

Master Thesis

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# Moral Panic

Which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a Social Pedagogical Perspective?

A master thesis in Applied Social Science: Social Pedagogy

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# Acknowledgments

Writing the thesis was a long, exciting and challenging process. Now however I have completed and the work process is finally at an end. The topic of my research was a topic that I only had limited knowledge about, which made the research both seem very interesting and scary at the same time. I have gained much new knowledge and perceptions about a field I choose to believe is unexplored in Norway, which I see as very useful in my future work as a social pedagogue.

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All in all, writing this paper has been an incredible learning process, which in times has been both tough and demanding. Nevertheless, I am left with positive memories, and I look back on these past six past months or so, as a positive period of my study period.

# Outline Structure

This thesis consist of six chapters; introduction, theoretical framework, research methods, the analysis and presentation of the findings and results, discussion and the complication.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The introduction clarifies the focus of this research and the overall research aim, and it identifies the research objectives and provides you with how the foundation of my research came to life. Here you will also get a presentation of my topic.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical framework**

In this chapter I will present the theoretical framework that forms the basis of my thesis. The theoretical framework is from national and international professors in the field of social science. Additionally, underlying factors influencing the content and thus the functions are described.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methods**

This chapter provides the background of the methodology I used. It outlines the methodological choices and procedures used throughout this research. In addition to clarifying the quality of the research due to reliability and validity

## **Chapter 4: The analysis and presentation of the findings and results**

This chapter reports on the findings and results of a phenomenographic analysis based on my seven interviews. Furthermore, this chapter provides analysis and synthesis in terms of comparing and contrasting my informants' perceptions. And how I have divided the informants' part perceptions into three categories, summarizing them and finding the holistic point of views. Their perceptions were of course articulated based on the topic of my research.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

This chapter reviews the overall aim and research objectives of this research. The findings are summarized into a discussion and put up against the specific context of social pedagogical theory. The focus will be on discussing my findings or empirical data in terms of my informants' perceptions on the categories children/childhood, evil/evildoing and media/society. These different perceptions will be discussed in the context of social pedagogical theory.

## **Chapter 6: The complication**

This chapter present a complication of my thesis. Hence providing suggestions for further research in this area. Furthermore, show how my findings and results form a basis for recommendations for social pedagogues and child welfare workers. And what I have learnt from writing this paper.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

*“The family is a dark place and the homes that replace them hidden ones. Behind closed doors, horrible things go on. There are childhoods that are like psychological experiments: take an unformed being, deny them order and attention and tenderness, abandon them, abuse them, and see what happens. See what the future will bring. It is proof to the human impulse towards goodness that so many children who are placed in conditions of deprivation and fear turn out well, become citizens in a society that works reasonably well reasonably often. Every so often, terrible and “evil” things happen, and then we glimpse the secret, forgotten lives that we try to ignore”*

Gerrard, (2009)

## When Children Kill Children

A high profile murder case made international headlines seven years ago in an article published by BBC World Service November the 9<sup>th</sup> 2000. Police were shocked when it emerged that a two-year-old toddler called Jamie Bulger had been abducted and then killed by two ten-year-old boys from Merseyside, in Northern England. When it was recently announced that these two, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, could soon be released, there was widespread outrage (BBC World Service, 2000).

Meanwhile, just across the North Sea, a similar murder case has proceeded very differently in the Norwegian city of Trondheim. In October 1994 five-year-old Silje Raedergard was attacked by two six-year-old boys, who left her dying in the snow. The names of Raedergard’s young assailants were never revealed in the Norwegian press, and neither boy was prosecuted (ibid, 2000)

### The case in Norway

On October the 15<sup>th</sup> in 1994 Silje Raedergard was playing with two boys on a local football field. She had played with the two boys many times, but this time the game

turned rough. Whilst making snow castles, the two boys became aggressive. They stripped Raedergard, stoned her and when she fell unconscious, they panicked and ran, leaving her to die in the snow.

The news of Raedergards' death shocked the small town. With a population of 135,000, the city of Trondheim had only experienced two murders in the six years prior to her death. However instead of expressing anger and revenge, the local community felt grief and a level of responsibility (ibid, 2000)

## The case in Britain

The Merseyside tragedy began on the afternoon of February the 12<sup>th</sup>, 1993 at 3.39pm when a surveillance camera in the Bootle Strand shopping centre, filmed Robert Thompson and Jon Venables take James Bulger by the hand from outside a butcher's shop. Bulger's mother was inside buying meat and had let go of him for just two minutes. In that short time the two boys had led him away, taking him out of the shopping centre and to a nearby railway line. Later the next day Bulger's body was found there, he had been beaten, struck with a battery and bricks and left for dead. After the public's initial grief came anger, which culminated in a crowd of more than 500 people gathering outside the magistrates court, hurling abuse at the two boys when they came to trial (ibid, 2000).

In Norway the boys were treated as victims, not killers. The legal age for prosecution stands at fifteen and so the children were free to return to kindergarten within a week of the incident occurring. The local community felt dismayed that such a thing could happen in their city and felt little anger when the two boys were given counselling for the following four years (ibid, 2000).

In stark contrast to Norway, in Britain the legal age for prosecution is ten-years-old. A few days after the body of little Jamie Bulger had been found, Venables and Thompson were taken into custody. They were convicted in November 1993, and ordered to serve a minimum sentence of fifteen years. The boys were separated and they were held in secure units for seven and a half years (ibid, 2000).



## Making little Monsters

Another incident like the two above also made the headlines in Britain in an article written by Nicci Gerrard of the Telegraph on April 7<sup>th</sup> in 2009.

One Saturday afternoon, in a semi-wild area of land near the former mining village of Edlington, in South Yorkshire, two children allegedly attacked and tortured two other children, reportedly hitting them with bricks, humiliating them, burning them, leaving one of them near death and the other savagely cut and bruised, half naked and dazed he wandered into Edlington for help. All four were primary-school age; the alleged attackers were brothers aged 11 and 10 and had only moved to the area a short time ago. According to residents, the village had been terrorised in recent weeks, with one choirboy claiming he was violently attacked and a girl reportedly having her hair set on fire (Gerrard, 2009).

Just recently on April the 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011 in Sweden, two boys under the age of fifteen tried to hang an eleven-year-old Norwegian boy at a playground. The boy was playing peacefully by a tree, when someone came up behind him and hung him up by the neck with a rope. The boy, who hung there for ten minutes with his toes barely touching the ground, had troubles breathing and was unable to shout for help because of the noose around his neck. Luckily an adult who was out walking passed by and rescued him (TV2, 2011).

## How the foundation of my thesis came to life

Social science is about grasping the patterns of social development, and to put the details together into structures and tendencies. In this day and age where society is drastically changing and redeveloping, this will to a large extent be about seizing the patterns in the things that are changing; what will the future bring them, where do they have their roots?

Childhood is in the focus of change. This does not mean that all we have to do is to follow the statistics; it means that our perceptions and perspectives must change. To look at new perspectives and relations with old glasses is as dangerous as it is common.

Children are children, and children change. The child, who played with marbles at the playground, is now making video films or playing Playstation 3 and expects to travel the world. Some say childhood is resistant, but it is also in the focus of constant change. This does not only mean that there is a new present, which affect children. Today's children are affected more than ever before in the history of the future, parents and society think will come.

The character of the child has always been the focus of parents and societies fears, desires and fantasies. And when it comes to my topic children being evil or doing evil acts, moral panics are irresistible and more recently debates about children have become invested with a growing sense of anxiety and panic. Children are vulnerable and underdeveloped, incapable of making their own choices and knowing right from wrong. Adults are able to make these choices children are not. Society and adults construct who children are and what childhood is. The "child experts" predominate and affect our perceptions of what "evil" children are.

Professionals undertake these discursive constructions directly or indirectly; hence social pedagogues and child welfare workers inherit and apply models of childhood and their actions and behavior. They assess whether a child has reached their appropriate stage of development. The media also produce discourses about children and childhood. Images of childhood circulate in novels, plays, films, advertisements and news stories, especially when children do abnormal and vicious acts. Some produce conventional idealized portraits of childhood; others explore their darker more ambiguous side.

Such alleged out of control viciousness like the incidents above sends a shudder of horror down our collective spine. This list of abnormal and evil factors could have been much longer, but it is really not that interesting in this context. These are just incidents that will hopefully give you an idea on how I am angling this research. Of the situated level of everyday interactions we know little outside our own experience and the topic of my thesis might open up new perceptions for people working with children and adolescents.

According to Natorp (2009) (see chapter 2) social pedagogy is a fundamental recognition of the perception that upbringing of the individual in any significant direction is socially determined and that shaping children into social life fundamentally requires that the individual be given appropriate upbringing into the society they will become a part of. As you will read about later on, Natorp's social pedagogical scientific perspective is based on analyzing and examine factors and conditions in society (social conditions of course) that inhibit or promote formation of the individual and to develop a theory of formation/education based on social pedagogical analysis, which can guide to upbringing and education of societies members and for them to become people who together can shape the social life as a communion (Mathiesen, 2009). The development of communion emerges as a norm to become part of the social life. And that is precisely why I have chosen to use a social pedagogical perspective.

In this day and age phenomena like children and evil have not gotten enough attention. And to work deliberately with important phenomena like these is a deficiency in child protection and social pedagogy. There have not been enough research about this topic and I therefore believe that my thesis paper will provide us with new and essential relevancy. It was important for me to embed the topic with the social pedagogical perspective, because it is important as a social pedagogue and for others to have deliberate relations and gain knowledge about children and evil. My results and findings will be presented in terms of different categories based on my informants' part perceptions that will be discussed in the context of social pedagogical theory.

## Where did the ideas come from?

Another factor that awakened my interest was in one of John Vegard Haugaas lectures in the spring of 2010. The subject was Evil, Deviation and Human dignity, where he talked about an incident you have already read about in Liverpool, England, where two boys at the age of ten killed a two-year-old boy in 1993. The subject in itself and this incident was something that really caught my interest and my supervisor and I arranged a meeting with Jon Vegard, to see if he would be willing to help us to hatch out some good ideas to a topic. The topic that addressed children that are involved in evil or commit

evil acts came to life and during our next guidance meeting; my supervisor and I came up with the topic of my research.

The title of my thesis "Moral Panic" derives from a term used for the first time by the sociologist Stanley Cohen in his book "Folk Devils and Moral Panics" from 1973. He used the concept to describe the impact created by society and the media to cover a phenomenon in such a way that the phenomenon is a symbol of a violation with the established norms, where the breach is an expression of a struggle between "them" and "us" or good vs. evil. The term is now in our everyday language as a general term for a panic reaction in the diverse general public, when a group or a phenomenon is seen as a threat against public morality. For such a group reaction to be characterized as a moral panic, it is understood that it is unjustified or exaggerated. Sometimes moral panics cannot be discussed openly because the conflict affects taboo-areas.

The ideas and interest behind my master thesis came to life much because of the BBC World Service article (2000), John Vegard Haugaas lectures (2010) and Cohen's concept on moral panic (1973). Children and evil is often a taboo area and I will through my thesis paper examine how one perceives children and evil through a social pedagogical perspective. The topic addresses children who are engaged in evil or commit evil actions. The world exists and different people construe it in different ways and with a non-dualist viewpoint. It is precisely the non-dualist viewpoint I will keep in mind throughout this entire research paper. Hence the topic of my research, focusing on *which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective.*

## Erasmus Intensive Program in Wales in the summer of 2010

In the summer of 2010 in between June 21 till July 3 I was part of an Erasmus Intensive Program in Newport, Wales. This was cooperation between Stavanger, Norway, Vilnius, Lithuania, and Newport, Wales. From each country there were 12 bachelor students on their second year. All of the students had recently completed their placements and they were part of this program to share experiences. The programs main goal was to improve and strengthen the quality of cooperation between the participating countries and to

encourage and enable the mobility of workers and students all around Europe. Another goal with the program was to give a good student experience by looking at different innovative learning and teaching methods. And to find the cross-cultural possibilities through sharing experience from the three different study perspectives social pedagogy (Norway), social work (Lithuania) and youth work (Wales), in order to get a wider understanding. The program consisted of learning pedagogy; hence group work, lectures, group discussions and presentations, guest lecturers from the three participating countries and role-play.

I got offered to participate as a research assistant and did not attend in the same way as the bachelor students, which made it possible for me to observe, get to know the students and to conduct my qualitative research interviews, the main reason for my participation in Wales. The Erasmus Intensive Program would provide me with valuable opportunities to enhance my thesis paper. First, by being a part of the multicultural cooperation between the universities of Newport, Stavanger and Vilnius, I would get a better idea of what a social educator deals with presently in terms of globalization. It would be beneficial for me to learn from other countries perceptions about children and evil, which I intend to reflect throughout a section of my thesis. By interviewing students within these three educational partners, I am allowing my thesis to gain relevant cross-cultural perspectives. Doing so will provide me with the opportunity to examine the similarities and differences regarding various cultures perceptions on children and evil. The problems and issues experienced by young people in contemporary societies often transcend national and cultural boundaries. Through these interviews I will develop a multidimensional understanding by applying the skills of comparative analysis to Youth work, Social Pedagogy and Social Work within these different European nations.

The interviews I conducted during my time with the Erasmus Intensive Program in Wales would hopefully accomplish the above by asking interviewees their perceptions mainly regarding the high profile murder case in Liverpool. By asking interviewees about their opinions of the tragedy of James Bulger, I would be gaining insight about the various perceptions of children and evil. It will be an interesting and enlightening analysis of both cross-cultural beliefs as well as individual ideals about this subject.

## Methodology and analysis

This is just a short introduction and I will give a more thorough description about this in chapter three. In this research I have decided to use a qualitative research method.

Where I want to take advantage of the qualitative research interviews and have a semi-structured approach. In a semi-structured interview the questions will mainly be determined in advance, but the order of the questions is determined along the way.

Flexibility is important for linking the questions to the individual informants' assumptions. The qualitative research interview will be a conversation between me, as researcher, and the informants controlled by the topics research.

During my stay in Wales I interviewed seven bachelor students from three different countries, hence Norway, Lithuania and Wales. I used an approach called the convenience sample where the sampling is strategic because the informants' represent the characteristics that are relevant to my research, and the procedure for selecting informants' was based on the availability they had for me. As a research perspective, I will be using phenomenography. A perspective that gives insight to the study of "how the world is perceived by someone", thereof the type of perceptions my informants' have. Phenomenography is a research perspective and an implementation and analysis method, which can be combined with Steinar Kvale (1997) perspective of the qualitative research interview. Researchers working this way have no interest in discovering an interpretation of what is right and wrong, but to discover different ways to perceive different phenomenon. Thus, the different perceptions my informants have on children and evil.

## Summary of chapter one

In this chapter you have gotten an introduction that clarifies the focus of this research and the overall research aim. You have read about how the foundation of my thesis came to life, you also got a clarification on where the ideas for my paper came from. You have also read about the Erasmus Intensive Program in Wales in the summer of 2010 which is was part of and where I conducted my interviews. And last but not least, you got an

introduction to what kind of methods I have used. In chapter two the theoretical framework will be presented, which forms the basis of my thesis.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

*“The question remains of how we know whether a theory is right or wrong. The simple answer is that we don’t, but we can make judgements between more or less adequate explanations offered by a theory. Such judgements are not simple, they must involve a number of aspects that are different for different types of theory; but we must always remember that we are living in a world in which there are no final answers. As the world changes and becomes a different place, so the theory by means of which we understand it will change”*

Craib, 1992 cited in Critcher, 2003

As I mentioned in chapter one my master thesis is entitled "Moral Panic" a term used for the first time by the sociologist Stanley Cohen in 1973. Which used the concept of the impact created by society and the media to cover a phenomenon in such a way that the phenomenon is a symbol of a violation with the established norms, where the breach is an expression of a struggle between "them" and "us" or "good vs. evil" Moral panic can also be seen as a byproduct of controversy within a group that causes differential of opinion and social tension, or that are not discussed openly because conflict affects taboo-areas.

The ideas for my master thesis came to life much because of the BBC World Service (2000) article "When children kill children", and Cohen's concept on Moral panic (1973). Children and evil is often a taboo area and I will through my thesis paper examine how one perceives children and evil through a social pedagogical perspective. The topic addresses children who are engaged in evil or commit evil actions. The world exists and different people construe it in different ways; and with a non-dualist viewpoint. It is precisely the non-dualist viewpoint I will keep in mind throughout this entire research paper. Hence the topic of my research, focusing on *which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective.*

In this chapter I will present the theoretical framework that forms the basis for my thesis. I will therefore use a theoretical framework that illustrates the definitions of children, goodness, evil/evildoing, normality and deviation, moral panic and social



pedagogy, which are a part of the complex interaction between biological, psychological and social systems. I will primarily use the theories that discuss conditions between individuals and society, since it is the main focus in this thesis.

Some of the concepts used in this paper are more complex than I express, which means that some of the readers might think that I provide the concepts with explanations that are too simple. But I am not doing a research for those who want to dig deeper into these concepts, this is rather for those who need to get to know the concepts I use better. Language in the work of social pedagogy is an important factor and thus also concepts. My thesis paper is entitled “Moral Panic” and it is therefore appropriate to start defining this concept.

## Moral Panic

The most common quotation about moral panics is the opening paragraph from Stanley Cohen’s book of “Folk Devils and Moral Panics”:

*Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. (1) A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; (2) its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; (3) the moral barricade are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; (4) socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; (5) ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; (6) the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folk-lore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way the society conceives itself.*

Cohen, (1973) cited in Critcher, (2003)

As a child welfare worker and social pedagogue I see that four of the consisting six points above can be compared with the social pedagogical perspective. For instance social pedagogy concerns point 1, 2, 3 and 4 because it is a scientific perspective that is based on analyzing and examine factors and conditions in society that inhibit or promote formation of the individual and one try to develop a theory of formation/education based on these analysis, in which point 1, 2, 3 and 4 also indicate. Professionals undertake these discursive constructions directly or indirectly; hence educators, counselors, social workers and pedagogues inherit and apply models of childhood and their actions and behavior, which can guide to upbringing and education of societies members and for them to become people who together can shape the social life as a communion.

The term moral panic currently resonates across a range of popular and academic debates about different topics, from the prospect of evil children, which I am writing about to the influence of video games on young people. The term often works as a kind of short-hand for public hysteria, but definition “irrational”, and is almost always held to be indicative of someone else’s behaviour rather than our own. Amongst researcher, the term is more likely to be taken to describe a host of complex – and contradictory – social process shaping public perceptions of an exigent threat to the “moral order of society”. Shared across most of these different inflections of the term, however, is the assumption that the media and the society play a crucial role in determining the characteristics of a moral panic (Critcher, 2003).

In his book “Moral Panics and the Media” Chas Critcher (2003) concludes that moral panic has three different dimensions. The first dimension involves an identifiable process of definition and action. Critcher’s second dimension marks the moral boundaries of society. His last dimension is a set of discourses of various kinds of levels. This is to demonstrate the value of moral panic models in tracing the similarities and difference between otherwise diverse social problems in quite different national context. According to Stanley Cohen (1997) this moral panic is a way to gain social control and can be defined as society organized reaction on human behavior as deviant, problematic, worrying, threatening, difficult or otherwise undesirable. This social control is a process were undesirable behaviors describing the use of particular

designations that intend to categorize the unwanted behavior, such as children who perform evil acts. When “moral panics strikes”, the social pedagogical perspective seeks to create and recreate committed and mutual social relations between individuals and communities in society's conflict zones. Again we see that Cohen's (1997) perspective relates to the social pedagogical perspective.

Stanley Cohan has developed a model of how moral panics occur in society and it has been extended into a processual model of the moral panic with seven loosely defined stages (Critchler, 2003):

**1. Emergence** – At this point a form of behaviour comes to be perceived as a threat. There is a general anxiety that something is wrong and a narrower focus on immediate danger. The initially fragmented response a warning, sensible processes that is dominant in the next stage. This is the moment when a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests. The object of the panic may be new or long established.

**2. Media inventory** – This is an initial explanation of the nature of the threat and those who represent it, articulated primarily through the mass media. Three strategies are involved: exaggeration/distortion, prediction and symbolization. The media become sensitized to apparently similar events. “Its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media”.

