undermine any attempt to draw meaningful conclusions from ICCE scores:

1) It is possible for students to answer most PACE test questions without understanding.

2) The tests frequently fail to measure their stated objectives.

3) The assessment regime does not give evidence of students' long-term retention of information.

4) The subject areas, as defined by ACE, are in many cases different from how these disciplines are understood by mainstream academia.

It is not claimed that it is impossible for ICCE students to excel. Anecdotal evidence indicates that ICCE graduates have achieved success at university. If universities receive applications from students with the ICCE, it should not, however, be taken as evidence of readiness for undergraduate study.

Given my record of campaigning against the ICCE, readers might assume that I believe universities should reject ICCE applicants, but that is not the case. My undergraduate degree was instrumental in helping me gain a broader view of the world and finding a way of life that I found fulfilling. I would not want ACE students to be denied this opportunity. At the same time, if universities and government agencies such as UK NARIC endorse the ICCE, this gives the

impression to parents that the ICCE is on a par with nationally recognised qualifications. For the reasons I have argued, this is not the case. I hope that ICCE graduates will continue to go to university, but their readiness should be assessed on an individual basis, rather than relying on their ICCE grades.

Notes

The PACE examined for this review were:

History of Civilization II 20; Basic Life of Christ 133, 143, 144; Basic New Testament Church History 121-132; Basic New Testament Survey 97-108; English 1085-1108, 1120, 1127, 1129, 1130, 1134, 1135, 1142-1144; Geography 1097, 1099, 1101, 1104, 1106, 1108; Science 1085-1108, 1121, 1137, 1140, 1141; Social Studies 97-108, UK1085-UK1096, 1097, 1099, 1101, 1104, 1106, 1108, 1139.

The objectives for PACEs that could not be obtained were viewed online at ChristianBook.com.

The PACEs examined for Table 5 were:

English I: 1086, 1089, 1094

English II: 1099, 1103, 1104

English III: 1121, 1127, 1130

English IV: 1135, 1142, 1144

Biology: 1099, 1105, 1107

Physics: 1137, 1140, 1141

Geography: 1097, 1104, 1108

World History: 99, 102, 106. I initially selected 108 using a random number generator, but this PACE features only one objective: 'When you have successfully completed this PACE, your understanding of recent events in world history should be increased'. As this was vague, a different PACE was selected.

BNTS: 99, 104, 107

BLOC: 133, 143, 144

BNTCH: 122, 129 130

PACEs examined for Table 7:

English: All listed above.

BLOC: 133, 143, 144

Physics: 1137, 1140, 1141

Chemistry: 1121

Economics: 1139

History of Civilization II: 20 (This is a 'college' PACE so does not follow the usual ACE numbering convention)

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Appendix 5 PACEs Referenced

Third Edition PACEs

Name	First published	Year(s) examined
English 1061	1982	1982, 2005
English 1062	1982	2001, 2009
English 1063	1982	2005
English 1064	1982	1997
English 1065	1982	1996
English 1066	1982	1998
English 1067	1982	1982, 2006
English 1068	1982	2004
English 1069	1982	1982, 2002
English 1070	1982	1982, 2005
English 1071	1982	1995, 2005
English 1073	1983	1996
English 1074	1983	1983, 1996
English 1075	1983	1996, 2006
English 1076	1983	1983, 2002
English 1077	1983	1983, 2001
English 1078	1983	1983, 2009
English 1079	1983	1997
English 1080	1983	1983, 1996
English 1084	1983	2009
English 1085	1985	1997
English 1086	1985	1995
English 1087	1985	1999
English 1088	1985	1998
English 1089	1985	2002
English 1090	1985	2000
English 1091	1985	2006
English 1092	1985	1996
English 1093	1985	1996
English 1094	1985	1996
English 1095	1985	2005
English 1096	1985	1996
English 1097	1987	2005
English 1098	1987	2011
English 1099	1987	2006
English 1100	1987	2002
English 1101	1987	2001
English 1102	1987	1996
English 1103	1987	2001
English 1104	1987	1996
English 1105	1987	2005
English 1106	1987	2000

