



CHAPTER 3

Hearing Children's Experiences in Public

This chapter explores how interest in children's experiences and emotions emerged and developed from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. In particular, it looks at how public policy, often through the work of charities, sought to understand, bring to light, consider, mediate, and assess children's self-expressions and representations of their inner worlds. This chapter demonstrates that, to an extent, these decades were characterised by increasing interest in children's experiences from psychologists, psychiatrists, and children's charities such as the NSPCC and ChildLine. At the same time, adult definitions of children's experiences were never clear-cut or uncontested. Not all children had equal opportunities to contribute to public inquiries or to use voluntary services and, significantly, the idea of the child's interests, intimately bound up with experience, could also be deployed by adults in pursuit of specific agendas. This chapter is not therefore an examination of what children's experiences and emotions were in the late twentieth century. Indeed, in part what this chapter argues is that children's experiences cannot be—and have never been—accessed without significant mediation and reconstruction. Looking to reconstruct precisely what children said in such recent child protection cases would be particularly problematic, given the confidential nature of many children's testimonies to legal and social work inquiries.

What this chapter does offer, however, is analysis of the changing public and political spaces in which children's experiences and emotions were

sought out and made public in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and in which adult ideas of these abstract conceptions—‘child experiences’ and ‘child emotions’—became significant in shaping social policies, public inquiries, and voluntary work. Such established interest in child experience and emotion was a new phenomenon to these decades and marked a significant development from the paternalistic interests in child wellbeing discussed in Chap. 2, which were entwined with a vision of childhood vulnerability and powerlessness. Nonetheless, read alongside Chap. 4, this chapter demonstrates how children faced particular challenges in accessing and utilising a broader expertise grounded in experience and emotion, which was adopted by parents and survivors, as hierarchies between adults and children proved difficult to disassemble.

WHERE WAS THE CHILD? THE MARIA COLWELL CASE

Looking closely at the landmark case of Maria Colwell—and comparing this at the end of this chapter to the significant Cleveland case—demonstrates the extent to which public policy interest in children’s experiences increased over the 1970s and 1980s. Maria Colwell was the fifth child of Raymond and Pauline Colwell, born in 1965 in Brighton. Her father died when she was a baby, and she was placed into the care of her aunt and uncle, the Coopers, while her siblings remained with their mother. On remarrying to William Kepple in July 1970, Pauline became ‘determined’ to regain custody of Maria.¹ In October 1971, social services returned Maria to her mother.² In the ensuing months, Maria was subject to severe physical and emotional mistreatment at the hands of her new stepfather and neglect by her mother. Maria was regularly locked into her bedroom, whilst Pauline Kepple’s other children were given sweets and ice cream.³ On the night of 6 January 1973, when Maria was just seven years old, William Kepple beat her until she died. The public inquiry conducted months later noted that it was impossible to ascertain the precise circumstances surrounding the days preceding Maria’s death, particularly given the conflicting and confused evidence provided by William and Pauline Kepple.⁴

William Kepple was sentenced to eight years in prison for manslaughter (later reduced to four years).⁵ In the ensuing months the residents of Whitehawk Council estate, where Maria had lived, the *Brighton Argus* newspaper, and the local Conservative Member of Parliament, Andrew Bowden, campaigned for a government inquiry into the supervision of

Maria by local authorities and other agencies. In May 1973, following a meeting with Bowden, this request was granted by the Conservative Secretary of State for Social Services, Keith Joseph.⁶ With no precedent for such an inquiry, it took the form of a quasi-judicial hearing, meaning that witnesses appeared voluntarily and were open to cross-examination by both defence and prosecution.⁷ Following a preliminary hearing on 24 August 1973, there were 41 days of public hearings between 9 October and 7 December 1973, where the inquiry heard 70 witnesses, received 13 written submissions, and examined 99 documents.⁸ The inquiry gained widespread media coverage and public attention, and was significant in bringing awareness of child protection issues to social and political arenas. The format set by the inquiry also established a compositional pattern replicated in following inquiries over the next quarter of a century.⁹

Professional conflict and failure was the primary focus of the public inquiry and media coverage around this case. The inquiry report discussed poor communication between Maria's school, social services, the NSPCC, housing departments, police, and local communities.¹⁰ Maria's social worker, an inspector from the NSPCC, and Maria's family doctor came under scrutiny for missing concerns raised by Maria's neighbours and schools.¹¹ The castigation of these individuals was framed primarily in terms of 'responsibility' rather than 'blame', particularly in the minority report provided by committee member and social worker Olive Stevenson.¹² While the majority report criticised those who allowed Maria's mother to regain custody, Stevenson emphasised the difficulties for social workers of having to make decisions under time pressure and with limited resources.¹³ Stevenson supported the decision of the social worker to allow Maria to return to her mother, arguing that she could not have foreseen Maria's death.¹⁴ This position found sympathy in contemporary newspaper coverage of the case, much of which replicated the British Association of Social Workers' (BASW) post-inquiry statement that their profession was 'on the edge of a precipice'. Notably, the BASW statement also criticised the 'dilution of child care expertise' following the consolidation of disparate social work departments into one generic 'social services' in 1970.¹⁵

In addition to underlining the role of 'experts', the Colwell report and subsequent newspaper coverage also paid much attention to 'society'. Society was in part conceptualised vaguely and in terms which suggested focus on professional relations: the public inquiry concluded by stating that 'the system' had failed to 'absorb individual errors' and it was society, which had created this system, on which the 'ultimate blame

must rest' for Maria's death.¹⁶ At the same time, ideas about communities and specifically working-class communities were also embedded in discussions of the social. The inquiry report's conclusion suggested that the 'highly emotional and angry reaction of the public in this case may indicate society's troubled conscience', suggesting a vision of broader public responsibility for child protection.¹⁷ Attention was paid to how several neighbours had sought to bring concerns about Maria's treatment to statutory and voluntary agencies. Meanwhile, the report also reproduced warnings from 'several agencies involved in the inquiry' that the neighbours' evidence should be treated with caution as the Kepples were 'social "misfits"' in a 'somewhat superior council house area' and as many neighbours were related and 'anti-Kepple'.¹⁸

Concurrent media coverage praised residents of the Whitehawk estate for their attempts to report Maria's case and for their lobbying for a public inquiry. The *Sunday Times* described the 'people of Maresfield Road' as 'ordinary, respectable people' who 'tried to warn officials'.¹⁹ Notably, responsibility for child protection was placed not only on individuals or on family units at this time. Responsibility was also situated in specific neighbourhoods, with particular pressure for council estate residents to perform 'ordinary respectability'.²⁰ Ingrained within this account, and within this stated vision of classlessness, was deep interest in linking the morality of working-class people with examination of their homes and personal appearances. While media described the residents of Maresfield Road as 'respectable', police reports referred to Mrs Kepple as 'low class and lacking in intelligence'.²¹ The involved social worker portrayed the Kepple household as 'poorly furnished and managed; clothing adequate; rather dirty', while the Cooper house by contrast was deemed 'reasonably clean and well kept though somewhat cramped'.²² The public inquiry chairman, Thomas Field-Fisher, likewise asked each witness whether the Kepples were a 'problem' family.²³ In the debates surrounding this inquiry, ordinariness and respectability thus became tropes to aspire to. Nonetheless, long-standing frameworks of class—the problem family and indeed visions of 'intelligence'—also remained significant in inflecting professional analyses, as in the work of the 1960s about the battered child.²⁴ These frameworks mediated and controlled how, and the extent to which, communities could report child protection concerns, and constructed a hierarchical relationship between families and professionals, where families were analysed, assessed, and judged.