**3. Moral entrepreneurs** – Groups or organizations take it upon themselves to pronounce upon the nature of problem and its best means. Cohen sees the “moral barricades” being manned “by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people”. They offer orientations and so called expert responses, images of the deviants and explanations of their causal explanations.

**4. Experts** - “Socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions”. On some issues these “experts” may carry particular weight, affecting the way the media, especially exclusive papers and broadcasting, come to define the issue. So the distinctive contribution of experts remains identifiable.

**5. Coping and resolution** – The reaction of the media, moral entrepreneurs and experts contain ideas about required measures. Current powers are exploited and demands for legal reform will often follow. Ways of coping are here evolved or more often resorted to.

**6. Fade away** – The moral panics ends, as “the conditions disappears, submerges or worsen and become more visible”. Cohen leaves open the possibility that the condition may re-emerge.

**7. Legacy** – Cohen suggests that any moral panic may have “little long-lasting effect” and become a “footnote in history” or produce changes in social policy; the law or societies view itself.

Crithcer (2003) make us aware that points two to five above, for example, are not in any simple sense linear; media, moral entrepreneurs, experts, public opinion, elites and the control culture reinforce each other’s interpretations. He goes on by saying that Cohan emphasizes that the deviancy amplification model is not an unavoidable one.

To sum it all up one can say that moral panic is a concept about the effect created by society and the media. And how they cover a phenomenon in such a way that the phenomenon is a symbol of violation with the established norms in society, and an expression of a struggle between "them" and "us". Moral panic can also be seen as a byproduct of controversy within a group that causes differential of opinion and social tension.

The term is later applied in common use of language as a more general term for a panic reaction in divers public, when a group or a phenomenon is seen as threat against public morality. If such a group reaction shall be characterized as moral panic, it is implied that it is unreasonable or exaggerated (ibid, 2003).

## Children and childhood

*“I remember that Bruno Bettelheim, originator of a revolutionary theory about individuals’ personal and intellectual development, used to say: “It is more than enough if you give me the first seven years of a human life, you can keep the rest”. I have wanted to be more generous: I offer you ten, as well as some episodes from the school years, believe me, it is more than enough”!*

Dario Fo - Flaggermusenes by. Mine første sju år og noen til (2006)

According to Dario Fo (2006) this is how long childhood lasts. But what is a child? A rather redundant question one might say; everybody knows what a child is. Children pass us every day on our way to work or the university. We see them every morning during rush hour on their way to kindergarten or school. We hear the sound of children playing. I see them at practice playing football. We are all aware of children’s world of books, we remember childhood games and rules, TV-shows and in the classroom. We have all been children.

At the same time we all experience that childhood is changing. Mass media creates the background for a “new” childhood; every generation has their own kind of movies and TV-series, their own music-hits and toys they play with. Our life spans are organized in new ways; the age group who not long ago were young parents, are now often just young, and fourteen year olds are now claimed to be more mature than a generation ago. So the big question, “what defines a child?” might not be an easy answered question.

At what age group does one have to be to in to be defined as a child? When does childhood end? Whether a fifteen year old is a child or an adult does not only depend on him or her, but on how the environment interprets and understand a fifteen year old. A society has certain ideas about their children, images that determine what a “child” is and what is expected of children in various situations. The image we have of children is not constant. It varies from society to society and it varies throughout history. How to define a child is therefore a question with many answers, and it depends on which

society and era the question is asked (Frønes, 2003). The family is also an entity that changes. Single parents have also increased and it is becoming more and more common with families where parents are of the same sex. The dominant nuclear family consisting of a father, mother and their children have also changed, because the relations between the individuals are changing. A family where dad is working and mom as a housewife is a totally different social entity than a family where both parents are working and have a career. Childhood implied within might therefore appear different to how the dominating A4 generation experienced childhood images. Different cultures can also have totally different perception of what a child is. This multi-cultural society does in fact not only give us new inequalities, it also creates a new awareness of the past.

According to Frønes (2003) the list of possible perspectives of children and childhood is long and reflects that childhood can be viewed from various angles. Some studies focus on the child's upbringing, others on their life conditions, how they play or on their behavior. There are a lot of different structural perspectives that tell us how to understand childhood and children. To talk about only one kind of childhood is therefore incorrect. Childhood's social and cultural formulation and children's life conditions vary with social classes, region and ethnicity. Childhood is also based in the family; parents' resources, upbringing and ways of thinking influence the formulation of childhood and the individual child's life and future (ibid, 2003).

As we all know we are not children our whole lives, childhood is a phase one passes through. In our culture, childhood is implied as the formative/shaping years; psychology has thought us that how we are as adults can be traced back to our childhood experience. Childhood is a development process an educational process, which we often refer to as the process of socialization. It is not just a process that deals with children's everyday lives, about their social position in relation to adults and other children, but also the images, the conceptions we have of childhood's position in our culture. The society in which we now live in has a tendency to see children as innocent, natural and legit. Former decades had a completely different "picture" of children (ibid, 2003).

As mentioned above, childhood is a complex phenomenon and it has a lot of different phenomena to it. Children are often considered to be "mysterious creatures" that live in

a playful world of mystical innocence and harmony. Childhood is associated with family, with different educational institutions, to modern media, to peers and to different theories focusing on children through different perspectives. Childhood is according to Frønes (2003) one of the best social phenomena to illustrate the complexity in social and cultural phenomena. Our daily comprehension is simple enough; childhood affects children in a particular age group and their lives. If we look more closely at what we put into childhood, we will see that the concept refers to a lot of various conditions, and various theories see childhood from different perspectives (ibid, 2003).

Based on Dario Fo's (2006) statement, "I have wanted to be more generous: I offer you ten, as well as some episodes from the school years, believe me, it is more than enough", and on my research interviews the age limit for when childhood ends is after reaching ten. As you will read about later on almost all my informants had the same perception on what a child was. Hence they all meant that a child is not aware of its own abnormal actions when they are in the age of ten and lower. They do not really know right from wrong. When a child is older than ten years of age it starts becoming an adolescent and is then aware of his/her actions. They reflect on what they do, they are capable of knowing right from wrong. Do not get me wrong; hopefully we all have the child in us our whole lives, but the childlike fantasies, the mystical innocence, the vulnerability and the playfulness of being a child slightly fades as the days goes by after turning eleven years of age. Some might say childhood ends at ten and some might say it ends when one becomes a teenager, even older. Piaget, and other child psychologists who have followed and developed his work, would concur that most "normal" children have developed a capacity to be held responsible for their actions by the age of ten. This is a stage that is not always age - related, and will not apply to all children. But my definition of a child in this research is from the age of zero to ten.

## Good and evil as opposites

Children do not necessarily understand right from wrong or good and evil as adults do. As we grow older, most of us develop the ability to put ourselves in the shoes of another person and to understand the consequence of our actions in terms of other peoples' feelings: "to do as you would be done by". Some children have never been given a sense

of right and wrong or good and evil. To others it is acute. The common thing about children is, it is about “me”. Parents put boundaries round that and gradually the child learns and internalizes it. But, at the very least, he or she would have a sense of permanence. You can find children with a very empathic mind or you can find children who lacks of empathy. Some children would know that when mum says: “Bingo the dog, has gone to heaven”, she does not mean that Bingo has gone to somewhere it can float back down again. She means: “That is it! Bingo is gone” Other children would not have this capacity: it is something that is variable. According to Susan Bailey this sense of permanence is one the basic things she would look for in determining the child’s ability to distinguish right from wrong and good from evil (Paul, 2005).

Most parents hope that their own children, having gone through their adolescence, come out with an ability to recognize right from wrong and to understand and accept responsibility; these are good indicators that they might make reasonable adults and maybe parents. Parents, teachers, social pedagogues and social workers and others who have been involved in children’s upbringing will attempt to give them certain skills, which may be taught directly, arising out ways of dealing with various situations that come up, or may be learned at second hand through sports and games for instance. Often such concepts and understandings will develop slowly, and what is learned or experienced in one context is not always applied or seen as relevant in another (ibid, 2005).

## Evil and evildoing

To know what evil is one has to know what goodness is and vice versa. I therefore think it is important for the readers to get a definition of these two phenomena. Evil and goodness is also two perspectives that have an important part in my thesis paper. They are opposites of each other, in a variety of ways. Influences that lead to goodness inhibit evil and those that lead to evil inhibit goodness. Good actions enhance, evil ones diminish, human wellbeing. They are also opposite aspects of morality, which refers to actions that relate to human welfare, principles and rules that guide such actions.

According to psychologist professor Ervin Staub (2003) morality is our conception of



how humans ought to behave. Moral rules and principles prescribe good (beneficial) actions and prohibit evil (destructive) ones. However, good and evil acts are not only guided by principles, rules, or values, but also feelings – of connection to, versus disconnection from, other people, of affection, caring and empathy versus anger and hostility. Staub (2003) also believes that these feelings give us motives to be good or bad, help or harm others. As personality develops with experience, some people will be more inclined to feel empathy, others feel anger and hostility. Thus, good and evil actions are opposites not only in their effects, and our conceptions of what is right and wrong, but also in the feelings, values and psychological process that lead to one or the other (ibid, 2003).

The Swedish pedagogue Eva Johansson has for several years conducted research on young children's ethics and morals, which among other things, have resulted in a doctoral dissertation (Johansson 1999). One of her conclusions is that children show empathy and altruism towards other human beings in a very young age. According to Johansson (1999), children's moral development begins just a few months after they are born. She believes that children are affected by someone's situation, especially on other children's feelings, and sometimes act to achieve something for others. Her empirical findings gives her the reason to believe that if the adults in any way do not engage children when other children are upset, are subjected to violations or need support, they still show empathy towards others (Johansson, 1999).

When it comes to defining evil I have decided to go with Ervin Staubs (2003) definition. According to him, evil means human destructiveness. This can come in an obvious form, as great violence against others. Or it can come I smaller act of persistent harm-doing, and can for example be acts were parents are being hostile and punitive, or peers picking on a child day by day for a long time. Such actions can destroy a child's spirit, his or her dignity, self-worth and ability to trust people.

Evil has been a religious concept. The word has also been used as a secular term to describe, explain or express disgust to certain actions and the human beings or natural forces from which they originate. The notion of a nonhuman force and origin has often been associated with evil, such as the devil, Satan or Mephistopheles. The word evil is

emotionally expressive for people: It communicates horror over some deed. People often romanticize evil. They want to see the repulsive acts or events to which the word refers as having mythic proportions. Appointing something as evil is sometimes used to suggest that the actions are not intelligible in an ordinary human framework. The actions are outside the bounds of morality or even of human freedom (ibid, 2003). Evil is usually used to denote extreme human destructiveness, as in cases of genocide, mass killing, murder, abuse etc, but evil may be defined by a number of elements. One of these is extreme harm. The harm can be pain, suffering, loss of life or the loss of personal or human potential. Thus, it might be best not to regard evil as a single act of intense harm that is out of balance with provocation. However, violence and evil acts evolve, and individuals and groups change as a result of their actions. As a person or group commits an intensely harmful act there is an increased likelihood that they will do so again. Evil acts are mainly directed at other human beings, although the destruction of animals and nature may also be considered as evil. These actions often cause material harm: death, injury, pain or severe deprivation and injustice. An important thing Staub (2003) points out is that a continuous neglect or derogatory of a child that causes physical harm, psychological pain or psychological injury that reduce the capacity of growth and satisfaction are also adequate regarded as evil.

Evil is considered to be overthrowing a moral conviction. One cannot study the phenomenon of evil, empirically, but it we can study the different perceptions of evil itself empirically. By identifying the empirical conditions, which the moral evil category will apply (sociological, psychological, biological, etc.) one can reflect over the ethical and philosophical phenomenon (Haugaas, 2010). Evil can be very visible to the outside world and it can be done quietly, preventing the outside world from knowing about it. Individuals, who practice evil, are not necessarily malicious. They are often lively irresponsible, insensitive, indifferent and surprisingly unconscionable. Individuals who do vicious acts are not an indicator that the person is evil, although they might become over time. It is also important to notice that evil can be interpreted many different ways based on ethnic groups, religion, culture and ethnicity. It is also important to remember that evil is a very abstract word and a Norwegian perception of evil might not be the same as in the United States. It is therefore important that we get a common holistic perspective.

Erwin Staubs (2003) definition of and concern with evil has to do with human actions that harm others. It focuses on evil actions and individuals as well as groups or societies that can develop characteristics that make it likely that they will repeatedly engage in such actions. Whether we do or do not want to call such individuals or groups evil, we must recognize their tendency for harm doing. We must understand its roots and develop the knowledge required and the will to use this knowledge to prevent destructive behaviour and to prevent ignorance (Staub. 2003). Evil acts cause different opinions and social tension, and are sometimes not discussed openly because the conflict affects taboo-areas. Children who do evil acts are often a taboo area and it is therefore an important topic to shine light upon.

## Goodness

Goodness is the opposite of evil. It refers to actions that bring benefit to individuals or whole groups, the greater the benefit the more effort and/or sacrifice it requires, the greater the goodness. Goodness, like evil, can come in an obvious form, like a single heroic act that saves someone's life. Or it can take the form of a person giving his seat away on the bus to a senior citizen or a person volunteering at the homeless shelter (Staub, 2003). Goodness also has to do with altruism, which is the principle or practice of unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others (opposed to egoism). Which again show that a person have an empathic devotion towards other human beings.

Goodness can also take the form of persistent engagement in helping people or creating positive social change that does not involve great danger. It can consist of small, repeated acts that bring benefit to others, like kindness by a neighbor or relative toward a child who is neglected or badly treated at home, kindness that can help the child develop normally or even flourish in spite of adversity. Like evil, goodness too is comprehensible. Like evil, goodness also evolves. Individuals and groups change by their own actions, which shape them to become more caring and helpful. "Those who help others, tend to value more the welfare of people they have helped, or of people in general, which makes it more likely that they will help again" (ibid, 2003:7).

As I mentioned in chapter one, the child experts predominate and affect our perceptions of what evil children are. In this day and age phenomena like children and evil have not gotten enough attention. And to work deliberately with important phenomena like these is a deficiency in child protection and for social pedagogues. There have not been enough research about this topic and I therefore believe that my thesis paper will provide us with new and essential relevancy. It was also important for me to embed the topic with the social pedagogical perspective, because it is important not just for social pedagogues but also other professions to have deliberate relations and gain knowledge about children and evil.

## Social pedagogy

Before I go on by telling you about the concept of social pedagogy I want to make one thing clear. When I am using the term social pedagogy in my thesis I am talking about both the active performing social pedagogue and the professionals that use social pedagogue as an analytic tool. These two factors depend on each other and it is important not to just think of one profession when the term social pedagogue is used. Through this paper I might use other terms, but that is just to get a variation in the language.

The social pedagogical practice has emerged from the social reality, which society constantly produces individuals and groups who are at risk of not being integrated. The social pedagogical practices seek to create and recreate committed and mutual social relations between individuals and communities in society's conflict zones. When modern society is described with definitions like "knowledge society", "expertise society" and "educational society", a number of new social demands to citizen's lifestyle and capacity are made. Some people can live up to these conceptions of a new "normality", others cannot. But for every "normality categories" that is made we also produce a shadow side of them (Madsen, 2006).

If to be "normal" is to have the right expertise, the useful knowledge and the disciplined social behavior, we have also produced categories for the deviant, which then can be described as the incompetent, useless, inaccurate and undisciplined. Thereby creating

the foundation of societies treatment of the “dissidents”. According to Bent Madsen (2006) social pedagogies major challenge is to respond to this general tendency to focus on the dissidents themselves and not on their social and cultural conditions. In the development of social pedagogy in terms of modernity, it is crucial to maintain that social pedagogy has a triple approach as its theoretical basis. It is the approach to man, its social and cultural conditions and the complex interaction between people and their social world (ibid, 2006).

Although social pedagogy, like other social scientific disciplines, can be put to different use, including unethical indoctrination, its practical application in Norway and other countries has historically focused on helping socially marginalized groups. For the most part, child welfare pedagogues work with disadvantaged children and their families, often as ambulant professionals in such sites as children’s homes, schools, after-school clubs, child and youth psychiatry and even prisons. In these settings, the social pedagogue is expected to exhibit such human qualities as empathy, a capacity for reaching respectful, mutual understanding and the ability to build constructive relationships (Stephens, 2009).

At the heart of social pedagogic practice is the education or socialization of the child and adult into social life and let them become part of a communion. This process involves the determination of social habits, mainly in the family and in school, but also in other social arenas where there is a conscientious effort to impart social knowledge. The main point here is that social pedagogy takes more account of the sociological compared to the cognitive aspects of human development. It is a social pedagogical task to create conditions for social participation in acclaimed societies. Not based on fear, but in the confidence that all people strive after the good life through the social conditions that exist, and with a sense in which society enables (Madsen, 2006).

And let’s not forget that globalization have created a so far unseen degree of mutual conditions of existence that is synonymous to a similar degree of interdependence and coexistence. In a globalized world it is a question of co-existence or no-existence. Social pedagogies basic entitlement is not to assume or accept that people live in different worlds, but to create conditions that people can live differently in the world (ibid, 2006).

According to “Norway’s official reports – Competence development in Child Protection” from 2009 (NOU) social pedagogy is defined as the study of how psychological, social and material conditions and different value orientations promote or prevent an individual or a group’s overall development and growth, quality of life and wellbeing. The concept of social pedagogy was first used in Germany, where Paul Natorp was the pioneer. He emphasized the pedagogies social dimension focusing on social development and the significance of upbringing.

This social pedagogical thinking resulted in new reforms in the educational system and new perspectives in the upbringing. At the same time social pedagogy was in an early stage referred to aid parents in the upbringing of their children. According to Natorp social pedagogy was a theory that included all kind of pedagogy and it became an area for upbringing outside of the family and schools, when these institutions did not reach its goal of integration (Mathiesen, 2008). According to NOU (2009) the social work education in Norway shall qualify to these social pedagogical activities, towards children, adolescents and their careers. It is here important to have a social perspective when it comes to upbringing and learning, and the organization of everyday life, space and activity are central in the social pedagogical thinking.

I have now given a definition of the word social pedagogy and described how social pedagogy can be put to different uses, where the main practice is to educate and socialize children and adults into social life and societies norms. In terms of my research I had to do more then just brush the surface, I had to dig deeper and get a thorough perception of what social pedagogy is. The discussion here is more about the necessity and the sense of understanding on how the individual and society relate to each other; hence to the purpose of my research that is *which view on evil and children is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective*. We live in a society where we influence each other and need each other one-way or the other. There are a lot of ways to interpret the social pedagogical perspective, but I believe that Paul Natorp’s core perspective and definition will suit my master thesis the best. It is this perspective that will be on display throughout my research. What is written underneath is just a theoretical introduction of Natorp’s social pedagogical perspective and I will give a thorough description of this perspective in chapter five in my thesis.

Paul Natorp (1854 – 1924) founded a theory of social pedagogy based on Kant's fundamental precepts on morals. A human being is no more than what upbringing makes them. Natorp believes that the interpretation of the individual and society as mutual assumptions is the foundation of a main hypothesis of the social pedagogical theory. It says, "Man can only become Man through human interaction". Thus, human communion liberates rather than restricts the individual. One of the fundamental precepts of social pedagogy is that the individual and society are each predicated upon the other.

Natorp tries to give a reasoned response to an important question, namely the relationship between upbringing and society. This is basically, the issue of an interaction-relationship between upbringing and society. The premise is that upbringing is conditioned by society, and that the development of society is a consequence of the upbringing each individual have received. The essence here is individual and society as mutual assumptions to each other. According to Natorp it was necessary to illustrate the facts related to upbringing and the realities about the social life. He said that the social life appears as a large organism for the human formation (Mathiesen, 2008).

Roger Mathiesen's (2008) interpretation of Natorp's social pedagogical perspective is; examine and analyze the factors and conditions in society (social conditions) that inhibits or promotes the formation of the individual, and to develop a theory based on the formation of a social pedagogical analysis, which can guide the upbringing and education to the members of society, to enable them to become "normal" people who are able to shape the social life into a communion. The development of communion emerges as a norm to becoming a part of society (Mathiesen, 2008). In this day and age it is all about getting included into society, hence normality vs. deviation, or if one think of my research "good" children vs. "evil" children.