Name	First published	Year(s) examined
English 1107	1987	2001
English 1108	1987	1996, 2013
English 1112	1989	1996
English 1113[18]	1989	1989
English 1114[18]	1989	1989
English 1118	1989	2005
English 1121	1990	1998
English 1127	1990	2005
English 1129	1990	1999
English 1130	1990	2000
English 1134	1993	2008
English 1135	1993	1995
English 1142	1993	1997
English 1143	1993	2007
English 1144	1993	2000
Science 1013	1979	1979
Science 1015	1979	1979
Science 1017	1979	1979
Science 1021	1979	2005
Science 1045	1981	1999
Science 1046	1981	1999
Science 1047	1981	1999
Science 1048	1981	1998
Science 1085	1986	1998
Science 1086	1986	1998
Science 1087	1986	1998
Science 1088	1986	1986, 1998
Science 1089	1986	1995, 2002
Science 1090	1986	1992, 1998
Science 1091	1986	1992, 2007
Science 1092	1986	1986, 1998
Science 1093	1986	1996, 2007
Science 1094	1986	1986, 2006
Science 1095	1986	1994, 2000
Science 1096	1986	1994, 2002
Science 1097	1989	1989, 1998
Science 1098	1989	1997, 2001
Science 1099[19]	1989	1995, 2001
Science 1099[20]	2013	2013
Science 1100	1989	1994

[18] Pullout 'Wisdom' inserts examined only, not full PACE.
[19] USA version published by ACE
[20] International, Loch Ness monster-free version published by SCEE

Name	First published	Year(s) examined
Science 1101	1989	1994
Science 1102	1989	2007
Science 1103	1989	1994
Science 1104	1989	1997, 1998
Science 1105	1989	1995, 2000
Science 1106	1989	1994, 2006
Science 1107	1989	1996, 2001
Science 1108	1989	1995
Science 1109	1992	1996, 1998
Science 1121	1995	1996
Science 1137	1987	2006
Science 1140	1987	2002
Science 1141	1987	1994
Social Studies 1045	1981	1998
Social Studies 1046	1981	2007
Social Studies 1047	1981	2006
Social Studies 1048	1981	1998
Social Studies 1073	1984	1998
Social Studies 1074	1984	1998
Social Studies 1075	1984	1998
Social Studies 1076	1984	1998
Social Studies 1077	1984	1984
Social Studies 1078	1984	1998
Social Studies 1086	1990	1990, 1998
Social Studies 1094	1990	1990, 1998
Social Studies 1095	1990	1992, 1999
Social Studies 1096	2001	2006
Social Studies 1097	1994	1997, 1999
Social Studies 1099	1994	1996, 2006
Social Studies 1101	1994	1994, 2005
Social Studies 1104	1994	1994, 2004
Social Studies 1106	1994	1994, 2002
Social Studies 1108	1994	1994, 2002
Social Studies 1139	1998	2000

Fourth edition PACEs

Name	First published	Year(s) examined
Science 1013	2010	2010
Science 1015	2010	2010
Science 1017	2010	2010
Science 1021	2010	2010
Science 1045	2010	2010
Science 1046	2010	2010
Science 1047	2010	2010
Science 1048	2010	2010
Social Studies 1029	2010	2012
Social Studies 1045	2010	2010
Social Studies 1046	2010	2010
Social Studies 1047	2010	2010
Social Studies 1048	2010	2010
Social Studies 1073	2009	2009
Social Studies 1074	2009	2009
Social Studies 1075	2009	2009
Social Studies 1076	2009	2009
Social Studies 1077	2009	2009
Social Studies 1078	2009	2012
Math 1085-1087	2012	2012