While focus was shifted to society, community, and family, to an extent the children involved in the Maria Colwell inquiry were represented as passive agents. In this period, media narratives were representing children as a symbol for broader adult anxieties, for example around 'tug of love' adoption cases between biological and adoptive families.²⁵ Maria Colwell in particular became symbolic of a broader need for legislative change in child protection, as exemplified by calls in the House of Commons and newspapers to answer 'how many more Marias are there?'²⁶ Concurrently however, the public inquiry report also represented an early attempt to understand the perspectives of young children. The report argued that 'even very small children possess sometimes a remarkable acuity as to the implications of both situations and conversations which adults ignore at their peril'.²⁷ Indeed, the report found that statutory agencies had had interest in Maria's interior life and her emotions—social workers and teachers had observed how Maria became upset during visits from her mother before she was rehomed, and that this may have marked her first 'fears for her security and happy home at the Coopers'.²⁸ In addition, the report noted that previous case discussions around Maria had discussed the potential for her 'stress and trauma'.²⁹

While practitioners had demonstrated interest in Maria's emotional life, knowledge of this had been primarily derived from observation, not consultation. Practitioners interacting with Maria drew their conclusions by observing her performed emotional states—whether Maria was 'happy', 'outgoing', or 'subdued' was gleaned from observation of her physical behaviours, for example, repeatedly running away from visits with her biological mother, and showing 'strenuous' resistance by 'kicking and screaming'.³⁰ Further validating the idea that observation was seen as a key means to access children's inner worlds in the mid-1970s, the social worker involved told the inquiry that she had had to make 'an intelligent guess as to Maria's true feelings'.³¹ Testimonies from Maria herself were not featured in the majority report from the public inquiry, though they were discussed in Stevenson's minority report.³²

The Colwell public inquiry report hence provided evidence of professional interest in accessing children's emotions and experiences, primarily through observation rather than expression. However, the discussions of this report also demonstrated that these testimonies were not yet central to the decisions made in case conferences nor to public inquiry analysis. Commenting on the case, child psychologist and Director of the National Children's Bureau Mia Kellmer Pringle argued that it demonstrated that

‘professional opinion’ may still ‘weight the scales’ in favour of adults over children, and that children’s voices must be heard independently of adults.³³ While social and political attention had turned further to focus on children’s welfare, the child was also a symbol for the negotiation of broader professional and ‘community’ tensions, and not always a direct participant within decision-making about their own lives.

CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCES: RHETORIC OR PRACTICE?

Following interest from the early 1970s in listening to the ‘thoughts, beliefs, experiences and reactions’ of adults who used social work services, practitioners’ concerns about ‘listening’, ‘hearing’, ‘believing’ in, and ‘validating’ the ‘experiences’ of children developed from the 1980s and in the 1990s.³⁴ Different interpretations of ‘experience’ underpinned this work. In part, to listen to children’s experiences was to interview children, capture their testimonies, and disseminate edited versions of these publicly. This was the approach, for example, of a 1979 collection by the clinical psychologist Valerie Yule on ‘the origins of violence’. Yule described her collection as presenting stories and poems ‘told by children who could not write them’.³⁵ While Yule’s interviewees were primarily from the industrial inner suburbs of Melbourne, Australia, her book was published in London and prefaced by words from a former physician at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street.³⁶ The images and words produced explained how children saw violence in their own terms with, for instance, one eight-year-old describing domestic violence faced by her mother: ‘She -uh-her-the man going kill her/Then the ambblelan will come.’³⁷ In this collection, the reproduction of children’s misspellings and pronunciations was positioned as evidencing a direct representation of their testimonies, and as revealing the connections that children were making between the violence in their domestic spaces and the responses of the statutory or voluntary sectors.

In *Life and Love and Everything: Children’s Questions Answered* by Claire Rayner (1993), popular agony aunt Clare Rayner interpreted children’s experiences in a related fashion. Rayner extended her agony aunt service—further subject to analysis in Chap. 7—towards children, again replicating and in this case answering their concerns. The letters from children reprinted included a variety of queries about social life and wellbeing, with discussions of violence introduced as part of these broader worlds. In one letter, a child called Meena asked what to do ‘when my mum is all ways [sic] smacking me on my bottom because I don’t listen to her’. While

the specific dynamics of this violence were unclear, Rayner responded by encouraging Meena to speak with her mother and to 'make a plan'.³⁸ Rayner also suggested that if a deal was not made, Meena ask her father or grandmother to intervene and to establish what was fair.³⁹ In a sense then, popular culture and literary works were disseminating children's experiences. To represent experience was perceived as to replicate children's writings or words, including the direct reproduction of their dialectic and misspellings. The case studies from Yule and Rayner demonstrated the ways in which this interest in childhood experiences was to be mediated and curated by adults, and also suggested a shift in terms of children's accounts being marketed as 'entertainment' in popular book collections. Such collections discussed violence within broad discussions of child and adult lives, marking an entwinement between therapy and entertainment in culture also visible in the popularity of the agony aunt phenomena and in later 'reality' television coverage of marital and family life.

In addition to such mediated published accounts, the self-representation of children, discussing their own experiences, was also becoming important in a series of new legal, political, and medical spaces: in courtrooms, through voting, in doctors' surgeries, and at self-help groups. In 1969, medical confidentiality was granted to those aged 16 and older and the age of majority was reduced from 21 to 18. The *Criminal Justice Acts* of 1988 and 1991 allowed child witnesses to testify in court.⁴⁰ The *Children Act* of 1975 stated that courts and adoption agencies must seek 'so far as practicable' to 'ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child regarding the decision'.⁴¹ The same period saw doctors beginning to consider children as active consumers of the healthcare system, for example, as the House of Lords rejected Victoria Gillick's challenge to whether doctors could prescribe contraceptives to children under the age of 16 without parental consent. The legal judgement in this case paid testimony to the idea that a child could reach a 'sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind'.⁴² Hearing children's experiences by creating pathways through which children could represent themselves in public, in law, in education, and in medicine became increasingly important. By the 2000s, children's testimonies were sought out—at least in theory—through school councils, peer counselling in schools, by a children's commissioner, and in young people's forums for medical Royal Colleges.⁴³ New private fora were also being created in the 1980s for children to hold open conversations with professionals, for example in the self-help groups for children who had been abused organised at Great Ormond Street Hospital.⁴⁴

These diverse trends all reflected a sense in which stated interests in children's experiences were enacted in various public and private spaces. While recourse to child experience was not merely a rhetorical strategy, significant disagreement remained about how, where, and when to best access it. In terms of child protection, psychologists disagreed about whether interrogative questions should be leading, to encourage children to speak about their experiences, or 'neutral', and around whether using anatomically accurate dolls would help children to discuss abuse or confuse their testimony.⁴⁵ Contemporary research from sociology and social work emphasised that structurally disadvantaged children were the least likely to be able to be heard in these new spaces.⁴⁶ Social anthropologists, notably Judith Ennew, also argued that child protection concerns should be taken broadly, in terms of prostitution, poverty, family, and the social relations of power.⁴⁷ These debates demonstrated the ways in which professional communities sought to negotiate new interest in children's inner lives, and the challenges of ensuring that all children's experiences could be heard.