As I mentioned above there are many ways to interpret social pedagogy and I think that Paul Stephens (2009) definition gives a thorough description of the word and I have therefore decided to add his definition as well. He defines social pedagogy as follows:

*"Social pedagogy is the study and practice of deliberative care, education and*

*upbringing, viewed holistically rather than as separate entities, and with emphasis on finding pedagogical ways of nurturing and supporting positive social development”*

Stephens, 2009

Society is changing and so does the social pedagogical perspective. Social pedagogy cannot be described or understood without its interaction with modern society, where the permanent modernization processes challenge social pedagogical thoughts and practices. Stephens’s definition refers to societies current needs and it is especially relevant in today’s Norwegian context. And that is another reason why I added his definition as well.

## Normality and deviation

The social and cultural opinions of children, adolescents and adults are often based on informal procedures in which criteria’s have been embedded as social norms and cultural values into the social pedagogical everyday life. This perspective means that we never look at children without assumptions. A group of children and the child itself are usually met with very specific assumptions in terms of behavior, language and thoughts (Madsen, 2006).

Society has certain conceptions of what is desirable, of what is expected from children, through social structures and cultural norms. These evaluation processes are profoundly embedded in our daily routines and incorporated in the norms and values that exist in our society. If we follow society’s norms and values we are accepted as “normal”, but if we break out of these norms and values, we are regarded as “deviants”. This is just an overstated example to show these two extremes.

In a broader sense of the term, deviation means the behavior or the conditions that differs from the normal or average. In the narrower sense deviation is defined as violations of important norms that exist in a society. What these standards involve can vary widely between different social systems, and what is within them. In other words deviation is not a characteristic of a particular person, a specific action etc., but a



product of social control. The fact that something appears to be deviation is not caused by the moral violation, it is the behavior that is defined or labeled as deviant in the current social system, the current culture or the relevant community. The deviation is not built into the act as such, but in the reaction others have of it. Other peoples labeling can both generate and reinforce deviation (Hillestad, 2006).

According to Torgeir Hillestad (2006) deviation has two main approaches: one individualistic (biological/psychological) and a collectivistic (socially). With the study of and through the gradual recognition of how human life arises and is shaped in a larger context, a specific and diverse range of theories that were based in the human roots emerge. Not just in themselves, their own psyche, personality and biology, but also in their relation, cultural, social and historical conditions (ibid, 2006). Through these new theoretical approaches the focus was now shifted from the individual (micro level) to the social conditions and relations (macro level). The social or sociological theories of deviation that has gradually gained ground have had tendencies to push the more individual-oriented theories and explanations in the background or bluntly rejected them. But it is also important to show that social theories do not exclude psychological and more individual-oriented theories, at least not as long as the principle that social and human facts are, as Hillestad writes, "real things and objects" (ibid, 2006).

The prevalence of deviance provides and prepares the moral and legal limits which are desirable and which shall apply in a particular society. And at the same time help us to strengthen the social morality and the "lawful unity". Moreover, the perception of deviation has another important social function, hence to indicate and form the basis for society's flexibility. In order to remain and evolve, every society must be able to absorb and adapt to change, new ideas and external influence (ibid, 2006). When it comes to being abnormal or breaking society's norms and values, there are no special features, malfunctions or symptoms. According to Hillestad deviation and pathology occurs when we put them under certain social constructed norms and general rule systems, which gives us an indication on how to relate to specific features of different individuals. The symbols, concepts, interpretations and definitions we use in our social perceptions and practices, and in a large extent represent society itself, seem decisive on our experiences and especially on our self-understanding (ibid, 2006).

As you will see later on in chapter 4, my informants' holistic points of views, subconsciously or not, are all based on the two philosophers John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. I therefore think it is of importance for the reader to also get a short introduction of their perspectives.

## John Locke Vs Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) and John Locke (1632 – 1704) were some of the most influential political and philosophic thinkers of their times. Living during different times, their contrasting views were influenced by what they experienced. Thomas Hobbes lived through one the bloodiest wars ever, the “English Civil War”; and making him view mankind as evil and beastly. On the other hand, John Locke lived through the “Glorious Revolution”, one of the most bloodless and peaceful wars ever fought; thus viewing humans as nonviolent. Hobbes and Locke are renowned philosophers for their firm believes in their thoughts and views about the nature of mankind (Hillestad, 2006).

Thomas Hobbes was a very accomplished writer. In 1651, the English Civil War inspired Hobbes to write is famous, “Leviathan”. It studied physical bodies and human nature. Hobbes viewed people and society as materialistic and mechanical. He defined human will as, “the last appetite before choice”. Although he viewed mankind as unthinking, he did believe that man could prosper from the use of science (ibid, 2006).

Hobbes viewed mankind in a very negative way. He claimed that people had a strong desire to attain power. Hobbes saw the original human state as corrupted and evil. He saw people as self-centered monsters without a master. In his view, the only way to prevent people from acting out of sorts was to impose a tightly ruled government, known as absolutism. He thought that a strong ruler could control the negative aspects of man. He believed that absolute rulers should have complete unlimited power. Hobbes did not care who was in power, as long as it was an absolute ruler (ibid, 2006).

John Locke also was a renowned writer. In 1690, he wrote, “Essay concerning Human Understanding”. Unlike Hobbes, Locke described the human mind as a blank board at

birth. He said that no one was born good or evil, but that the society people grow up in influences their morality. Locke showed his disapproval with Hobbes' claim that rulers were absolute in power. Locke believed that an absolute monarchy was inconsistent and no form of civil government. He believed that the best form of government was a limited constitutional monarchy. In contrast to Hobbes, Locke believed that it was important to protect the rights of life, health, liberty, and possessions (ibid, 2006).

Thomas Hobbes and John Locke had very different views when it comes to the state and right of mankind. Hobbes viewed mankind as inherently evil and as savage beasts. While Locke claimed humans were born clean, pure and with a blank slate, but it is society that influences the evil. Hobbes wanted an absolute monarchy to control the wild nature of man. On the other hand, Locke wanted a limited monarchy and the preservation of man's rights. In Hobbes view, the greatest good was law and order, while Locke believed in maintaining the rights owed to man.

## Summary of chapter two

In this chapter you have read about the theoretical framework that forms the basis for my thesis. You have seen that my theoretical framework illustrates the definitions on children, goodness, evil/evildoing, normality and deviation, moral panic and social pedagogy, which are a part of the complex interaction between biological, psychological and social systems. Paul Natorp (1854 – 1924) founded a theory of social pedagogy based on Kant's fundamental precepts on morals. Human communion liberates rather than restricts the individual. One of the fundamental precepts of social pedagogy is that the individual and the community are each predicated upon the other. Natorp believed that rising from the individual level to the communal level enriches the self. Pedagogy is faced with the task to contribute to the development of the individual's personality through upbringing and education. It is in this situational context we must understand the social pedagogical perspective that "man can only become man through human interaction" (Mathiesen, 2008). It is this perspective that will be on display throughout my research. You also got a short introduction of John Lock and Thomas Hobbes perspective. The theoretical framework is from national and international professors in the field of social science. I will primarily use the theories that discuss conditions

between individuals and society, since it is the main focus in this thesis. In the next chapter I will be focusing on the methodology I have used throughout my master thesis.

# Chapter 3: Research Methods

## Deciding which methodology is right for me

There has always been a large amount of complex discussions and arguments surrounding the topic of research methodology and the theory of how inquiry should proceed. Much of this debate has centered on the issue of qualitative versus quantitative inquiry – which might be “the” best and which is more “scientific”. Different methodologies became popular at different social, political, historical and cultural times in our development, and, in my opinion, all methodologies have their specific strengths and weaknesses. These should be acknowledged and addressed by the researcher, which will help us to think about our research methodology in considerable depth. It is important not to fall into the trap in thinking that quantitative research is “better” than qualitative research and vice versa. Neither is better than the other, they are just different and both have their strengths and weaknesses. Another important thing to keep in mind is which of the two methodologies is best suited for your research. It is an advantage for me as a researcher to find it more productive to conduct the type of research in which I will feel most comfortable. Thus, why did I lean towards one rather than the other? How did I decide and justify which methodology to choose?

## Comparing Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Quantitative and qualitative research methods differ primarily in:

- Their analytical objectives
- The types of question they pose
- The types of data collection instruments they use
- The forms of data they produce
- The degree of flexibility built into study designs

The key difference between quantitative and qualitative methods is their flexibility. Generally, quantitative methods are fairly inflexible. With quantitative methods such as

surveys and questionnaires, for example, researchers ask all participants identical questions in the same order. The response categories from which participants may choose are “closed-ended” or fixed. The advantage of this inflexibility is that it allows for a meaningful comparison of responses across participants’ and study sites. However, it requires a thorough understanding of the important questions to ask, the best way to ask them, and the range of possible responses (Thagaard, 2009).

Qualitative methods are typically more flexible, that is, they allow greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the studied participant. For example, qualitative methods ask mostly “open-ended” questions that are not necessarily articulated in exactly the same way with each participant. With open-ended questions, participants’ are free to respond in their own words, and these responses tend to be more complex than simply “yes” or “no” (ibid, 2009).

In addition, the relationship between the researcher and the participant in qualitative methods is often less formal than in quantitative research. Participants’ have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with quantitative methods. In turn, researchers have the opportunity to respond immediately to what participants’ say.

It is important to note, however, that there is a range of flexibility among methods used in both quantitative and qualitative research and that flexibility is not an indication of how scientifically strict a method is. Rather, the degree of flexibility reflects the kind of understanding of the problem that is being pursued by using the method (ibid, 2009).

## Qualitative research method

Cato Wadel (1991) claims that qualitatively oriented research implies to a "roundel" between theory and hypotheses, methodology and data, while the researcher is engaged in fieldwork. Most likely, the researcher must change their strategy during the process. One cannot predict what the data is, prior to the experience and information one can access, is considered and interpreted (Wadel, 1991).

Qualitative approaches are characterized by diversity in types of data and analytical procedures. By using qualitative methods, we can delve deeper and obtain rich data in the form of direct quotations and careful descriptions of observed behaviours.

Qualitative research usually seeks to answer questions about what individuals express in their own words and qualitative researchers use methods that obtain rich data in first-hand testimony. The aim is to reconstruct, as far as possible, the experiences of the participants in their own terms. In that respect, the analysis seeks to keep faith with the perceptions of those whom the researcher is studying. The analysis is their analysis, or as close to this as is achievable. A large amount of data analysis in qualitative research involves presenting excerpts from transcripts of interviews, thereby capturing the presence of “voice”. The researcher then clarifies these dialogues by being sorted into major themes. The “real expert” is the insider, not the outsider, the respondent rather than the researcher (Stephens, 2009).

Because most qualitative research aims at an in-depth understanding of a few cases rather than general trends, qualitative data collection typically uses smaller samples than those employed in quantitative research. This allows the qualitative researcher to study small-scale settings in fine detail. In qualitative research, it is also quite common for the researcher to spend time in the setting under study: a clinic, a community, a school or in my case the Erasmus Intensive Program in Wales, or wherever care professionals and other respondents’ go about their daily lives (ibid, 2009).

Traditionally, qualitative methods have been associated with research that involves close contact between the researcher and those studied, as in observation and interview. An important objective for qualitative approaches is to achieve an understanding of social phenomena. Interpretation is therefore particularly essential in qualitative research (Thagaard, 2009). Important methodological challenges might be how the researcher analyzes and interprets the social phenomena being studied. Qualitative methods are still in a development phase. It is therefore essential that the principles of qualitative research is based on are explicitly defined. This means to clarify and specify the processes that lead to results in qualitative research (ibid, 2009).

The reason why I chose to go with qualitative research is its ability to provide complex

textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the “human” side of an issue – that is, the often-contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent (ibid, 2009). Although findings from qualitative data can often be extended to people with characteristics similar to those in the study population, gaining a rich and complex understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon typically takes precedence over eliciting data that can be generalized to other geographical areas or populations. In this sense, qualitative research differs slightly from scientific research in general.

Another advantage of qualitative methods is that they allow the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant responses – that is, to ask why or how. The researcher must listen carefully to what participants say, engage with them according to their individual personalities and styles, and use “probes” to encourage them to elaborate on their answers (ibid, 2009).

As you can see, I will be using a qualitative research method. I want to take advantage of the qualitative research interview and have a semi-structured approach that focuses on the informants’ perception of one or multiple phenomena. I will come back to that later on.

## The qualitative research interview

Under the umbrella of qualitative research there are many different methodologies. The three most common qualitative methods, explained in detail in their respective modules, are participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups. Each method is particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data.

- *Participant observation* is appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in their usual contexts.
- *Qualitative research interviews* are optimal for collecting data on individuals’ personal histories, perspectives and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are



being explored.

- *Focus groups* are effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural groups or subgroups represented.

*“The qualitative research interview is the place for production of knowledge. An interview is literally an inter view, an exchange of views between two people who talk about a topic of common interest. The interdependence of human interaction and knowledge production is a major theme in this method”.*

Kvale, (1997)

To talk, “converse”, is a basic human communication method. People talk with each other; they interact, ask and answer questions. Through conversations we learn how to get to know each other, we learn about their experience, feelings and dreams and about the world they live in.

There are many types of conversations; in everyday life, in literature and in a scientific context. The everyday life conversation can be about anything from chitchat to exchanging news, discussions and formal negotiations, to exchanging deep personal thoughts and emotions. From drama to novels in literature, communication embraces a wide specter of things. This can contain shorter or longer conversations. Scientific conversations include journalistic interviews, legal interrogations, academically oral exams, therapeutically conversations etc, and what I will be using, a qualitative research interview (ibid, 1997).

A qualitative research interview is based on monotonous talk or conversation and is more of a scientific conversation. A semi-structured approach is a particular kind of research interview. It is defined as an interview, which aims to gather descriptions of the informants’ view of life in order to interpret the described phenomena (ibid, 1997). There is nothing mysterious in using interview as a scientific method. An interview, or in my case a qualitative research interview, is a conversation that has some structure and meaning. You dig deeper than in spontaneous everyday talk. It becomes a cautious “ask and listen approach”, where the reason is to produce thoroughly tested knowledge. A

research interview is not a “normal” conversation between equal participants, as it is the researcher/interviewer who defines and controls the situation (ibid, 1997). The interviewer himself sets the theme of the interview.

To demonstrate this way of doing research, I will present an extract from one of my interviews (Ommundsen, 2010):

**I: Can children actually be evil or do evil things?**

**Lois:** What if I say yes and no? Yes, to be evil is to perform an evil act. But no, in terms of knowing what one does, if they know right from wrong. I don't think that it can be so black and white; there must be some gray areas. But I can't imagine that intention and action can be put together in a way that it can be calculated as a purely evil act. Children are not developed well enough to be thinking of consequences. I do not think that they can sit and wonder; "today I want to go out and kill someone". And then you have to keep age in mind. For it is a very young group of individuals. It's usually adolescents we think of when it comes to such acts.

**I: So one evil act isn't enough to say that a child is evil?**

**Lois:** No it's not. I can answer pretty clear on that one to be honest.

**I: Do children know right from wrong? Do they know how to reflect?**

**Lois:** Yes I think so. It's what I meant when I told you that they learn these things. The two ten year olds said they knew they had done something wrong. The question was; whether they should believe it or not. And then they go on by saying it was cunning. How cunning can a 10 year old be? And what wouldn't one do and say to protect oneself?

**I: John Locke talks about “tabula rasa”, children are born with a “clean slate”. And Thomas Hobbes said that children are born egotistic and goes as far as saying they**

are born evil. And they eventually learn how to be good and socialise. Which perspective do you believe in?

**Lois:** I can't really say if it's one or the other. All human beings have some form of egoism. So what you're really asking me is if children are born egoistic. We get socialized into a community and we get "sculpted" from our surroundings. In other words there's much to this, why do they always go back to their upbringing and childhood? Thus, who are these kids' parents, where do they come from, how was their upbringing etc?

**I:** So what you're saying is, that it's a mixture of these two?

**Lois:** Yes. Because the "history that gets written" on peoples "board" is created by all the different social structures around us. So we kind of have to combine them.

**I:** Do you think these two kids have experienced bad things from their significant others?

**Lois:** Yes, I think that they somehow got such an idea from someone. Based on one or the other form of influence. It might not necessarily have to be their parents though. Also the media and other networks might have influenced them. These English boys lost their opportunity to grow up like normal children. And because of that I think we've given them a role that makes it difficult to live with later on in their lives. And who knows how their days wore. In terms of what people they've met. And the way it was all done and handled by the media. So it never was and there never will be any form of protection for these kids. They're still children you know.

As a researcher one might give up and discard the qualitative research interview, because of all the conflicting information one might get from all the different informants'. The data is not objective enough, but subjective in the sense that it depends too much on those being interviewed. Steinar Kvale (1997) believes the contrary. He says that the qualitative research interviews biggest strengths are that it captures the

variation of the informant's perceptions about different phenomena. Thus, a picture of a diverse and controversial human world is produced. The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to understand aspects of the informant's everyday life, their own perspective. An alternative perception about social knowledge (ibid, 1997).

## Phenomenography

As a research perspective, I have decided to go with phenomenography. A perspective that gives insight to the study of "how some people view the world". Thus the goal is to get different opinions and perceptions from the informants. Phenomenography is a research perspective and an implementation and analysis method that can be combined with what Steinar Kvale (1997) calls a qualitative research interview. Scientists working this way have no interest in looking for an interpretation of what is right, but to find different ways to perceive a phenomenon. This is important because of all the different perceptions of children and evil, as in my case the informants may have. It is irrelevant whether the perception is right or wrong, rather it is the nature of the perceptions that is interesting. My topic addresses children that are involved in evil or commit evil-doing and mainly focusing on which view of children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective.

## Phenomenography as a qualitative research method

Phenomenography provides access to the study on how to investigate the qualitatively different ways in which people experience something or think about something. Or more so, "how some people view the world". Scientists who work this way have no interest in looking for "the" right answers; instead they are looking for different ways to perceive a phenomenon. Kari Søndena (1994) points out that the word phenomenography derives from Greek and is put together by the word "phenomenon" and "graphia". Phenomenon meaning "that which shows itself" and graphia meaning "description".

Most of the phenomenographical research that has been done in the Nordic countries is associated with the University of Gothenburg and in particular with Ference Marton's research in a group called INOM in the 70's and 80's. Phenomenography's ontological

assumptions are subjectivist. The world exists and different people construe it in different ways and with a non-dualist viewpoint. There is only one world, one that is ours, and one that people experience in many different ways (ibid, 1994). It is precisely the non-dualist viewpoint I will keep in mind throughout this entire research paper. Hence the topic of my research, focusing on which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective.

The study of other people's perceptions is provided as a separate area of research within the qualitative research methodology. As I have mentioned already, it does not matter whether the perceptions is "right" or "wrong". What is interesting here is what kind of content these different perceptions have. Phenomenography as a scientific pathway focuses on how humans perceive phenomena. A phenomenon can be referred to as everything that gives us meaning. Phenomenographers think that a perception is something we take for granted. Thus, an opinion we do not have to reflect over but an opinion we can build our reasoning on (ibid, 1994). If we take an interview survey as an example, phenomenography is used to ponder over the underlying idea behind what is said in the interview. What is so obvious but is not clearly stated?

From time to time this is a very difficult thing to undertake since it takes a lot of time and reflection. Moreover we have to try and weed out all the irrelevant points that have nothing to do with the interview and at the meantime reflect on all the different perceptions. Still the interviewer cannot control the interview object too much. The important thing here is to let the person you are interviewing answer what they want and not what the interviewer wants them to.

As a phenomenographer you cannot work based on a hypotheses, a theory or how the categories are going to look like. This kind of research methodology is therefore called "explorative", partly because it is based on research and partly because one can say that a phenomenographer works with "gaps" in people's knowledge. The final result of the research is therefore descriptive and a conclusion at the end is not always necessary (ibid, 1994).

The purpose of the research interviews is to try and describe the content of the thoughts and different perceptions that exist. The purpose is not to conclude; why do people think that way? Or why do they think this or that? Because of this, a random selection of people you are interviewing is not needed. On the contrary, it might be good to strategically select different informants to get as many opinions as possible. Having too many informants might not pay off either and it just might be a good thing to have a small group of informants, as the analysis and interviews do take some time.