Staff training PACEs

Name	First published	Year(s) examined
Parents	1998	1998, 2011
The Secret of Leadership	1996	1996, 2009
Wisdom	2008	2011
Wisdom: A Philosophy for Educational Reform Part 1	1995	1997
Wisdom: A Philosophy for Educational Reform Part 2	1995	1998

Basic Education PACEs

Name	First Published	Year examined
Basic History of Civilization I 1	1975	1999
Basic History of Civilization I 3	1975	1975
Basic History of Civilization I 5	1976	2009
Basic History of Civilization II 20[21]	1977	1997
Basic Intro to Christian Counseling 1	1980	1998
Basic Intro to Christian Counseling 3	1980	1980
Basic Intro to Christian Counseling 5	1980	1980

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[21] *Basic History of Civilization II* is published by Reform Publications, Inc.

Name	First published	Year examined
Basic Life of Christ 133	1988	1988
Basic Life of Christ 143	1976	1992
Basic Life of Christ 144	1976	1976
Basic New Testament Church History 121	1974	2002
Basic New Testament Church History 122	1974	1995
Basic New Testament Church History 123	1974	2001
Basic New Testament Church History 124	1974	2000
Basic New Testament Church History 125	1975	1975
Basic New Testament Church History 126	1975	1994
Basic New Testament Church History 127	1976	1976
Basic New Testament Church History 128	1976	1976
Basic New Testament Church History 129	1976	2008
Basic New Testament Church History 130	1976	1976
Basic New Testament Church History 131	1976	1976
Basic New Testament Church History 132	1976	1976
Basic New Testament Survey 97	1974	2002
Basic New Testament Survey 98	1974	1974
Basic New Testament Survey 99	1974	1974
Basic New Testament Survey 100	1974	2009
Basic New Testament Survey 101	1974	1998
Basic New Testament Survey 102	1974	2001
Basic New Testament Survey 103	1974	1974
Basic New Testament Survey 104	1974	1974
Basic New Testament Survey 105	1974	1974
Basic New Testament Survey 106	1974	1974
Basic New Testament Survey 107	1974	1974
Basic New Testament Survey 108	1974	1996
Basic Old Testament Survey 109	1974	1974
Social Studies 97	1974	1974
Social Studies 98	1974	2005
Social Studies 99	1974	2002
Social Studies 100	1974	1995
Social Studies 101	1974	1995
Social Studies 102	1974	1997
Social Studies 103	1974	2002
Social Studies 104	1974	2002
Social Studies 105	1974	1974
Social Studies 106	1974	1995
Social Studies 107	1974	2002
Social Studies 108	2010	2010

UK PACEs

Published by Christian Education Europe Ltd.

Name	First published	Year examined
Social Studies UK1085	2011	2011
Social Studies UK1086	2011	2011
Social Studies UK1087	2009	2009
Social Studies UK1088	2010	2010
Social Studies UK1089	2010	2010
Social Studies UK1090	2010	2010
Social Studies UK1091	2012	2012
Social Studies UK1092	2011	2011
Social Studies UK1093	2011	2011
Social Studies UK1094	2011	2011
Social Studies UK1095	2011	2011
Social Studies UK1096	2012	2012

All PACEs are published by Accelerated Christian Education unless otherwise noted. PACEs do not name the location where they were published. All PACEs give only the date of first publication and (if revised) latest revision. In the tables below, "Year(s) examined" refers to the dates of latest revision for each examined PACE.

PACEs were obtained between 2012 and 2014. Except where old editions were obtained for comparison (Chapter 3), all PACEs were to the best of my knowledge the most recent available at the time of purchase.

Basic Education is an ACE brand originally intended to be marketed to US public schools (Hunter 1985, 232-233). It is based on the second edition PACEs, and lacks the character strips and Bible memorisation of third and fourth edition PACEs. It retains ACE's biblical emphasis, however, and is otherwise similar to other PACEs. It is commonly used in ACE schools and comprises several core credits for the ICCE General, Intermediate, and Advanced certificates. See also Rose (1988, 212) and Wagner (1990, 244–245).