Significantly, concerns about children's emotions were central in interpretations of child experience, acting as a perceived marker for whether children's experiences had been accessed successfully. Notably, this was in contrast to earlier accounts of the 1960s and 1970s, studied in Chap. 2, in which policy and practitioner focus centred on the emotions of the parents and clinicians involved in child protection cases. In part, the new interest in child emotional life was driven by psychologists and educators in child protection, who emphasised that analysis of children's emotions would enable people to identify if they were being abused, spotting if they seemed 'depressed and low in spirits' or had a 'fear of a particular individual'.⁴⁸ At the same time, children and parents themselves, relying on and contributing to increased interest from researchers, were also drawing attention towards the significance of emotion. In a publication from 1995, interviewers working for the Women's Aid Federation of England provided accounts of domestic violence in children's own terms, which expressed guilt, confusion, anger, powerlessness, bitterness, and rejection.⁴⁹ Children reported a struggle to express their feelings, for example testifying that, 'I used to smile so that people wouldn't know'.⁵⁰ Parents likewise, psychologists reported, were calling for increased training and information about how to protect children from their own emotions and from those of strangers.⁵¹

Interest in children's experiences therefore was in a sense developing in the 1980s and 1990s, in part reliant on interest from researchers and psychologists but, at the same time, also guided by discussions with certain

children themselves, who provided testimony and drew attention to their emotions. Personal testimonies demonstrated that children used physical and behavioural performances to mask and represent specific emotional states. The published accounts which emerged presented a contrasting model to earlier accounts of the 'battered child' as too young or vulnerable to express their own experiences, though nonetheless the narration of children's emotions remained curated by adults.

ADULT INTERPRETATIONS OF CHILD EXPERIENCE

With the construction of child experience emerging as powerful, the claim to be listening to, creating spaces for, or representing children's voices could function to promote or conceal specific adult agendas. To take just one example—writing the introduction for an edited collection, *The Maltreatment of Children*, published in 1978, psychiatrist Myre Sim sought to speak *in the voice of a child*.⁵² Writing that 'we are all very small and helpless', Sim argued that 'society' had raised funds, passed legislation, sponsored research, and changed training, but that these measures had not made a substantial difference, either in terms of the outcome of child protection cases or by placing further social emphasis on children's lived experiences. While this demonstrated interest in expressing and representing children's views, children themselves did not contribute to this collection, and indeed they were represented as 'all very small and helpless'.⁵³

In part, Sim utilised this space, which was curated by and directed at professionals, to demand a professional-level rethink of professional action. Sim argued that there was too little urgency in child protection work, and that fundraising, legislation, training, and research had made little difference.⁵⁴ While calling professionals 'well-intentioned' and 'some of the kindest and most concerned people', Sim also labelled them 'incompetent' and 'touchy'.⁵⁵ His article did not only challenge professional practice in general, but specifically questioned a 'slavish devotion' to psychologist John Bowlby's views on attachment theory.⁵⁶ Further demonstrative of the politicised potential of using descriptions of childhood experience, Sim also used this piece to challenge abortion policies, criticising the pro-choice movement and arguing that 'most battered babies are not unwanted; many are over-wanted'.⁵⁷ This piece therefore was a provocative one, framed by a specific political viewpoint. While intending to address child protection practitioners, rather than to reconstruct or report on children's own viewpoints, Myre simulated child voice as a powerful tool.

By the mid-1980s to early-1990s, an active critique of how adults may utilise children's testimony about their own experiences emerged, particularly in discussions around satanic ritual abuse. Concern about satanic ritual abuse emerged in America and later in Britain and Western Europe from the 1980s, with accusations that networks and cults were abusing children as part of satanic rituals involving murder, cannibalism, animal sacrifice, and torture. In Britain, analysis of alleged cases in Rochdale, Nottingham, and the Orkney Islands saw controversy about whether the satanic elements of these organised abuse cases were 'moral panics' or 'real', and about the roles of media, child protection professionals, evangelicals, and children and adults themselves in raising and shaping concerns.⁵⁸ In professional reflection on these cases, a key question became about how children's accurate accounts could be accessed and understood—framed by media in terms of separating 'fact from fantasy', and about the extent to which 'video nasties', media representations, and the interview styles of practitioners shaped children's narratives.⁵⁹

The Department of Health funded the anthropologist Jean La Fontaine to produce a report on these cases, *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Abuse* (1994). Investigating 84 cases of organised child abuse containing allegations of ritual or satanic components, the report found no evidence that abuse had been conducted as part of a satanic ritual, and only three cases that showed any evidence of ritual.⁶⁰ In this report, and in a subsequent book discussing the case, *Speak of the Devil* (1998), La Fontaine argued that 'adult constructions' had shaped children's accounts, and also that 'different professionals'—foster parents, social workers, police, psychiatrists, and charities—used 'children's sayings and behaviour ... as evidence for particular conclusions'.⁶¹

In part, La Fontaine argued, the assumption that 'telling' was key for children, the 'first step ... on the road to a normal life', motivated adults to try and push children to provide answers, or to see children's silences as suspicious during interviews.⁶² La Fontaine argued that fixation on satanic abuse specifically was a cultural phenomenon and served to distract from work with damaged or disadvantaged children.⁶³ La Fontaine's report was not without its critics, notably survivor support groups, and child psychologists who argued that they had worked with children who had experienced satanic abuse and survivor support groups.⁶⁴ Valerie Sinason, a child psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic in London, was significant in providing an intentional 'counterpart' to La Fontaine's work. Sinason released a collection, *Treating Survivors*

of *Satanist Abuse* (1994), a few weeks before the publication of La Fontaine's report, and it contained contributions by psychotherapists, psychiatrists, social workers, counsellors, and journalists.⁶⁵ Media framing around this publication challenged what type of 'evidence' La Fontaine wanted, and her omission of not speaking to adult survivors.⁶⁶

Significantly, these contested and controversial debates drew professional and public attention to the complexity of accessing child experience, and to questions about how existing power dynamics between children and adults would shape its manifestations. The debates demonstrated that interest in children's opinions, beliefs, and voices would be judged, mediated, and interpreted through broader adult debates, notably in the media as well as by and between psychologists and sociologists. They also suggested an extent to which the turn towards thinking about children's inner worlds, and towards taking their emotions and experiences seriously, would be met by moralising and anxieties about the authenticity of children's accounts, and about the 'fantasies' or 'fevered imaginat[i]on[s]' uncovered.⁶⁷ While clear power dynamics were significant here, the issue of power—as relating to age, class, gender, race, and ethnicity—rarely became central in debates about how to construct and narrate child experience. This absence persisted even as the mid-1980s public inquiries into the deaths of Jasmine Beckford and Tyra Henry challenged how effectively statutory agencies served and investigated black and minority ethnic families.⁶⁸ The focus on children's experiences thus opened up a new space in which children were recognised as capable of holding expertise which would, for example, be crucial for criminal cases. At the same time, children remained relatively powerless in terms of governing how and when their voices were heard, and child experience was typically discussed in abstract terms.

HELPLINES⁶⁹

One key medium for the expression of children's experiences from the mid-1980s was the helpline. In relation to child protection, this medium was first used through the Incest Crisis Line from 1982, the National Children's Home 'Touchline' for sexually abused children, which opened in Yorkshire in 1986, and with the inception of ChildLine in 1986.⁷⁰ ChildLine was launched after Esther Rantzen, the presenter of

the contemporary consumer affairs programme *That's Life!*, approached British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Controller Michael Grade having read newspaper coverage of the death of a toddler.⁷¹ In Spring 1986, *That's Life!* appealed for responses to a survey about child abuse. Three thousand adults replied, 90 per cent of whom were women. Of all respondents, 90 per cent recounted experience of sexual abuse perpetrated in nine of ten cases by a member of their own family. The programme also opened a helpline for 48 hours, run by social workers who spoke to around one hundred children about sexual abuse. Following this, the special programme *Childwatch* was aired on 30 October 1986 to launch ChildLine, which also received premises and a telephone number from British Telecom (BT). The institution of ChildLine was thus deeply shaped by media influence from its inception, and found influential early support from the BBC and BT.