Evil and children as phenomena can then be studied qualitatively in many ways on the basis of phenomenography. One can use the same techniques as in other qualitative research methods to collect data such as the structured open-ended interview or different observation methods. It is when we ask whose opinion it is that we discover that special thing about phenomenography (ibid, 1994). The key question here is whether evil and children as phenomena emerge from the interviewers' perspective, or if the phenomenon as it is presented to the informants itself that is in focus.

Ference Martons distinguishes these two ways of thinking into a first and second order perspective. The research that shows factual knowledge, for example "which view of evil and children is manifested throughout social pedagogical perspective", is based on the researcher's own perspective and can be characterized as the first order perspective. The second order perspective is through the phenomenographic point of view. And what is interesting here is what kind of content these different perceptions have on how people experience something or think about something (ibid, 1994).

The second order perspective does require a particular view from the researcher. One has to try and put parentheses around its own understanding of the phenomenon one wants to do research on. This requires that you as a researcher have the ability to reflect and to be aware of your own bias and experience when it comes to the current research area. It is also important to put yourself in other people's train of thought without getting "disturbed" by your own personal opinion. This is a difficult thing to do, because as a researcher we will always interpret data based on former experiences and interpretations (ibid, 1994).

Phenomenography can sometimes be mistaken with phenomenology and through the years there have been various discussions about the differences between these two methods. Marton refers to phenomenology as a way to “take an interest in what is common”, like the similarities in the understanding of different phenomena. He characterises phenomenology as a philosophical method, were the researcher studies his/her own experience of a phenomenon “a measure in first person” (ibid, 1994).

In phenomenography however, the main interest is to look for the variations between the different perceptions. Ference Marton describes phenomenography as an empirical method where the intention is to study “how other people experience the world” (ibid, 1994). My intention exactly is to describe my informants’ perceptions on children and evil.

Phenomenographical science is contextual and therefore depends on time and space. During my stay in Wales I interviewed seven bachelor students from three different countries, hence Norway, Lithuania and Wales. My empirical foundation is therefore international, because by interviewing students from three different countries, various contexts become highlighted and I will therefore gain relevant cross-cultural perspectives. This will provide me with the opportunity to examine the similarities and differences regarding various cultures’ view on children and evil.

The way we see the world is attached to our former experiences, to everyday life as it appears here and now in a particular cultural context. Researchers using phenomenography work empirically based on interviews about peoples perceptions about a phenomenon. The goal here is to reach the qualitative inequalities of different opinions in the form of unequal description categories.

In the 1970’s and the 1980’s three different kind of problem areas evolved in phenomenography. Within the first area, one is engaged with different perceptions of learning and how humans understand and remember what they have learned. In this context, it is the study of changes in perceptions through education one shows interest in. Different perceptions of central concepts in various subject areas constitute the second area. The last and third area consists of how humans understand different

phenomenon (ibid, 1994). When it comes to finding out which view of evil and children is manifested throughout a pedagogical perspective the third area might be most ideal when it comes to my research.

When the interviews are done and transcribed, it is your task to think and reflect over the various answers you have. It is now time to do a qualitative analysis of the interview material, which in this case means that he/she will attempt to isolate and divide the perceptions into various categories. To isolate perceptions implies to try to look behind the underlying meaning in what is said; one tries to have a holistic point of view, to emphasize and to give meaning to all that is said (Marton, 1981).

To sum it all up, one can say that phenomenography is a method in the broadest sense of the term methodology. It has a scientific point of view, "a way to understand the world around you". It is about thoughts that are usually not made the subject of reflection, which is now stepping forward and described in terms of categories. That way, new aspects can be carried out and become available for reflection and further development. For me personally, phenomenography becomes a method to represent different perceptions of children, evil and society. The process of phenomenographic analysis is strongly iterative and comparative; it involves the continual sorting and resorting of data and ongoing comparisons between data. Developing categories of description as well as between the categories themselves (ibid, 1981).

## Collecting data

This section is a description of how I have adapted the qualitative research method into my own research. You may say it is the design of my research paper.

## Type of interview

A research interview can be carried out in various ways. One method, known as the slightly structured interview, is characterized by its lack of structure and is considered to be a conversation between the researcher and the informant where the main theme is decided in advance. Having such an informal approach allows the informant to come up



with new issues during the interview. The researcher can therefore adapt his questions to the new issues brought up by the informant (Thagaard, 2009)

In the other method, known as the relatively structured interview, the questions are made in advance and the order is pretty much set. The aspect of this approach lets the informant freely articulate his answer and give reasons to how they understand the situation (ibid, 2009).

The third method, the semi-structured interview, is the most common used method in qualitative interviews. Like I have said before, it is the semi-structured approach I will be using throughout my interviews. In Steinar Kvaales book, "A qualitative research interview" (1997), he is describing the design of a semi-structured interview. In this approach the questions the researcher might ask are determined in advance, but the order of the questions are determined during the interview. As a researcher I will therefore follow the informant's story more easily, but also ensure to get the perceptions of the different phenomena that are initially determined. Flexibility is important for linking questions to each informant assumptions. It is also important that as a researcher I am aware that the informants may raise issues that are not planned in advance. The qualitative research interview is a conversation between the researcher and the informant and is controlled by topics the researchers want to get information about (ibid, 2009).

This type of interview appears to be well suited to collect data in a second-order perspective, as it is accounted for under the general representation of phenomenography as a research method. The semi-structures interview should not have too many questions made up in advance, and nor should there be too many details determined in advance. Most questions follow from what the subject says. The point is to establish the phenomenon as experienced and to explore its different aspects jointly and as fully as possible. Most often, however, a concrete case makes up the point of departure: a text to be read, a well-known situation to be discussed, or a problem to be solved. The experimenter then tries to encourage the subjects to reflect on the text, the situation or the problem, and often also on their way of dealing with it.

The interview thus aims at making that which has been unthematized into the object of focal awareness. This is often an irreversible process. This kind of research interview thus comes very close to a pedagogical situation.

## Convenience sample

Like I said earlier on in the paper, the purpose of the research interviews is to try and describe the content of the thoughts and the different perceptions that exist. The purpose is not to conclude; why do people think that way? Or why do they think this or that? A random selection of people you are interviewing is therefore not needed and having too many informants might not pay off either. It just might be a good thing to have a small group of informants. Qualitative studies are often about personal and often intimate subjects; it can be difficult to find individuals who are willing to participate as informants. Therefore, we must rely on a selective manner that ensures a range of people who are willing to participate in the interview. I will be using an approach called the *convenience sample* where the sampling is strategic because the informants represent the characteristics that are relevant to my research, and the procedure for selecting informants is based on the availability they have for me.

## The origin of my informants

I have been interviewing seven bachelor students that participated in the Erasmus Summer IP project at the University of Newport in Wales in the summer of 2010 (appendix 1). Two students from Newport, Wales, three students from Vilnius, Lithuania and two students from Stavanger, Norway. The seven informants had an average age of about 27 years and ages varied from 20 years to 43 years and they are all on their final year of their bachelor degree. I first got in contact with the students by sending them a letter (appendix 2). Telling them about my participation in the Erasmus IP project, the reason for my interviews, about the subjects of my thesis and the length of the interview, that lasted around 30 to 35 minutes.

One of the most common questions is, "How many informants do I need"? To that question Steinar Kvale (1997) writes, "Interview as many people as necessary to find out what you need to know". When I was in Wales, I chose my informants with the help of a

convenience approach. The informants I picked did represent the characteristics that were relevant to my research. They also got picked because they showed a lot of interest in my thesis and they were all willing to participate in the interviews.

### Cross-cultural perspectives

By interviewing students from different countries within these three educational partners, I am allowing my thesis to gain relevant cross-cultural perspectives. Doing so will provide me with the opportunity to examine the similarities and differences regarding various cultures' view on children and evil. The problems and issues experienced by children in contemporary societies often transcend national and cultural boundaries. It will be an interesting and enlightening analysis of both cross-cultural beliefs as well as individual ideals about this subject.

Language and cultural differences was a concern I had in mind, but it turned out not to be a challenge at all. The interviews took place in different classrooms at the University of Newport in Wales during June 21<sup>st</sup> to July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010. We were not interrupted in any of the interviews. The mood during the interviews can be characterized as mellow and informal, which I think has value for the trust and confidence between the informant and the interviewer, and thus also crucial for the quality of the interviews.

I have made a matrix (table 1) showing the informants names, age, nationality and studies. It is important to note that the names are fictional. The reason I gave them fictional names and not, let's say, numbers is because this will give the informants more of a personality, which brings you a bit closer to the informants.

**Table 1**

<b>Informants</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Studies</b>
Marge	43	Welsh	Female	Youth Work
Gary	39	Welsh	Male	Youth Work
Francis	21	Lithuanian	Male	Social Work
Katie and	22 and 20	Lithuanian	Female	Social Work

Rosario				
Lisa	22	Norwegian	Female	Social Pedagogy
Lois	23	Norwegian	Female	Social Pedagogy

## Reliability and validity in my qualitative research interviews

Reliability and validity are concepts that emphasize features in the qualitative research method. Thagaard (2009) amongst many other professors considers the quality of the research due to these concepts and I will therefore take advantage of these.

### Reliability

Tove Thagaard's (2009) concept of reliability relates to the credibility of qualitative studies. That is, whether the research is done in a trustworthy manner. She claims that we ensure reliability by elaborating how data are developed throughout the process. Throughout my thesis paper I have tried my best to explain my procedures, in order to ensure reliability. What I interpret and analyze contribute to the continued clarification of the analytical process towards the reader. I also believe that I am good at separating information coming from my own reviews and opinions and the information coming from already used theory.

It is important that the researcher is aware of and explains the relations to the informants, and that he is aware of the importance of field work when data is extracted. Because this is a process where the qualitative data is developed in collaboration between the researcher and the informant (ibid, 2009). In my opinion the relations I had with my informants can be characterized as mellow, open and informal. I justify this with the fact that my informants talked a lot, were enthusiastic, felt secure and were willing to share their perceptions of the different phenomena. They also talked without to many objections from my side. This increases the chances that the informants' did not

hold back important information, which may enhance credibility.

Steinar Kvale (1997) claims that leading questions can influence responses the informants give, and thus the study's reliability. During the interviews, I tried to avoid asking leading questions; in addition to that I tried to be aware of my own body language and verbal responses. Nevertheless, during the transcriptions I experienced that I sometimes used leading questions subconsciously, but it did not happen often. The questions that were leading may have influenced the interviewees' answers. In other cases, I used leading questions deliberately to make sure I understood the informant statements correctly. Leading questions like "do you mean?" and "so what you are saying, is"? Kvale (1997) says that these types of questions may strengthen the reliability of a semi-structured interview. He also claims that one can affect the reliability by how one chooses to transcribe the interviews. I transcribed all my interviews, which can enhance the reliability even more. That I am the only one who has been interpreted the sound recordings can at the same time be a weakness. I also see it as important for the reliability that all the interviews were typed literal.

According to Thagaard (2009) it strengthens the reliability when several researchers take part in a project. But since it is my one and only master thesis I did not have the opportunity for it in my research. Another key element is that I as a researcher reflect upon the context of collecting data and how it can affect the results. All my interviews took place in different classrooms at the University of Newport in Wales and we were not interrupted in any of the interviews. The research and theories I have used to in this research is also from leading scientists and professors in this field. This also strengthens the reliability of the study. The credibility and conformability is also strengthened because the interpretation of the thesis is linked towards leading theory about children, evil and social pedagogy.

The question is often raised, would another researcher who is examining the same data come up with the same results? Such a question implies a view of the analysis as a kind of measurement procedure. And repeated measurements should yield similar results, of course. The analysis is, however, not a measurement but a discovery procedure. The discovery does not have to be replicable, but once the outcome space of a phenomenon has been revealed, it should be communicated in such a way that other researchers

could recognize instances of the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question. After having studied the description of the outcome space another researcher should be able to judge what categories of description applied to each individual's case in the material, in which the categories of description were found.

## Validity

In qualitative research, validity is related to the interpretation of the results (ibid, 2009). This means that one is looking to evaluate whether the interpretations that I made are trustworthy. It is important that the researcher is critical to their own interpretations when they are seeking for the requirement of validity. I have tried to ensure this by assessing and controlling my interpretations throughout the process by asking questions to my selection, analysis and interpretation, and by trying out alternative interpretations and perspectives. In order to ensure that the categories I used were correct, I tried to change the categories several times, split and merge the categories, to see if my results changed.

Other criteria to secure validity are to test my interpretations with the help of other people, hence fellow students, my informants or professors. I on the other side have not used fellow students or my informants to secure validation due to lack of time and that most of my informants lived in other countries and cities in Norway. I still had ongoing guidance, and my supervisor has read and commented on the analysis theoretical framework and drafts of the analysis, which may have helped to ensure the validity. A problem with interviews may be that the informants do not provide you with appropriate information (Kvale, 1997). This means that the informants might answer what they think it is expected from them, or what is pedagogical or politically correct. This might have a negative impact on the validity. It is therefore important to have a critical review of the sources and information from the resources. To verify this, I had a critical discussion of the subjects' ability to provide correct information and if the interviews had any contradictory statements. All in all I consider my informants to be good sources because they have given me the relevant information about the different phenomena.

Thagaard (2009) writes that it is important that the researcher explains the basis for the interpretations, so that the interpretation can be confirmed by other empirical data or theory. This means that one must document the interpretations of the data, and that the researcher specifies how he or she got those results. Throughout the process I tried to pursue these principles to ensure validity. I have used both national and international scientific perspectives and definitions, which can strengthen my validity. The theoretical framework is also from national and international professors in the field of social science.

According to different researchers like Kvale (1997) and Thagaard (2009), it is important to test the questions in a qualitative research interview. To ensure that it capture the essence of what we are looking for. My questions where verified by my supervisor who gave me useful feedback, which helped to ensure the validity of my questions and link them up towards the topic of my thesis.

## Summary of chapter three

In this chapter you have read that I will be using the qualitative research method where I will take advantage of the qualitative research interviews and have a semi-structured approach. As a research perspective I intend to use phenomenography a perspective that gives insight to the study of how some people view the world, and different opinions and perceptions the informants' might have. Thus, the perceptions informants' have of children, evil and society. Phenomenography is a research perspective, an implementation and analysis method, which can be combined with qualitative research interview. You have also read my procedures toward the interviews and during the interviews. Reliability and validity are concepts that emphasize features in the qualitative research method and the quality of the research is considered due to these concepts. In the next chapter I will be focusing on the analysis of the interviews, hence the findings and results from my interviews.

# Chapter 4: The analysis and presentation of the findings and results

## Pieces of a Puzzle

As you notice and name things the next step is to collect and sort them. This process is analogous to working on a jigsaw puzzle where you start by sorting the pieces of the puzzle. For example, assume you have a puzzle picture with a tree, a house, and sky. A common strategy for solving the puzzle is to identify and sort puzzle pieces into groups (e.g., frame pieces, tree pieces, house pieces, and sky pieces). Some of the puzzle pieces will easily fit into these categories. Others will be more difficult to categorize. In any case, this sorting makes it easier to solve the puzzle. “When you identify pieces, you are noticing and “coding” them. When you sort the pieces you are “collecting” them” (Sidel, 1998).

Of course this analogy differs in important ways from the qualitative interview analysis process. For example, you don’t always have a final picture of the puzzle’s solution. Also, in qualitative interview analysis the puzzle pieces are usually not pre-cut. You create the puzzle pieces as you analyze the phenomena. Nonetheless, the jigsaw puzzle analogy captures some important attributes of the qualitative research interview process. A useful definition of the qualitative research interview process, and one that seems to fit well with the jigsaw puzzle analogy comes from Jorgensen; “Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces” (Sidel, 1998).

## The relation between theory and empirical data in qualitative research methods

The main purpose of an interview can be either empirical or theoretical. A research can be planned in order to obtain empirical information about for example children and evil. Or a research can be planned in order to test the implications of a theory or, as in the experienced-based theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (“grounded theory”), to



develop an empirically grounded theory through observation and interviews (Widerberg, 2001).

Qualitative research interviews usually have a theme-centered approach. It means that the results are presented in association with central themes in the material. Theme-centered presentations are well suited to produce patterns in the data in the manner, which highlights key tendencies. Another option to a theme-centered approach is a person-centered approach. Where results are presented in relation to the types of people or situations that illustrate important trends in the data. It is important that the presentations of typical people or situations have reference to the material as a whole and not based on randomly selected examples (ibid, 2001).

Qualitative research interviews are characterized by the phenomena that are related to patterns and tendencies in the material. The relationship between theory and empirical evidence, however, varies between different studies. Interpretation is nevertheless an important characteristic in the qualitative research method and empirically oriented studies can therefore be described as interpretive descriptions. In more theoretically oriented texts, the purpose is to emphasize the theoretical perspectives and theory-based argumentation. The more theoretically oriented presentations can be linked to concepts from previous theories, or to the development of new notions/phenomena. It is important that theoretically oriented texts not only have an abstract form, it is also important to combine the abstract and concrete descriptions. Which means that the text has a level of abstraction that provides a reason for connection to the theory and the text simultaneously is concrete enough that the reader gets an understanding of the phenomena described (ibid, 2001).

## The whole is more than the sum of its parts

When I was done transcribing my seven interviews I approximately had forty pages of text. Using everything from a text analysis is an almost impossible task and such an analysis would probably not be especially interesting research. It is therefore totally necessary to “weed out” the surrounding text material that does not seem to “answer” my research, which consists of how humans understand different phenomenon hence

finding out *which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective*. To isolate perceptions or “weed out” implies to try and look behind the underlying meaning in what is said. However, “weeding out” can only become relevant after the researcher has compared all the interviews, and formed the necessary holistic perceptions. Because in the phenomenographic research perspective, one tries to have a holistic point of view to emphasize and to give meaning to all that is said.

Phenomenography as a research approach is otherwise very similar with the hermeneutic research approach where the relationship between the whole and part is a basic principle of the hermeneutic circle.

Above you can read that I have referred to hermeneutics and hermeneutical principles of interpretation, in which I compared it with the research perspective phenomenography. I therefore think it is appropriate to overlook the hermeneutic approach in order to show the relation between the phenomenographical research perspectives, as it was explained in the previous chapter, and some important hermeneutic approaches in analyzing texts.

## Pedagogy and hermeneutics

The “models of understanding” derives from a knowledge tradition that goes much further back than modern science. Knowledge is neither new nor useful in pre-modern times; it rather consists of a constantly renewed insight into the traditions of eternal truths. Knowledge is a “perk” itself, with the intent to form human beings, realizing that true human potential. It is knowledge that gives humans the awareness that the world is constantly changing. Society cultures and human beings themselves change and develop during the course of history. And in contrast to the unchanging nature, history is man's own creation; we are all responsible for the making of history. It is in the reflections of these characteristics in human-sciences that the contradictions between explaining and understanding are formulated for the first time. The basic distinction that postulate then goes between nature, which we can explain and culture/society, which we must understand (Thomassen, 2006). But what does it mean to explain and interpret the human world, human perceptions, products and actions and of course human life itself? These are all key questions in the hermeneutic perspective.

The term hermeneutics comes from the Greek word “hermeneuein” which means to interpret or construe. Hermeneutics was originally used as a method to study and understand religious texts. The modern version appears more as methodology for interpretation and prejudices, where the German philosophers Schleiermacher and Dilthey are regarded as fathers of hermeneutics (Hovdenak, 2006). Within social sciences, we can easily say that hermeneutics is all about peoples contextualized understandings and interpretations.

Sylvi Hovdenak (2006) points out that Gilje and Grimen refers to two different hermeneutic approaches, which consist of “experience near” and “experience distant” concepts. The first one refers to how people describe and interpret their situation, and the second one refers to the social researchers theoretical concepts related to descriptions and interpretations. A phenomenographic interview like mine can be placed both within the experience near, because I am interesting in finding my informants’ perceptions on the phenomena children and evil. Hence how my informants’ describe interpret these perceptions. A key issue in the hermeneutic approach is how these two concepts can be integrated. They go on by saying that social science should consist of what Giddens call “double hermeneutic”. Which means the social scientist on the one hand have to deal with the participants descriptions and interpretations, and on the other hand have to conduct research and thereby reconstruct the participants interpretations within the theoretical frameworks and concepts (ibid, 2006).