Testimonies about experience were central to the early foundation of ChildLine, featured heavily on *Childwatch* alongside 'expert' testimony and also in newspaper coverage around the new charity which republished survey responses. *The Times* reprinted testimony from a 13-year-old that she walked home slowly from school, hoping to be 'mugged, raped or run over', as she knew that these things would not be 'as bad' as what waited for her at home.⁷² The newspaper also reprinted a report from a woman who was abused as a child, who would be left in a freezing cold and dark attic and who recalled how 'frightened' she was.⁷³ Rantzen told *The Times* that these testimonies left her 'shocked' but mostly 'angry'.⁷⁴ While Rantzen felt that national polls had given 'the cold statistics' about the prevalence of abuse, she emphasised that the *Childwatch* survey had shown 'what it feels like to be abused as a child and how it affects the rest of your life'.⁷⁵ Notably, the producers of *Childwatch*, Ritchie Cogan and Sarah Caplin, also recognised the significance of a global context, particularly in terms of proving the validity of, and need for, this new approach. Writing for the *Observer*, Cogan and Caplin emphasised that Holland had a parallel service, Kindertelefoon, established in 1979, while Sweden and America also had similar organisations.⁷⁶

From the inception of this phone line therefore, its significance was couched in terms of being shaped by, and enabling the spread of, children's testimonies—internationally, as well as nationally. Thinking about inner feelings was presented as fuelling mobilising emotions within the group's founders. Emotions embedded in qualitative testimonies were motivators to action, shaped and supported by quantitative research that vindicated the broader significance of such narratives. Criticism of

Childwatch was likewise couched in terms of warning against the dangers of such emotional affect. For example, the *Daily Mail* questioned whether the show 'whips people up into a state of agitation', causing 'too much' emotion which, the newspaper contended, may then mean that children were taken unnecessarily from their parents.⁷⁷

For children nonetheless, ChildLine positioned the sharing of emotion and experience as a positive phenomenon, both for individual therapeutic purposes but also in terms of forming a sense of ownership over ChildLine itself as a virtual space. On an individual level, children's ownership was promoted by the medium of this organisation—the phone line—which meant that children could avoid eye contact and guide the duration and timing of their encounters. ChildLine also had a confidentiality policy from its inception, only making referrals to statutory agencies if the child consented, unless their life was under threat. In ChildLine's *Annual Report* of 1994, Rantzen emphasised that the organisation only referred a 'tiny fraction' of all calls to social services, because their counsellors job was rather to 'listen, to comfort and to help children to work through their pain'.⁷⁸ This tended to involve directing children to speak with an adult they trusted, rather than approaching statutory services directly.⁷⁹ The length of time of the call was important too—children could speak with counsellors for as long or as short a period as they wished.⁸⁰ The notion of local voice was highly significant within the helpline model, and ChildLine established regional counselling centres across the UK, in addition to their London headquarters, to enable children to speak to counsellors from nearby areas. The organisation's leaders suggested that children would benefit from speaking to people with a familiar accent and with understandings of children's regional subcultures.⁸¹ The inflections and tones of the voices heard were thus conceptualised as important, alongside the new nature of listening to experiences and emotion. Throughout this organisation, interest in the physicality of voice was blended with concern about childhood openness and sharing.

Volunteers met the invitation for children to discuss their concerns. Annual reports described how volunteer counsellors were 'carefully selected and trained', and that many had previously worked with children as, for example, teachers, nurses, and social workers, while valued equally were 'fathers, mothers, students, retired people, actors, bank clerks'.⁸² This statement again promoted a model of 'ordinariness', whereby 'relatable' and 'respectable' individuals in communities would volunteer through ChildLine to enact child protection work. The key qualification presented was that

counsellors ‘love children and enjoy listening to them’.⁸³ Indeed, ChildLine emphasised that visitors were impressed by its ‘professionalism’, though also that it was founded because of abstract ideals—‘commitment, compassion and love of children’.⁸⁴ The dual focus on emphasising professionalism and compassion emerged as the voluntary sector more broadly professionalised, amidst pressure to reform institutional children’s services, but also with the politicisation of debates about what, exactly, ‘children’s experiences’ were. By using and promoting the empathy and compassion of volunteers, ChildLine presented a positive model of society and of community life, whereby many people from many professions were willing and able to make a time commitment to help children. Simultaneously, the organisation’s work also drew attention to abuse, violence, and childhood unhappiness within communities, families, and institutions.

While adult volunteers were key, from its inception ChildLine’s leaders sought to emphasise that the organisation was not theirs, but rather ‘took root in the minds of children and young people as their line ... the place that children and young people identify as their own’.⁸⁵ This notion was to an extent validated within children’s use of the line to discuss, at first sexual and physical abuse, primarily within the home, but later a range of issues around bullying, unhappiness, emotional problems, self-harm, eating disorders, and physical and mental health.⁸⁶ Following this range of defined issues, ChildLine’s definitions of ‘abuse’ were shaped by children themselves in terms of, Rantzen told *Newsround*, ‘anything that troubles a child really’, or anything which made a child feel ‘pain’, ‘uncomfortable’, or ‘unhappy’.⁸⁷ Contemporary testimony collected in 2016 by the *One Show*, for the 30th anniversary of ChildLine, reflected the ongoing significance of these narratives of child ownership and listening, with adults testifying that as children the organisation had ‘listened [to them] when no one else did’, and been ‘[t]here to listen’.⁸⁸ While adult volunteers were positioned as important, children were expected—or invited—to feel a sense of ownership over this virtual space. Nonetheless, ChildLine faced contemporary critique for enabling children to express testimonies in their own terms. *The Times* journalist Barbara Amiel challenged ChildLine’s definition of abuse as ‘too broad’, potentially including ‘little girls afraid of the dark and little boys with school nerves’.⁸⁹ The idea of girls and boys as ‘little’ again presented a model of vulnerability and powerlessness, and of children whose fears—school or darkness—were not always significant. By the 1980s,

therefore, children's emotions and experiences *could* be made public, but they were not always taken seriously, nor used to influence change.

ChildLine thus occupied an important place in discussions of child protection in mid-1980s Britain. Its focus on testimony and also on providing children's services over the phone, while in accord with broader legal, medical, and social interest in children's experiences, also put ChildLine in to tension with existing child protection charities and state agencies. Looking retrospectively in 2016 to the foundation moment of ChildLine, Shaun Woodward, its former Deputy Chair, and Anne Houston, a former director in Scotland, reflected back that existing 'experts' expressed concern that the organisation represented 'well-intentioned meddling by amateurs', while ChildLine felt able to 'challenge traditional agencies'.⁹⁰ These concerns, while recorded retrospectively, were echoed in contemporary newspaper coverage, suggesting that 'experts' had 'reservations' about the organisation—about whether it was necessary and also conversely about whether it would uncover needs which social services could not meet.⁹¹ Reflecting challenges for female leaders in the voluntary sector at this moment, contemporary newspaper coverage also discussed an 'image war' between the organisation's leaders, Valerie Howarth, director of ChildLine, and Esther Rantzen, the founder.⁹²

These 'expert' tensions represented broader disagreements about whether the priorities of child protection work should be led by journalists and media, increasing public awareness and lobbying government, or by ongoing intervention and campaigning from statutory agencies and charities. ChildLine would mediate between these lines. The charity drew support from the BBC and BT, but also met with criticism from tabloids. ChildLine received funding and support from successive governments, though at times the charity's leaders were also critical of statutory services. Howarth positioned ChildLine as operating within a 'tapestry of services for children', but it was also a disruptive force, challenging existing relationships between voluntary and statutory agencies, media, governments, and public.⁹³

To an extent, children were also to be trained by ChildLine in later years to meet one another's needs: the ChildLine in Partnership with Schools programme, founded in 1996, enabled psychologists to teach children to help one another.⁹⁴ At the same time, psychologists also told children to 'be aware of the limits of their own expertise', and to refer serious problems to teachers.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, the idea that ChildLine should address children directly was taken up in Parliament. In 1989, members

questioned Home Office regulations assuming that parents should be responsible for educating children about child protection, citing calls to ChildLine as evidence that these adults may be the perpetrators of abuse.⁹⁶ The interest in communicating child protection directly to children is addressed in the following chapter of this book, demonstrating how interest in understanding, recording, and inculcating children's expertise emerged hand-in-hand in the mid-1980s. In the case of ChildLine, addressing children directly to an extent bypassed broader debates about the role of communities and families in child protection: about what 'communities' and 'families' were, how they had changed in late modernity, and whether they were acting as protective or dangerous spaces for children.