As a researcher one must through this perspective seek beyond the participants’ perceptions. Gadamer (ibid, 2006) points out that the researchers usually have a form of prejudices when they are in the process of interpretation and these prejudices is a term which makes the researchers understanding and interpretation possible. It is through these prejudices the researchers get their theoretical relation and the concepts they will use as analytical tools (ibid, 2006). This means that as a researcher I will in a greater or lesser extent be influenced by my former “history”. Bracketing own prejudices is one of phenomenographies strengths and it contributes to sharpen the awareness about the influence of former history.

An important hermeneutic principle is represented by the term “hermeneutic circle”.

The term denotes the fact that any interpretation consist of the constant movement between the whole and part, between what we interpret, what is interpreted in context or between what we are interpreting and our own understanding. This shows how carefully “part” and “whole” is connected to each other in an ongoing movement towards a deeper understanding (ibid, 2006). By studying the way people express and interpret different phenomena in life we can reach understandings of a common human life experience, even an understanding of life itself. Life manifests itself through visible cultural and social expression. And through the interpretation of these we reach an understanding of people inner experience of life. It is the historical, cultural and social contexts that give us the different perceptions in life.

## How I conducted the phenomenographic analysis

As I have pointed out above in the course of the interviews, my informants’ are invited to reflect on their perceptions of the different phenomena dealt with in my research interviews, hence their perception on children and evil. They are supposed to adopt an attitude, which is similar to that of the philosophers who exercise the Husserlian (the “father” of phenomenology) method of phenomenological research. When the interviews have been transcribed verbatim and the analysis has begun, it is my job to bracket preconceived ideas. Instead of judging to what extent the answers reflect an understanding of the phenomenon in question which is similar to their own. As researcher I am supposed to focus on similarities and differences between the ways in which the phenomena child, evil and society appears to the informants’.

The same informants’ may express more than one-way of understanding the phenomena the individual is not the unit of analysis. The borders between the individuals are temporarily abandoned, as it were. The transcripts originating from my different individual interviews together make up undivided - and usually quite extensive data to be analyzed. You can see how this was done in table 2 below. The first thing I did to reduce the data was to distinguish between what is immediately relevant for my research. From the point of view of expressing a way of experiencing different phenomena in question and which is not. Such decisions may of course be reconsidered subsequently in the course of the continued course of my analysis. It might sometimes

be found that different topics or phenomena have been dealt with in the interviews. In my case the data had to be organized according to topic or phenomenon to begin with and the analysis had to be carried out for each topic or phenomenon, one at a time. The next step was to identify distinct ways of understanding (or experiencing) the different phenomena like the once mentioned above, which my research consists off.

There are two mechanisms through which a certain understanding appears. One is based on similarities: when we find that two perceptions reflect the same meaning, we may become aware of a certain way of understanding the different phenomena evil, children and society. When two perceptions reflect two different meanings, two ways of understanding, the phenomenon may become thematized due to the contrast effect. At this point the analysis boils down to identifying and grouping expressed ways of experiencing the different phenomena. Literally or metaphorically making extracts from the interviews and putting them into tables like I did (table 2). Underneath you can see an example on how I made extracts from Gary’s perception of children and childhood:

**Table 2**

<p>Ahh, Mead! I would say yeah. Learnt behavior, learnt values, learnt ethics. I come from a council state myself. It was a small majority of us who came trough and didn’t touch the drugs or didn’t touch the car theft. Got out of the council state and did positive things. I’ve seen a lot, so that’s what I get my opinion from. And when it came out that there where kids who had done this. Straight away then, you’re angry. I can remember one of my colleagues saying; “you can’t blame those boys for that”. But now I’ve grown up, and seeing what he was saying. Because you know, a kid or child is not born with that kind of problem and goes off to murder somebody. It’s the initial circle of primary care that’s around there that give them that kind of thing. It was a reflection of everybody’s opinion. Everyone was stunned about it. I meant, put them down you can’t rehabilitate that.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children learn behaviour, values and ethics from their parents/surroundings.</li> <li>• Believes in Meads mirror theory.</li> <li>• Growing up in a bad community might influence you to do bad things.</li> <li>• Children cannot be born that way. It’s the initial circle of primary care that’s around them.</li> <li>• Cannot rehabilitate children in such a young age.</li> </ul>
<p>But I think everybody’s moral would be the same. At the end of the day it’s children doing it. When it’s male or female, at the end of the day it’s youngsters doing it, and they shouldn’t</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never forget that it’s children doing wrong, their not adults.</li> <li>• Children should not be doing “evil” things.</li> </ul>

<p>be doing it. The threats to morality more or less. Because like I said, "Is children killing children". They should be arguing about crayons, not killing each other. . No one can breed anything like that again like and you know maybe someone like that would be a constitution to everybody. But then again like a said, from all this sociology thing of "learnt environment" and "learnt behavior", comes "labels" and stuff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's a threat to morality that children can do such an evil act.</li> <li>• Children are innocent and vulnerable.</li> <li>• Blaming the significant others for "breeding" so called "evil" kids.</li> <li>• With learnt environment, learnt behaviour comes "labels".</li> </ul>
<p>It wouldn't have mattered whether it was girls or boys. I think that the outcome would be the same. What the hell have those girls seen in order for them to be that deprogrammed? People may think its way worse because its females, and females are not suppose to do that, cause they bare life, I don't know</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't see children as girls or boys.</li> <li>• When children do wrong the outcome is the same.</li> <li>• What have children seen to be that "deprogrammed".</li> <li>• People may think its way worse when it's girls doing wrong. Cause girls are not supposed to be doing that. They're suppose to bare life not take life.</li> </ul>
<p>Yeah! We come out of our parents wherever like. When we grow up and stuff like that, our imaginations are overactive. The suns got a big smile on its face. You know you see childlike things. Going back to the articles and stuff, and to the news-reports. A child's imagination is blank board. A child's brain and mind is influenced from the stages of zero and upward.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children "come out" of their parents.</li> <li>• Children's imagination is overactive when they grow up.</li> <li>• They see childlike things in everything.</li> <li>• Going back to the news-reports and articles. Can children really see and think evil things?</li> <li>• A child's imagination is a blank board. A child's brain and mind is influenced for the stage of zero and upward.</li> </ul>

In order to do this I had to try and have a deep of an understanding as possible of what had been said, or rather what did they mean? The various statements have to be seen in relation to two contexts. One of the contexts is "the pool of perceptions" that derives from what all the informants have said about the same thing. The other context is - and here we have to reintroduce the individual boundaries again, what the same person has said about other things. Thus I had to make sense of particular perceptions in terms of the collective as well as of the individual context, which is the hermeneutic element of the phenomenographic analysis.

After the relevant quotes had been grouped the focus of attention was shifted from the relations between the different perceptions to the relations between the informants. We have to establish what the critical attributes of each informant is and what the distinguishing features between the informants are. In this way we develop the set of

categories of description in terms of which we can characterize the variation in how a certain phenomenon is experienced, conceptualized, understood. There are logical relations to be found between the categories of description and as they represent different capabilities for seeing the phenomenon in question, in relation to a given criterion, a hierarchy can be established (Søndenå, 1994)

The different steps in the phenomenographic analysis have to be taken interactively. As each consecutive step has implications not only for the steps that follow but also for the steps that precede it, the analysis has to go through several runs in which the different steps are considered to some extent simultaneously.

The categories of description and the outcome space are the main results of a phenomenographic study. Once they are found they can be reapplied to the data from which they originate. Thus there will be a judgment made in each individual case concerning what category or categories, of description is (or are) applicable. I am then able to obtain the distribution of the frequencies of the phenomena of description.

I will divide my informants' part perceptions into three categories, hence their perception of the phenomena children/childhood, evil/evildoing and media/society. This is manifested throughout social pedagogical perspective. The last category shows us the role of the media and society and how it may affect its members. An important aspect with this category is what one can read about in chapter two, hence about Cohan (2003) and his perspective about moral panics in society. I will then summarize my informants' part perceptions of the different phenomena and look at their holistic point of views. Finally I will see if my informants have similarities and dissimilarities in terms of their different perceptions. Their perceptions are of course articulated based on the topic of my research.

In the following you will meet my informants: Marge and Gary from Wales, Francis, Rosario and Katie from Lithuania and Lisa and Lois from Norway. As I have mentioned before the seven informants had an average age of about 27 years and ages varied from 20 years to 43 years and they are all on their final year of their bachelor degree (see table 1). As I mentioned in chapter 3, all the names in the interviews are fictional.

# Interview with Marge

## Children and childhood

Marge perception is that she sees children as children and not as boys and girls, which means she does not see behavioral problems as a gender issue. Further on she sees children as impressionable and innocent. But if they do wrong children lose their innocence in the sense of how a child thinks, they kind of lose their innocent way of thinking. When children have behavioral problems, do bad/evil things; both physical and mental, she blames it on the parents' upbringing. She also believes that children get affected and take after social media, and that all the different media channels influence them one-way or the other.

She believes that children do know right from wrong. It is the consequences of when they have done something wrong or how good or bad their actions are they do not understand. Children have not developed perception in that age and they are not able to reflect and realize to what they have just done. It is the severity of how bad their actions are that is not yet developed.

## Evil and evildoing

Marge perception of evil as a phenomenon is to be manipulative and conniving. Evil is a physical and psychological act where an individual ends up hurting someone severely both physically or mentally, or cause death. Further on she feels when children are evil it is easy to blame everything else surrounding them, from their parents to the community in which they live in. Evil is usually an evil act and she believes that a "normally" mentally developed adult can be or become evil. Then again she thinks that children's minds are not formed enough for them to be thinking evilly or have cunning minds. People who are evil and who inflict pain and suffering enjoy the acts they do and she believes children can become evil if their parents and the environment are bad enough. An important statement Marge made was that to be classed as evil one has to know what is good and she means that children do not know any better. If a child is brought up not knowing what good is, bad upbringing can form a child into becoming evil or do evil acts.



## Media and society

Marge believes that society experiences some kind of moral panic when extraordinary and abnormal incidents occur. And media might be the one to blame because the society believes everything the media feeds them. It is that powerful and it has such a major influence on people. She feels that the rehabilitation programs for children under the criminal responsibility age, is not good enough. Society is good on “labeling” children who does not follow societies’ norms and ethics. Some believe if children can do evil acts when they are ten they cannot be helped. The society feels that children do not have the moral values adults have; they have not made an opinion to what is right or what is wrong. Society has not got it right at all Marge says. Academics and “specialists” will critically analyze different events and through their one research have their own perceptions. The “normal” population in a society will go with what is fed to them. Marge also follows the crowd but after she started the youth and community work course, her opinions has changed. She now sees how important children’s parents are and how children can become victims of their social upbringing.

## Marge’s holistic point of view

As mentioned above I will through my thesis paper examine how one perceives children and evil through a social pedagogical perspective. The topic addresses children who are engaged in evil or commit evil actions. Marge’s perception is of course articulated based on the topic of my research.

She does not see behavioral problems and children doing evil acts as a gender issue. See children as children and not as boys and girls. Children are impressionable and innocent, but if they do evil acts they lose just that. When it comes to children doing evil acts she does not just blame it on the upbringing, but also on the different media channels and the community in which they live in. Marge believes that children do know right from wrong; it is the consequences of what they have done they do not understand. Her perception of evil as phenomenon is to be manipulative and conniving. It is a physical or psychological act where an individual end up hurting or harming someone. Marge believes that children’s minds are not formed enough to be thinking in such ways. They

are not able to reflect like that and be that cunning, because to be classified as evil one has to know the difference between good and evil and children do not have that perception.

Marge believes that societies experience some kind of moral panic when extraordinary and abnormal incidents occur. Incidents like the Jamie Bulger case, which was the initial in all my interviews. The Media might be the one to blame because people believe most of the things media feed them. According to Marge society is good on “labeling” children who do not go by its norms and values. She believes that we live in a society, which consist of academics and “specialists” who make up our perception. And most people will go with what is fed to them. Marge also followed the crowd, but her opinions have changed after she started the youth and community work course. She now sees how important children’s parents are and how children can become victims of their social upbringing.

Marge’s holistic point of view is based on the British philosopher John Lock’s perspective. Which restated the importance of the experience of the senses over speculation and sets out the case that the human mind at birth is a complete, but receptive, blank slate (scraped tablet or tabula rasa) upon which experience imprints knowledge (see chapter 2). Below you can see an outtake from my interview with Marge and why I got this perception:

*“They can do evil things, which in this case it was an evil act. However, have their minds formed enough for them to be thinking evilly? A normally mentally developed adult I feel can be evil. They enjoy the acts that they do. Inflict pain and suffering. However, before these two children I think they can become evil, if their environment is bad enough. Because they don’t know any better. I suppose to be classed as evil you have to know what is good, and maybe their upbringing has not allowed their minds to form what is really good”.*

## Interview with Gary

### Children and childhood

Gary's perception of children is that they learn behavior, values and ethics from their parents/significant others and their surroundings. He believes in what George Herbert Mead called "mirror theory". Their parents and their surroundings influence children. Growing up in bad surroundings might influence them to do bad things and vice versa if children grow up in good surroundings. Gary believes that children is not born that way, it is not biological. It is the initial circle of primary care that is around them. He goes on by saying that we cannot forget that it is children doing wrong and they need to be treated as children, not adults. Children should not be doing evil acts, because it is a treat to morality when children act like that. Children are supposed to be innocent and vulnerable.

Gary is blaming the parents for "breeding" so called evil children. These are acts they learn and act out. With learnt environment, learnt behavior, comes "labels". Just like Marge, he does not see children as boys and girls but as children. It is not a gender issue when children do wrong; when they do wrong the outcome is the same. He asks himself, "What have these children experienced in their lives" to be "deprogrammed". Children's imagination is overactive when they grow up; they see childlike things in everything. So how can some children see and think evil things? A child's imagination/mind is a blank board. Children's brain and mind is influenced by their surroundings the day they are born.

### Evil and evildoing

Gary is sure that if children watch horror movies, they might think it is true and might become evil and think it is true. If parents are not there for their children and let them be on their own, they will become feral and barbaric. Children become evil without human care, love or social behavior. He is blaming both nature and nurture if children become evil or do evil acts. He believes that primary careers, the ethics and the morals involved there is what gives children the ability to understand right from wrong. If you

show children “dark stuff” from a young age Gary believes that is when they grow up “dark” and that is when they become “broken”. We all want to be good and all children are like that, unless there is a biological issue they are born with. Gary believes that if you nurture children, they will become what society and we want them to be. But if you show children to be evil that is the only thing they know. He feels that saying children are evil is such a strong word. If children are evil it has to do with their environment, because children cannot be born evil.

## Media and society

Gary gets his opinions from the media and the community and thinks the society is doing the wrong thing when they try to rehabilitate children under the age of criminal responsibility. But by studying youth and community work backs up his beliefs. He is now reflecting more over what on the upbringing and not just what society and the media are feeding him. Back in the days when Gary was 19 he believed everything he read in the paper, which has now changed. When children do evil acts, Gary asks himself the question; what does that say about our society and us? He also blames the parents when children do something wrong. When children have behavioral problems, do bad/evil things he blames society for not doing enough and for not being there for them. The justice system in Britain is not deterrent at all and he says that the society is “soft”. The justice system is not intimidating children enough and he is questioning why society is institutionalizing children. Are they getting re-educated?

He then goes on saying that the media has been constructed to manipulate us, and they have a lot of influential power. Society and media gives you illusions to help us block out the “normal” happenings surrounding you. People look at the media when we need to glorify something. They decorate the truth in negative and positive ways.

## Gary’s holistic point of view

Through my thesis paper I examine how one perceives children and evil through a social-pedagogical perspective. The topic addresses children who are engaged in evil or commit evil actions. Gary’s perception is articulated based on the topic of my research.

His perception of children is that they learn behavior, values and ethics from their parents, significant others and their surroundings. Children are not born with an evil mind. It is when children grow up in bad surroundings and get influenced to do bad things they act evil. He believes it is the initial circle of primary care that is around them. It is also important to not forget that when children do evil acts, they need to be treated as children not adults. Gary does not see children as boys and girls, but as children who are supposed to be innocent and vulnerable. It is not a gender issue when children do evil acts; the outcome is usually the same.

When it comes to evil children Gary is blaming the parents. Evil are acts that children learn and act out. With learnt environment and learnt behavior comes "labels". Children do become evil without human care, love or social behavior. They might think being evil and bad is the only right thing. Gary believes that primary caregivers, the ethics and the morals involved there is what gives children the ability to understand right from wrong. If you show children "dark" stuff from an early age that is when they grow up having a "dark" mind. Saying children are evil is such a strong word. We all want to be good and all children are like that, but they need guidance to become that way.

Gary got his perceptions from the media and the community and thinks the society is doing wrong when they try to rehabilitate children under the age of criminal responsibility. Back in the days he believed everything he read in the paper, the society made his perceptions. That changed when he started studying youth and community work. He believes that the media has been constructed to manipulate us, and they have a lot of influential power. When children do evil acts he blames society for not doing enough and for not being there for those who need help. He accuses the justice system in being soft and non-deterrent. The media always try to tell us what is normal and what is deviant.

Gary's holistic point of view is based on George Herbert Meads "mirror theory". This states that children learn behavior and values by their significant other and their surroundings. His view is also based on John Locke "tabula rasa" perspective. Gary believes that a child's imagination/mind is a blank board and the significant others form their minds from the day they are born (see chapter 2). Underneath you can see two

outtake of my interview with Gary and why I got this perception:

*“Ahh, Mead! I would say yeah. Learnt behavior, learnt values, learnt ethics. Because you know, a kid or child is not born with that kind of problem and goes off to murder somebody. It’s the initial circle of primary care that’s around there that give them that kind of thing”.*

*“They can do evil things, like pixies and ferries can do evil things. But primary careers and the ethics and morals involved there, so that’s what gives that child the ability to understand right from wrong. But on the level of like showing them dark stuff. If that’s from a young age they’re going to grow up dark. And that’s when they become broken. But I believe, say 8.5 times out of 10 all of us are born with blank morals and ethics. And that’s what we get from our primary family and stuff. We want to be good”.*

## Interview with Francis

### Children and childhood

Francis said he might one of those philanthropists who say that all children are born good and if children do something wrong they have strong arguments to do wrong. He believes that when children do something evil they have reasons to do so. Not strong intentions though. His perception of children is that they are good in the beginning of their lives, because they have not learned bad things. Good vs. bad might be genetic or learnt behavior. Maybe children who do evil acts have something “cold” inside themselves. He says that it is all about nature vs. nurture when it comes to understanding children.

You can describe children as evil, as bad. But one have to think deviation, maybe learned behavior. He believes that one can say it in a metaphysically way, that children are evil inside. Every human being is “coded” in two ways when they are born he told me. The genetic part and the things we learn from the society around us. Francis believes that genetics can pressure children into doing things they do not want to do. Children are

defined from being from the age of 0 to 10 and they are quite pure and innocent. But Francis believes that children can do evil things if it is something they learn and if they lack of empathy. Children can be pressured into doing all kind of things from their surroundings.

## Evil and evildoing

Francis perception of evil is that evil people are usually very egotistic. And he believes that some human beings as a species can turn evil inside, they have an evil mind. But humans are not born like that; it is a thing that can develop over time. He thinks it is easier for human beings to turn evil when everyone around them is bad. So if children have an evil upbringing, they turn evil. It has to do with what kind of role models children have around them. Francis believes that genetics is a factor that can pressure us into doing evil things. Evil is something humans learn from other people, and if that is the only thing a human being is exposed for they do not know other ways to behave. Thomas Hobbes said that humans are born egotistic and it is when that egoism strikes, humans might do evil and inconceivable acts. Francis thinks that evil is a very abstract word and one has to remember that evil for one person might be good for another. People react to evil in many different ways.

## Media and society

When it comes to the media Francis means that they are always trying to shock their readers and the society. When extraordinary and abnormal incidents occur in society media is there to create some kind of “moral panic”. As an example media intend to pressure the reader to think that children can be evil. He believes the media can fill peoples’ minds with things that are not true. It is easy to judge a book by its cover, which is what the media is trying to do. Francis thinks the media has a major influence not just on people, but also on the society.

## Francis holistic point of view

As mentioned above, the reason for my qualitative research interviews was to examine

how informants perceive the addressed topic on children who are engaged in evil or commit evil actions. Francis perception is of course articulated based on the topic of my research, hence which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective.

A child is at the age of zero to ten and they are quite pure and innocent. Francis perception of children is that they are good in the beginning of their lives, because they have not learned bad behavior. He thinks that children who do evil acts have something “cold” inside themselves. You can describe children as evil, as bad, but one have to think deviation, maybe learned behavior. Francis says that every human being is “coded” in two ways when they are born. The genetic part and the things children learn from their surroundings. Children can do evil things if it is something they learn and if they lack of empathy.

Evil people are usually very egotistic and he believes that human beings as specie have an evil mind. But they are not born evil; it is something that one can develop over time. Francis thinks it is easier for human beings to turn evil if that is the only thing children are exposed to, they do not know other ways to behave. It has to do with what kind of role models children have around them. For Francis evil is a very abstract word and we have to remember that evil of one person might not be evil for another. People react to evil in many different ways.

When it comes to media Francis thinks that they are always trying to shock their readers and the society. When extraordinary and abnormal incidents occur, the media is there to create some kind of moral panic. He believes that the media can fill peoples’ minds with things that might not be true, that children can be evil for instance. The mass media has a major influence not just on people, but also on society.

Francis holistic point of view is based on Thomas Hobbes who said that humans are born egotistic and it is when that egoism strikes, they might do evil and inconceivable acts. Hobbes saw the original human state as corrupted and evil and that it is society’s duty to socialize the individual. His perceptions are also based on John Locke’s “tabula rasa” theory, a perspective that say we are born with a blank slate that is constantly



replenished (see chapter 2). Below you will see two examples from my interview with Francis and why I got this perception:

*“Hobbes said that every person is born egoistic. And to be egoistic we do evil things. And if you don’t control people with a “strong hand” there will be no system in the country. So yeah, people are born egoistic. But still they’re not evil. Maybe we should say something more. Evil is a very abstract word. What’s evil for one person might be good for another”.*

*“Generally I think that people are egoistic and selfish. And human beings as a specie is evil inside. But it’s not that they’re born like that. It’s more like when you come to a place where everyone is bad. And if that’s all, you learn such things. So, when kids are under protection, in their families, if they have good role models to watch. If the dad is good and the mom is good, they’re safe. And still they remain pure. But as soon as they are left alone and as soon as nobodies around they can be harmed”.*

## Interview with Katie and Rosario

I interviewed Katie and Rosario together in case we got lost in translation. The girls helped each other when they had troubles with their English, which was very helpful for me and for them. But we must not forget that they might have influenced each other since I interviewed them together and this might have a negative impact on my validity.

### Children and childhood

Katie and Rosario both think it is hard to understand that children can sometimes do bad and abnormal acts, because they are such lovely and precious creatures. When a child is doing something wrong and extraordinary, one usually thinks; is there something wrong with their parents. Children do learn behavior and morals through their parents. So if the parents show children a good life and give them the attention they all need, they will turn out good.

The girls both think it is important to remember that it is children when they do something bad or evil. See children as and not judge them as adults. A child is in the age of ten and down and in that age children do not understand if they are doing abnormal or evil things. They think that children are led by their emotions, live in the moment. And it is therefore hard for them to stop when they have made up their mind. Children do not think of the consequences of what they do.

When a child is born they are born with a “blank slate”, no impressions what so ever. People and the society around them will then have the possibility to fill the “slate” with whatever they want. It is here important to fill the “slate” with what is best for a child. Not with things that will do them bad in the long run.

## Evil and evildoing

Katie and Rosario’s perception of evil is to be really angry at something and to lack of empathy. To be evil is to act in a really bad and abnormal way. Maybe one becomes evil, when one as a child does not get the attention, the comfort and the encouragement they so badly need. The girls both believe that being evil is a gender issue. If girls are doing evil acts she thinks it is much worse and strange then if boys do them. They think that girls cannot be as evil as boys because they are so sensitive and innocent. Boys are more likely to do evil acts; maybe it is because they are more cunning and aggressive by nature.

Katie and Rosario believe that children can do evil acts. And they both think of the British philosopher John Lock when it comes to children and evil. Children get influenced form the inside and the outside. Their surroundings fill their “blank slates” So evil acts and ideas have to come from somewhere or someone. Life is all about “learning by seeing”.

## Media and society

Katie and Rosario believe that boys and girls are on the same level in today’s society. They pretty much cope with the same problems until they become adolescents. The big

question about today's society is whether children are getting more influenced by mass media than before.

In this day and age mass media has a massive influence on society. Media is now a central part of sociology because our society cannot be understood regardless of the mass media. We all have to deal with the media in some way and it has a big role in people's lives.

Katie and Rosario think it is society's responsibility to keep people, especially children on the right tracks. One can say that society has an effect on parents who then have an effect on their children. We all need lessons in what life is all about and society has a big role of doing just that.

### Katie and Rosario holistic point of view

They both think children are such lovely and precious creatures. A child is in the age of ten and lower and they do not understand if they are doing abnormal or evil acts. When children do evil acts we should not judge them as adolescents or adults. The girls both believe children are led by their emotions, they live in the moment. They do not reflect over the consequences their actions might cause. So when their mind is set it is usually hard to stop them.

Katie and Rosario's perception of evil is to be really angry at something and to lack of empathy. To be evil is to act in a really bad and abnormal way. Children learn behavior and morals through their parents and the environment maybe children become evil when all they learn and see is to be bad and evil. But if a child's parents or significant others show the child a good life and give them the attention and the positive encouragement they all need, they will turn out good.

Katie and Rosario also stated that it is a gender issue. They think that girls cannot be as evil as boys because they are so sensitive and innocent. Boys are more likely to do evil acts, maybe because they are more cunning and aggressive by nature. Except from that, boys and girls pretty much cope with the same problems until they become adolescents.

Katie and Rosario think that in this day and age mass media has a massive influence on society, especially children. Media is now a central part of sociology because our society cannot be understood regardless of mass media. It has such a big influence on people's lives. They both believe that it is also society's responsibility to keep peoples, especially children on the right track. Society has an effect on parents who then have an effect on their children. We all need lessons in what is "normal" and "abnormal" behavior and society has a big role in that.

Along with my other informants, Katie and Rosario's holistic point of view is also based on the British philosopher John Lock (see chapter 2) When children are born they are born with a "blank slate", with no impressions. The significant others and the environment then have the possibility to fill the slate with whatever they want. So if a child is evil it has to come from somewhere and someone, it is learnt behavior. Underneath you will see two outtakes from my interview with Katie and Rosario and why I got the perception of:

*"I believe in Locks theory because we are born with a clean board. This means that you have some possibilities to fill the board with the best things for a child".*

*"The first thing that came to my mind was Locks theory. And I also agree that a child is born an angel without anything bad in his head. And then children get influenced from the inside and the outside. Yes I believe that children can be evil and cruel and so on. But they got the ideas from somewhere. "Learning by seeing"".*

## Interview with Lisa

### Children and childhood

Lisa's perception of children is that they are in the age of 0 to 10. They are more vulnerable than adults and they are not as reflective as adults. Maybe they do not reflect at all. She believes that children are not fully aware of what their own actions. If children do an evil act, let's say hurt someone. They are not quite aware of their actions are painful and hurtful. What is common with children is that they say and do the first thing

that comes to mind. Like my other informants', Lisa believes that children do not think of consequences. They live in the moment and live day by day and that makes children unpredictable.

## Evil and evildoing

When people are evil or do evil acts. It is usually an explanation why they have become what they have become. But we cannot blame the parents for everything, our surroundings and society has a role too. Because that is what usually affect children who do evil acts early or later in their lives. One has to remember that adults and parents have been children too so they must have been influenced by something negative too.

Evil is something that develops through lack of adequate care. Behavioural problems is often a "vicious circle" in children's life, where the only way to get attention is to be bad, scream and brawl. Children who tend to act this way might not have many friends and it is because they are "abnormal" and do mean things. In this day and age, humans have to give a lot of them self to get accepted by society. If a person just give and give and never gets anything in return such as acceptance, it may be a factor why some people turn evil. Lisa thinks that extreme egotistic person can become evil. When it comes to evil she also believes that if parents have bad intentions they can shape a child as much as they like, if they start early enough.

## Media and society

When it comes to the environment, Lisa sees it as an important factor for all of us. It is very rare you see children and adolescents with big problems where you cannot find any problems in their family and surroundings. Families get influenced by the society and vice versa. So does every human being. Their family and society affect everyone throughout their lifetime. Lisa believes that the media influence people one way or the other, regardless of what they might say. No matter if it intentional or not a person reading the newspapers gets affected. The media is societies "watch dogs" and when extraordinary and abnormal incidents occur, the media portray bad happenings as negative as possible to get every one to buy their newspaper.

People's families, the media and the society are factors that set our limits to what we can do and not do. These factors give every human being some kind of "inner alarm" that should go off when unacceptable behaviour occurs. Lisa goes on by saying that religions, culture and the media will always be factors that control what is right and wrong. It is also important not to forget that the parental role has a major influence on how big that "inner alarm" will be.

## Lisa's holistic point of view

Lisa's perceptions are, like my other informants' perceptions, based on the topic of my research, hence which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective.

To be defined as children one has to be in the age from zero to ten. They are vulnerable and non-reflective. Children are not quite aware if their own actions are painful or hurtful when committing evil acts. Lisa believes that children do the first thing that comes to mind, and they do not think of consequences before after the evil act is done.

Lisa believes that it is usually an explanation why humans become evil. When children are evil or commit evil acts it is important to see it as a combination of their upbringing and their environment. Because that is what usually affects children who do evil acts early in their lives. She thinks that evil is something that develops through lack of adequate care and behavioral problems is often a "vicious circle" in children's lives. If parents have bad intentions they can shape a child to become evil, if they start early enough. If a child is evil it is important to remember that adults and parents have been children too so they too must have been influenced by something negative.

It is very rare you see children with big problems where you cannot find any problems in their family or environment. Lisa believes that the media is society's "watch dog" and when extraordinary and abnormal incidents occur, the media portray bad happenings as negative as possible to create a moral panic. The society affects families and the media affect society and vice versa. These three factors set limits to what we can do and not do. They give every human being some kind of "inner alarm" that should go off when

unacceptable behavior occur. Lisa thinks that these factors tell children right from wrong, what is good and what is evil. But the parental role has of course most influence on children on how big their “inner alarm” will be.

Lisa’s holistic point of view is based on the British philosopher, politician etc John Lock’s perspective. Who claimed humans were born clean, pure and with a blank slate, but it is society that influences the evil. Below you will see two examples from my interview with Lisa and why I got the perception.

*“However, children that messes up their lives. Are usually affected by adults, their parents, who have been kids themselves. So they must have been affected in some way too. I think that evil is something that develops through lack of adequate care”*

*“I basically agree on what Locke is saying. I also think that people has to be egotistic to survive. If we just give and give, there won’t be more left of you. But maybe it’s a crossing of the two theories. Whether your selfishness grows even stronger, or whether you take into account the needs of others as well, has to do with your upbringing. That’s what “tabula rasa” is all about. If you have bad intentions, I think you can shape a child as much as you like, if you start early enough”.*

## Interview with Lois

### Children and childhood

Lois perception of children is that they are easily gullible and that is why children usually do and believe what people tell them. Upbringing and environment affect all children and they both have an important role in children’s lives. It is therefore important that children’s parents and the environment show them right from wrong because this is where children learn behavior, values and ethics from.

When children do evil acts or behave abnormal, Lois then think it is important that we do not judge or punish them like adults. Children do know right from wrong they just do

not understand what they are doing when they do something wrong. They live in the moment and do not think of the consequences before it is too late. Children are very spontaneous and they are not capable on planning ahead. They take one day at a time.

Children at the age of 0 to 10 usually do the first thing that comes to mind, they do not have a “to do list” for the day. Lois thinks it is wrong to call children cunning; they do not walk around with an evil and cunning plan in their heads all day. Their minds are not developed well enough. It is therefore important that their significant others and society teach them how to act.

## Evil and evildoing

Lois believes that evil is something you conduct on someone or something. It is a really viscous and abnormal act when one is being evil. To be evil one must know right from wrong and it is therefore hard to understand that children can be evil. Lois cannot imagine that a child’s mind and actions can be put together in a way that it can be calculated as a purely evil act.

She thinks it is important to note that when human beings are evil or do evil acts they are usually influenced by someone in their lives. They have got the idea from someone or something in their environment. It does not always have to be the parents or close family that influences people into becoming evil. Mass media and other networks also have a big influence on human beings these days.

When it comes to being evil or performs evil acts, it is not a revelation that it is usually boys involved. Lois believes we are talking about a gender issue when it comes to evil. But we cannot exclude that also girls can perform evil acts. So she does not think that evil always have to do with gender. Evil is the act itself, the brutality of it makes it so unreal and abnormal it is sometimes hard to understand.

## Media and society

Lois believes that we get socialized into society and get “sculpted” by our environment.



When we talk about deviation we always go back to people's upbringing and childhood, factors that are created by society.

She also thinks media creates some kind of "moral panic" in our society. And it is therefore easy for society to put "labels" on the so-called deviators. We, especially society, give the not so "normal" once roles that make it difficult to live with later in their lives. Society teaches us what is normal and what is abnormal, what is allowed and not allowed.

Lois, like the other informants, thinks that media has a lot of influence on society. When for example boys do evil and viscous acts it gets media's attention and it is sometimes blown out of proportion. The media can create a kind of "witch hunt" amongst citizens. But when girls do things that are equally as bad, it is for some reason pampered down. We, and especially children need to be protected by all the negativities and the atrocities we get from our surroundings/environment and mass media. This is where societies important role come in.

### Lois holistic point of view

Lois thinks children are easily gullible and that is why they usually do and believe what people tell them. Upbringing and environment affect all children and both factors have an important role in children's lives. Children at the age of zero to ten usually do the first thing that comes to mind but they do not know right from wrong. Lois believe that children are very spontaneous and do not think of the consequences. It is therefore very important not to judge children as adults when they do something abnormal or evil.

Lois perception of evil is that it is a really viscous and abnormal act one inflicts on someone or something. To be evil one must know right from wrong and it is therefore hard to understand why children can be evil. She cannot imagine that a child's mind and actions can be put together in a way that it can be calculated as a purely evil act. Someone usually influences children who are evil or commit evil acts. The ideas have to come from someone important in their environment. Not just their parents but also media and other networks have a lot of influence on children these days.

She does believe that it is a gender issue when it comes to being evil, because it is not a revelation when a male is involved. But we cannot exclude that also girls can perform evil acts. Evil does not always have to do with gender. It is the act itself. The brutality of it makes it so unreal that it is sometimes hard to understand.

When we talk about deviation we always go back to people's upbringing and childhood, factors that are created by society. Like my other informants, Lois believes that media has a lot of influence on parents and society. Media creates some kind of moral panic. We, especially society, give the so-called deviators "labels" that are hard to get rid of. Society teaches us what is "normal" and what is "abnormal". Children especially need to be protected by all the negativities and atrocities they might get from their environment and mass media.

Lois holistic point of view is based on Thomas Hobbes who said that humans are born egotistic and it is when that egoism strikes, they might do evil and inconceivable acts. Hobbes saw the original human state as corrupted and evil and that it is society's duty to socialize the individual. Her perceptions are also based on John Locke's "tabula rasa" theory, a perspective that says we are born with a blank slate that is constantly replenished (see Chapter 2). Underneath you can read an outtake from my interview with Lois and how I got the perception.

*"I can't really say if it's one or the other. All human beings have some form of egoism. So what you're really asking me is if children are born egoistic. We get socialized into a community and we get "sculpted" from our surroundings. In other words there's much to this, why do they always go back to their upbringing and childhood? Thus, who are these kids parents, where do they come from, how was their upbringing etc"?*

*"Yes. Because the "history that gets written" on peoples "board", is created by all the different social structures around us. So we kind of have to combine them".*

## Isolating the different perceptions to try and look behind the underlying meaning in what is said

I am at this point almost done with my analysis. My informants' part perceptions have been divided into three categories, hence their perception of the phenomena children/childhood, evil/evildoing and media/society. I then summarized my informants' part perceptions of the different phenomena and then looked at their holistic point of views.

Phenomenography has a scientific point of view, a way to understand the world around you. It is about thoughts that are usually not made the subject of reflection, which is now stepping forward and described in terms of categories. That way, new aspects can be carried out and become available for reflection and further development. For me personally, phenomenography becomes a method to represent different perceptions of my three categories. I need to refine some of my informants' views and show the perceptions, which seem to answer my topic, the best. By isolating different perceptions implies to try and look behind the underlying meaning in what is said and to emphasize and to give meaning to all that is said. The process of phenomenographic analysis is strongly iterative and comparative; it involves the continual sorting and resorting of data and ongoing comparisons between data. Developing categories of description as well as between the categories themselves and that way get the important holistic perceptions.

The point is not to deny that there are differences in what these terms refer to, but to suggest that the limited number of ways in which a certain phenomenon appears to us can be found. Based on the informants' holistic perceptions I can clearly see a resemblance between their perceptions. But there are also some of my informants that have a couple of different perceptions compared to my other interviewees.

Marge, Gary, Francis and Lisa had the same perceptions when it comes to seeing children as children and not as boys and girls, which refers to the interpretation of gender. It is for them very important to treat them as children and not look at them as boys and girls when they do something abnormal and evil. In contrast to the other

informants Katie, Rosario and Lois believe that doing evil acts is a gender issue, because it is not a revelation when a male is involved. They mean boys are more likely to do evil acts, maybe because they are more cunning and aggressive by nature. Girls cannot be as evil as boys because they are more sensitive and innocent, but they did not exclude that girl's can perform evil acts. Evil does not always have to do with gender.

All the informants' meant that to be a defined as a child one must be in the age of zero to ten, which refers to the interpretation of childhood. According to my informants children are impressionable, innocent, pure, lovely, vulnerable, easy gullible and precious creatures. When children do evil acts my informants thinks that it has a lot to do with their upbringing, their parents, but we cannot forget the environment they live in. It is a combination of these two factors.

Gary, Francis, Lisa, Rosario and Katie all thought that children do not know right from wrong. Unlike Marge and Lisa who believed that children do know right from wrong. It is the consequences of when they have done something wrong or how good or bad their actions are they do not understand. The two groups do not have the same perception of that factor but they have the same perception that children have not developed perception in that age and they are not able to reflect and realize to what they have just done. It is when children do something wrong an evil act they do not reflect over the consequences it might bring, they are not aware of their actions, and the informants therefore thinks it is important not to judge them as adults.

All the informants believed that children are not cunning enough to plan an evil act, they are very spontaneous and they usually do the first thing that comes to mind. When a person is evil that person is manipulative and conniving and it is a really viscous and abnormal act one inflicts on someone or something that is harmful or painful. The informants' had a pretty straightforward perception of what evil was except for Francis. He meant that it is important to state that evil is a very abstract word and that we have to remember that evil for one person might not be evil for another person. People react to evil in many different ways, which I think is a very important statement.

The informants' do not think that children can be born evil to predict such a conniving

act. If a child does an evil act it is usually a learnt behavior. The chances for a child to become evil gets bigger if they do not get the proper human care, nurture and love they need. If the parents or the environment in which the child live in have nothing but bad intentions, they can shape a child to be or become evil. Morals and values on to become “normal” in society is something children learn from their primary careers and environment and the informants’ believe that it is these two factors that give children the ability to understand right from wrong. Children need guidance in life.

They all point out that it is not just the primary careers that influence children’s life. Society and media also influence children. These two factors have a lot of influential power; they always try to tell people what is “normal” and what is “deviant” and with that comes “labeling” of the children who do not go by society’s norms and values. It has such a big influence of people’s lives. One can say that media is societies “watch dog” and when extraordinary and abnormal incidents occur (incidents like the Jamie Bulger case which was the initial in all my interviews) the media portray these happenings as negative as possible to create a moral panic. The informants’ believe that society affects parents who then affect their children. These three factors set limits to what we can do and not do. Two of my informants’, Marge and Gary, specifically said that the media and the community influenced their perceptions back in the days before they started on their youth and community work-studies.