Thus, the renewed interest in seeking out children's experiences was met by a range of actors, in part continuing existing hierarchies—for example, between teachers and students—but also testing out relations anew, for example between voluntary sector and state and between parent and child, in a disruptive moment met with concern about making 'private parenting concerns' public.⁹⁷ Interest in child experience was not only a political construct utilised to mask broader agendas, but also lived in the voluntary sector through conscious efforts to enable children to speak in their own time, in their own terms, to volunteers. ChildLine's work was reliant on the media—the service was launched by the BBC and featured heavily in national newspapers. While the *Daily Mail* questioned whether child protection was becoming 'show-biz', this also marked a significant transformation in terms of the public discussion and exposition of children's testimonies.⁹⁸ From the mid-1980s and by the 1990s, as subsequent chapters demonstrate, media interest in the experiences and emotions of children, parents, and survivors developed further still.

CHILDREN IN PUBLIC POLICY

ChildLine sought to mobilise children's testimonies politically, and thus to make them powerful in public policy. This aim was conceptualised by ChildLine's leaders not merely as an extension of their work, but as a moral and social duty. The organisation's *Annual Report* of 1994 emphasised that with 'listening' came a responsibility for ChildLine to 'give children a voice', and to use their 'unique access' to 'children's views and experience' to inform 'decision-makers'—notably based on contact with around 80,000 children and young people per year in the early 1990s.⁹⁹

This vision of moral duty, borne from the service's unique work, reshaped the working lives of volunteers. From inception, ChildLine volunteers took physical notes of each child's call, later writing them into full case notes and entering them into computers.¹⁰⁰ This had therapeutic focus—enabling different counsellors to advise the same children; legal purpose—with the children's permission, the notes could be used as evidence in court cases; and political power.¹⁰¹ While records were drawn from a sample and completed as a record of a phone call, rather than representing a direct recording of the child's comments, these summarised notes became central to ChildLine's published studies around, for example, bullying, child abuse, and racism.¹⁰²

Looking at a case study reveals the ways in which ChildLine sought to turn children's testimonies into a political resource, a source of critique, and a mode of childhood empowerment. In a chapter of *"It Hurts Me Too": Children's Experiences of Domestic Violence and Refuge Life* (1995), ChildLine workers Carole Epstein and Gill Keep sought to 'highlight the predicament' of children affected by domestic violence by 'conveying their own thoughts and words'.¹⁰³ Epstein and Keep emphasised that the organisation held a 'rich source of information' drawn from 'direct communication with large numbers of children who give us their accounts, views and feelings about their predicament'.¹⁰⁴ Between June 1993 and May 1994, ChildLine had spoken to 1554 children about domestic violence, and the chapter analysed a sample of 126 calls. Within the sample, the majority of children were between 11 and 15 years old, and 91 per cent of callers were female—above the overall ratio of girls to boys calling ChildLine at that time, which was four to one.¹⁰⁵ The majority of children—110—described violence against their mother perpetrated by her partner.¹⁰⁶

From this sample, Epstein and Keep drew clear messages: that children rarely used the term 'domestic violence', that violence nonetheless had typically been occurring for a long time, and that children struggled to make sense of this.¹⁰⁷ Children's emotions were a key focus in this chapter, which discussed how children often empathised with their mothers' feelings and felt 'angry' and 'hurt' but also 'disappointment' and 'intense frustration' when their mother did nothing, or took her partner's side.¹⁰⁸ The chapter expressed concern about the connections between these emotions and the physical states of children, suggesting that this emotional stress may cause abdominal complaints, asthma, ulcers, arthritis, and enuresis.¹⁰⁹ Children's emotions were framed around vulnerability, with discussion of them feeling anxious, confused, alarmed, fearful, alert, scared,

frightened, distraught, sad, helpless, betrayed, ashamed, and powerless.¹¹⁰ These expressed emotions were said to demonstrate that children were ‘helpless’, not ‘strong’ or ‘powerful’. Thus, this lived testimony, and indeed the specific framing of this testimony, demonstrated the challenges in this moment of making children ‘expert’. Their testimonies would be listened to and disseminated but, as in earlier debates about battered children, discussion was still framed around how adults had a moral duty to ensure that children were ‘looked after, nurtured, protected’.¹¹¹

Recognising conflicting thinking about how to use their insights, and a level of tension between ChildLine’s roles as lobbyist and counsellor, Epstein and Keep argued that the counselling was ‘child-led’, and that volunteers would not ask children questions that would *only* be useful for information purposes. Nonetheless, the organisation was able to utilise their counselling calls to reshape political debate. Drawing on information from their calls, ChildLine provided statistics and case studies to prominent public inquiries, for example into the Cleveland affair and the deaths of Jasmine Beckford, Kimberly Carlile, Victoria Climbié, and Baby P. Childline also provided data to brief Parliamentarians on legislation including the *Criminal Justice Acts* (1988 and 1991), *Children Act* (1989), and *Sex Offenders Act* (1997). ChildLine evidence also fed into voluntary and educational contexts: contributing for example to National Children’s Home research on children who abused other children and to educational discussions of bullying, as an analysis of ChildLine’s calls, *Bullying—The Child’s View* (1991), was circulated to all schools.¹¹² ChildLine’s routes into policy, therefore, were multiple: through national and local, political, educational, and voluntary settings, and in reactive response to crises, as well as in the proactive formulation of legislation. Notably, Parliamentarians and journalists alike framed the role of ChildLine around its capacity to channel and to represent children’s experiences. Discussing ChildLine statistics in 1987, indeed, Labour Member of Parliament Llin Golding linked this data to her ability to ‘speak on behalf of young children’.¹¹³ This statement represented a series of significant and transformative beliefs, which came to the fore in the 1980s: that children’s testimonies were important, and would potentially shape political debate, and that ChildLine had a unique ability, derived from phone counselling, to mediate between children’s lives and political change.

The NSPCC was likewise seeking to translate children’s experiences in to policy at this time. In 1988, the Society produced a campaign entitled

'Putting Children First', asking children about how they perceived their lives and conducting a survey including questions such as, 'What is the most difficult part of being a child?'¹¹⁴ In response, children expressed their frustrations about structural hierarchy, answering, for example, 'not having a say in anything, especially in what happens to you', 'adults don't always understand what you are talking about', and 'not being trusted by adults'.¹¹⁵ In 1994, the NSPCC commissioned the sociologists Ian Butler and Howard Williamson to conduct a further survey, looking to 'listen and learn from what children have to say to us' and to reshape children's services accordingly.¹¹⁶ Butler and Williamson interviewed 190 young people aged between 6 and 17, consciously looking to overrepresent children from the care system (46) and from minority ethnic backgrounds (74) in their sample, arguing that the 'experiences' of these children were 'especially important to hear'.¹¹⁷ Interest in empowering children was clear from the design of the study, and children were allowed to stop the taped interview at any time, and to decide whether they would prefer to be interviewed individually or in a group.¹¹⁸ The research was presented to children as 'an opportunity for their voice to be heard; if they wished to use their voice, the NSPCC, through the research was listening'.¹¹⁹ Children were able to pursue any line of thought, though researchers would, after listening carefully, look to redirect the 'main thrust' of the inquiry towards the project's key themes.¹²⁰