The cornerstone is that all the informants’ perceptions, subconsciously or not, are based on either John Locke or Thomas Hobbes perspectives or both. Hobbes saw the original human state as corrupted and evil and that it is society’s duty to socialize the individual. Unlike Hobbes, Locke described the human mind as a blank slate at birth. He said that no one was born good or evil but that the society people grow up in influences their morality. Gary is the only one who sticks out by mentioning Georg Herbert Meads “mirror theory”. This states that children learn behavior and values from their parents and their surroundings.

# The result and findings of my phenomenographic analysis

Based on my informants holistic point of views I have given the three categories six various perceptions and one part perception.

## Three different perceptions on children and childhood;

Table 3

<p>1.Perception - See children as children</p>	<p>2.Perception - Children are not morally responsible</p>	<p>3.perception - Childhood is constructed</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important to treat them as children and not judge them as adults. See the uniqueness of being a child. Children are precious not only in themselves but also for what they represent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children do not think logically or make moral judgements of their actions. They do not know right from wrong and usually do the first thing that comes to mind. Children live day by day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The degree of anxiety generated by risks to children is associated with a particular construction of childhood as an age of innocence and vulnerability which adults and society have a duty to protect. We want to keep them young and innocent as long as possible.</li> </ul>

## One perception and a part perception on evil and evildoing;

Table 4

<p>1.Perception - Children are not born evil</p>	<p>Part perception - Evil is created</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evil is a learnt behaviour. Children are products of their own environment and evil children are not born but made. Evil expresses a widespread anxiety, a taboo area we are scared of.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wicked "them" and the decent "us". Evil is a very abstract word and that evil for one person might not be evil for another person. The figure of evil has always been the focus of adult fears, desires and fantasies. The abnormal vs. normal.</li> </ul>

## Three different perceptions on media and society;

Table 5

1.Perception - "Labeling"	2.Perception - Pseudo-adults	3.Perception - Growing crisis in childhood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Society and media have a lot of influential power. They always try to tell people what is "normal" and what is "deviant". With that comes "labeling" of the children who do not go by societies norms and values.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The media and society affect parents who then affect their children. We flood them with adults expectations and media images on how they should act and how to become part of the communion.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is a sense of a growing crisis in childhood, certainly a crisis in the way that we think of children. Moral panics are known to mobilize the need to protect children through increased regulation.</li></ul>

## Summary of chapter four

In this chapter you have read about the relation between theory and empirical data in a qualitative research methods. Further you have seen how social pedagogy and hermeneutics relates to each other and how I have conducted the phenomenographic analysis. Hence the most important part, the results of my phenomenographic study of the interviews. I have divided the informants' part perceptions into three categories, hence their perception of the phenomena children/childhood, evil/evildoing and media/society. You have then read how I summarized my informants' part perceptions of the different phenomena and then looked at their holistic point of views. I then isolated the different perceptions to try and look behind the underlying meaning in what is said and to emphasize and to give meaning to all that is said The outcome of this was six various perceptions and one part perceptions (see table 3, 4, 5) divided between the three categories.

In the next chapter I will be focusing on discussing my findings or empirical data if you

like, in terms of my informants perceptions on the categories children/childhood, evil/evildoing and media/society. These different perceptions will be discussed in the context of social pedagogical theory.



## Chapter 5: The Discussion

Careful the things you say,  
Children will listen.  
Careful the things you do,  
Children will see.  
And learn.

Children will not obey,  
But Children will listen.  
Children will look to you  
For which way to turn,  
They learn what to be.

Careful before you say,  
“Listen to me”.  
Children will listen.

**Stephen Sondheim,  
Into the Woods (1986).**

### The results of a phenomenographic study

Social pedagogy and individual pedagogy is referred with reference to various perspectives in the Norwegian educational literature. Individual pedagogy is presented as a perspective on the individual and opposite of what we see in social pedagogy, which is related to social perspectives and society. What mentioned as a possible consequence of the different perspectives is the conflict of interest between individual and society and it is said to be a natural tension between individual and society. Underlying this issue is the question of what needs to be taken care of; the individual or the society?

The answer to that question is determined by two factors. On one hand we have the context of how we understand human interactions. What do we mean about human interactions and which social perspectives do we have about this? This is an important part of the social pedagogical discourses. On the other hand we have the understanding of individuals/human beings. What kind of social views do we have for our theories on individual development? If we believe that humans are a purely biological phenomenon, a purely natural being that evolves according to a genetic program independent of society and the environment it lives in. It would be logical to think individual pedagogy when it comes to creating conditions for human development. However, if we believe that the individuals can be just what we want them to be, it is only a question of the “external influence” society exposes the individual for. It will then be logical to think social pedagogy. The discussion here is more about the necessity and the sense of understanding on how the individual and society relate to each other, because we live in a society where we influence each other and need each other one way or the other (Mathiesen, 2008).

Human communion liberates rather than restricts the individual. One of the fundamental precepts of social pedagogy is that the individual and the community are each predicated upon the other. Natorp believed that rising from the individual level to the communal level enriches the self. Comparing a biological category (individual) with a social category (society) is an error that is often made when we consider the relationship between the individual and society according to Regi Th. Enerstvedt (ibid, 2008). Individual and society then becomes two magnitudes that are in an external relation to each other. Human nature is understood as a social product, and the social product is produced by a natural being. This interpretation indicates a more open development-perspective and can provide the basis for the statement that we are formed and developed in what we shape and develop ourselves. The individual and the social perspectives stand in exterior relations to each other. When Enerstvedt (ibid, 2008) use the terms personality and society it indicates that we become human, an individual through our lived life in society. Pedagogy is then faced with the task to contribute to the development of the individual’s personality through upbringing and education. It is in this situational context we must understand the social pedagogical perspective that “man can only become man through human interaction” (ibid, 2008).

As I mentioned earlier, when I was done transcribing my seven interviews I approximately had forty pages of text. Using everything from a text analysis is an almost impossible task. Such an analysis would probably not be especially interesting research. I therefore weed out the surrounding text material that did not seem to answer my research, which consists of how the people understood different phenomenon hence finding out which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective. By isolating different perceptions I looked behind the underlying meaning in what my informants stated. Because in the phenomenographic research perspective it is important to have a holistic point of view and to emphasize and give meaning to the things my informants' said about the different phenomena.

How different phenomena is experienced and interpreted can of course be expressed in many different ways. The empirical study of a qualitative research interview show different ways, in which my informants' experience, conceptualize, understand, perceive, apprehend etc, children and evil and aspects of the world around us. These differing experiences, understandings etc are characterized in terms of categories of description, logically related to each other and forming hierarchies in relation to given criteria. Such an ordered set of categories of description is called the outcome space of the phenomenon, concepts in question. Different ways of experiencing children/childhood, evil/evildoing and media/society discussed in the interviews are the units of analysis and not the single individuals. The categories of description corresponding to those differing understandings and the logical relations that can be established between them constitute the main results of my phenomenographic study.

When I was analyzing my interviews I looked for different perceptions the informants had on children and evil. I wanted to try and show what my informants' thought about the different phenomena in general and what they meant specifically. "Social pedagogy is the study and practice of deliberative care, education and upbringing, viewed holistically (like the phenomenographical and hermeneutical perspectives) rather than as separate entities, and with emphasis on finding pedagogical ways of nurturing and supporting positive social development" (Stephens, 2009). What was important for me when I was analyzing was to try and show the informants' individual perspectives and their social pedagogical perspectives, then give their holistic point of view.

## Filling in the gaps

Through this thesis paper I was concerned with the question, *which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective* that includes both perceptions from my informants and already existing and relevant literature. I primarily used theories that discussed conditions between individuals and society, since it is the main focus in this thesis. As you already know I have been using phenomenography as a qualitative research perspective and through this perspective I have not intended to work based on a hypotheses, a theory or how the categories are going to look like. This kind of research methodology is called “explorative”, partly because it is based on research and partly because one can say that a phenomenographer works with “gaps” in people’s knowledge, and part of my research is to try filling in these “gaps”.

By studying the way people express and interpret different phenomena in life we can reach understandings of a common human life experience, even an understanding of life itself. This is perhaps a little exaggerated if you ask me, but life manifests itself through visible cultural and social expressions. And through the interpretation of my informants’ different perceptions and social pedagogical theory I have reached an understanding or at got the idea on what I can enlighten in this chapter. It is the historical, cultural and social contexts that give us the different perceptions in life and the final result of this research is therefore descriptive and a conclusion at the end is therefore not necessary. I will be focusing on discussing my findings or empirical data in terms of my informants’ perceptions on the categories children/childhood, evil/evildoing and media/society. These different perceptions will be discussed in the context of social pedagogical theory.

When it comes to children and childhood three different perceptions came to life. Through evil and evildoing I got one perception and one part perception. On media and society I came across three different perceptions (see table 3, 4 and 5 in chapter 4). A theory is a set of abstract principles that enable a scientist to understand phenomena in a plausible way. The focus here is on scientific understanding in a given field of study: in my case, social pedagogy. This discipline enables scholars to explain aspects of the deliberative education of individuals into social values and social norms. So which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective?

## Which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective?

To a child, the twenty years from birth to adulthood is like a long, long road. To those of us who are growing nearer to our final destination, we cover the same distance with what appears to be increasing speed: those two decades are no longer the seeming eternity that they used to be. We use our life experiences to map the way for “our” children; their journey is made clearer by showing them our own mistakes. At least that is what we would all like to believe. We like to think that we are so smart and that we have all the answers and we want to pass all that over to “our” children. But if you scratch beneath the surface you do not need to dig very deep to find the kid you were. That is why it is kind of crazy that we are, or eventually will raise children of our own. I guess that is the real circle of life. Parents “fake” their way through it, you “fake” your way through it and hopefully you do not raise a “serial killer”.

Yet, for every generation of children and young adults, the way is far from clear. As parents, relatives, teachers, pedagogues, friends, or simply as members of society, we battle constantly to guide young minds towards what we see as right and healthy while at the same time trying to keep them from dangerous and damaging influences. Paradoxically it must be, to some extent, a losing battle. Without an awareness of the darker side of life, children will grow to be vulnerable and ill-equipped adults. The consensus would maintain that there must be a balance; children need to be left of the lead gradually, it is a “balancing act” and it is easy to put too much weight on one of the sides. Through the various danger points (the “terrible twos”, the pre-teens and puberty), they will need adult reassurance, support and advice. There is no prescribed “success guaranteed” method of raising children. The best we can hope for is that we can pour as much good as possible into their lives and limit the harm we and others, inevitably, will do to them.

Am I saying that all children’s misdemeanours are the result of their parent’s mistakes? No, I am not. There are often other factors involved but, when considering the alarming and painful subject I am about to discuss here, I wish to put away the notion that some children are born evil or that evil acts of any kind is an aberration affecting only the

relatively few whom it is easy to distinguish by it. It is here suitable to incorporate the 1 perception; children are not born evil in table 4. Most of my informantst believed that children are not born evil. They thought that evil is a learnt behavior and children are products of their own environments and evil children are not born but made. Evil expresses a widespread anxiety, a taboo area we are scared of.

Due to this notion it is also worth mentioning that my informants, subconscious or not, was based on either John Locke or Thomas Hobbes perspectives or both. Hobbes saw the original human state as corrupted and evil and that it is society's duty to socialize the individual. Unlike Hobbes, Locke described the human mind as a blank slate at birth. He said that no one was born good or evil but that the society people grow up in influences their morality. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke had very different views when it comes to the state and right of mankind. Hobbes viewed mankind as inherently evil and as savage beasts. While Locke claimed humans were born clean, pure and with a blank slate, but it is society that influences the evil. Hobbes wanted an absolute monarchy to control the wild nature of man. On the other hand, Locke wanted a limited monarchy and the preservation of mans rights. In Hobbes view, the greatest good was law and order, while Locke believed in maintaining the rights owed to man. Gary was the only one who sticks out by mentioning Georg Herbert Meads "mirror theory". This states that children learn behavior and values from their parents and their surroundings.

Children's innate cruelty does not usually extend to murder like the cases I am referring to. Those who have, for whatever reason, killed other human beings before the age of eighteen are generally notorious cases, regarded with ghoulish fascination by media and society alike. Naturally, there is a deal of genuine commendable and entirely necessary concern: for the effected families, for the state of our society, and for the safety of our children. While it is understandable that the children are demonised and degraded, it is nevertheless regrettable that attempts to find reasons for their behaviour are greeted with howls of protest. Society seems always to prefer, if ill-informed, "solutions": "lock them up and throw away the key". This is where we see the importance of social pedagogy and what we try to prevent. As I have already mentioned a theory is a set of abstract principles that enable a scientist to understand phenomena in a plausible way.

The focus here is on scientific understanding in a given field of study: in my case, social pedagogy.

## Not a discussion about nature vs. nurture

It may be possible to get two children from identical backgrounds, from the same family, one of whom goes “wrong” and one who does not. Like Norway’s prime minister, who has a sister who is a heroin-addict. It is all about the “nature vs. nurture” debate, which continues today, just as it always has done. Is a child’s character formed entirely by their experience and background or is there “badness” in some, that at some stage they will demonstrate no matter what? If nurture is responsible, why do some children suffer adversity and triumph over it? If only I had the answer to that, but I do not. No one really has. This thesis paper is not about the “nature vs. nurture” debate that is so ongoing. I am trying to avoid that as much as possible because I believe it is a continuum, a debate that will go on forever. So before moving on I just wanted to point out that this research was not a discussion about nature vs. nurture.

## “Won’t somebody please think of the children”!?

According to NOU - “Norway’s official reports – Competence development in Child Protection” from 2009 upbringing is all about providing conditions for growth and protection of learning, care and socialization - everything that can help children to become part of society’s communion. They are here talking about self-renewing social processes that will lead new generations into adult ranks, which could include family, work and social life.

The UN children’s convention summarizes upbringing into three main principles: protection, provision and participation. The children’s convention focuses on that the upbringing conditions will promote a desirable development and prevent the risk factors that may occur. In accordance with the convention, the upbringing policy in Norway aims to help children and adolescents so they have conditions for development that provides the basis for a good future.

In the Nordic countries the most significant upbringing and care mandate has been assigned the family, but children and youth are not exclusively at the mercy of their parents and the upbringing conditions at home. It is also societies responsibility to ensure that the younger generations receive proper conditions for a constructive development and hopefully make them part of the communion. This applies to all institutions that are responsible for children's upbringing and whether it is kindergartens, schools, organizations or labor there are norms of responsibility for the protection of children and adolescents, although these are not always clearly stated.

We live in a postmodern society, which is a diverse society that gives a lot of new possibilities for each individual, and at the same time expose us for more risks. Our society is highly affected by the mass media and the exposure that takes place here is largely liberated from control and may contribute to non-desirable behavior, morals and values. And lets not forget that globalization have created a so far unseen degree of mutual conditions of existence that is synonymous to a similar degree of interdependence and co-existence. The changes in children's lives may be that childhood is no longer local, but global, and children and adolescents identity formation is no longer linear, continuous and predictable, but chaotic. In which society, their parents and significant others are all institutions that try and teach them the "proper" morals and values.

Social pedagogy cannot be described or understood without its interaction with modern society, where the permanent modernization processes challenge social pedagogical thoughts and practices. The social pedagogical practice has emerged from the social reality, which society constantly produces individuals and groups who are at risk of not being integrated. This perspective seeks to create and recreate committed and mutual social relations between individuals and communities in society's conflict zones. At the heart of social pedagogic practice is the education or socialization of the child and adult into social life and let them become part of a communion.

When modern society is described with definitions like "knowledge society", "expertise society" and "educational society", a number of new social demands to citizen's lifestyle and capacity are made. Some people can live up to these conceptions of a new



“normality”, others cannot. But for every “normality category” that is made, we also produce a shadow side of them (Madsen, 2006). We create a society that consists of normality vs. deviance, the natural vs. the unnatural or in my case good vs. evil, but what does this really mean? Are we creating little “monsters”? In a society that weakens their innocence and an institutional care system that brutalises them, we must expect abnormal acts to flourish. Due to this notion it is here suitable to add the 1. perception in table 5, hence labelling. My informants believes that society and the media alike have a lot of influential power. They always try to tell people what is normal and what is deviant and with that comes labelling of the children who do not go by society’s norms and values.

Although morality in general are becoming more and more reflexive we cannot take it for granted that there will be less regulation of the social life in society, it might be quite the opposite. The modern society is described as a collection of institutions that spins us into a web of bureaucratic unforeseeable and commercial rules that are often produced by a form of moral panic, which is then produced by an abnormal incident, a phenomenon in such a way that the phenomenon is a symbol of a violation with the established norms and values. According to Stanley Cohen (1973) this moral panic is a way to gain social control and can be defined as society organized reaction on children’s behavior as deviant, problematic, worrying, threatening, difficult or otherwise undesirable. This social control is of course a process where undesirable behaviors describing the use of particular designations that intend to categorize the unwanted behavior, such as children who perform evil acts. Is our perception on children and evil a consequence of society’s moral panics?

Moral panics are irresistible when they present threats to children. The figure of the child has always been the focus of societies and adult fears, desires and fantasies, but lately, debates about children have become invested with a growing sense of anxiety and panic. When children are involved or victims of abnormal and evil incidents, for example children killing children it becomes an image of moral collapse, of a decayed and broken society where children who are supposed to be innocent and supposed to be protected can turn into evil creatures. We ask ourselves what has gone wrong in our society? Is there a sense of growing crisis in childhood, a crisis in the way that we think of children?

The child symbolized the social order and adult and social anxieties are projected into children. It is here suitable to incorporate the 3.perception in table 5, growing crisis in childhood. The perception here is a certain crisis in the way we think of children. Moral panics are known to mobilize the need to protect children through increased regulation. What happens to them or what they do, tell us what kind of society we have become or are becoming: “the child” has become a way of speaking about sociality itself. Any assault on what the child is, or rather what the child has evolved into, threatens to rock the social base (Critchler, 2003).

*“Childhood is often shaped by the past, which then affects the present the children encounter through society and traditions. Childhood is also shaped by the ideas of the future. It is not only shaped by what parents and society “is”, but by what parents and society believes will come. Childhood is consistent, but in the mean time it is in the focus of change. “Modern” children are more then ever affected by the future we all believe will come”.*

Frønes, (2003)

As I have already mentioned, moral panics about childhood rest on the proposition that children need to be protected by increased regulation of adult activity. Childhood is a precious area surrounded by the things that will “rob” children of their childhood. They are vulnerable and underdeveloped, incapable of informed choice about for example mass media. Adults are able to make these choices children are not. Adults and society construct who are children and what childhood is. “Childhood is a shifting, relational term, whose meaning is defined primarily through its opposition to another shifting term, adulthood” (Critchler, 2003). These discursive constructions are undertaken by the social pedagogical perspectives and act as guidance for societies educators; social pedagogues and child welfare workers – all creations of the twentieth century inherit and apply models on how to the educate or socialise children and into social life and let them become part the important communion and redeem individuality. Here I want to incorporate the 3.perception in table 3 namely that childhood is constructed. My informants also see children as precious, innocent, vulnerable and underdeveloped. The degree of anxiety generated by risks to children is associated with a particular construction of childhood.

Childhood and adolescents first and foremost means identity formation and development of its personality. Between these two factors a complex dialectical process unfolds, it is not easy for a child to distinguish the influence they get from parents/significant others and society. Seen from a child's point of view their parents affect them the most, but as the media and society also greatly affect parent's values and behaviors, it is not so easy for children to keep the adults significance apart. One of childhood's most important paradoxes is that children have a life, which is similar to the adult life. As mentioned before childhood is the focus for our adult desires and anxieties, and it is also a construct, changing over time.

*"The line between childhood and adulthood used to be like the Berlin Wall, when the two states were separated with each other and the adults were the authority figures in the forbidden zone. Now the wall has collapsed and children step over the rubble into the grown up world prematurely, while adults can easily step back into a state of cultural immaturity".*

Gerrard, (2009)

What is worth mentioning here is the 2.perception in table 5, hence pseudo adults. The media and society affect parents who affect their children. We flood them with adult expectations and media images on how they should act and how to become part of communion and therefore forget that they are children and not young adults.

This is further aggravated by what has been described as "childhood lost", the idea that the years of innocence are getting fewer and fewer, and that the time-span of childhood has collapsed. Children are growing up faster than before. "If you are lucky, they are still a child when they are eight; if not, they are pseudo-adults" (Paul, 2005). With so many examples to influence impressionable and powerless children, it is hardly surprising that the vulnerable and exploited among them take on the adult role models presented to them through society and the mass media even earlier ages. Is it possible that children in today's society are growing up much faster than before due to the influence of mass media, commercial values and society? Hence increase the adults' expectations of the children even more. Again the 2.perception, pseudo adults, in table 5 can be incorporated.

This is where Natorp's social pedagogical perspectives show its utility value. It is a perspective that can help us to see more clearly and to help social pedagogues to become more aware and not to be moved by all the moral panics in society. Social pedagogy is an instrument that guides the individual will towards a higher level, that is, the communal or collective will. We develop through our life in the society. We achieve self-understanding only when we place ourselves in relation to others, hence "man can only become man through human interaction".

## Man can only become Man through human interaction

As I have already mentioned before, Natorp founded a theory of social pedagogy based on Kant's fundamental precepts on morals and expanded on Kant's reasoning and felt that "Man can only become Man through human interaction". One of the fundamental precepts of social pedagogy is that the individual and the community are each predicated upon the other. Like many others Natorp's intention was to give a reasoned answer to a very important question, namely the relationship between upbringing and society (Mathiesen, 2009). The premise is that upbringing is conditioned by society, and society's development is a consequence of the upbringing individuals has received.

The essence here is that the individual and society have mutual assumptions to each other. He believed that rising from the individual level to the communal level enriches self-awareness. However, Natorp emphasized the importance of individual variation for the quality of communion. Genuine communion emancipates as it is based on the independent and intentional participation of the individual. The goal of education is to create communion and to enhance moral development during the whole lifetime. He saw social pedagogy, as an instrument that guides the individual will towards a higher level, that is, the communal or collective will. We develop through our life in the community. We achieve self-understanding only when we place ourselves in relation to others (Mathiesen, 2009).

According to Natorp, social pedagogy is a fundamental recognition of the perception that upbringing of the individual in any significant direction is socially determined and that shaping a human into social life fundamentally requires that the individual be given

appropriate upbringing into the society they will become a part of. Natorp's social pedagogical scientific perspectives are based on analyzing and examine factors and conditions in society (social conditions of course) that inhibit or promote formation of the individual and to develop a theory of formation/education based on social pedagogical analysis, which can guide to upbringing and education of societies members and for them to become people who together can shape the social life as a communion (Mathiesen, 2009).

The development of communion emerges as a norm to become part of the social life. I think it is possible to say that Natorp has two goals for what he calls the formation process. The first goal is to raise children to wanting to become and to be part of society/communion. The second goal is to raise children that want to improve society/communion. It is all about raising children to become self-conscious, acting individuals towards what should be essentially of this context, namely communion. It should be mentioned that theories about upbringing runs parallel to theories about society. It is important to state that communion shall not go beyond the individual and vice versa. It is therefore essential to consider what is best for the individuals, which can be compared with §4-1 "Consideration of the child's best" in the Norwegian Child Protection Law. The more the individual enriches itself the more the communion develops.

It is all about social inclusion and awareness. Formation of communion is a prerequisite for the formation of individuals/children. It is the professionals the social pedagogues and child welfare workers, in the institutional environment, that basically have the primary responsibility on creating the necessary social terms and conditions of human development and change. When the relations between children and communion become a conflict it is not just the individual that is subject for chance, but equally the social environment. The communion and social organizations may trough these perspectives develop just as much as the individual.

Like I mentioned above underlying this issue is the question of what needs to be taken care of, the individual or the society? Do we have to ignore society's needs if we do consider individual needs, and whether if we consider societies needs, will that be on

the expense of individual needs (Mathiesen, 2008)? For a wide-ranging change in personalities to occur, changes in culture and social institutions are required, and vice versa. Change can be initiated at any point. However, it is essential, when change begins in the personalities and values of groups of individuals, that this will be followed by or codified in change in society. That is, changes in the functioning of institutions or the creation of new institutions. Such social change is required for individual change to be supported and for it to spread to a substantial degree. It is the actions of collectivities, of groups, and of nations that create antagonism or build positive connection and cooperation, a communion in society.

To create a society characterized by the values, morals and practices of caring and cooperation among groups, and to reduce the predispositions for inter-group conflict, deviance, group violence, evil children, evildoing etc. Committed groups of individuals, especially social workers, child welfare worker and social pedagogues must work for a long-term change. This might not be a thing done over night and it is tendencies that might not be directly changed, but it is a goal one constantly works for and aims for. These factors might change if socialization practices promote in children a positive orientation to other human beings, as positive acts and cross-cutting relations (are essential to develop an appreciation of likeness as human beings and a feeling of connectedness, becoming part of a communion) among groups result in changed values, morals, self-concepts, attitudes toward other groups and in culture and social institutions (Staub, 2003).

At the same time we are aware of things which are not immediately relevant to the problem but surround it in space and time. In this sense we are aware of everything all the time. But we are surely not aware of everything in the same way. Every situation has its own relevance structure. The world is seen from the point of view of that specific situation. At the same time the situation is seen through all of our experiences of the world. We are aware of everything all the time and we are aware of everything differently all the time. Through mass media and the creation of a moral panic this awareness arises and it has affection on most of the members of society from politicians to parents, which then affect our future generations, hence children. The importance of social pedagogues and social pedagogical theory is to prevent this public hysteria in

which is created by these factors.

## Is childhood and evil a social creation?

We see it in Medias so called “you”-journalism. “No case without a face”; no problem is too big for it to be translated into what it means to you. Cases, especially the taboo ones that is presented in my thesis, are hard, and they cause a reaction in society and it works as a kind of short-hand for public hysteria, but definition “irrational”, and is almost always held to be indicative of someone else’s behaviour rather than our own. Likely to be taken to describe a host of complex – and contradictory – social processes, shaping public perceptions of an urgent threat to the “moral order of society”. Shared across most of these different inflections of the term, however, is the assumption that the media and the society play a crucial role in determining the characteristics of a moral panic (Cricher, 2003). There are no hooks to hang news on, given that it should be understandable to public citizens. It is when the media start to feed us with all kind of different risks that will soon concern us. Here it is beneficial to incorporate one of the part perceptions in table 4, evil is created. The figure of evil has for most of us, including my informants’ been the focus of adult fears, desires and fantasies. Wicked “them” and decent “us”. One of my informants stated something very relevant, which was that evil is a very abstract word and that evil for one person might not be evil for another person. And again we see the importance of gaining cross-cultural perspectives.

But is this about children? Yes it is, though somewhat indirectly. It is about a type of reality that children, especially in the West, are growing up in. They are raised in a hypermodern media society where commercial values and messengers stand stronger than any known era. Wherever children roam they are in some kind of “social training venue” where they “practice” to become part of society. They need to be given the chance to become initiated into the real and serious life, not just in terms of demands and duties, but also the basic conditions of existence and boundaries.

The question must be; why do some children take their fantasies one step further and turn them onto catastrophic reality? Part of the answer, according to Dr. Bailey, is serendipity (the ability for making desirable discoveries by accident): Circumstance, or

as she puts it more simply, “bad luck” (Paul, 2005). She explains that there may be a layer of truth in the idea that if similar, unfortunate circumstances converged, we might all be capable of doing similar things. Also, some may be fortunate enough to have the brink for disaster.

Children play, and whether they are aggressive, evil and cruel or not, will depend on which adults are there and whether they are saying; “Think about what you have just done, what do you think that means to the other child”? Children need guidelines; they need responsible adults or sometimes older children to show them boundaries. It is important to remember that they do not naturally find these limits themselves that is when things go wrong. Because children are impulsive, they have little awareness of their behavior and need help early on; they need someone to teach them what is right and what is wrong. It is here suitable to add the 2. perception in table 3 that children are not morally responsible. Most of my informants believed that children did not think logically or make moral judgments of their actions. They do not know right from wrong and children usually do the first thing that comes to mind. Children live day by day.

It is difficult not to look for easy answers when children do evil acts; we blame the parents, the social workers, the teachers etc. And with a society that mostly ignore the destructiveness in adult behavior and instead we engage us with the destructive and self-destructive behavior in children and adolescents. On the one hand, we sentimentalize children and on the other we are scared of them. We idolize them and scapegoat them. We want them to be young innocent, flawless by hard and “filthy” life for as long as possible, and we want them to grow up, flooding them with adult expectations and media images, trying to guide them through what is right and wrong. The way the different social institutions think of children and childhood today is very different from the way that we thought of them in previous centuries. We do not believe in original sin, that we are born imperfect and in need of religious redemption or at least most of us. Instead we have the idea that a child is born perfect and uncorrupted and only gradually becomes impure by society.

We are deeply shocked and disturbed by the image of young boys and girls behaving as if they are acting against nature and have become “mutant” versions of themselves. It



seems worse to us that a child should behave evil than that an adult should. Children who behave evil or do evil acts become like symbols of a congenital evil. But should we judge them as adults that are responsible for these actions? It is here important to treat children as children and not young adults. It is here suitable to add the 1. perception in table 3, see children as children. Where my informants stated that it is important to treat them as children and not judge them as adults. See the uniqueness of being a child and they are precious not only in themselves but also for what they are.

We tend to forget about the alternative version of children (when they do abnormal things) in which they are a chaotic package of impulses, desires, appetites and fears. Fears and risks created by the environment in which they live in. As I have already mentioned, we live a postmodern society, which is a diverse society that gives a lot of new possibilities for each individual, and at the same time expose us for more risks and harm. Moral panics is a concept that describe the impact created by society and the media to cover a phenomenon in such a way that the phenomenon is a symbol of a violation with the established norms, where the breach is an expression of a struggle between “them” and “us” or “good vs. evil”. The protectionist tendency is clearly mobilized by moral panics.

The grounds are that children are increasingly “at risk”. The environment is monitored for its sources. All moral panics about childhood identify a risk from adults, define children as vulnerable for them, proclaim the need to defend innocence of childhood against corruption and require authority to intervene to protect children. The degree of anxiety generated by risks to children is associated with a particular construction of childhood as an age of innocence and vulnerability, which adults and everyone working with children and their families have a duty to protect. The aim is therefore to enhance social pedagogues and child welfare workers understandings of, and prevent children being exposed to danger from all the different factors in their environment. Adult society constructs a view of childhood, which validates protective measures. “The notion that children are precious, that they need protection from a harmful adult world, is basic to contemporary understandings of childhood” (Best, 1990, cited in Critcher, 2003). Children are precious in themselves but also for what they represent.

## Summary of chapter 5

In this chapter you reviewed the overall aim and research objectives of this research. And how I through the interpretation of my informants' different perceptions and social pedagogical theory reached an understanding and an idea on how to fill in the gaps in peoples knowledge when it comes to my topic. You have also read how my results and findings are summarized into a discussion in terms of my informants' holistic perceptions on the categories children/childhood, evil/evildoing and media/society.

When it comes to children and childhood you can see that I have incorporated three different perceptions hence *see children as children*, *children are not morally responsible* and *childhood is constructed*. I also incorporated one perceptions and a part perception from the evil and evildoing category, thus *children are not born evil* and *evil is created*. On media and society I came across three different perceptions hence "*labeling*", *pseudo-adults* and *growing crisis in childhood* (see table 3,4 and 5 in chapter 4). These perceptions were of course discussed in the context of my topic, which view on evil and children is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective?

In the last chapter of my paper you will be presented with a complication of my thesis. Hence showing how my findings and results form a basis for recommendations for social pedagogues and child welfare workers. Furthermore, providing suggestions for how I can expand my research in this area. And what I have learnt from writing this paper and the various experiences I am left with.

## Chapter 6: Closure

The close relationship between knowledge, scientific questions and values in social science are visible in many ways. Social pedagogy is characterized by the fact that processing and care must have a foundation based on analysis and exploratory factors. And those conditions in society will inhibit or promote formation of the individual and develop a theory of formation/education based on social pedagogical analysis. This can guide to upbringing and education of societies youngest members and for them to become individuals who together can shape the social life as a communion.

Social pedagogy is a profession based on actions and where you apply knowledge, theory and experience to those actions. But it is easy to take your actions for granted and it is a factor that most of us never reflect upon. Things that we take for granted appears in actions that become a routine, through habits, in ways that judgments are practiced in ways people's moral behavior is expressed. Committed to the question, *which view on children and evil is manifested throughout a social pedagogical perspective.* I have throughout my results and findings from my phenomenographic analysis presented different categories that I discussed in the context of social pedagogical theory. Also focusing on discussing my categories or empirical data, in terms of my informants' perceptions on children/childhood, evil/evildoing and media/society. As you know by now, phenomenography is a research methodology that is called explorative, partly because it is based on research and partly because one can say that a researcher works with "gaps" in people's knowledge, and part of my research was to fill in these gaps.

In this day and age phenomena like children and evil have not gotten enough attention and it might be a gap in people's knowledge, especially for social pedagogues and child welfare workers. To work deliberately with important phenomena like these in the child protection and social pedagogy profession is very relevant and will be of great value. Recent changes in the status of children and childhood, how society is changing and the way the media influence the environment. Children and childhood has emerged as such an important theme of contemporary moral panics. Social pedagogy cannot be described or understood without its interaction with modern society, where the permanent

modernization processes challenge social pedagogical thoughts and practices. This is where I believe my thesis will show its utility value. It is a topic that can help us to see more clearly, to follow the rapid change in society, to help social pedagogues and child welfare workers to become more aware and not to be moved by all the moral panics that are created. It is beneficial for social pedagogues in general to have awareness that childhood is in the focus of change. This does not mean that all we have to do is to follow the statistics; it means that our perceptions and perspectives must change. To look at new perspectives and relations with “old glasses” is as dangerous as it is common. It is a social pedagogical task to create conditions for social participation in acclaimed societies. Not based on fear but in the confidence that all people strive after the good life through the social conditions that exist, and with a sense in which society enables.

Social pedagogy is an instrument that guides the individual will towards a higher level, that is, the communal or collective will. We develop through our life in society. A theory is a set of abstract principles that enable us to understand phenomena in a plausible way. The focus in my thesis has been a scientific understanding in a given field of study: in my case, the social pedagogical perspective. It should be mentioned that theories about upbringing runs parallel to theories about society and if people working with children become more aware of that it might help them see more clearly and make them more conscious about themselves. I also believe that my thesis paper will raise scientific and moral issues that do not only have specific but also a public interest. This applies to the relation between science, subjects and moral, subjective and objective knowledge, individual choices and justification of performance in practice.

The problems and issues experienced by children in contemporary societies often transcend national and cultural boundaries. Globalization has created a so far unseen degree of mutual conditions of existence that is synonymous to a similar degree of interdependence and co-existence. The changes in children lives may be that childhood is no longer local, but global. Phenomenography as a research perspective is contextual and depends on time and space. As you already know, during my stay in Wales I interviewed seven bachelor students from three different countries, hence Norway, Lithuania and Wales. This will provide me with the opportunity to examine the similarities and differences regarding various cultures’ view on children and evil. My

empirical foundation and findings is therefore international, because by interviewing students from three different countries, various contexts become highlighted and I will therefore gain relevant cross-cultural perspectives. This can be of great value to social pedagogues and child welfare workers, and students.

Writing this paper has been an incredible learning process. I have learnt a lot and I believe that I have gained new interpretations and perspectives when it comes to social pedagogy. In the development of social pedagogy in terms of modernity, it is crucial to maintain the social pedagogical perspective. The approach towards human beings, the social and cultural conditions and the complex interaction between people and their social world are all factors that can help us understanding different phenomena. The society is constantly changing so is children's behavior and their way of thinking. It is therefore important that the basis of the social pedagogical perspective follow these changes by keeping up to date with new perspectives and phenomena that are created by moral panics in which society and especially its citizens are affected by. And by writing this paper I feel I have managed to do just that.

The social pedagogical thinking results in new reforms in the educational system and new perspectives in the upbringing. According to NOU (2009) the social work education in Norway shall qualify to these social pedagogical activities, towards children, adolescents and their careers. I have learnt about the necessity and the sense of understanding how the individual and society relate to each other. We live in a society where we influence each other and need each other one-way or the other. As I have already mentioned above, childhood has emerged as an important theme of contemporary moral panics, which can be prevented by filling in the gaps in peoples' knowledge.

Writing my thesis in English was both challenging and fun. I wrote it in English because I wanted my paper to be read not just by Norwegians but also by other nationalities. Social pedagogy is a well-known active performing profession and its role as an analytic tool is highly practiced in Norway, and I hope other countries may harvest by it fruits of knowledge. It is going to be desirable to see whether my findings and results can be transferred to social pedagogues and child welfare workers as well as upcoming ones,

nationally and globally.

Now if I had more time, let's say a couple of years. And if had the opportunity to dig even deeper into my research and developed it even more, which is of course quite time-dependent. New topics and new empirical data would have been enlightened. My three already existing categories and new topics would be presented as follows:

1. I would have discussed various perceptions of children and childhood throughout a social pedagogical perspective.
2. I would have discussed various perceptions of evil and evildoing throughout a social pedagogical perspective.
3. I would have discussed the ongoing problem in which the "media society" is "labelling" its citizens when they are becoming deviants and if it is causing problems for social pedagogy?
4. And last but not least. Is childhood and evil a social creation to protect future generations from the future the parents and environment think will come?

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# **Appendix 1**

Name:

Nationality:

Age:

Gender:

**1. What is your opinion about the article? What's your reaction/feeling about the incident?**

**2. What's the reason for your opinion? Like why do you react the way you do?**

**3. Let's say girls did this instead of boys, what do you think would happen? Do you think you would react the same way if that was the case? Do you think this is a gender issue?**

**4. Do you find incidents like these in your own country?**

**5. Can children actually be evil or do evil things?**

## Appendix 2

Dear participants of the Erasmus Intensive Program

My name is Christian Ommundsen and I am currently studying Applied Social Science as a graduate student at the University of Stavanger in Norway. I just finished my first year enrolled in this program and next year I will be starting to work on my thesis. The topic addresses children that are involved in evil or commit evildoing. Mainly focusing on how to understand evil through a social pedagogical perspective, but also which view of children and evil is manifested throughout society.

My participation in the Erasmus Intensive Program in Wales will provide me with valuable opportunities to enhance my thesis paper. First, by being a part of the multicultural cooperation between the universities of Newport, Stavanger and Vilnius, I will get a better idea of what a social educator deals with presently in terms of globalization. It would be beneficial for me to learn from other countries about how to improve children's and young peoples' wellbeing, which I intend to reflect throughout a section of my thesis. By interviewing students within these three educational partners, I am allowing my thesis to gain relevant cross-cultural perspectives. Doing so will provide me with the opportunity to examine the similarities and differences regarding various cultures' view on children, evil, reintegration, socialization, etc. The problems and issues experienced by young people in contemporary societies often transcend national and cultural boundaries. Through these interviews I will develop a multidimensional understanding by applying the skills of comparative analysis to youth work, social pedagogy and social work within these different European nations.

The interviews I conduct during my time with the Erasmus Intensive Program in Wales will accomplish the above by asking interviewees their opinions regarding a high profile murder case in Liverpool, which made international headlines 17 years ago. The Merseyside tragedy began on the afternoon of February 12, 1993, at 3.39pm when a surveillance camera in the Bootle Strand shopping centre filmed Robert Thompson and Jon Venables taking James Bulger by the hand from outside a butcher's shop. Bulger's mother was inside buying meat and had let go of him for just two minutes. In that short time the two boys had led him away, taking him out of the shopping centre and to a nearby railway line. Later the next day Bulger's body was found there, he had been beaten, struck with a battery and bricks and left for dead. A few days after the body of little Jamie Bulger had been found, Venables and Thompson were taken into custody. They were convicted in November 1993, separated, and ordered to serve a minimum sentence of 15 years, yet the boys were released seven and a half years later. (See attached article for more details of event.)

By asking interviewees about their opinions of the tragedy of James Bulger, I will be gaining insight about the various perspectives of children and evil. It will be an interesting and enlightening analysis of both cross-cultural beliefs as well as individual ideals about this subject. I look forward to meeting you in person and hope that if you are chosen to participate you will gladly contribute my research process. The interview will last about 30 min to 1 hour.

Sincerely,  
Christian Ommundsen