Overall, the final study argued that children's accounts must be considered in their own terms and 'not dismissed or devalued because they do not conform to some existing classifications of child abuse'.¹²¹ Indeed, Butler and Williamson argued that 'less objectively awful events'—an adult construction—may have 'a more lasting impact' on young people than 'more awful' ones.¹²² Discussing a 17-year-old whose mother was killed by her father, they emphasised that she found what was 'actually worse' than the death itself was that no one told her where her mother was buried, and indeed 'nobody even tried'.¹²³ Ideas about 'objectivity', guided by adults, remained in these surveys. At the same time, they demonstrated widespread interest from significant charities in translating children's testimonies into change at the institutional and social policy levels. Recognising that such changes would be made by adults, Butler and Williamson's report questioned, 'can adults listen and learn from what is being said?'¹²⁴

A variety of organisations were hence looking to access, develop, reshape, and mobilise constructions of children's experiences from the mid-1980s, and to bring them to bear on their own internal organisational

structures as well as on a national policy level. Not all children's voices were heard equally, but nonetheless the stated interest in experience extended beyond rhetoric alone, and was matched by voluntary efforts to access children's testimonies and to make them powerful—and indeed 'expert'—in public policy.

CLEVELAND: A CASE STUDY

Analysing the public inquiry into the Cleveland case in 1987, conducted 14 years after the Colwell inquiry, demonstrates how—and to what extent—public policy and professional interest in children's experiences developed across the 1970s and 1980s. In Cleveland, England, in the first half of 1987, 121 children were removed from their families under suspicion of child sexual abuse.¹²⁵ Many cases were referred by two local paediatricians, Dr Geoffrey Wyatt and Dr Marietta Higgs, who relied in part on a controversial physical assessment of abuse, the reflex anal dilation test. As the number of referred cases rose, investigations were prompted by police and social services. Civic and social spaces were disrupted by this case: as the foster homes in Cleveland were full, children slept in the accident and emergency ward of Middlesbrough General Hospital, reportedly, contemporary newspapers stated, with their parents staying nearby on camp beds.¹²⁶ In July 1987, the Secretary of State for Social Services established a statutory public inquiry around this case, led by Justice Elizabeth Butler-Sloss. The subsequent public inquiry report criticised the lack of attention paid to children, writing that 'attention was largely focussed upon the adults, both parents and professionals, and their interpretation of the children involved.... The voices of the children were not heard.'¹²⁷ The inquiry did not invite children to give evidence, to 'shield' them from the 'enormous burden' of speaking either in the private sessions, with approximately 50 people, or the public sessions.¹²⁸

Nonetheless, and consciously looking to 'redress this imbalance', the inquiry asked the Official Solicitor to represent the children, to meet with them, and to record their views.¹²⁹ Of the 165 children examined by the paediatricians at Middlesbrough General Hospital between January and July 1987, 51 were over eight years old, and 32 of these met with the Official Solicitor—again reflecting an assumption, present in the 1960s debates, that younger children would not be able to express their own accounts.¹³⁰ One chapter of the inquiry report sought to explain the 'impressions and perceptions' of the children spoken to. The testimonies described the broad effects which the inquiry had on the children, including the discomfort of their

physical examination, the loneliness of waiting in hospital, and a case of subsequent bullying at school, by a child who was called 'child abuse kid' by her peers because she was featured in a newspaper.¹³¹ The chapter discussed the cases of children who had had positive encounters with various child protection professionals, as well as negative ones. For example, one eight-year-old girl, who had been abused by a man outside of her family, saw doctors and nurses who were 'nice'; while a 16-year-old reported liking her social worker, and being glad to be in care, though she 'could not stand the police'.¹³² Summarising the findings from this report and the meetings with the children, the Official Solicitor stated that the children felt a range of emotions: 'misunderstanding, mistrust, discomfort, anger, fear, praise, gratitude and sheer relief'.¹³³

The report overall emphasised that listening to the child was 'essential' to investigate an allegation of abuse.¹³⁴ Demonstrating the shift made over time, one expert witness, child psychologist Dr Arnon Bentovim, testified that until 'a few years ago', the practice was 'to disbelieve the child', rather than 'taking it [their allegation] seriously' and investigating it 'properly and thoroughly'.¹³⁵ The focus on consulting with children, and on making children's testimonies central, was thus a new feature of public inquiries towards the late 1980s, acting in significant contrast to earlier inquiry reports such as that around the Maria Colwell case. Social workers and other statutory agencies had long been concerned about child welfare. Newly, however, policy and press would consider, criticise, and respond to prominent child protection cases in terms framed by children's own accounts. Policy and press continued to analyse co-operation and conflict between statutory agencies and the voluntary sector, but children's testimonies became central metrics with which to judge professional 'competency'.

There was not a full or instantaneous change. Butler-Sloss emphasised in the report that 'not every detail' of the child's story should be 'taken literally', signalling an extent to which children's accounts were still questioned, and accessed and expressed through mediators.¹³⁶ The public inquiry report also referred to the focus on adults' voices as, 'perhaps inevitable'.¹³⁷ Further, while the report signalled a shift in how children's experiences were being approached, media coverage around the Cleveland case maintained many parallels with that around the Colwell case. Such coverage, particularly from tabloid newspapers, continued to focus on professional tension and to describe children in powerless terms, in line with the 'fetishistic glorification of the "innate innocence" of childhood' described by Jenny Kitzinger.¹³⁸

One *Daily Mail* article from July 1987, for example, argued that the children involved in this case had, ‘lost their innocence and that is priceless’, and presented a vision of ‘empty bedrooms where dolls and toy guns are gathering dust ... houses with no children’.¹³⁹ This article also discussed a ‘secret battle’ between doctors, social workers, and police. Positioning consultants, social workers, and ‘bureaucrats’ as ‘well meaning, well qualified, and articulate’, parents were also represented as relatively powerless in the face of professional authority, and described as ‘confused’, ‘often tongue-tied when first faced with officialdom’ and with ‘a deep respect bordering on awe for the medical profession’.¹⁴⁰ The idea of acting as a ‘voice for the children’ was also used defensively within media coverage, for example by the husband of an involved paediatrician looking to defend his wife’s decisions.¹⁴¹

Again, the construct of children’s experiences had growing power—in this case, realised in terms of the growing interest of public inquiries in employing expert mediators to talk with children. Nonetheless, visions of childhood experience remained underdefined, and at times were used as a proxy for broader professional conflicts. An article in *Spare Rib* in August 1987 further emphasised that a focus on broader questions of class, power, and gender were lacking from analysis of the Cleveland case.¹⁴² The focus on children’s experiences could function to challenge structural oppression—giving children a platform to criticise inequality or professional ineptitude. However, it could also further a focus on looking to the individual to resolve child protection issues, or on constructing an abstract vision of ‘childhood experience’ detached from structural inequalities.

CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates the significance of thinking about children’s experiences in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Interest in children’s inner worlds emerged from specific circles of charity, psychology, psychiatry, and policy, but also significantly influenced the media reporting and conduct of the Cleveland public inquiry by 1987. In part, this period offered a conception of childhood as fragile and vulnerable, potentially unable to take up these new avenues of consultation and influence. Such accounts expressed an ongoing vision of childhood, even among children’s charities, as a stage ‘in waiting’, with children ready to grow in to ‘caring adults’. This representation of the child as vulnerable and innocent was in part grounded on recognition of structural inequality relating to age. This

representation also sought to contest previous psychological and cultural visions of childhood agency as complicity, visible in the 'Lolita' trope.¹⁴³ Nonetheless, emphasis on vulnerability constructed a distinction between the 'knowing' child, who was stigmatised, and the innocent one.¹⁴⁴

Thinking about children's experiences did not entirely overcome biases in terms of who was listened to and when—it is important to analyse which children's experiences were being accessed, appropriated, and disseminated on the public stage, when the records become available to study this. Nonetheless, this historical moment represented active and engaged attempts by psychologists and children's charities to understand childhood interiority, and to make it powerful. These groups operated in a specific cultural and political moment of the 1980s, drawing on ideas of experiential expertise and childhood representation in medicine and law, and looking to represent knowledge as empowering and to present children as complex and emotional. Again reflective of the mid-1980s moment, much innovation came from the voluntary sector, and particularly from small organisations less impeded by central government management. Children's charities were key mediators of children's experiences, and they worked with successive governments, reshaping the objects of their inquiry and providing services, but also against them, briefing journalists and directly challenging policy. The networks through which charities and government were working together were reliant on the work of individuals—for example, Esther Rantzen and Shaun Woodward worked in both policy and charitable circles, transferring knowledge and expertise.

Interest in the politics of childhood experience and emotion provides a useful addition to scholarship around children's rights, helping us to unpick the extent to which ideas about rights imposed from above were also shaped by a broader responsive context around listening to and engaging with children, and reconstructing them as thinking, reflexive subjects. In this context, the last decades of the twentieth century were not only characterised by conflicts between the state and the voluntary sector, nor by growing disagreement between social, medical, and psychological services. To make this analysis is to miss the campaigning of a small but significant group of psychologists, psychiatrists, and children's charities attempting to access children's experiences, in a variety of ways, across this period. Adults would access and disseminate children's experiences and would offer solutions which required children to adopt adult behaviours—for example, writing to agony aunts or using helpline therapy. Nonetheless, children also sought out such help and learnt at times to

express their experiences and emotions through the available channels and to offer critical accounts. The next chapter assesses attempts to make children themselves ‘expert’, and explores the extent to which interest in child experience, emotion, and expertise were reflective of a mid-1980s ‘moment’ or continuations of a series of longer-term social trajectories.

NOTES

1. ‘Mother was “determined” to get child back’, *The Times*, 24 November 1973, 3. See also: Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (hereafter MRC), MSS.318/BASW/C/68, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Care and Supervision Provided in Relation to Maria Colwell* (hereafter *Colwell Report*), May–October 1974.
2. Ian Butler and Mark Drakeford, *Social Work on Trial: The Colwell Inquiry and the State of Welfare* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2011), 78 emphasises that ‘if one is to judge by the tone of the court report ... they did so with considerably greater reluctance than has been reported elsewhere’.
3. MRC, *Colwell Report*, 68.
4. *Ibid.*, 8–69.
5. Far more severe sentences have been given for similar crimes since this case. For example, the parents and guardians convicted as responsible for the murders of Tyra Henry (1985) Kimberley Carlile (1985), Leanne White (1992), and Victoria Climbié (2001) were all jailed for life.
6. MRC, *Colwell Report*, 6.
7. Dave Merrick, *Social Work and Child Abuse* (London: Routledge, 1996), 181 highlights a ‘long and continuing tradition’ of changing the format and ceremony of public inquiries into child care according to the particular case—some are public, some private, some internal, some external, some instigated by local authority, some by secretary of state for social services.
8. MRC, *Colwell Report*, 6.
9. Ian Butler and Mark Drakeford, *Scandal, Social Policy and Social Welfare: How British Public Policy is Made* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 88.
10. MRC, *Colwell Report*, 70–102.
11. *Ibid.*, 63–64.
12. *Ibid.*, 2, 106–140.
13. *Ibid.*, 106.
14. *Ibid.*, 3.
15. MRC, BASW, Correspondence and Papers 1976–1980, MSS 378/BASW/2/486, Press Cuttings, ‘Maria Colwell—It Could Happen Again’, *Northern Echo*, 9 September 1974; ‘Maria Case ‘Not the Last’

- Sheffield Morning Telegraph*, 6 September 1974; 'There Could Be Another "Maria" Tragedy Warn County Social Workers', *Leicester Mercury*, 7 September 1974; "'More Contact" Call in Avon', *Bristol Evening Post*, 5 September 1974; "'Maria" Plea in City', *Nottingham Evening Post*, 7 September 1974; Mrs J. Thorburn, 'Maria Colwell—and the Rates', *Eastern Evening News*, 10 September 1974; 'Threat of More Maria Tragedies', *Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph*, 10 September 1974; MRC, BASW, Correspondence and Papers 1976–1980; MSS 378/BASW/2/486, Press Cuttings, 'Tragic Lesson that has Shamed a Nation', *Western Daily Press*, 5 September 1974.
16. *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Care and Supervision Provided by Local Authorities and Other Agencies in Relation to Maria Colwell and the Co-ordination Between Them* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1974), 86. Point echoed in: MRC, BASW, Correspondence and Papers 1976–1980, MSS 378/BASW/2/486, Press Cuttings, 'The Errors that Led to Maria's Death', *Glasgow Herald*, 5 September 1974; MRC, BASW, Correspondence and Papers 1976–1980, MSS 378/BASW/2/486, Press Cuttings, 'Tragic Lesson that Has Shamed a Nation', *Western Daily Press*, 5 September 1974.
 17. *Report of the Committee of Inquiry*, 86.
 18. *Ibid.*, 34.
 19. 'Battered Maria: Neighbours "Tried to Warn Official"', *Sunday Times*, 21 October 1973, as cited in Ian Butler and Mark Drakeford, 'Booing or cheering? Ambiguity in the construction of victimhood in the case of Maria Colwell', *Crime, Media, Culture*, 4, no. 3 (2008): 375.
 20. For discussions of ordinariness, see: Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Discourses of "class" in Britain in "New Times"', *Contemporary British History*, 31, no. 2 (2017): 294–317. For a useful discussion of respectability, see: Peter Bailey, "Will the real Bill Banks please stand up?": Towards a Role Analysis of mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability', *Journal of Social History*, 12 (1979): 341–343.
 21. *Ibid.*, 376.
 22. *Report of the Committee of Inquiry*, 18.
 23. Butler and Drakeford, 'Booing or cheering?': 381.
 24. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Discourses of "class"': 294–317.
 25. Butler and Drakeford, *Scandal, Social Policy and Social Welfare*, 85–87.
 26. 'How many more Marias are there?', *Daily Mail*, 7 November 1973, 37; David Cross, 'MP's adoption shock', *Daily Mail*, 21 June 1975, 9.
 27. *Report of the Committee of Inquiry*, 16.
 28. *Ibid.*, 16, 111–120.
 29. *Ibid.*, 19.
 30. *Ibid.*, 24–25.
 31. *Ibid.*, 27.

32. *Ibid.*, 98, 104–105.
33. Mia Kellmer Pringle, 'Every day, two children...', *Observer*, 25 August 1974, 18.
34. In terms of paying attention to the perspectives of social work clients, see: John Eric Mayer and Noel Timms, *The Client Speaks: Working Class Impressions of Casework* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970); Eric Sainsbury, *Social Work with Families: Perceptions of Social Casework Among Clients of a Family Service Unit* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975); Peter Philmore, *Families Speaking: a study of Fifty-One Families' Views of Social Work* (London: Family Service Units, 1980). In terms of interest in the perspective of the child at this moment see, for example: Harry Blagg, John A. Hughes, Corinne Wattam (eds) *Child sexual abuse: listening, hearing and validating the experiences of children* (Harlow: Longman, 1989).
35. Valerie Yule, *What happens to children: the origins of violence, a collection of stories told by children who could not write them* (London: Angus & Robertson: 1979), 'Introduction'.
36. *Ibid.*, 'Foreword'.
37. *Ibid.*, 46.
38. Claire Rayner, *Life and Love and Everything: Children's Questions Answered* (London: Kyle Cathie Limited, 1993), no page references. See also: Claire Rayner, *When I Grow Up: Children's views of the adult world* (London: Genesis Productions Ltd, 1986).
39. Rayner, *Life and Love and Everything*, no page references.
40. HM Government, *Criminal Justice Act 1988* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1988); HM Government, *Criminal Justice Act 1991* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1991); Amanda Elizabeth Wade, 'The Child Witness and the Criminal Justice Process: A Case Study in Law Reform, unpublished thesis, March 1997, 1–10.
41. HM Government, *Children Act 1975* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1975), 1–3.
42. As quoted in Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 98.
43. As pointed out by: Mary MacLeod, in '30 Years of ChildLine (1986–2016)', Witness seminar, held 1 June 2016 at the BT Tower, London, held at Modern Records Centre, Coventry, 22.
44. 'Support at the end of the line', *The Times*, 30 October 1986, 17.
45. Frances Gibb, 'Call to widen new-style video questioning in cases of child abuse', *The Times*, 28 November 1986, 7.
46. As cited in, Alex Saunders, *"It hurts me too": Children's experiences of domestic violence and refuge life* (1995), 37.
47. Judith Ennew, *The Sexual Exploitation of Children* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986).

48. Oralee Wachter and Dr Andrew Stanway, *No More Secrets for Me: Helping to Safeguard Your Child Against Sexual Abuse* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 11.
49. Saunders, "It hurts me too", 8.
50. *Ibid.*, 8.
51. Helen Franks, 'A world of secrets', *Guardian*, 5 July 1989, 21.
52. Myre Sim, 'Introduction—a child speaks', Selwyn M. Smith (ed.) *The Maltreatment of Children* (Lancaster: MTP Press, 1978), 1.
53. Sim, 'Introduction—a child speaks', 1.
54. *Ibid.*, 1.
55. *Ibid.*, 2.
56. *Ibid.*, 2.
57. *Ibid.*, 4–5.
58. Multiple accounts of these cases have emerged. Philip Jenkins has described these cases in detail in the framework of 'moral panic' in Philip Jenkins, *Intimate Enemies: Moral Panics in Contemporary Great Britain* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992), 154–194. Jean La Fontaine provided several anthropological contemporary accounts: Jean La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and for the Department of Health: Jean La Fontaine, *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Abuse* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1994). Another article worth reading on this account was an interview by Jean La Fontaine by Celia Kitzinger: 'Satanic disabuser', *Times Higher Education*, 25 August 1995. A contrasting contemporary account by psychologists claiming to have treated ritual abuse survivors is: Valerie Sinason (ed.), *Treating Survivors of Satanist Abuse* (London: Routledge, 1994). Looking to move 'beyond disbelief', and to analyse why and how 'validity' was 'accorded to some kinds of life-stories and not others', how some people were constructed as 'reliable witnesses of their own lives' while others were 'discredited': Sara Scott, *The Politics and Experience of Ritual Abuse: Beyond Disbelief* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), 1.
59. Discussion of separating 'fact from fantasy' in terms of recommendations from Health Minister Virginia Bottomley: 'Shake-up follows Satan scandal', *Daily Mail*, 11 March 1991, 9. Discussing the role of video nasties in these cases: John Woodcock, 'Video nasties named in child abuse probe', *Daily Mail*, 14 September 1990, 2.
60. La Fontaine, *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Abuse*.
61. La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil*, 119–120.
62. *Ibid.*, 124.
63. La Fontaine, *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Abuse*.
64. See: Sinason, *Treating Survivors of Satanist Abuse*. The Ritual Abuse Information Network is mentioned in the following article: David

- Brindle, ‘Therapists reject Bottomley claim that new report “explodes myth”’, *Guardian*, 3 June 1994, 2.
65. Describing the piece as a ‘counterpart’: Catherine Bennett, ‘Satanic Verses’ *Guardian*, 10 September 1994, 12–20. Edited collection is: Sinason, *Treating Survivors of Satanist Abuse*.
66. See: Bennett, ‘Satanic Verses’ 12–20.
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68. See discussion in Ravinder Barn, “‘Race”, Ethnicity and Child Welfare: A Fine Balancing Act’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 37 (2007): 1425–1434.
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71. Esther Rantzen, in ‘30 Years of ChildLine (1986–2016)’, 7.
72. ‘Support at the end of the line’, 17.
73. *Ibid.*, 17.
74. *Ibid.*, 17.
75. Quote from Rantzen on Childwatch as cited in: Stuart Bell, ‘Childwatch: Is this the most dangerous show on TV?’, *Daily Mail*, 6.
76. Ritchie Cogan and Sarah Caplin, ‘Phone-ins work’, *The Observer*, 26 October 1986, 56.
77. Mary Kenny, ‘The serious doubts about Childwatch’, *Daily Mail*, 29 November 1986, 6.
78. Bodleian Library (hereafter Bod), P.C06240, ChildLine Annual Reports 1991–1994, *Annual Report 1994*, ‘Chairman’s report’, Esther Rantzen, 3.
79. Bod, *Annual Report 1994*, ‘How ChildLine works’, 7.
80. *Ibid.*, 7.
81. *Ibid.*, 6.
82. *Ibid.*, 4.
83. *Ibid.*, 4.
84. *Ibid.*, 4.

85. Hereward Harrison, 'Childline—the first twelve years', *British Medical Journal*, 82 (2000), 283.
86. See contemporary description of calls in: BL, *Annual Report 1994*, 'Facts and figures', 18; BL, *Annual Report 1992*, 'The Children who Call ChildLine', 5.
87. As cited in: Barbara Amiel, 'Teaching children to complain', *The Times*, 5 November 1986, 15.
88. Testimonies shared by Esther Ranzten, in '30 Years of ChildLine (1986–2016)', 10–11.
89. Barbara Amiel, 'Teaching children to complain', *The Times*, 5 November 1986, 15.
90. Quotes from: Anne Houston, in '30 Years of ChildLine (1986–2016)', 26–27. Also discussed by: Shaun Woodward, in '30 Years of ChildLine (1986–2016)', 18.
91. Peter Hildrew, 'Danger: crossed wires on the crisis line', *Guardian*, 28 November 1986, 23; 'Support at the end of the line', 17; Jill Sherman, 'Childline shake-up as pressure grows', *The Times*, 9 January 1987, 3.
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93. Bod, *Annual Report 1994*, 'Chief executive's report', Valerie Howarth, 5.
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95. *Ibid.*
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98. Kenny, 'The serious doubts about Childwatch', 6; Bell, 'Childwatch: Is this the most dangerous show on TV?', 6.
99. Bod, *Annual Report 1993*, 'A year for children', 2. Baroness Valerie Howarth, Chief Executive of ChildLine from 1986 to 2001, reflected back in 2016 that listening had 'never been enough', and that ChildLine then 'told the nation about just what was happening to children' Valerie Howarth, in '30 Years of ChildLine (1986–2016)', 14.
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106. *Ibid.*, 45.
107. *Ibid.*, 44–47.
108. *Ibid.*, 51.
109. Saunders, “*It hurts me too*”, 10; Epstein and Keep, ‘What Children Tell ChildLine’, 48–49.
110. Epstein and Keep, ‘What Children Tell ChildLine’, 44–48.
111. *Ibid.*, 50.
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128. *Ibid.*, 25.
129. *Ibid.*, 25.

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131. Ibid., 25–35.
132. Ibid., 34–35.
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